

Serving Communities



The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, which I signed into law, expands our work, helping protect valuable lands that serve as habitat for wildlife and ensuring the safety and economic vitality of communities affected by wildfires.

President George W. Bush, October 21, 2004

The Department of the Interior is responsible for protecting lives, resources, and property; generating scientific information; and fulfilling the Nation's trust and other special responsibilities to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and residents of affiliated island communities.

The Department faces challenges as it strives to continue to improve services to these communities. These include:

- Fulfilling trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of tribal governments, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.
- Protecting communities from catastrophic wildland fires.
- Safeguarding visitors to Interior-managed lands from illegal activities.
- Providing scientific information to reduce risks from earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, and other hazards.
- Providing scientific assessments on the quality and quantity of the Nation's water resources and conducting multi-purpose natural science research.

The 2006 budget includes \$5.1 billion for programs that provide services to communities. It will improve services and accountability in trust programs and the operation and maintenance of detention centers; promote healthy forests; and enhance earth science information analysis to reduce risks.

SERVING COMMUNITIES MISSION

**Safeguard lives, property and assets,
advance scientific knowledge, and improve
the quality of life for communities
we serve**

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The Department's 2006 budget increases funding for unified Indian trust programs over the 2005 enacted level by \$80.1 million. This proposed increase will fund continued improvements in trust management, continue implementation of the Department's plan to conduct a historical accounting for individual Indians and Tribes, and continue efforts to consolidate fractionated interests in lands.

Working closely with federally recognized Tribes, Interior also promotes economic development and an improved quality of life for 1.5 million Native Americans in tribal communities across the Nation. To support the effort, the 2006 budget includes a total of \$2.5 billion for BIA programs. The budget gives priority to improving operations and facility conditions at BIA-funded detention centers and continues to address the repair and replacement of BIA elementary and secondary schools.

AFFILIATED ISLAND COMMUNITIES

In serving communities, the Department coordinates Federal policy for, and provides technical and financial assistance to, the Territories of American

Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Interior also oversees financial assistance to the freely associated states: the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The 2006 budget requests \$79.1 million in discretionary appropriations for the Office of Insular Affairs to improve the financial management practices of the insular governments, increase economic development within the insular areas, and increase Federal responsiveness to the unique needs of the island communities. Permanent appropriations for OIA in 2006 will total \$313.3 million, including \$198.3 million for payments to the freely associated states under the recently revised and ratified Compact of Free Association.

WILDLAND FIRE

Over the past five years, the National Fire Plan has generated a more effective response to wildland fires and, with the tools of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, fostered significant progress to reduce fuel loads, improve forest health, and reduce risks to communities. In 2006, continued progress in fuels treatment performance to support the President's Healthy Forests Initiative will be a primary focus of the Department's wildland fire program. A second focus will be continued improvement in the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of fire preparedness and suppression activities. The 2006 budget

proposes \$756.6 million to carry out Interior's responsibilities under the National Fire Plan and Healthy Forests Initiative.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY

Law enforcement and security activities of the Department are critical components for successfully managing and protecting public lands and surrounding communities. The 2006 budget requests \$613.4 million for law enforcement and security programs. In addition to addressing deficiencies at BIA detention centers, the budget focuses increased resources on law enforcement presence in specific areas where the risk of violent crime is high and on improving internal affairs and compliance programs.

SCIENCE

Science is a cornerstone for the Department's land management decisions, supporting work to achieve resource protection, resource use, recreation, and serving community goals. The 2006 budget continues science programs that generate relevant, objective information for land managers and for communities throughout the Nation by proposing \$933.5 million for the U.S. Geological Survey. The budget emphasizes improvements in hazards monitoring and provides funding for the USGS role in a partnership with NASA and NOAA for the next generation of land remote-sensing satellites.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

With deficit reduction as a top priority, the 2006 budget proposes \$200.0 million for the PILT program, a \$26.8 million decrease from the 2005 enacted level. The proposed funding is 60 to 97 percent higher than PILT funding levels in the nineties, and level with the 2001 amount. The PILT Act was passed by Congress in 1976 to provide payments to local governments in counties where certain Federal lands are located within their boundaries. The PILT is based on the concept that these local governments incur costs associated with maintaining infrastructure on Federal lands within their boundaries but are unable to collect taxes on these lands; thus, they need compensation for these losses in tax revenues. The payments are made to local governments in lieu of tax revenues and to supplement other Federal land receipts shared with local governments. Local governments use PILT payments to improve local school, water, and road systems, as well as for other necessary infrastructure purposes that local governments would be hard pressed to provide without PILT.

The PILT distribution formula takes into account the population within an affected unit of local government, the number of acres of eligible Federal land, and the amount of certain Federal land payments received by the county in the preceding year. These payments include other Federal revenues, such as receipts from mineral leasing, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting, that the Federal government transfers to the counties.