

A group of people, including students and a guide, are walking along a path in a forest of tall, thin trees. The ground is covered in brown leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. The trees have a distinctive gnarled appearance. In the background, some buildings are visible through the trees.

America's Great Outdoors

2011 Progress Report

October 2011

“Around the country, from the Flint Hills of Kansas to the boroughs of New York City to the Chatahoochie River in Atlanta, we are supporting communities to enhance local parks, conserve working landscapes, and restore rivers for their natural and recreational values. These investments are and will continue to pay a generous dividend—benefiting local and state economies, increasing public access, and improving public health.”



–Ken Salazar
Ken Salazar

“We’re cleaning up our communities by helping to replace deserted lots with urban parks, transforming our local waters into centerpieces around which new businesses can grow and teaching all Americans how the environment is an important part of their everyday lives. These communities are becoming more sustainable and more prosperous—demonstrating that a healthy environment is a key ingredient to a strong economy.”



–Lisa Jackson
Lisa Jackson

“From kayaking on the Dismal Swamp Canal in Virginia to moose-hunting with paralyzed veterans in Alaska, the America’s Great Outdoors initiative is gaining momentum throughout the country. Our work across America’s abundant recreation sites is educating our youth and communities about the health benefits and job advancement opportunities related to conservation and outdoor recreation.”



–Jo-Ellen Darcy
Jo-Ellen Darcy

“With children spending half as much time outside as their parents did, and with many Americans living in urban areas without safe access to green space, connecting to the outdoors is more important than ever for the economic and physical health of our communities. Through the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, this Administration will continue to work together with communities to achieve clean and accessible lands and waters, thriving outdoor cultures and economies, and healthy and active youth.”

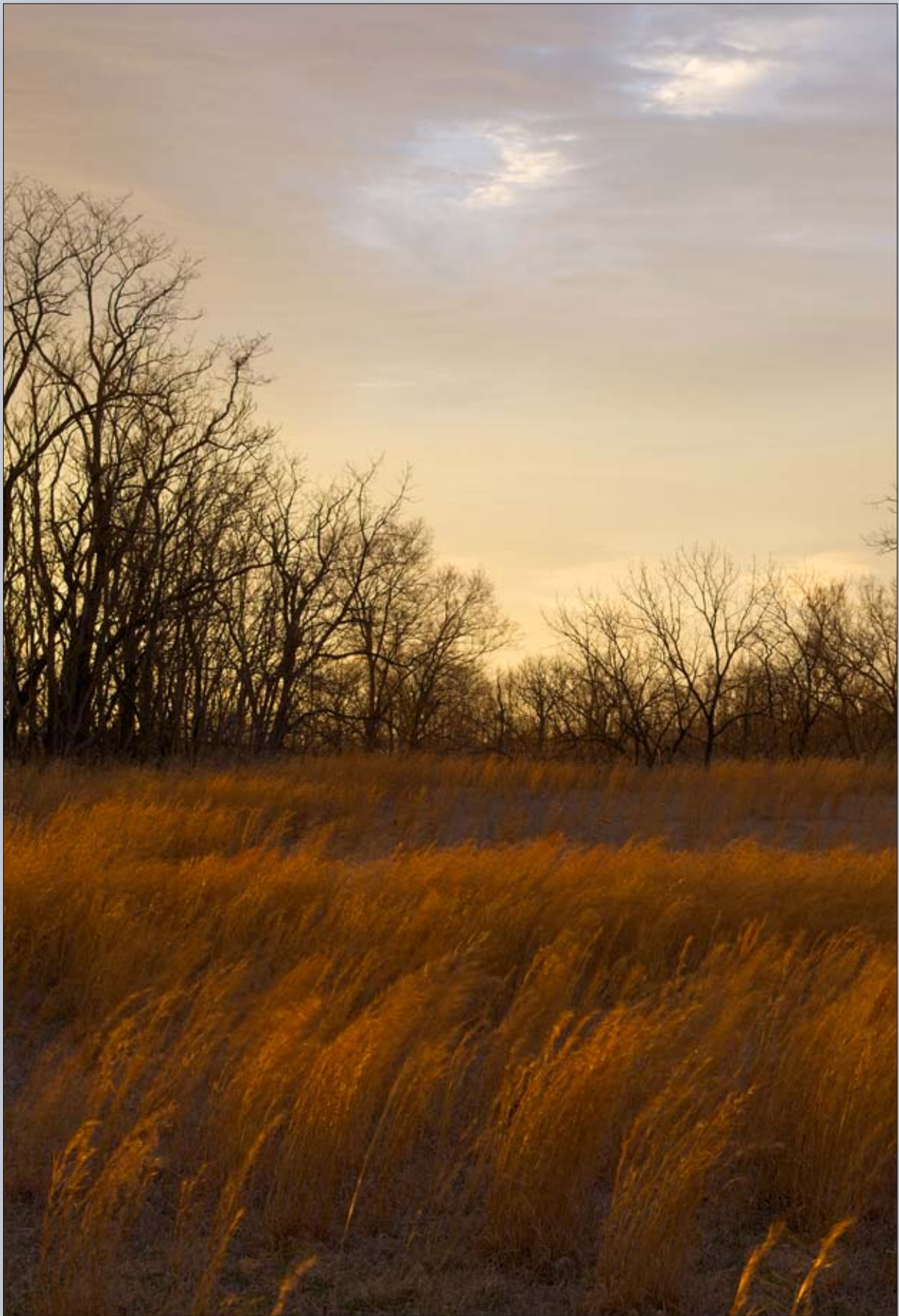


–Nancy Sutley
Nancy Sutley

Tom Vilsack: “Under the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, this Administration is making great strides in conserving farms, ranches, forests and our public lands. We have record acres enrolled in USDA conservation programs and we’ve made significant strides in protecting and restoring national treasures like the Everglades, our National Forests, and critical wetland habitat for ducks and other migratory birds.”



–Tom Vilsack
Tom Vilsack



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America's Great Outdoors

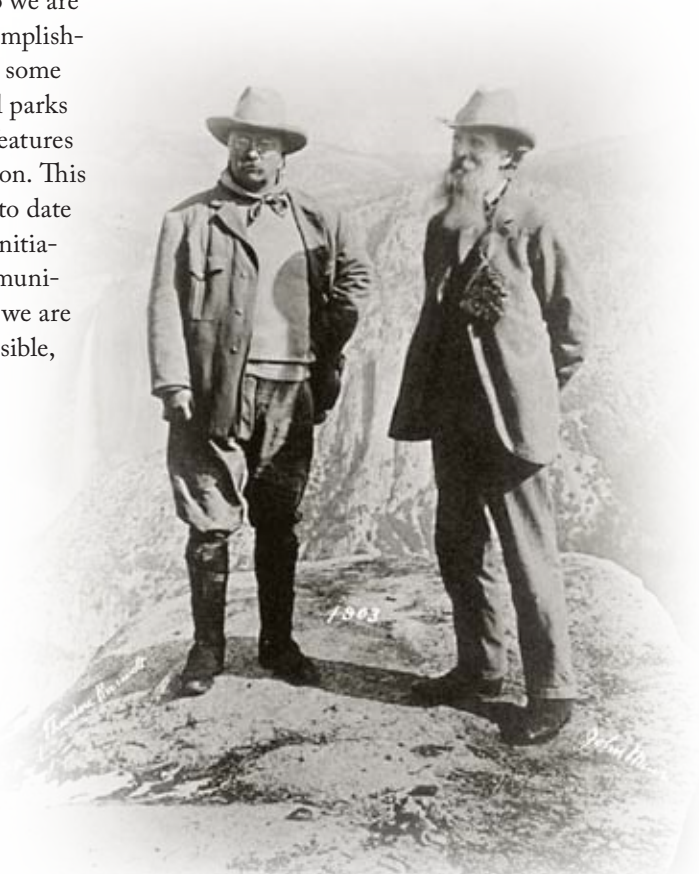
In April 2010, President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, calling on the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to develop a 21st-century conservation agenda that will protect America's natural and cultural resources, and connect people to the outdoors through jobs, education, recreation, and service. The President asked federal agencies to listen to and learn from the American people. The result was one of the largest conservation-related public dialogs in our nation's history.

In February 2011, the Administration published the America's Great Outdoors report. Its recommendations reflect the American people's ideas, goals, and shared values and include job creation and strengthening local economies. Progress on the recommendations is creating a fundamental shift in how the federal government structures spending, policies, and programs for conservation, restoration, preservation, cleanup, outdoor and environmental education, and recreation. America's Great Outdoors is reconnecting Americans—nationwide—to the great outdoors, investing in a shared conservation legacy to benefit future generations and communities for years to come.

“We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

Conservation of our natural, cultural and historic resources is an American tradition, shaping who we are as a nation and as a people. Conservation accomplishments of decades past remain with us today in some of our most treasured national, state, and local parks and forests, as well as historic structures and features that improve public use, access, and appreciation. This Report highlights this Administration's work to date under the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative. It demonstrates, by partnering with communities, landowners, businesses and many others, we are making America's Great Outdoors more accessible, better protected, and healthier.



The Great Outdoors Economy

The great outdoors has fueled centuries of economic activity through recreation and natural resource management, and it continues to employ millions of people today. The Outdoor Industry Association reports that outdoor recreation in the United States—from hunting and fishing to hiking and camping—contributes an estimated \$730 billion to the U.S. economy. The “recreation economy” supports nearly 6.5 million jobs. It generates \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue and \$289 billion annually in retail sales and services¹. From the largest parks to the smallest historic sites and memorials, National Park Service areas alone see over 280 million visitors. They generate \$12 billion in visitor spending that supports nearly 250,000 jobs². As part of the leisure and hospitality sector, the fifth-largest employer in America, the recreation industry has proven resilient in tough times. It shed only three percent of its workforce from 2007 to 2010 and maintained non-exportable jobs tied to places where people live and recreate right here in the United States. Maintaining this industry hinges on an accessible and healthy America’s Great Outdoors.

The value of clean green spaces and wild places is not limited to outdoor recreation. Working lands—farms, ranches and forests—from Florida to Alaska provide Americans with food and fiber. There are also environmental benefits like clean water, wildlife habitat, and open space. In the last year alone, cleaning our environment by reducing air pollutants reduced premature mortality risks equivalent to saving an estimated 160,000 lives. Cleaning up contaminated brownfields yields an average of 7.45 jobs for every \$100,000 federal dollars invested. Further, protecting historic and cultural sites in both rural and urban areas celebrates our history while providing indirect economic benefits through tourism and local economic development.

At Zoar Outdoor, our product is outdoor recreation. We see people wanting to connect with each other and with nature through participating in our rafting, kayaking, zip lining and rock climbing programs. We work to anchor our company in the local area through hiring local people and purchasing local goods when possible. We have fared well through the past recession, growing 30% from 2008 to 2009 and about 20% from 2009 to 2010.

—Bruce Lessels, Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont, MA

¹ <http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/RecEconomypublic.pdf?26>

² Department of the Interior Report: The Department of the Interior’s Economic Contributions. June 2011.

Working Together for America's Great Outdoors

In public listening sessions and visits to all 50 states, this Administration heard loud and clear that Americans care about the legacy they have received, and they want to pass along a clean and healthy environment to their children. They care enough to want to be part of the solution. Listening to those concerns, the Administration developed recommendations and actions detailed in the America's Great Outdoors report. The report is this Administration's promise to reconnect people to their birthright. It is this Administration's promise to conserve and restore their heritage, to support and propel locally led community conservation, and to work together towards shared goals.

Woven through this report is the principle that the federal government must be a better partner and supporter of local conservation. We must be innovative in how we empower communities to protect, connect with, and restore the great outdoors. We must be creative in leveraging resources through public-private partnerships, persistent in breaking down silos within agencies that hinder work getting done, and principled in our technical assistance and decision-making. Many of the accomplishments illustrated here did not occur overnight. Some were envisioned or already underway thanks to the work of many across the federal government and in hundreds of state, tribal, and private partners. But, thanks to the President's Initiative and the Administration's enthusiasm for AGO, this report details an impressive list of accomplishments during the first eight months of AGO. These accomplishments flow from focused agency priorities, collaboration and communication, and leveraged partnerships that are the hallmark of the AGO Initiative.

- Connecting Americans to the great outdoors by creating natural resource-based jobs and by working to establish a 21st-Century Conservation Service Corps.
- Expanding Access to the great outdoors by promoting outdoor recreation, investing in urban parks, expanding national recreation trails, and increasing hunting and fishing opportunities.
- Conserving and restoring large landscapes by investing in working-lands conservation and land acquisition; by restoring ecosystems like the Dakota Grasslands, Everglades, and western rangelands; and by developing a new strategy

for our National Parks and a new management framework for our National Forests.

- Enhancing rivers and other waters in the great outdoors by developing a system of water trails, restoring riparian areas, and working with farmers to improve water quality.

Given their sheer number, this report does not list all AGO recommendations and action items and their corresponding accomplishments to date. Instead the report illustrates the nature and breadth of work by describing notable achievements and outlining several case studies. A more detailed list of accomplishments and what we plan to achieve in coming months and years are appended to this report.



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US FOREST SERVICE / LEE JACOBSON

Connecting Americans to the Great Outdoors

Connecting Americans—especially young people—to the great outdoors through meaningful work, recreation, service, and educational experiences is a main goal of America’s Great Outdoors. In the past year we have successfully kept Americans working to protect the nation’s heritage. We have also created new opportunities for young people, veterans, and the young at heart to connect to the great outdoors through meaningful jobs and service work that cannot be outsourced or exported.

America’s youth are the stewards of the future. One sure way to protect our shared legacy is to create ways for them to connect to—and form a personal relationship with—the great outdoors. We must make the outdoors relevant to today’s youth by making sure that all Americans have access to safe, clean, and close-to-home places to recreate. By creating new and better ways for them to connect with our shared legacy, this Administration empowers young people and is responding to the ideas, concerns and goals captured in the AGO Youth Report.

- In FY 2010, over 21,000 young Americans were part of DOI—as interns, volunteers, and staff—in building trails, serving as interpreters, restoring habitat, and maintaining our public lands.
- Last year, USDA reached over 25 million children and families through environmental education, recreation, and other programs on public lands and waters.
- DOI and USDA launched a partnership with HistoriCorps to give job training, including sustainable energy technology skill building, and heritage education to youth, veterans, and unemployed Americans through projects that help preserve America’s historic and cultural treasures. In the first year of the partnership, participants completed projects on 31 buildings in 4 states (Wyoming, Colorado, Alaska, South Dakota).
- EPA provided grants—through its Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training program—for the recruitment, training, and job placement of mostly low-income and minority unemployed and under-employed residents of communities impacted by solid and hazardous waste. EPA’s program in Los Angeles, CA has an 85% placement rate, while in Boston, MA its 80-90%.

“We need to expose our youth to the wonders of our natural resources so that they can enjoy the health benefits that come from being outdoors and to make sure that, in the future, they know to conserve our incredibly valuable outdoor resources. All of us need to do more to get our kids into the outdoors.”

–Carolyn Brodsky, Sterling Rope Co., Inc., Biddeford, Maine

CASE STUDY:

Leveraging New and Continuing Service

Under the President’s AGO initiative, federal agencies committed to work with the many existing conservation corps programs to engage thousands of young adults in natural resource projects addressing unmet conservation needs. Outdoor jobs and volunteerism create and maintain outdoor recreation infrastructure. They also develop citizens with long-term job skills who connect to and appreciate America’s natural resources. That’s why federal agencies and partners have worked together over the past two years to provide paid work and service learning opportunities on public lands and waters to over 50,000 young people.

Nowhere is the power of these opportunities more clear than in programs to benefit men and women who served our country in the military. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided seasonal and permanent jobs—as rangers, maintenance workers, wildlife managers, and lock managers—to former military personnel, especially wounded personnel. The Corps and military installations worked together through the Veteran’s Workforce Investment Program, Warrior in Transition Program, and Army Wounded Warrior Program. The USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior worked with Veteran Green Corps and many states to expand a pilot program that provides jobs for returning veterans. Returning veterans worked on trail crews

and fire crews on National Forests, National Parks, and other public lands across the nation. On these crews, veterans gain abilities that last a lifetime—work readiness, educational advancement, and civic engagement. In turn, veterans provide lasting benefits to the natural resources and people in their communities. EPA and USDA also started to recruit veterans to the water workforce. This is one of the agencies' initial steps in working collaboratively to assist rural water and wastewater system providers in addressing aging infrastructure, workforce shortages, and declining rate bases.

“After I returned from combat, I felt life back home was suffocating. My experience through the Veterans Green Jobs and Veterans Expeditions at Dinosaur National Monument allowed me to take a breath, and rebuild the belief that there are people that truly care about helping veterans. I felt empowered when I realized that I wasn’t alone in the struggle. I have met friends for life, and I cannot say enough about how important the outdoors has been in helping me get my life back on stable ground.”

—Amir Ansari, Washington, DC





NPS / CHESTNUT PHOTO



US FOREST SERVICE / DONNA EDWARDS

Expanding Access to the Great Outdoors

From community parks and waterways to rural farmlands and forests, America's great outdoors encompass a range of geographies and meet many needs. Our majestic public lands and waters are invaluable places for families and friends to relax and recreate—whether a city or national park, a mountain wilderness, or a neighborhood trail. Federal agencies can improve access to these spaces by supporting investments in transportation systems that provide convenient and accessible options for reaching America's great outdoors, whether across town or across the country. Parks and green spaces improve a community's economy, health, quality of life, and social cohesion. In cities and towns nationwide, parks, forests, rivers, and green spaces generate tourism and recreation dollars and improve investment and renewal. Ready access to a local park, trail, or protected wildland is frequently an important factor in a family's choice of where to live. It often improves property values, too. Time spent in nature improves the emotional and physical well-being of children and adults alike.

- NPS invested \$40 million through LWCF state grants to leverage public-private partnerships and support locally-driven conservation work. The funds enable state and local governments and their partners to create and improve parks, trails, and open spaces for communities to enjoy.
- In 2011, DOI worked with the USACE to designate 41 local and regional trails as National Recreation Trails that stretch across 17 states. These will add nearly 650 miles to the National Trails System, which also includes National Scenic Trails like the Appalachian Trail and National Historic Trails like the Oregon Trail. These trails help people to reconnect with the history and natural beauty across America.
- USDA improved access for sportsmen by enrolling eight more states and one tribe in the Voluntary Public Access Program, "Open Fields," that works with states and gives landowners incentives to make more lands available for hunting and fishing.
- NPS launched a new five-year program commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, "From Civil War to Civil Rights." Along with state and local programs, it will promote hundreds of cooperative interpretive, educational, and commemorative projects and highlight many landmark battlegrounds. These events, along with strategic recent acquisitions like the Emanuel Harman Farm, where major fighting occurred on the first day of battle at Gettysburg and a conservation easement at Manassas, are connecting Americans across the country to their unique cultural heritage and building strong relationships to historically significant sites.
- Through the Greening America's Capitals program, EPA, HUD and DOT worked with five urban state capitals—Boston, MA; Hartford, CT; Charleston, WV; Jefferson City, MO; Little Rock, AK—to develop plans that will add centralized public green spaces, improve river access with trails and waterway improvements, and support economic revitalization in town squares.

"In partnership with the National Park Service, we are creating a new, united approach to parks management that will bring more people—especially kids and young adults—to Jamaica Bay to camp, play, learn about, and fully embrace the great outdoors."

–Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York City, NY

CASE STUDY:

New York City's Great Urban Parks Initiative

In our country's largest city, the National Park Service, Army Corps of Engineers and New York City are working together to make parks and play spaces safer, cleaner, and more accessible. Secretary Salazar and Mayor Bloomberg launched this initiative in February 2011. This is a unique city-federal partnership to enhance the shared green space of New York. The initiative is centered on how NPS and New York City can better manage and enhance the 55,000 acres of urban parkland they own. The goal is to increase out-

door educational opportunities for children, complete the trail system around the city, restore Jamaica Bay, and expand what will be the nation's largest urban campground. In related work, DOI, EPA, USACE, USDA and seven other Federal agencies are identifying and overcoming challenges for the Bronx and Harlem Rivers to give economically challenged communities access to new greenways and parks in their neighborhoods. New York will serve as a model of the benefits of green cities—healthy people, a healthy environment, and a healthy economy.



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Conserving and Restoring Large Landscapes

Conserving large landscapes requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including landowners, tribes, conservation, recreation, agriculture and forestry groups, and local, state, and federal governments. America's Great Outdoors calls for broad collaboration around locally-driven priorities and for more efficient and coordinated ways of investing in, restoring, and managing our country's natural and cultural resources. This emphasis on collaboration, coordination, and local leadership is best reflected through progress in conserving landscapes across public and working lands.

- A partnership of state agencies, conservation organizations, individuals, DOD, USDA, and DOI has developed a plan to more than double the size of the longleaf pine ecosystem that stretches from Virginia to Texas to 8 million acres over 15 years. Building on these partners' efforts, through AGO we invested \$60 million in federal funds to restore longleaf pines on federal and private working lands including 130,000 private land acres have been added through federal programs.
- This year, NPS released a new 5-year strategy, A Call to Action, for managing the 84 million acres, 85,000 miles of rivers and streams, 43,000 miles of shoreline, and the 100,000 sites, structures, and landmarks held in trust within the National Park System for all Americans. This strategy will help guide the conservation, preservation and recreation efforts of the Service's 28,000 staff and 2.5 million volunteers across crown jewels from the Grand Canyon to the Washington Monument.
- In 2011, USDA, in partnership with other agencies, launched three new landscape-scale projects in Saginaw Bay, Michigan; Monterey Bay, California; and around Lake Champlain in New York and Vermont. Based on listening sessions and stakeholder concerns in each area, USDA underwrote \$3.5 million through Farm Bill conservation programs for projects including sediment and phosphorus reduction and restoration of wildlife habitat on working lands.
- The Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area is the first new national wildlife refuge created by this Administration. It resulted from a partnership of governments, ranchers, and private organizations. All partners recognize agriculture's vital role in stewarding our nation's fish and wildlife resources. The project keeps working ranches on the landscape while conserving tallgrass prairie wildlife habitat for future generations to enjoy.
- The US Forest Service has published a draft 21st-century framework to govern management of all 193 million acres of the National Forest System. The Draft Planning Rule incorporates new science, supports resilient ecosystems and watersheds, and enhances the capacity of the national forests and grasslands to provide people and communities with a range of benefits, including jobs, recreation, outdoor education and healthy watersheds, now and into the future.
- USDA, DOI, and DOD are working in partnership with ranchers across 11 western states to conserve and restore habitat for sage grouse, a species proposed for the federal endangered species list. Over the past year, this effort has provided \$94 million to help landowners restore habitat and to purchase easements. Participating ranchers are assured that, if the sage grouse is listed, they won't be subject to additional regulation.

“Connecting to communities builds trust and credibility that translates to success on the ground and transferability to others. To have landscape conservation one must have landscape conversations; FIRST! Communities bring compassion and truth to a landscape; allowing partnerships to grow will engage the private sector.”

–Jim Stone, “Blackfoot Challenge” Landscape Collaborative Initiative, Montana

CASE STUDY:

The Greater Dakota-Prairie Grasslands

Generations of sportsman have known that the Prairie Pothole Region is our nation's “duck factory” because it plays a central role in sustaining strong duck populations, which in turn sustain hunters, bird

watchers, and local economies. Because of the foresight of earlier leaders, this landscape is an ecologically and economically rich mix of protected public lands and working private lands. Today, however, the focus is on creating a big-picture approach to

landscape-scale management that transcends jurisdictional borders. In a public-private partnership with supportive local ranchers, DOI has established the Dakota Grassland Conservation Area to help protect ranching culture and preserve, at a landscape scale, the ecological integrity of the area's tallgrass prairie, pothole wetlands, and riparian woodlands. Under the proposal, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will seek to acquire easements from willing sellers on nearly 2 million acres of native prairie habitat to support traditional economic activities, specifically livestock pro-

duction, and to benefit wildlife. To promote voluntary conservation on rural working lands, in 2011 USDA committed \$10.8 million to support ranchers and farmers who are enhancing migratory bird habitat and improving the water quality and the health of grasslands through the Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative. This initiative provides technical and financial assistance for restoring wetlands; managing farmed wetlands in ways that reduce impacts on wildlife and water quality; and keeping unaltered wetlands in their current condition.

“The Dakota Grasslands Initiative represents a win-win situation for farmers and ranchers, as well as wetlands and waterfowl. To support and leverage this important administration initiative, Ducks Unlimited pledged \$50 million over the next 10 years to purchase easements under this program.”

–Dale Hall, CEO, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

CASE STUDY: The Everglades

The Everglades, the “River of Grass,” is nationally and internationally recognized as one of the world's most distinctive ecosystems. The Everglades is also the focus of the largest active intergovernmental watershed restoration project in the U.S. Everglades restoration is intended to ensure that fresh water will be available to millions of urban South Florida residents and to sustain agriculture, commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, and other economic sectors. A broad constituency is at work to ensure that this unique ecosystem will be sustained for future generations.

Over the last decade federal, state, local, tribal, and non-governmental partners have worked together on a number of important restoration efforts. These include the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, an Army Corps/State of Florida effort to revitalize the ecosystem and ensure future water supplies for the people and farms of the region; EPA's development of a blueprint for future water quality improvements to ensure the quality of new supplies of fresh water to

the ecosystem; and the efforts of DOI and USACE to increase the natural flow of water in the Everglades by elevating a section of the Tamiami Trail. Over the last three years, Everglades restoration generated an estimated 10,500 jobs.

In August of this year USDA announced \$100 million in landowner agreements with farmers and ranchers to restore wetlands and permanently conserve nearly 24,000 acres of agricultural land in the Northern Everglades. This agreement will allow farmers to maintain their way of life while contributing to the conservation of the Everglades. DOI complemented this action by proposing a new Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. Up to 100,000 acres could be protected through landowner agreements and retained for agricultural purposes. Up to 50,000 acres would be purchased from willing sellers to create the proposed refuge where visitors could fish, hike and view wildlife.

“As a fourth generation ranching family, we recognize the importance of biodiversity in our ranching operation. Maintaining natural systems and a healthy habitat is critical for our wildlife. We view conservation easements as a way to maintain a working landscape agriculturally and maintain natural systems at the same time. If these easements are crafted well, we have an opportunity to maintain a huge open landscape in the middle of Florida that will be of great value to future generations.”

–Mike Adams, President of Adams Ranch, Northern Everglades Headwaters, FL



AUDUBON / JERRY W DAVIS



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Enhancing Rivers and Other Waters in the Great Outdoors

Rivers and waterways provide local and accessible opportunities for outdoor recreation, conservation, environmental education and economic activity in nearly every community across America. Clean, reliable fresh water is a critical resource that drives the creation of American jobs, supports human health and safety, and protects cherished wildlife. Clean and plentiful waterways are also key to our domestic economy. Every year, about 40 million anglers spend \$45 billion annually to fish in American waters, and the U.S. beverage industry uses more than 12 billion gallons of water annually to produce products valued at \$58 billion. Cities with waterways once considered too polluted for human contact are now hosting triathlons with swim events, bringing in millions of tourism dollars, and heightening peoples' appreciation of these waterways. By improving the health of our waters, promoting recreation, and expanding access—from our extensive network of urban rivers to breathtaking Great Lakes—the America's Great Outdoors Initiative is ensuring that future generations can fish, boat, swim and benefit from these national treasures.

- In Washington State's Olympic National Park, DOI and its partners began the removal of the 108-foot Elwha Dam and the 210-foot Glines Canyon Dam—the largest dam removal project in U.S. history. These actions will allow fish access to more than 70 miles of protected habitat and help increase the river's salmon populations from 3,000 to more than 300,000. As salmon runs return, so will the economic benefits generated by tourists and sportsmen lured to the river banks. Removal of the Elwha dam will also restore access to a historical village location and the sacred Creation Site of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. The salmon restoration will renew treaty commitments and restore a central feature of the tribe's culture and sustenance.
- Led by EPA, USDA, DOI, and HUD, eleven agencies came together to form the Federal Urban Waters Partnership. This unprecedented effort will revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them, transforming overlooked assets into treasured centerpieces and drivers of urban revival. It will also reconnect urban communities with their waterways by

leveraging federal funds to support pilot projects in seven cities.

- In 2011, DOI's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program is supporting 70 community-based river and riparian projects and another 47 projects building community capacity for water trail development. A partnership between RTCA, EPA's Brownfields Program and Groundwork USA is revitalizing local communities through projects and programs that improve the environment, economy and quality of life, and engage youth in environmental service and education.
- USDA and EPA are working with state governments and others to explore flexible, voluntary approaches for farmers to improve water quality. The agencies are working toward regulatory "certainty" mechanisms that encourage farmers to adopt voluntary practices that reduce impacts on water quality. The goal is to allow states flexibility to increase farmers' and other landowners' interest and willingness to adopt the most effective land stewardship practices. The agencies will achieve this through incentives to quicken the pace of, and fully achieve, resource conservation and verifiable water quality improvements.
- USDA is targeting nearly \$600 million in Farm Bill conservation funds to restore wetlands and fish habitat water quality in ecosystems across the country, including the Upper Mississippi River basin, Chesapeake Bay, California Bay-Delta, Great Lakes and others.
- In 2011, DOI and USACE worked together to designate three National Water Trails including Lake Michigan National Water Trail in Illinois and Indiana, the Quinebaug River Water Trail in Connecticut, and the Susquehanna River Water Trail in Pennsylvania.

“For the people of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, the restoration of the Elwha River is much more than just the taking down of two dams. A free flowing river will bring back the fish so that we can once again earn our livelihood from the river, rebuild our smoke-houses along the river, and pass on our traditions from the river to future generations.”

–Frances G. Charles, Tribal Chairwoman, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

CASE STUDY:

San Joaquin River Restoration and Recreation

Although the San Joaquin River is the second longest river in California and empties into the largest estuary on North America’s west coast, there is very little public access for recreation along most of its length. A coalition of non-profit organizations in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies seeks to deepen Central Valley residents’ connection to their river and enhance their recreational and educational assets. The San Joaquin River Partnership is working with the Department of the Interior’s Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to expand river access for boating, picnicking, swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, and nature education along the river from the San Joaquin River Gorge to San Francisco Bay.

This project complements a continuing multi-agency effort to restore flows to the San Joaquin River. The San Joaquin River restoration Program involves the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, The National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Army Corps of Engineers, among other federal and state partners. The dual goals of this effort are to create a self-sustaining Chinook salmon fishery while reducing or avoiding impacts to water supplies for agricultural, municipal, and industrial water users. The partners began increasing flows in 2009 and will re-introduce salmon in the coming years. The river starts high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where many of its tributaries are among the nation’s best known and most loved wild and scenic rivers—the Tuolumne, Merced, Kings, and Kern rivers. A restored San Joaquin River will enhance recreational opportunities and access for many communities along its 330 miles.

“The San Joaquin River Blueway is about connecting individuals and families to their rich natural and cultural heritage that is found along the river’s mosaic of parks and wildlife refuges. Exploring and enjoying a restored San Joaquin River fosters healthy lives, strengthens community ties, and reflects our pride of place.”

–Dave Koehler, Coordinator, San Joaquin River Partnership



NPS / DOMBROWSKI



US FOREST SERVICE / KENT WOODRUFF

The Path Ahead

The great outdoors continues to preserve American values and provides the basis for economic and community vitality. We live in an increasingly complex world; but for all our challenges and our differences, Americans are united in their passion for and commitment to the great outdoors.

The America's Great Outdoors Initiative has already yielded impressive results and will continue to move toward even more success. A more detailed list of accomplishments from this past year and the 2012 implementation plan are provided as appendices.

Even as we celebrate success, we look toward the future and resolve to keep the promises of America's Great Outdoors.

- Appendix A—Acronyms
- Appendix B—Detailed Accomplishments
- Appendix C—Implementation Plan
- Appendix D—Working Group Agency Membership

The full report may be downloaded from:
www.americasgreatoutdoors.gov.

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Department of Commerce
Department of Education
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Labor
Department of Transportation
Office of Management and Budget



NPS



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Appendix A

America's Great Outdoors: 2011 Progress Report

List of Acronyms

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 21CSC | 21st-Century Conservation Service Corps |
| ACHP | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation |
| AGO | America's Great Outdoors |
| BIA | Bureau of Indian Affairs |
| BIE | Bureau of Indian Education |
| BLM | Bureau of Land Management |
| CDBG | Community Development Block Grants |
| CELCP | Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program |
| CEQ | Council on Environmental Quality |
| CNCS | Corporation for National and Community Service |
| CRP | Conservation Reserve Program |
| CSC | Coastal Services Center |
| DOC | Department of Commerce |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| DOI | Department of the Interior |
| DOJ | Department of Justice |
| DOL | Department of Labor |
| DOT | Department of Transportation |
| EDA | U.S. Economic Development Administration |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| EQIP | Environmental Quality Incentives Program |
| FACA | Federal Advisory Committee Act |
| FICOR | Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation |
| FWS | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GRP | Grassland Reserve Program |
| HHS | Department of Health and Human Services |
| HUD | Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| LWCF | Land and Water Conservation Fund |
| LMO | Let's Move Outside! |
| NCCC | National Civilian Community Corps |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NPS | National Park Service |
| NRCS | Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| OMB | Office of Management and Budget |
| RTCA | Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program |
| SCORPs | Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans |
| Tiger Grants | Transportation Investment Generation Economic Recovery Grants |
| USACE | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| USDA | Department of Agriculture |
| USFS | U.S. Forest Service |
| USGS | U.S. Geological Survey |

Appendix B

America's Great Outdoors: 2011 Progress Report

A Collaborative Approach: Progress Report

Eight months into this 21st Century conservation agenda, federal agencies and hundreds of partner organizations are working to implement the goals, recommendations, and action items outlined in the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) report. Federal agencies have accomplished many tangible projects this year and have also launched new projects and processes to advance the initiative. In all of this work, federal agencies have placed a premium on working together to get more done more efficiently with the resources they have. From federal agencies leveraging each other's expertise and funding to pooling their expertise to put more young people to work in the outdoors, AGO has inspired a new ethic of collaboration in the federal government.

A. Connecting Americans To The Great Outdoors

1. PROVIDE QUALITY JOBS, CAREER PATHWAYS, AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Increasing opportunities for jobs, training, and service in the great outdoors to put Americans back to work now with benefits that last well into the future.

Selected Accomplishments

- Employed over 21,000 youth across the country in full and part-time jobs and internships and across a range of duties from building trails to inventorying species (DOI)
- Partnered with state and local conservation organizations to leverage a \$18 million federal investment into nearly \$30 million, creating 530 jobs across rural America to implement conservation practices on private lands. (USDA)
- Hired former military personnel, especially wounded personnel, by working in conjunction with the Veteran's Workforce Investment Program, the Warrior in Transition Program, the Army Wounded Warrior Program, Veterans Curation Program, and individual military installations. Jobs included rangers, maintenance workers, wildlife managers, lock managers, and others. (USACE)
- Partnered with HistoriCorps to provide job training and heritage education for youth, veterans, and unemployed Americans through projects that preserve some of America's historic and cultural treasures. (DOI, USDA)
- Worked with the Student Conservation Corps, Veterans Green Corps, California Conservation Corps, and the Southwest Conservation Corps to recruit and train people to do restoration work on public lands. Participants in the Veterans Green Corps worked to reduce hazardous fuels to decrease the intensity of a potential wildfire. (USDA)
- Awarded \$24.5 million in competitive grants to nonprofits and agencies that will result in more than 6,000 AmeriCorps members improving or creating 127,533 miles of rivers and trails, cleaning or improving 231,872 acres of parks, and providing environmental education to 127,838 youth. (CNCS and federal, state, and local partners)
- Provided grant funds through EPA's Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grant program to nonprofit organizations to recruit and train for job placement predominantly low-income and minority, unemployed, and under-employed residents from solid and hazardous waste-affected communities. These grants help to create green jobs that reduce environmental contamination and build more sustainable futures for communities. (EPA)
- Leveraged 1.3 million volunteer hours at USACE projects across the country, valued at \$28 million, to make public areas safer and more visitor-friendly. Helped to educate youth and adults on water management, land stewardship, and safe outdoors play. (USACE)
- Launched new partnership with Operation Honor Card, a joint project of Blue Star Families, the American Red Cross, and ServiceNation: Mission Serve, to honor a military service member through volunteer service. USACE pledged over 1 million volunteer hours, which are performed by volunteers at Corps lakes and rivers. (USACE)
- Leveraged \$12 million on top of a \$20 million federal investment through a USDA-NRCS partnership to create conservation jobs and implement landscape-scale conservation initiative in rural America. (USDA)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Launched Federal Advisory Committee to advise and create the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) aimed at expanding opportunities and funding for youth employment and training. (DOI, USDA, NOAA, DOL, USACE, EPA)

- Issued guidance providing direct hire authority that will assist agencies in providing career pathways to a diverse group of qualified young people, connecting them to jobs in natural resource conservation and historic and cultural preservation. (DOI)
- Increased recruitment of veterans to the water workforce, an effort to address the challenges of aging infrastructure, workforce shortages, increasing costs, and declining rate bases, through a EPA and USDA memorandum of understanding. (USDA, EPA)
- Launched YouthGO.gov portal in January 2011. This tool is used by DOI and USDA to provide information on education programs, outdoor activities, and job opportunities.

2. ENHANCE RECREATIONAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Recreation access to America's lands and waters presents enjoyable opportunities to connect with family and friends and enhances our health and wellness.

Selected Accomplishments

- Designated 41 trails as National Recreation Trails, stretching across 17 states and adding nearly 650 miles of trails to the National Trails System. These land and water trails provide opportunities for communities to connect with nature and increase access points for enhanced recreation. (DOI)
- Acquired 5,500 acres of important lands for habitat and recreational access in FY 2011, including priority work on 1,500 acres for grizzly, bull trout, and cutthroat trout habitat in the Lolo and Clearwater National Forests in Montana; and on 1,500 acres of watershed protection and access to the Appalachian Trail in the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee. (USDA)
- Launched major effort to renovate the Federal "recreation.gov" website to improve access to information about recreation opportunities and enhance ease of making reservations at over 3200 Federal recreation areas and over 2800 field locations, representing over 90,000 recreation sites. (USACE, USDA, DOI)
- Supported 240 community-based projects through the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. These include more than 70 river and riparian projects, 180 projects creating trail opportunities, 40 projects building community capacity for water trail development, and 120 projects accessing protected local lands. Projects in 70 urban communities bolster conservation and creation of trails, land, and blueways, while improving access to recreational opportunities (including urban-focused partnerships with EPA's Brownfields program and Groundwork USA). (DOI, EPA)
- Expanded the financial assistance role of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to include administration of awards made in the Washington Office under the Coastal Impact Assessment Program (CIAP), Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). (DOI)
- Enrolled eight additional states and one tribe in the Voluntary Public Access Program, "Open Fields," that encourages owners of privately-held farm, ranch and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting and fishing through programs implemented by state or tribal governments. (USDA)
- Awarded \$1 million in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Grants to Michigan's Huron Clinton Metropark Authority for green infrastructure investments. These investments, which are expected to improve water quality, are also expected to yield public health benefits, protect natural hydrology, and reduce, capture and treat stormwater runoff. In addition, EPA awarded \$1.1 million in GLRI funds to the Chicago Park District to groom the city's 24 beaches on a daily basis and build a protective barrier to make swimming areas cleaner. These actions should result in fewer swimming bans and advisories due

- to contamination. (EPA)
- Launched and furthered work on place-based recreational access initiatives across the country to improve the ecological health of the water and make waterways more fishable, boatable, and swimmable, including the Charles River Initiative in Boston, the Mystic River Watershed Initiative in Massachusetts. (EPA)
- Invested \$27 million last year through the “Transit in Parks” program to improve trail and transit connections between local communities and Federal recreation areas, and to improve mobility and accessibility for visitors. (DOT)
- Invested \$4.3 million federal and \$4.8 million matching funds from the states through the Coastal Zone Management Program, in partnership with coastal programs in 34 coastal states and territories, to protect and enhance public access and recreational sites along our coasts. (NOAA)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Established the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) to provide a clear and focused venue to improve the coordination, communication, and collaboration of agencies that directly manage outdoor recreation facilities and provide recreational opportunities and resources. (DOI, USDA, USACE, NOAA)
- Issued guidance that requires BLM to consider State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans in their recreation planning efforts to help ensure compatibility and complementary activities; to reduce duplication of service or facilities; to encourage partnerships; and to ensure community engagement on a regional scale. (DOI)

3. RAISE AWARENESS OF THE VALUE AND BENEFITS OF AMERICA’S GREAT OUTDOORS

Promoting early experiences in nature and at historic places to inspire a lasting connection and commitment to service in the outdoors.

Selected Accomplishments

- Awarded approximately \$3.5 million through the Environmental Education Grant Program to state and local education entities and non-profit organizations to increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues. In 2010, more than 100 grants were awarded nationwide, reaching more than 100,000 people. (EPA)
- Developed new formal education programs (modeled after the Forest Service’s “Forest for Every Classroom”) such as “A Trail to Every Classroom” and “A Park for Every Classroom,” to engage teachers and students in place-based service and learning opportunities. (USDA, DOI)
- Launched Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative to solidify the role of national parks and open spaces in contributing to America’s public and environmental health. (DOI, HHS, CEQ) Designated nine new Children’s Forests and 25 more “Kids in the Woods” projects, which will provide “outdoor classrooms” where kids and adults can learn about forest ecology and healthy land management practices. (USDA)
- Worked with partners to host more than 100 Let’s Move Outside! inspired events on public lands and waters. (DOI, USACE, USDA)
- Granted \$2 million for the Expanding Capacity in Environmental Education Project, a consortium of public and private interests that partner with federal agencies to train educators in the methods and delivery of environmental education, including outdoor and conservation education and interpretation of our natural resources. (EPA) Developed plans to integrate historic and cultural sites into youth education and involvement activities offered by federal agencies at the 13th Conference on National Scenic and Historic Trails and the National Service Learning Conference. (ACHP)

- Hosted 55 special events to expose, encourage, and educate adults and children about the great outdoors, including fishing clinics, tours of dams and lakes, canoeing, tagging butterflies, shoreline clean-ups, tree planting, and many other fun and interactive activities. (USACE)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Established an interagency Let’s Move Outside! working group and drafted a comprehensive strategic plan. Integrated health-focused messaging and increased opportunities for physical activity in existing outdoor education and grant programs, including the NPS Junior Ranger program and the FS More Kids in the Woods program. (DOI, USACE, USDA)

4. ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONSERVATION AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Enlisting America’s young people, our nation’s future stewards, to learn about their heritage and help create outdoor spaces that are safe, clean, affordable, and accessible.

Selected Accomplishments

- Hosted special Youth Session on historic preservation for over 50 youth, teachers, federal agency, and ACHP staff, featuring presentations from and interaction with a visiting delegation of young people and teachers from the Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit programs. (ACHP)
- Participated in Outdoor Nation events in New York, Denver, Atlanta, Minneapolis, and San Francisco, involving hundreds of young people, to encourage connections and activities in the outdoors. (USDA, DOI, HHS, USACE)
- Hosted over 100 National Get Outdoors Day and National Trail Day events and promoted Let’s Move Outside! Additionally, DOI hosted 19 Let’s Move Outside! Catch A Special Thrill (C.A.S.T) events. (USDA, USACE, DOI, LMO)
- Granted \$193,000 for ten Let’s Move Indian Country (LMIC) projects which include outdoor activities on or near Tribal lands. (HHS)
- Hosted more than 2,000 National Public Lands Day Events that engaged 180,000 people in conservation service projects on public lands and waters. Emphasized the link between healthy lands and healthy people through Let’s Move Outside! tools and other education programs with public service announcements across partner websites. (DOI, USDA, USACE, HHS, NOAA)
- Supported nationwide recreational events, including National Kids to Parks Day, National Get Outdoors Day, and National Trails Day, by hosting free, outdoor activities for more than 100,000 children and families (USDA , DOI, USACE, HHS, NOAA)
- Reached over 4 million children and families through agency-led environmental education events and programs on public land and waters such as Forest for Every Classroom, EdOut, Kids4Trees. (USDA)
- Announced the Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools recognition program to recognize schools that demonstrate the best improvements in environmental literacy, healthy learning conditions, and operation in a sustainable manner. Approximately 25—50 awards to these schools will be announced before the end of the 2011—12 school year. (ED, CEQ, EPA, DOI, USDA)
- Reached over 80,000 K-12 students annually through National Estuarine Research Reserves that serve as “living classrooms” for educators, students and the general public. (NOAA)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Convened a Youth Advisory Group to address declining youth involvement in recreation and to advise agencies on ways to better engage young people in outdoor recreation. (USACE)
- Developed interagency working group for Let's Move Indian Country including DOI, USDA, HHS, ED, and CNCS. (DOI)
- In collaboration with partners, NPS Youth Programs office is developing an agency-specific action plan for implementing each recommendation in the AGO Youth Report. (DOI)

B. Conserving And Restoring America's Great Outdoors

5. STRENGTHEN THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)

Aligning investments in large-landscape acquisition and restoration to ensure America's lands remain intact for generations to follow.

Selected Accomplishments

- Protected 149,000 acres in 14 states through the Forest Legacy Program, leveraging \$31 million of federal, state, and private resources to support land conservation activities through easements and fee acquisition. (USDA)
- Protected over 32,000 acres across a dozen states through LWCF conservation easement or fee title acquisitions, including: Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Colorado; Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut; and Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park, Virginia. (DOI)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Developed an interagency process for strategic investment in landscape-scale land acquisition projects, ensuring investment of LWCF resources in places that are ecologically important, have a clear strategy for reaching shared goals grounded in science-based planning, have strong community support, and make efficient use of funds. (USDA, DOI)

6. ESTABLISH GREAT URBAN PARKS AND COMMUNITY GREEN SPACES

Creating urban parks and community green spaces is critical to building lasting personal relationships with the great outdoors.

Selected Accomplishments

- The National Park Service invested \$40 million through LWCF state grants to leverage public-private partnerships and to support locally-driven conservation efforts. The funds enable State and local governments and their partners to establish and improve parks, trails, and open spaces. (DOI)
- Assisted over 7,000 communities with planning and managing their urban forests through the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program while supporting private land acquisition of community-owned forests through the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program. (USDA)
- Approved plan to establish the Middle Rio Grande Urban National Wildlife Refuge, the Southwest's first urban national wildlife refuge, leveraging Bernalillo County's commitment of \$5 million. Once complete, the refuge, which is within a 30-minute drive of over half of New Mexico's population, will be a place for people to connect with and learn

about the natural world and will provide valuable habitat for wildlife, including benefits to endangered species. (DOI)

- Established a partnership between New York City, the State of New York, and DOI to coordinate the management of 55,000 acres of NYC and NPS lands in the city. The goals of the project include establishing the nation's largest urban campground, providing public transportation to greenways and bikeways, establishing kayaking trails in the Bay, establishing an environmental education center for schools and community groups, and restoring and preserving the aviation heritage of Floyd Bennett Field. (DOI, USACE)
- Partnered with the State of Colorado to connect trails in the Denver Metropolitan Area to the three national wildlife refuges in and around Denver, providing access to millions of urban residents. (DOI, EPA)
- Completed 10 miles of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, the City's signature greenspace and transportation alternative for residents of the District of Columbia and visitors. Partnered with the District of Columbia and Friends of the Arboretum. (DOI, DOT)
- Created urban parks, gardens, green spaces, and jobs through various EPA Brownfields programs, including the Brownfields Area Wide Planning Pilot Program, EPA Assessment Revolving Loan Fund and Cleanup (ARC) Grants, Brownfields Cleanup grants, and Brownfields Assessment Grants. On average, 7.45 jobs are leveraged through every \$100,000 of EPA Brownfields funding, and as of August 2011 a total of more than 70,000 jobs have been leveraged.¹ (EPA)
- Approved investment of \$800,000 HUD HOPE VI funds to the Atlanta Housing Authority, matched by additional city funds, for improvements in the city's Butler Park, including the creation of a walking trail with exercise station, a multi-purpose field, community gardens, and the addition of a new playground. (HUD)
- Partnered with over 500 local organizations to create 1,465 People's Gardens in communities across the country including every state and three U.S. territories. (USDA)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Launched the Urban Waters Federal Partnership to revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them. This unprecedented effort will reconnect urban communities and their waterways by leveraging federal funds to support projects in seven pilot locations—the Anacostia River Watershed (Washington, DC and MD), the Patapsco Watershed (Baltimore, MD), the Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds (New York, NY), the South Platte River (Denver, CO), the Los Angeles River Watershed (Los Angeles, CA), the Lake Pontchartrain area (New Orleans, LA), and the Northwest Indiana area. (EPA, USDA, USACE, EDA, NOAA, CNCS, HUD, DOI, DOT and partners)
- Developed plans in five cities—Boston, MA; Hartford, CT; Charleston, WV; Jefferson City, MO; Little Rock, AK—to add centralized public green spaces, improve river access with trails and waterway improvements, and support economic revitalization in town squares through the Greening America's Capitals Initiative. (EPA, HUD, DOT)

7. CONSERVE RURAL WORKING FARMS, RANCHES, AND FORESTS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND INCENTIVES

Sustaining sound stewardship practices and hunting and fishing opportunities to preserve our natural and cultural heritage for generations to come.

Selected Accomplishments

- Committed \$100 million in financial assistance to farmers and ranchers in the northern

¹ <http://epa.gov/brownfields/overview/Brownfields-Benefits-postcard.pdf>

Everglades to acquire permanent easements and assist with wetland restoration on nearly 24,000 acres of agricultural land through targeted use of the Wetlands Reserve Program. (USDA)

- Proposed an Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area totaling 150,000 acres in south-central Florida to benefit and preserve both local ranching culture and public lands with decision expected in December of 2011. (DOI)
- Established the Dakota Grassland Conservation area as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and began acquisition of two million acres of grassland easements of native prairie habitat. The project will benefit wildlife and maintain traditional economic activities and the region's agricultural heritage, specifically livestock production. The Prairie Pothole Region, a grass- and wetland-rich area, is known as "America's Duck Factory" for its importance to the nation's migratory waterfowl population and importance to wildlife-dependent recreation. (DOI, USDA)
- Invested \$94 million across 11 states in the Sage Grouse Initiative to proactively work with farmers and ranchers to protect sage grouse habitat and ensure that agricultural lands are productive and are enhancing western economies. (USDA)
- Established the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area in central Kansas as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and began acquisition of over one million acres of grassland easements in America's largest remaining area of tallgrass prairie. Building from a shared vision of maintaining both ecosystems and working ranches on the landscape, this is a model for future wildlife refuges. (DOI)
- Enrolled 3.3 million acres in the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program, which provides support to private landowners who adopt conservation practices on eligible farmland. (USDA)
- Invested \$3.5 million through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to put AGO recommendations into action by addressing water quality and wildlife habitat concerns, outreach, planning, and conservation implementation in Monterey Bay in California, Saginaw Bay in Michigan, and Lake Champlain in New York and Vermont. (USDA)
- Initiated conservation easement acquisitions across 17,000 acres along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front. (DOI)
- Secured eight new landowner agreements and restored 345 acres of riparian/wetland habitat and 17 miles of stream for bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and trumpeter swans in western Montana's Crown of the Continent. Enrolled 23 landowners in the range rider program to manage 15,500 acres. (DOI)
- Added eight additional states and one tribal government to participate in the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, "Open Fields", which encourages private landowners to provide public access to their lands for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, especially fishing and hunting. (USDA)
- With landowners and conservation partners, invested \$17.4 million to fund nine large-scale greenhouse gas mitigation projects in 24 states. These investments, which will be matched by the grant recipients, will help develop markets for environmental services. (USDA)
- Implemented a competitive allocation process to fund state and private forestry projects focused on landscapes of national importance. Funded projects in 47 states, leveraging \$19.8 million of federal investment with over \$21 million in non-federal and in-kind contributions. (USDA)

8. CONSERVE AND RESTORE OUR NATIONAL PARKS, WILDLIFE REFUGES, FORESTS, AND OTHER FEDERAL LANDS AND WATERS

Protecting outstanding iconic, natural, and cultural landscapes to pass down to future generations.

Selected Accomplishments

- Invested \$22 million in 10 Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects that promote healthier, safer, and more productive public lands through partnership efforts that will reduce wildfire risk, enhance fish and wildlife habitats, and maintain and improve water quality. Current projects are located in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington. (USDA)
- Advanced plans to begin restoration of 300,000 acres of ponderosa pine forest by thinning and harvesting mainly small-diameter trees over a 10-year contract period as part of the 750,000-acre Four Forests Initiative. This will be the largest restoration contract ever awarded by the Forest Service. More than 20 organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Four Forest Restoration Initiative Collaborative Stakeholder Group and the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab, and Tonto National Forests. (USDA)
- Designated 24 new Preserve America Communities—communities that use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. (DOI, ACHP)
- Designated 14 new national historic landmarks in 11 states and the District of Columbia that represent chapters in the story of America, from archeological sites dating back more than two millennia to historic train depots, homes of famous artists, and buildings designed by some of our greatest architects. (DOI)
- Completed longleaf restoration activities on approximately 510,000 acres of National Forest System lands. This large landscape conservation effort relies on the Range-Wide Conservation Plan and involves the work of multiple federal agencies and non-federal partners. (USDA, DOI, DOD)
- Invested more than \$143 million since 2005 in conservation partnerships to protect and restore forests across the longleaf pine range through the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative, including acquisitions in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. (DOD)
- Integrated climate adaptation into several Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants to enhance the ability of tribes and tribal organizations to consider and plan for the impacts of climate change. Also partnered with coastal communities in the Chesapeake Bay region to conduct climate change vulnerability assessments. The goal is to ensure the environmental objectives of the projects are attained even as the climate changes. (EPA)

Aligning Departmental Actions:

- Issued Draft of the Forest Service's new Planning Rule, which would provide a framework to guide land management planning for the 193-million-acre National Forest System. The proposed rule is designed to replace 1982 planning procedures currently in use by the Forest Service with a modern framework that incorporates new science and information about land management planning. The proposed rule also supports resilient ecosystems and watersheds, diverse plant and animal communities, and the capacity of the national forests and grasslands to provide people and communities with a range of benefits now and into the future. (USDA)
- Created a national network of 21 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to provide a more

formal mechanism for assessing science gaps and facilitating landscape-scale conservation and restoration. In FY 2011, for example, the Southern Rockies and Desert LCC, through the Bureau of Reclamation, will fund approximately nine applied science projects supporting these LCCs. (DOI)

- Established eight regional coordinating bodies to better deliver the climate science and services of DOI, USDA, NOAA, and others. By leveraging resources and eliminating redundancies across agencies, the regional coordinating bodies will support efficient and effective delivery of climate science, tools, services, and assessments to meet stakeholder needs. (CEQ, DOI, USDA, NOAA)

9. PROTECT AND RENEW RIVERS AND OTHER WATERS

Safeguarding America's rivers, lakes, and other waters to sustain critical ecosystems and the livelihoods and economies that depend on them.

Selected Accomplishments

- Designated three National Water Trails including Lake Michigan National Water Trail—Chicago to New Buffalo Segment, IL and IN; Quinebaug River Water Trail—Thompson section, CT; and Susquehanna River Water Trail—West Branch, PA. In addition the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program worked on more than 47 place-based projects to help communities plan, develop, and support water trails in 2011. (DOI, USACE)
- Awarded over \$100 million to kick off the rebuilding of two barrier islands in Plaquemines and Lafourche parishes and to construct the Bayou Dupont Ridge Creation and Marsh Restoration in Jefferson Parish, LA. (NOAA)
- Initiated five comprehensive basin studies that define options for meeting future water demands in river basins in the western U.S., as cost-shared activity with qualified state and local partners. Studies include Henry's Fork of the Snake River Basin Study, Niobrara River Basin Study, Santa Ana Watershed Basin Study, Southeast California Regional Basin Study, and Truckee River Basin Study. (DOI)
- Managed portions of 95 water trails covering over 387 miles, 12 of which are designated as National Recreation Trails, including the Mississippi River Water Trail, the Little River Blueway, and the Alabama Scenic River Trail. (USACE)
- Completed construction of two fish screens and ladders as part of the Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project—among North America's largest cold-water fish restoration efforts. (DOI)
- Completed restoration of the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta, Georgia, providing education and recreation opportunities along riverfront trails. (DOI, HUD)
- Worked with states, counties, cities, and stakeholders to restore and protect rivers around the country, including Metro Beach in Michigan; Cuyahoga River Basin, OH; Klamath River, CA; and Mystic River and its tributaries, CT. (EPA)
- Partnered with the Nez Perce Tribe to open hundreds of miles of habitat for salmon, steelhead, and other fish species in the Clearwater and Nez Perce national forests through culvert replacement and removal. (USDA)
- Accelerated the protection of clean abundant water resources by working with farmers, ranchers, community leaders and states to apply high impact and targeted conservation practices on 6 million acres of national forest and private working lands in the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, Mississippi River and California Bay Delta basins. (USDA)
- Eliminated 36 dams and other river barriers to restore natural, free-flowing river conditions, re-establish access to migratory fish habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities and safety in coastal watersheds through the Open Rivers Initiative and Community-

- based Restoration Program. (NOAA)
- Awarded nine projects totaling \$11 million through the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) protecting over 3,000 coastal acres. CELCP helps states and local communities protect coastal and estuarine lands considered important for their ecological, conservation, recreational, historical, or aesthetic values. (NOAA)
- Removed a dam that was a fish passage barrier on the Hoosic River in Massachusetts. Public/private partnership leveraged federal dollars and resulted in a restored recreational trout fishery and retained jobs at a local business otherwise faced with a financial hurdle if it had to repair the aging dam. (USDA)

C. Working Together for America's Great Outdoors

10. MAKE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT A MORE EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION PARTNER

Partnering to spur the critical investments required to catalyze state, local, private, and tribal conservation.

Selected Accomplishments

- Established the interagency AGO Council co-chaired by the Chair of CEQ and the Director of OMB with a steering committee of senior officials from CEQ, OMB, DOI, USDA and EPA. Other AGO council members include senior officials from: NOAA, USACE, HHS, HUD, DOL, DOT, EPA, CNCS, and ACHP.
 - o The Council created six interagency working groups (jobs and youth; large-landscape conservation; water; urban parks and green spaces; recreation; and education) to align and accelerate the implementation of AGO.
- Engaged the congressionally chartered foundations (including the National Park Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Forest Foundation, and the National Environmental Education Foundation) to establish The Partnership for AGO. The foundations will convene an advisory committee composed of leaders from philanthropy, the private sector, conservation, and historic preservation to advise the Partnership on effectively focusing philanthropy and supporting AGO priorities.
- Surveyed lead AGO agencies to assess their engagement with tribes in carrying out AGO-related activities and discuss new ways to expand these activities in tribal communities.

Appendix C

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Implementation Plan for Fiscal Year 2012

The President's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative provides a comprehensive agenda to conserve America's natural and cultural history and to reconnect Americans to the outdoors. The AGO Initiative covers ten broad themes and commits the Administration to over 70 separate action items. The following Implementation Plan for fiscal year 2012 (October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012) describes significant actions the Administration, in cooperation with state, local, and private partners, will initiate or accomplish to achieve the goals of America's Great Outdoors.

Improved and more frequent interagency coordination, clear imperatives of the AGO report, are fundamental to maximizing and leveraging the benefit from valuable agency resources and taxpayer dollars. This implementation plan highlights how agencies are aligning their programs and resources to improve how programs are implemented to achieve common goals. In addition, many of the AGO action items require close cooperation with state and local partners. The AGO Council is tracking progress on each individual action item.

To foster more cohesive interagency collaboration, the Administration has established six interagency working groups reflecting the overarching goals of AGO:

- **Jobs and Youth: Provide Quality Jobs, Career Pathways, and Service Opportunities & Engage Young People in Conservation and the Great Outdoors**
- **Recreation and Access: Enhance Recreational Opportunities**
- **Education: Raise Awareness of the Value and Benefits of America's Great Outdoors**
- **Urban: Establish Great Urban Parks and Community Green Spaces**
- **Conservation: Conserve and Restore Our Public Lands and Rural Working Lands through Partnerships and Incentives**
- **Water: Protect and Renew Rivers and Other Waters**

The actions of these working groups as well as those of specific agencies are highlighted in this Implementation Plan.

1. PROVIDE QUALITY JOBS, CAREER PATHWAYS, AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

The Jobs and Youth interagency working group is developing strategies to increase opportunities for conservation-related jobs, training, and volunteer service in the great outdoors. Through these opportunities, agencies will engage Americans in restoration of our public lands and water and help young people, including low-income, underserved, and diverse youth, gain valuable training and work experience while accomplishing needed conservation work on public lands.

Jobs and Youth working group, selected next steps:

- Work with the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) Federal Advisory Committee for two years to: establish a 21CSC framework, including common program components, structure, implementation, accountability, and performance criteria; develop criteria for certification of 21CSC providers and members; address barriers to successful program implementation; identify and develop partnership opportunities to support conservation corps programs, career training, and youth employment opportunities; and create pathways to natural resource careers for participants.
- Develop a skill set and core competency database with 21CSC partner organizations to help agencies understand the capacity of individual corps and corps members in order to identify additional work opportunities for those groups and individuals.
- Coordinate with other AGO interagency working groups to identify, and invest in creating, opportunities for 21CSC participation in AGO pilot locations (e.g. Urban Waters and Community Green Spaces).
- Promote a Coastal Restoration Corps as part of the 21CSC.
- Establish a Youth Innovation Fund/21CSC Fund to engage stakeholders and leverage private/philanthropic donors through the AGO Partnership.
- Establish partnerships to recruit new volunteers to address the highest public lands/water/cultural resources priorities. Launch online volunteer training modules for volunteers and volunteer coordinators. Start collecting and reporting data on common volunteer metrics.
- Initiate a program to foster natural resource mentoring opportunities, including a focus on the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers that will contribute to a 21st century workforce.

Notable agency plans:

- Expand the Fisheries Tribal Youth Conservation Corps programs to at least five other sites beyond the current programs at White Mountain Apache in AZ, Mescalero in NM, and Creston in MT National Fish Hatcheries. (DOI)
- Expand youth, persons with disabilities, and veteran hiring programs and training of managers and supervisors in broader use of flexible hiring authorities, including: development of a hiring toolkit; promotion of the YouthGo.gov portal; enhanced use of social networks and media hiring; and partnerships like the Student Conservation Association. (DOI)
- Establish and expand on partnerships with new organizations that work with underrepresented populations to recruit diverse interns and conservation teams and expand partnership with HistoriCorps to provide more opportunities for veterans and youth to learn preservation and restoration skills. (DOI, USDA, EPA)

2. ENHANCE RECREATIONAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As a key first step to coordinate efforts to increase recreational opportunities within and access to the great outdoors, federal agencies established the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR). The FICOR and the Recreation and Access interagency working group

will develop a framework for establishing a regular way to engage federal agencies—as well as other partners—in the development of strategies to address issues and challenges outlined in the AGO report.

Recreation and Access working group, selected next steps:

- Enhance communication and consistency between agencies, improve business practices, seek efficiencies, promote partnerships, and align federal policies related to outdoor recreation through the FICOR. Select first-year FICOR priorities and workplans include:
 - a. Provide a National, One-Stop, Web-based Portal for Recreation Information. The Recreation One-Stop Program handles over 1.6 million reservations per year.
 - b. Establish a National Interagency Visitor Use Management Committee and develop strategies for consistent and effective visitor use management and monitoring.
 - c. Develop, Coordinate, and Align Strategies for Outdoor Recreation Planning and Management among FICOR Agencies and other federal agencies as appropriate (e.g. Blueway water trails).
- Engage and coordinate with recreation councils chartered by the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Coordinate with state and local recreation agencies to provide opportunities for input and engagement of national recreation interests. Formalize partnerships with state and local recreation agencies and interests.

Notable agency plans:

- Starting in FY 2012, the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fishing Restoration Program takes on the national administration of Coastal Impact Assistance Program to award nearly \$570 million to enhance coastal environments in six states. This program was previously managed by DOI’s Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement. (DOI)
- Implement direction in the Recreation Strategic Plan to collaborate with other public and private entities on recreation and land stewardship. Work will include improvements to and operations of recreation facilities, as well as habitat improvements and invasive species controls. Partner with tribes on ecosystem restoration studies. (USACE)
- Expand the Handshake partnerships program to incentivize partnerships at Corps lakes with other public and private organizations. (USACE)
- Emphasize recreation values as part of LWCF evaluation and project ranking process to help improve recreational access to public lands and share the ranking process and criteria development in interagency cooperative LWCF efforts. (DOI)

3. RAISE AWARENESS OF THE VALUE AND BENEFITS OF AMERICA’S GREAT OUTDOORS

The role of both formal environmental education and extracurricular activities is critical for ensuring we develop the next generation of stewards to carry on America’s Great Outdoors. The Education interagency working group is developing strategies to: engage new and diverse audiences and connect them to natural, cultural, historic, and sacred sites and landscapes; develop new relationships between agencies; develop new relationships with local communities and partners; and provide educational programs and services that are interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional—enriching the minds, bodies, and hearts of our citizens.

Education working group, selected next steps:

- Continue partnerships with The North Face, National Park Trust, and state parks to invest in state parks, identify models for subsidizing transportation costs, work more closely with schools to bring more kids outdoors, and evaluate the impact of these first-time experiences in the outdoors.

- Develop an online “central clearinghouse” education portal representing all the AGO partners where youth, educators, and agency staff can connect with new and existing outdoor educational programs and resources.

Notable agency plans:

- Expand National Public Lands Day - the nation’s largest, interagency, hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy (DOI, USDA, NOAA, EPA, DOD, USACE)
- Continue implementation of Let’s Move in Indian Country through competitive grants and continue work with 59 Bureau of Indian Education-operated schools to develop curricula that emphasize the protection of sites and the role of parks, forests, and natural resources in healthy lifestyles and traditional tribal practices. (DOI, HHS, USDA, ED)
- Continue implementation of Community-based Restoration Program to partner with local, state, tribal, and non-governmental organizations to increase awareness and stewardship of our nation’s valuable natural resources through on-the-ground habitat restoration. (NOAA)
- Expand partnerships and pilot programs for persons with disabilities, including BLM’s Wounded Warrior and Disabled Sports USA Partnership pilot programs, to improve access and accessibility to outdoor recreation opportunities, especially for children and veterans and their families. (DOI)
- Partner with states and regions to support school-based environmental literacy planning and implementation efforts, including the K-12 Environmental Literacy Strategy supporting the Chesapeake Bay Executive Order 13508. (NOAA, DOI, USDA)

4. ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONSERVATION AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The growing disconnection of youth from the outdoors is a serious threat, with impacts on their mental and physical health as well as the future of our natural and cultural resources. It is imperative that we continue to engage, empower, and learn from our young people, who will inherit and carry on the stewardship of our nation’s outdoor legacy. The planned activities of the Jobs and Youth interagency working group and of individual agencies are intended to connect young Americans to the great outdoors. These programs or opportunities will get kids outdoors, active, and connected to educational and recreation opportunities and engage them in work related to conservation and stewardship.

Jobs and Youth working group, selected next steps:

- Identify model environmental education and outreach programs as examples of best practices for youth involvement.
- Identify federal funding opportunities that support more outdoor student learning, including transportation funding through DOT and environmental literacy programs supported by NOAA and EPA.
- Continue to consolidate DOI, USDA, USACE, EPA, and other federal outdoor recreation, education, and employment programs into YouthGO.gov to make it easier for people to connect with learning, service, recreational, and job opportunities.

Notable agency plans:

- With partners, expand outreach to more youth through programs such as: More Kids In The Woods, Children’s Forests, Hands on the Lands, Let’s Move Outside!, Schoolyard Habitat, Catch A Special Thrill (C.A.S.T), and other targeted youth programs leveraged through partnerships. (USDA, DOI, USACE, NOAA)
- Collaborate with education partners and youth organizations to create a pathway to em-

ployment with the NPS, with a focus on diversifying the workforce. Involve at least 10,000 youth each year in a multi-year progression of experiences from education programs to internship/volunteer opportunities to employment. (DOI)

- Host outdoor classrooms and events in collaboration with youth groups, NGOs, Let's Move Outside!, and schools. (USACE, DOI, USDA, NOAA)
- Continue the work of the 2011 Youth Advisory Group. Develop plans for implementing recommendations as possible. (USACE, USDA)
- Continue NOAA's Ocean Guardian school program and increase the number of schools that become "Ocean Guardians." (NOAA)
- Leverage youth engagement through public-private partnerships with Outdoor Industry Foundation, Ski Industry, and ethnic-minority youth organizations. (USDA)
- Engage thousands of children, students, and families in the great outdoors and encourage healthy, active lifestyles each year through the "Take It Outside" and "Hands on the Land" outdoor and environmental education programs. BLM will coordinate these programs with the First Lady's "Let's Move Outside" initiative and develop a series of public service "Outdoors is Cool" ads in partnership with other federal and state agencies.(DOI, LMO, HHS)
- Develop and implement an action plan centered on the National Forest System and the National Park System and the recommendations of the "Youth and America's Great Outdoors" report. (DOI, USDA)
- Expand programs like "Discover the Forest"—Connecting Children to Nature, Nature Prescriptions, a Forest for Every Classroom, Teacher Rangers, Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE), and the Junior Duck Stamp Program—to cross-promote and integrate where possible. NPS is increasing the number of Teacher-Ranger-Teachers by 100 percent each year until 2016. (USDA, DOI, USACE, NOAA)
- Reach more schools through and ensure AGO priorities are represented in the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools recognition program. (ED, EPA, DOI, CEQ, USDA, DOI)

5. STRENGTHEN THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund remains a critical source of funding to allow state and federal agencies to protect and conserve America's national treasures and to promote outdoor recreation. Federal funds for land acquisition are limited in this budgetary environment. DOI and USDA will continue to ensure that acquisition funds are strategic and targeted, provide maximum benefit for the taxpayer, and leverage other resources to maximize conservation. DOI and USDA will work closely with other federal agencies to align priorities of LWCF and similar federal programs. The Administration will also continue to place a high priority on increasing recreational access through competitive project selection.

Selected Next Steps:

- DOI bureaus and Forest Service will continue to identify geographic areas with shared strategic conservation objectives, where collaboration is feasible and where prompt action can protect important natural and cultural resources. The agencies will also continue to seek out areas with significant opportunities to leverage additional non-federal funding, to coordinate with other federal, state, local, and tribal governments to maximize conservation, and to realize economic and community benefits such as new or enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities from strategic investment in land conservation. (DOI, USDA)
- NPS has initiated consultation with state and local officials to develop new criteria for State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORPs), which will prioritize Stateside

LWCF funds for projects that respond to local needs and support landscape-scale conservation, urban parks, blueways, and related national priorities. Beginning in FY 2012, new or revised SCORPS will align state and local needs with national conservation and recreation priorities while reflecting local needs and priorities. (DOI)

6. ESTABLISH GREAT URBAN PARKS AND COMMUNITY GREEN SPACES

Identifying cities where there is a clear need for green space and parks and where federal resource coordination and technical assistance can be maximized is a priority objective of AGO. Both through individual agency actions and through the Urban interagency working group we will identify specific cities, identify on-the-ground multi-agency projects that can be accomplished in the near term, and begin developing and planning for future multi-agency projects in these and other priority cities. This approach relies on the federal government working with local partners to identify both the specific objectives of interagency collaboration and the shared work necessary to achieve those objectives.

Urban working group, selected next steps:

- Select pilot projects across the country focused on the development or enhancement of urban parks and community green spaces where agencies will coordinate investments, technical assistance, and other federal agency actions.

Notable agency plans:

- Invest Stateside LWCF funding to continue developing and improving urban parks and green spaces in areas where they are needed most. (DOI)
- Continue partnerships with New York City, Los Angeles and other cities to conserve urban forests. In addition, in FY 2012 the US Forest Service will initiate the first “request for applications” under the Community Forest and Open Space Program and select projects for enrollment. (USDA)
- Initiate an Urban Refuges Program within the National Wildlife Refuge System as part of efforts to connect people, especially children and diverse audiences, to America’s great outdoors. (DOI)
- Prioritize and focus existing resources on completion of urban parks and community green space projects, or accelerating their rate of completion. In coordination with Tribal, state and local governments and private sector organizations, NPS will identify these projects through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. (DOI)
- Promote the creation of more urban parks and, greenspace and open space through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and the following programs: the Greening America’s Capitals program, Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2), Sustainable Communities Building Blocks Program (and Building Blocks II), and the Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program. (EPA, HUD, DOT)
- Through the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, eleven participating agencies are working together at the seven pilot sites to pool resources, expertise, and assistance. Lead agencies for each of the pilot have had local meetings with participating agency representatives and have met (and are continuing to meet) with local communities. These leads are now developing workplans based on consultations with local communities that will describe priority projects, implementation, and timelines. (EPA, USDA, USACE, EDA, NOAA, CNCS, CDCP, NIEHS, HUD, DOI and DOT)

7. CONSERVE RURAL WORKING FARMS, RANCHES, AND FORESTS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND INCENTIVES

This Administration is expanding the number of landscapes where we are supporting collaborative, locally-driven, landscape-scale efforts to conserve rural working lands. Landscape conservation necessarily requires working across public and private ownerships. Accordingly, the large-landscape conservation interagency working group is focused on implementing recommendations and action items for both private and public land conservation.

Conservation work group, selected next steps:

- Agencies will work together to conserve large landscapes by improving interagency coordination and collaboration with partners. The working group will continue landscape conservation initiatives in places like the Chesapeake Bay, Everglades, Great Lakes, California Bay-Delta, and others. In addition to these efforts, the working group will advance landscape-scale conservation pilot locations such as the longleaf pine ecosystem, the grasslands of the northern Great Plains, the Crown of the Continent in the northern Rockies, the southwest deserts, and the northern forests of New England and New York.

Notable agency plans:

- Target Farm Bill programs through landscape conservation initiatives. In addition to 10 existing landscape initiatives, NRCS anticipates initiating at least two new landscapes initiatives in FY 2012. In each, coordination with other agencies and with local stakeholders will be high priorities. (USDA)
- Utilize the Conservation Reserve Program to enhance landscape scale conservation through initiatives that target marginal lands and lands important for fish and wildlife habitat, water conservation and other important public benefits. The program will continue to enroll streamside riparian and grass buffers and other types of conservation measures that protect and enhance the quality of our streams and rivers. (USDA)
- Forest Service, through the Forest Stewardship program which is delivered by State Foresters, will also target a portion of its resources towards landscape conservation on private lands. (USDA)
- Continue to acquire grassland easements in the newly established Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area by working with key ranching community partners to protect up to 1.1M acres of North America's last landscape scale tallgrass prairie.
- Expand the piloting and development of environmental markets in FY 2012 and beyond through collaboration with EPA, USDA and other federal, state, and local partners to bring new sources of public and private capital to conservation; compensate farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners for the public benefits they provide on private lands; reduce the costs of both regulatory compliance and voluntary stewardship; and increase the scale and pace of conservation. (EPA, USDA)
- Expand "safe harbor" and similar agreements to encourage conservation of rare habitats on private lands. USDA and EPA will continue efforts to develop similar agreements for farmers with a goal of piloting the first such agreements in FY 2012. (USDA, DOI, EPA)
- Use the Statewide Forest Action Plans—which identify and prioritize national, regional and state forest management goals across all ownerships—as a foundation for agencies and partners to work together. USDA's competitive allocation process focuses a portion of its appropriation each year on novel, landscape-scale projects. (USDA)
- Expand capacity for implementation of the Sage Grouse Initiative working with ranchers in the 11-state target area. (DOI)
- Promote public-private partnerships for species conservation on a landscape scale through regional partnerships. BLM will expand use of Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA) and Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCA) among FWS,

NOAA, non-federal landowners and other stakeholders. BLM will promote connection of regional landscapes for wildlife habitat improvements, and parks and green spaces through federal land acquisitions, conservation easements and partnerships through use of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), LWCF, SNPLMA, others. (DOI, NOAA)

8. CONSERVE AND RESTORE OUR NATIONAL PARKS, WILDLIFE REFUGES, FORESTS, AND OTHER FEDERAL LANDS AND WATERS

Conservation and restoration of the nation's public lands is central to the accomplishment of the goals set out in the AGO report. The AGO report recognizes that much of the focus of conservation today is across large landscapes that encompass working farms, ranches, and forests, as well as federal and state lands. As noted above, the AGO Council has established a landscape conservation working group that will seek to further these large landscape-scale conservation efforts in partnership with local and state stakeholders. The following, then, focuses on individual agency plans to align resources and work collaboratively to protect, connect, and restore public lands.

Notable agency plans:

- Acquire voluntary easements and fee-title land to protect critical undeveloped low-elevation coniferous forests, and riverine habitat between Glacier NP and Bob Marshall Wilderness. (DOI)
- Manage federal plans and programs to create and protect critical wildlife corridors and maintain landscape connectivity in collaboration with other public and private stakeholders resulting in better protection of wildlife species from habitat loss and fragmentation. (DOI, NOAA, USDA)
- Use the Historic Preservation Fund to provide financial and technical support to states and local communities, tribes, and private sector organizations for historic preservation and cultural resources protection. (DOI)
- Acquire historically significant, threatened battlefields in coordination with states, local governments, land trusts, non-profits and other partners. As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the NPS will emphasize protection of more Civil War battlefields. (DOI)
- Identify a national system of parks and protected sites (rivers, heritage areas, trails and landmarks) that fully represents our natural resources and the breadth of the nation's cultural experience. Work with communities and partners to develop a comprehensive National Park System plan that identifies the ecological regions, cultural themes and stories of diverse communities which are not currently protected. (DOI)
- Finalize the Forest Service's planning rule which governs land management planning on 193 million acres of the National Forest and Grasslands System. Consistent with many of the recommendations in the AGO report, the final rule will enable field units to have plans that better conserve and restore the National Forests and Grasslands, conserve water resources, make our forests more resilient to climate change, protect wildlife habitat and corridors, foster outdoor recreation, and contribute to the vibrancy of rural communities. (USDA)
- Finalize the Forest Service's Colorado roadless rule, conserving 4.2 million acres of roadless National Forest lands in that state, developed in collaboration with the state and local interests. Colorado's National Forests provide over 29 million national forest visits per year. (USDA)
- Continue to promote landscape conservation and support local employment through the Forest Service's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, with a focus on conservation of watersheds and implementation of the integrated resource restoration program. (USDA)

- Finalize the Forest Service’s report on protecting Native American sacred sites on the National Forests and Grasslands. (USDA)
- Complete report with recommendations on the preservation of tribal and Native Hawaiian traditional cultural landscapes, and review an update National Park Service guidance on identifying, evaluating, and registering traditional cultural places (ACHP, DOI)
- Complete and issue report to the President in February 2012 on federal agency progress in identifying, protecting, and using cultural resources under federal management. (ACHP)
- Update 28 high priority master plans at water resources projects to review land allocations for recreation development, shoreline uses, and environmental management areas. (USACE)
- Improve conservation efforts for sage grouse and other important wildlife species with the goal of sustaining both high-quality wildlife habitat and productive grazing lands by working with ranchers and other private landowners who manage livestock on both private and public lands. (USDA)

9. PROTECT AND RENEW RIVERS AND OTHER WATERS

America’s waterways are integral to America’s Great Outdoors, as families rely on waterways, lakes, and beaches for outdoor recreational activities that bring families together and create invaluable family memories. A major impetus of the AGO initiative is reconnecting the American people to these natural land and water resources. In addition, our rivers and other waters provide America’s drinking water, fuel the economy, and sustain critical ecosystems. The Water interagency working group will develop pilots to integrate landscape conservation along with watershed-scale water management while recognizing national, state, and local priorities.

Water working group, selected next steps:

- Define and develop a process for nominating and establishing a Blueway water trail. Working with public and private partners, nominate three Blueway water trails for designation as National Recreation Trails. Expand partnerships with water-based recreation organizations and local communities to explore new Blueways and river and lake access opportunities.
- Finalize draft framework for National Water Trail designations. Review initial list of potential waterways for water trail designation.
- Establish a new watershed pilot study in FY 2013, working with a number of federal land management agencies to integrate land and water management.
- Present national data on fish barriers; report on active investments in stream restoration projects over the next three years; draft approach to identify multi-agency priority projects and gaps in implementation of these priority projects; set draft measures.

Notable agency plans:

- Continue and expand coordination with state, tribal, and other federal agencies in water resources planning, cost-sharing, and flood risk management to align programs, transfer technology, expand strategic partnerships, and simplify access to water resources information. (USACE)
- Expand partnerships with water-based recreation organizations and local communities to explore new blueways and river, lake, and coastal access opportunities. (USACE)
- Improve access to community waterways and coastal areas resulting in increased use of these areas by the public. (DOI, USDA, NOAA)
- Remove fish passage barriers from America’s coastal watersheds to support sustainable fish populations, increase recreational opportunities, and improve safety. (NOAA)
- Identify opportunities to restore wildlife, fish, and other aquatic species through restoration and protection of waterways, including the removal of barriers across streams and

rivers. (DOI, USDA)

- Complete land acquisition goal of 10,000 acres for the Platte River Restoration Project. Complete groundwater recharge pilot demonstration project. (DOI)
- Participate in the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership, which provided funds to enhance aquatic habitat and water quality for recreational fishing. (USACE)
- Support and participate in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan's 17 Fish Habitat Partnerships nationwide to enhance aquatic habitat and water quality and improve opportunities for recreational fishing. (NOAA, DOI, USDA, USACE)
- Reconstitute the Interagency Task Force on American Heritage Rivers (established by Executive Order 13061). By May 31, 2012, issue a call for updated action plans from existing American Heritage Rivers and a call for nominations for six additional American Heritage Rivers. (CEQ, NOAA)
- Complete agreement between FWS, state, private, and federal partners for a basin wide water operation plan in the Bill Williams River Basin, AZ. Anticipated completion of water agreement in FY 2012 will result in historic conservation benefiting rare, threatened and endangered habitat. (DOI)

10. MAKE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT A MORE EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION PARTNER

Chapter 10 of the AGO report emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnership among agencies within the federal government and with partners and stakeholders outside the government. One important mechanism to improve interagency coordination is establishment of the AGO Council. The AGO Council has been working with Congressionally chartered foundations—the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the National Forest Foundation, the National Park Foundation, and the National Environmental Education Foundation—to examine ways to expand partnerships with businesses, non-profits, philanthropic organizations, and a variety of other partners.

Appendix D

America's Great Outdoors: 2011 Progress Report

Working Groups

Jobs and Youth

DOI (Lead)
USDA (Lead)
USACE
ACHP
CNCS
DOL
EPA
NOAA
OMB
CEQ

Recreation and Access

DOI (Lead)
USACE
CNCS
DOT
HHS
NOAA
OMB
USDA
CEQ

Urban

DOI (Lead)
EPA (Lead)
HHS
HUD
NOAA
OMB
USDA
DOT
CEQ
USACE

Large Landscape Conservation

DOI (Lead)
USDA (Lead)
USACE
ACHP
DOD
NOAA
OMB
CEQ
EPA

Water

USACE (Lead)
DOI
EPA
NOAA
OMB
USDA

Education

DOI (Lead)
EPA (Lead)
ACHP
ED
HHS
NOAA
OMB
USDA
USACE

