



Take Pride In America.®

A Public Lands Volunteers Initiative



President Bush shows the way. The President lent a hand to volunteer crews repairing trails near Estes Park, Colorado, in 2001.



In 2002, President George W. Bush called on all Americans to commit at least two years over the course of their lives (the equivalent of 4,000 hours) to service to their communities. Citizen response to this request has been extraordinary. Across America, volunteers are serving others in countless ways and through myriad organizations – schools, hospitals, shelters, pantries, churches, synagogues, mosques, and parks and conservation areas.

Public lands and public places across America need the caring hands of volunteers to protect some of America's greatest treasures—its natural and cultural resources.

The time is right for a bold, new, and citizen-centered public/private partnership to address restoration and conservation issues at the local level.

As part of President Bush's USA Freedom Corps, his initiative to create an American culture of service to others, his administration is renewing Take Pride In America – a public lands initiative to engage volunteers in protecting our public lands, and extend to all Americans the educational and recreational opportunities available on and through those lands.

Through Take Pride in America, the U.S. Department of the Interior is enabling citizens, private organizations,



Department of the Interior Secretary, Gale Norton

and state, local, and tribal governments to help protect and enjoy America's natural and cultural resources.

Our country is blessed with an abundance of natural and scenic areas. We enjoy countless public

parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas. But these great resources face continuing threats: vandalism, littering, maintenance backlogs, and obsolete facilities, to name just a few. Maintaining and preserving these resources is an ongoing challenge — and an opportunity to broaden the enjoyment of these public places through the helping hands of citizen stewards.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan created a dynamic and far-reaching program called Take Pride In America to encourage citizens to get involved in their local communities and to help restore and protect public lands. Through this successful initiative, state, county, and municipal governments, youth groups, and community service organizations launched a host of restoration efforts that made an important difference for our public lands.



Litter remains a problem for the American landscape. The renewed Take Pride In America effort can help address this and other local environmental issues.

Take Pride in America was both a rallying call and a highly visible program to recognize and reward the extraordinary projects it supported and inspired. Under President Bush's leadership, we are re-launching and broadening Take Pride In America, to extend the benefits of volunteer service to public lands across the country.

Take Pride In America will work to accomplish the following objectives:

- Recognize Take Pride In America Volunteers with a new Presidential Take Pride In America Award.

A Presidential-Level Volunteer will earn that recognition by contributing 4,000 hours of cumulative volunteer service. Other opportunities for personal recognition will include:



The new Take Pride In America will even recognize restoration efforts undertaken on private lands if there are significant public resource benefits.

Secretarial-Level Volunteer – 3,000 hours, and Agency-Level Volunteer – under 2000 hours, at the discretion of participating agencies.

- Enhance access to volunteer opportunities through technology.

The Internet has fundamentally changed the way government provides services to the public and volunteering is no exception. The new Take Pride in America will enable Federal, state and local government agencies offer volunteer opportunities through the USA Freedom Corps Volunteer Network at www.usafreedomcorps.gov by using the Department of the Interior's volunteer.gov/gov website, a portal for public sector volunteer opportunities.

- Expand participation among non-traditional groups.

Take Pride In America will engage youth, senior citizens, Hispanic- and African-Americans, faith-based, and union organizations in public lands volunteer opportunities. The program will emphasize service to inner city and urban sites, such as parks, trails, historical monuments, and playgrounds.

One of the key factors in the success of the original Take Pride in America was the enthusiasm, innovation, and commitment that various public and private sponsors and participants brought to the effort. It was a program

that thrived on imagination, diverse input, and hard work.

Although the Federal Take Pride in America infrastructure was deactivated in the early 1990's, the program remains on the books, under the Take Pride in America Act [Title XI of PL 101-628, November 28, 1990], with its purposes codified "... to establish and maintain a public awareness campaign to instill in the public an appreciation for Federal, state and local lands, facilities and cultural and natural resources..." and to conduct a national awards program to honor groups and individuals that distinguish themselves in their community efforts.

The renewed Take Pride In America program will recognize and further volunteer opportunities for Americans to fulfill their commitment to serve others, assist us in achieving our stewardship mission for public lands and public places and engage people—including America's youth—in outdoor experiences.

President Bush has asked the American people to join together through their volunteer efforts to continue a legacy of service, and through Take Pride in America they can also establish a public lands and public places for future generations of Americans to enjoy and cherish.