



PRESERVING LANDSCAPES AND HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE THROUGH COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION

The Department of the Interior is:



- **Achieving record amounts of conservation funding** - The department has provided \$1.3 Billion in grants to States, private landowners, sportsmen, hunting and fishing groups, and conservation groups.



- **Expanding the number of cooperative conservation partnerships** – by 2005, the Administration will have entered into over 17,000 landowner agreements.



- **Improving habitat on millions of acres of public and private lands** – As one example by 2005, 1.7 million wetland and upland acres will be restored through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.



- **Strengthening the relationship with America's hunters and sportsmen** – Signed a memorandum of understanding to improve hunting and fishing access of federal lands.



- **Promoting best management practices in managing multi-use public lands** – The Administration has set aside Specially Designated Areas to protect wildlife.
- **Achieving local environmental successes that are nationally significant** – The Administration has funded partnership efforts that are conserving habitat on private lands.



SUSTAINING LANDSCAPES AND HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE THROUGH COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION

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- **Expand the number of cooperative conservation partnerships**
- **Improve habitat on millions of acres of public and private lands**
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- **Promote best management practices in managing multi-use public lands**
- **Achieve local environmental successes that are nationally significant**



These are the results that the Department is achieving under the leadership of President Bush and Vice President Cheney, both avid hunters and anglers. Under Secretary Gale Norton, the Department is expanding cooperative conservation funding and partnerships, implementing the Healthy Forests Initiative, expanding hunting and fishing access, and promoting best management practices.

As one example of his personal commitment to conservation, last December President Bush met with leaders of the nation's top hunting and fishing conservation groups. President Bush listened closely to their concerns about the importance of protecting isolated wetlands, ponds and lakes that provide habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. In response to those concerns, the Bush Administration reaffirmed its commitment to the continued protection of isolated wetlands.

Achieve Record Conservation Funding Levels and Increase Partnerships

- During the past three years, the Interior Department has provided **\$1.3 billion** in grants to states, private landowners, hunting and fishing groups, and other conservation groups to preserve open space, restore habitat and conserve species.
- In FY 2005, DOI's budget proposes \$507 million in cooperative conservation programs, an increase of over \$371 million since 2000. **This is a 270% increase.** This funding is used for:
 - **The Cooperative Conservation Challenge Cost Share (CCI): President Bush proposes to spend \$129 million in FY 2005 on this program.** In its first year, FY 2003, CCI funded **256 projects in 40 states with more than 740 partners**, including Ducks Unlimited and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Projects include removal of invasive species that compete with native species and wetlands restoration on more than 50,000 acres.
 - **North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants:** These dollars are used as matching funds to establish or enhance habitat benefiting waterfowl and many other wildlife species. This year, **\$54 million has been requested, an increase of \$16.5 million over FY 2004.** In the past three years, these grants were matched with more than \$695 million in total partners' contributions to conserve, restore or enhance more than **14 million acres of wetlands.**
 - **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants:** Funding for this program is proposed at a record \$80 million, an increase of \$10.9 million over FY 2004; these grants help States and Tribes conserve wildlife.
 - **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund:** The President has proposed **\$90 million for this fund, an increase of \$8.4 million from FY 2004.** Other programs are the **Landowner Incentive Program**, which has a **\$50 million request in FY 2005**, an increase of \$20 million over the FY 2004 request, and **Private Stewardship Grants**, with a \$10 million FY 2005 request – nearly a \$3 million increase over FY 2004.

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund State Grants:** Interior's budget includes \$93.8 million for the state grant program, equal to FY 2004.
- **Fish and Wildlife Refuges, celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2003, have received record levels of funding** in the last two years. The 544 refuges are vital in conserving migratory bird and wildlife and fisheries habitat and are important destinations for wildlife dependent recreation, including hunting and fishing. **In the past three years, 7 new refuges have been created. In total, the Refuge System has been expanded by over 228,955 acres.**
- **Full funding for Land and Water Conservation Fund:** Interior's budget includes \$660.6 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund for 2005, including \$153.3 million for land acquisition and \$93.8 million for the state grant program (counted as part of the \$507 million mentioned above). The Department's request, combined with the request for the U.S. Forest Service, fully funds the LWCF at \$900 million.

Improve Habitat on Millions of Acres of Public and Private Lands

The Bush Administration is committed to continuing and expanding its non-regulatory, incentive-based programs that protect and restore wetlands, forested areas and rangelands.

- **Healthy forests and rangelands:** A key element of the Administration's land management efforts is improving the health of forests, woodlands, and rangelands, as well as benefits to wildlife by the lessening of hazardous brush and woody fuels. **Under the Bush Administration, nearly 11 million acres have been treated by the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior.** These Fuels reduction projects completed in the past two years reduce the threat of catastrophic fires while also improving habitat for elk, deer, antelope, turkey, sage grouse, ruffed grouse, and woodcock. They have also benefited threatened and endangered species, including spotted owls, red cockaded woodpeckers, and Florida scrub jays.

The Healthy Forests Initiative gives land managers new tools to restore the health of forests and rangelands. Under the initiative, the Bureau of Land Management will reestablish native vegetation, restore riparian stream channels, and improve threatened and endangered wildlife and fisheries habitats.

- **Coastal Protection:** The Bush Administration has used the **Coastal Program** to lead conservation efforts in bays, estuaries, and watersheds around the U.S. coastline. Since 2001, the program has been working, through over **300 partnership agreements**, to *restore* nearly **45,000 acres** of wetlands and native grasslands and over **300 miles** of streamside habitat to their former healthy, functioning state. The Coastal Program has also assisted communities and non-government organizations to *protect* over **900,000 acres** of wetland and native grasslands, and nearly **2,800 miles** of stream and streamside habitat. So far, to further add to the success of the Coastal Program, nearly **57,000 acres** have been planned for FY 04 and 05 for restoration and protection.
- **Partners for Fish and Wildlife:** Through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Department has worked closely with private landowners, recognizing that over 60 percent of our Nation's land is in private ownership and the health of wildlife populations depends heavily on habitat found on such lands. Since 2001, **151,000 acres** of wetlands have been restored; over **703,000 acres** of native grasslands, prairie, and uplands; and nearly **2,400 miles** of stream and streamside habitat through approximately **9,000** landowner agreements. The projects planned for FY 04 and 05 will **nearly double** the success of the Partners program.
- **Migratory bird habitat:** Chaired by Secretary Norton, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved the **acquisition of, or conservation easements on, almost 250,000 acres.** Over the past three years, at an estimated cost of \$142 million, these lands enhance or establish migratory bird habitat.
- **The Bush Administration has funded more than \$30 million dollars of partnership programs managed by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and is seeking over \$10 million in FY 2005.** These creative partnerships among federal, state, and local governments, corporations, private foundations, individuals, and non-profit organizations conserve habitat for fish and wildlife species.

Strengthen the Relationship with America's Hunters and Anglers

"In a civilized and cultivated country wild animals only continue to exist at all when preserved by sportsmen. The excellent people who protest against all hunting, and consider sportsmen as enemies of wild life, are ignorant of the fact that in reality the genuine sportsman is by all odds the most important factor in keeping the larger and more valuable wild creatures from total extermination." -**President Theodore Roosevelt**

The Bush Administration implements what President Roosevelt preached by working with sportsmen and women in wildlife and habitat management. These efforts include:

- **Expanding hunting and fishing access at more than 60 National Wildlife Refuges:** Today, 325 refuges are open to hunting and 283 are open to fishing.
- **Improving access to public lands for sportsmen:** The Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service have signed an agreement with 17 sportsmen organizations to improve hunting and fishing access to federal lands.
- **Supporting the statutorily established right to hunt and fish within the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System:** Hunting and fishing, expressly authorized by Congress, are necessary resource management and conservation tools when conducted in cooperation with state wildlife management agencies and consistent with biological data and goals. Both the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service have successfully defended legal challenges to hunting programs. **The Fish and Wildlife Service is currently defending a lawsuit brought by animal rights activists challenging public hunting programs on 37 national wildlife refuges. Over 30 of our hunting and fishing conservation partners have voiced their opposition to this lawsuit on our behalf.**
- **Consulting with state agencies, sportsmen and conservation groups on policies:** The Fish and Wildlife Service has listened to state agencies, sportsmen and other conservation organizations as it has worked on policies governing the operation of the refuge system, migratory birds, fish hatcheries, chronic wasting disease in deer and other issues. This puts Secretary Norton's communication, cooperation and consultation in the service of conservation philosophy in action.
- **Encouraging hunters, anglers and others to volunteer to help on public lands:** The newly launched Take Pride in America program increases awareness of public lands and natural and cultural resources, and encourages volunteers to care for such lands and resources to preserve open space and restore habitat. Take Pride is supported by the American Sportfishing Association, Bass Pro Shops, Bowhunting Preservation Alliance, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Izaak Walton League of America, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Pheasants Forever, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.
- **Increasing services at national parks:** President Bush has proposed \$3.9 billion through FY 2005 toward improving maintenance and service at National Parks. In FY 2004 alone, \$1 billion was provided, an increase of \$341 million since FY 2000. **This is a 50% increase.** The funds are producing tangible benefits for visitors, including hunters and anglers, by improving boat ramps, docks, and marine facilities.
- **Ensuring that hunting and fishing excise taxes are appropriately administered to States:** In 2004 more than \$464 million in excise taxes were apportioned to States.
- **Improving Fish Passage:** The Bush Administration is addressing 20 high priority fish passage barriers in Washington State using one Fish Passage Program. These projects will open 53 stream miles and 438 acres of rearing and spawning habitat for the Pacific Coast salmon and trout. During the Bush Administration, the Fish Passage Program has, or will have, removed or bypassed 10 barriers to fish migration, opening up 17 miles and 1,742 acres of historic habitat in the state.

Promote Best Management Practices in Managing Multi-Use Lands and Welcome Full Public Participation in Developing Land Use Plans that Have Energy Components

The Interior Department manages public lands through its multiple-use mission, including managing lands and waters that supply 30% of the Nation's critical energy production. The President's National Energy Plan calls for increasing domestic energy production through environmentally responsible means. Energy development occurs when appropriate environmental safeguards are in place.

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for most onshore land use plans that have an energy component. BLM manages 261 million acres of surface lands and 680 million acres of subsurface minerals. Currently, only 8% of the mineral land is leased and 2.2% is actually producing.

BLM lands are managed through 162 resource management plans. Since 2001, BLM has completed three land use management plans focused on energy: the San Juan River Basin plan, the Farmington, New Mexico area, the Powder River Basin in Wyoming, and the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (Northwest). Each plan utilizes adaptive management for wildlife that allows field managers to modify activities based on wildlife needs. All of these plans were developed after extensive environmental review and after seeking, receiving and analyzing comments made in public meetings and in writing.

- The Farmington Resource Management Plan includes seasonal restrictions to protect big game winter habitat, migration routes and calving areas. **The plan sets aside 400,000 acres (30% of the planning area) as Specially Designated Areas to protect wildlife. Each Specially Designated Area has a set of management rules that minimize habitat loss and human disturbances during critical periods. There is no drilling, pipeline construction, seismic exploration or well pad construction during spring fawning and calving and bald eagle and raptor roosting periods.**
- The Powder River Basin final decision, for example, **affects less than 1% of winter habitat** for resident pronghorn, white-tail deer, mule deer and elk. The plan imposes seasonal closures, adaptive management, mitigation measures and special conditions of approval to protect wildlife.
- Of the 8.8 million acres of BLM land in the NPR-A (NW) planning area, 7.3 million acres would be available for leasing, but under very strict guidelines. The NPR-A (NW) plan would impose seasonal restrictions to protect birds and other sensitive species. It also imposes strict study requirements for caribou and water fowl that must be satisfied prior to development. Other stipulations and required operating procedures will establish restrictions designed to prevent waste spills, unnecessary water use and pollution and help us to manage winter overland moves of equipment, seismic activity, exploratory drilling and aircraft use. **Leasing is prohibited in the 102,000 acres designated as the Kasegaluk Lagoon Area, a sensitive marine habitat** that is important to migratory bird and marine mammals featuring marine tidal flats rare to the North Slope. **Leasing is also prohibited on 1.5 million acres along rivers, lakes, ponds, and the coast to protect riparian habitat, nesting areas and subsistence resources for North Slope residents.**

BLM has developed Best Management Practices (BMPs) for land use plans and energy permits to protect wildlife, air and water quality, cultural and visual resources, and to improve reclamation and restoration.

- BMPs are guided by the principle of least intrusion on the land. This includes minimizing the “footprint” during the exploration and drilling process to return the land to its original state when development is complete. Examples include the use of multiple wells drilled from the same pad and intermediate reclamation of roads and surrounding areas with re-planting to mitigate habitat loss.
- BMPs seek to minimize wildlife habitat fragmentation. Burying power lines and flow-lines, eliminating hazards to wildlife, reducing noise, and remote production monitoring are all examples of efforts the BLM promote to lessen the footprint of oil and gas development on public lands.

Achieve Local Environmental Successes that Are Nationally Significant

Conservation funding, partnerships and best management practices produce results one acre, one stream, one project at a time. Cumulatively, these projects are building blocks for national conservation achievements. Here are just a few local environmental success stories in the making that are nationally significant:

- In response to increasing wolf numbers, the Department **downlisted the gray wolf** from endangered to threatened in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin and proposed greater state management of wolves in Idaho and Montana.
- **The High Plains Partnership** proactively conserves declining habitats on private lands in Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Its goals are to restore, protect, or enhance 2 million acres of High Plains habitat in 10 years to reduce threats to the lesser prairie-chicken and the black-tailed prairie dog and avoid listing under the ESA. The Department is proposing to fund this partnership at \$5 million in new funding in the FY 2005 budget.
- **Restoring and preserving bottomland hardwood forests at the Bushley Bayou unit in Louisiana** with the acquisition of 18,000 acres for the Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge. The Fish and Wildlife Service purchased 8,000 acres and American Electric Power donated 10,000 acres. Of the 18,000, almost 10,000 will be restored to the original hardwood forest and wetland ecosystem.
- **The Aleutian Canada Goose** is no longer an endangered species, thanks to an effort to remove introduced foxes from nesting islands, establish new breeding areas by translocating family groups of birds, provide protection throughout its range, and manage wintering habitat in California and Oregon.
- **The Leon River Restoration Project** is a broad based, grassroots public-private initiative directed at improving the quality and quantity of water, and vigor of native plant communities, through the treatment of Ashe juniper, an invasive plant of central Texas. Such activities are also intended to assist in the recovery of the endangered black-capped vireo and provide additional benefits to the endangered golden-cheeked warbler.
- The Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Idaho have worked in partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and private landowners to consolidate water diversion structures, install screens, and **improve fish passage along approximately 60 miles** of the main stem Lemhi River to facilitate salmon migration.
- Examples of projects under the Department's newly funded Cooperative Conservation Challenge Cost Share Program include:
 - The Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, and the Yuma Valley Rod & Gun Club have partnered with FWS to **rehabilitate watering areas for desert bighorn sheep** in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona.
 - The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and the National Wild Turkey Federation have partnered with the National Park Service to establish and **restore elk habitat** at Buffalo National River, Arkansas.
 - Trout Unlimited, the University of Tennessee Student Conservation Association, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Tennessee Brookies, and Little River Outfitters, have partnered with National Park Service to **restore native brook trout** at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina.