
NATURAL RESOURCES

National Wildlife Refuges are found in every State of the Union. National Parks are found in every State save one. The public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management spread across the expanse of 11 Western States and Alaska. The Department of the Interior is committed to supporting and improving the services provided to the people who visit or work on these lands, and to protecting the infinite variety of natural and cultural resources they contain.

"It is our task in our time and in our generation to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."

John F. Kennedy

Address at the dedication of the National Wildlife Federation Building, March 3, 1961

The careful balance, between providing public access to the Nation's resources today and preserving those same resources for coming generations, is a primary objective of the Department of the Interior.

ENSURING HEALTHY PUBLIC LANDS

The Department is committed to sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands, and to adopting management practices that keep pace with competing demands on the Nation's natural resource base that stem from an ever growing population in the Western United States. The Department's responsibilities cover the management of mineral, timber, grazing and water resources on these lands and elsewhere for the benefit of the American people.

During 1995, the commercial uses of the Nation's Public Lands included over 52 thousand oil and gas leases on 36



*President Clinton and family visit Grand Teton National Park.
Photo credit - Bonnie Jo Mount.*

million acres of public land; 20 thousand ranchers who grazed cattle on Federal lands; the harvesting of 127 million board feet of timber; the extraction of a variety of other minerals including coal, uranium, potash, sand and gravel; and over 30 thousand permits for harvesting non-timber vegetation, including Christmas trees, mushrooms, pine nuts and cactus. Rangeland management activities not only provide livestock forage, but also support wildlife habitats, serve wild horse and burro needs and promote watershed health.

The Department is the fourth largest revenue producer in the Federal Government. During 1995, the income from resources on Public Lands brought over \$2.16 billion into the U.S. Treasury. In addition, Public Lands provided \$884 million of direct revenue to States, communities, and Native Americans, in addition to the economic benefits that industry and tourism provide to local communities.

To balance demands, the Department must consider the effects of management actions on all parties and throughout a given watershed rather than on individual

units of land. In this process, the Department is increasingly employing more open and collaborative decision-making procedures.

VISITORS AND PUBLIC ACCESS

The Department's natural resource responsibilities begin with the management of over 442 million acres of land, which represent one-fifth of the total land mass of the United States. This land encompasses range land and forests, National Parks and recreation areas, wildlife refuges and wilderness areas.

National Parks, Wildlife Refuges and Public Lands belong not to the government but to the people of the United States. During 1995, an estimated 270 million people visited America's National Parks, 28 million visited Wildlife Refuges, and approximately 138 million visited recreation areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation. Entrance fees, campground fees, and other recreation fees are collected at nearly 170 National Parks and totaled approximately \$80.5 million in fiscal year 1995, about 7 percent of the Park Service operating budget. Figure 5



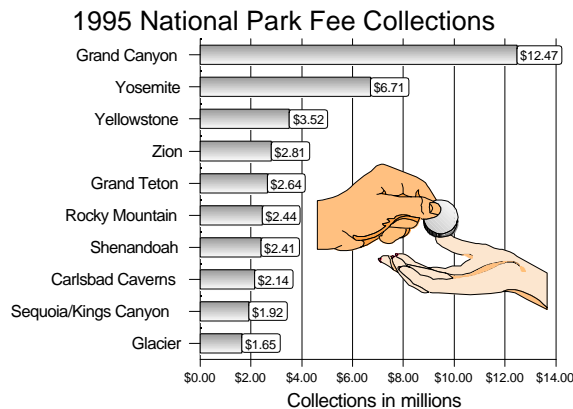
Range Manager inspecting Public Land. Photo credit - BLM.

shows the national parks with the highest fee collections in 1995. When compared to the total visits to the National Park System, fee receipts average well under \$1 per visitor.

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The Department, through the Bureau of Reclamation, is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states. In addition to critical water resources for cities and agriculture, Reclamation's multi-purpose projects provide power, flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Facilities developed by Reclamation over the course of this century have contributed to sustained economic growth and enhanced quality of life in the western regions of the United States. However, greater environmental awareness and increased competition for scarce water resources in recent years have necessitated new approaches to water resources management. Reclamation is meeting this challenge through partnerships with Federal and non-Federal entities, and by promoting cooperative, effective stewardship of the West's water and associated natural resources.

Figure 5



WORKING TOGETHER

In balancing the goals of public access and preservation, the Department is committed to bringing all interested parties into the decision-making process and to finding new ways of achieving these goals.

Habitat Conservation Plans

The Department is working closely with private landowners, local governments, and other groups to develop Habitat Conservation Plans that balance the needs of economic development activities with the needs of endangered and threatened species. The intent of these Plans is to maintain adequate protection for the species through agreements, easements, and other protective



Northern Spotted Owl. Photo credit - Fish and Wildlife Service.

measures, while providing communities with room for economic development activities. Further, these Plans allow owners of small parcels of land to make positive efforts to attract species without fear of future restrictions on the use of their land.

Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative

Within the Appalachian region, the most serious water quality problem is pollution caused by acid mine drainage resulting from coal mining. To date, over 7,000 miles of



Deputy Secretary John Garamendi surveys a stream damaged by acid mine drainage. Photo credit - Office of the Secretary.

streams have been devastated by the effects of this drainage, which cause ill health in humans and which kill fish and wildlife. As the environmental and recreational value of Appalachia's streams have deteriorated, local economies that depend on these natural resources for jobs and tourism have suffered.

The Office of Surface Mining has established the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative to bring together Federal agencies, State coal regulatory authorities, fish and wildlife agencies, local water conservation districts, industry, environmental groups, and coal field residents to solve this problem. An example of the benefits of the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative occurred in August 1995, when about 50 miners, environmentalists, regulators, volunteer leaders, elected officials and media gathered on Greens Run, a tributary of the Cheat River in West Virginia, to break ground on the first "River of Promise" environmental restoration project. The "River of Promise" was heralded as the first commitment to clean up an entire watershed initiated jointly by a private mining company, a grassroots community organization, a statewide river conservation group, and state and Federal regulatory agencies.