



U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs

November 2012

Message from Gail Adams, Director OIEA

Happy Holidays from the Secretary's Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs! We are grateful to our governmental partners and stakeholder organizations for your involvement and support of the Secretary's initiatives these last four years. We look forward to working more closely together as we start a new term under President Obama. With Secretary Salazar's continued leadership at the Interior Department, we plan to make tremendous strides in our conservation and renewable energy agenda, preserving cultural and tribal resources, restoring our nations waterways, and developing the next generation of conservation leaders. Please let us know how our office can continue to serve and partner with you all.

Gail Adams, Director, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs



Secretary Salazar addresses the audience and delegations from the U.S. and Mexico at an official signing ceremony of Minute 319 to the 1944 Treaty with Mexico. Photo: Tami A. Heilemann - Office of Communications

Recent News

11/13/2012: [AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS: Salazar Announces Fee Free Days at National Parks, Other Public Lands for 2013](#)

11/14/2012: [Interior Hosts Navajo and Hopi Leadership for Water Settlement Discussions](#)

11/20/2012: [Secretary Salazar Joins U.S. and Mexico Delegations for Historic Colorado River Water Agreement Ceremony](#)

DOI Urban Initiatives: Putting the Rapids Back in Grand Rapids

Running roughly 200 miles through some of Michigan's biggest cities, the Grand River is one of the state's longest rivers and one of Lake Michigan's largest tributaries, with a watershed draining over 5,500 square miles across 18 counties. As a major logging site during the late 1800s, the river in Grand Rapids was scoured by local industry to speed passage for raw lumber on its way to Lake Michigan. This scouring and the building of several dams destroyed habitat and impeded the passage of lake sturgeon to their native spawning grounds. Today, the river in Grand Rapids also serves as a divide with residents west of the river facing more economic challenges than those living east of the Grand River.

A coalition of over 30 local business, foundation, city, and community leaders in Grand Rapids are partnering to "put the rapids back in Grand Rapids" and address the river's environmental degradation and the city's economic challenges. Partners have established, Grand Rapids Whitewater to coordinate environmental and economic restoration efforts. City officials have awarded over \$100,000 to begin the initial phases of the Grand River Restoration Plan. Partners are planning park, trail and riparian canopy projects in tandem with restoration efforts to encourage new economic growth on both sides of the river. And the city is currently being proposed as a new Urban Waters Federal Partnership site, with DOI and USDA playing active roles.

"One group, one agency, one individual cannot accomplish river and economic restoration," noted Chris Muller, President of M Retail Solutions and co-founder of Grand Rapids Whitewater. "Its only by combining our efforts and growing our network will we be successful and see rapids flowing through our city again and a thriving local economy that benefits all residents—on both sides of the river."

Article courtesy of Lisa Pelstring, Advisor, Urban Environmental Issues and the Anacostia Watershed, Office of the Deputy Secretary

Staff Highlight: Andrés Varona

Andrés Varona is an Office of the Secretary Fellow. While at Interior, Andrés has been working on the Secretary's American Latino Heritage Initiative to recognize and preserve sites of Latino historical significance, such as the newly designated César E. Chávez National Monument. Andrés has also been helping to expand our partnerships with youth development organizations and Latino-serving organizations to foster partnerships and promote STEM education opportunities at the Department for underserved communities.



Prior to joining the Interior team, Andrés held an educational teaching position with the Smithsonian Institution and has been involved in the U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Andrés is in the process of completing his Dual Bachelors degree in Latin American Studies and International Affairs from the George Washington University. Upon graduation, he hopes to join the Peace Corps, obtain a Master's in International Development, and return to public service to work on international environmental policy for the U.S government. Andres was born in Colombia and raised in southern California.

Favorite National Park: [The National Mall](#)

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