

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

On March 3, 1999, the Department of the Interior celebrated its 150th anniversary.

We are proud of our distinguished history and our accomplishments during the Clinton Administration. Over 68,000 Interior employees support the Department's stewardship mission to preserve the Nation's natural and cultural heritage and fulfill our trust responsibilities to Native Americans.

As guardians of the past and stewards for the future, we strive to achieve five broad goals for America:

1. Protecting the Environment and Preserving Our Nation's Natural and Cultural Resources:

Because people and the environment are interdependent, the Department strives to ensure that our lands, waters, and other resources remain healthy. Federal lands contain exceptional geological formations, rare and vulnerable plant and animal communities, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, and numerous historical, paleontological and archaeological sites. Critical to this effort is the work being done to implement ecosystem-based standards and guidelines for healthy lands, placing particular emphasis on restoring and protecting streams, riparian areas, wetlands, and abandoned mine lands. Interior works in partnership with federal agencies, states, and the private sector to prevent contamination of quality habitat, clean up contaminated water bodies, and restore fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

2. Providing Recreation for America: The Department provides recreation opportunities on federal lands and serves as a catalyst for recreation efforts by state and local government and the private sector. Interior is committed to providing access to public lands and enhancing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the benefits of our national heritage. "One-stop shopping" for recreational information and services is now available through the interagency federal recreation web site, www.recreation.gov.

3. Managing Natural Resources for a Healthy Environment and a Strong Economy: The Department manages a wide variety of natural resources for commercial activities when development can be undertaken in an environmentally responsible manner. These resources, including energy and non-energy minerals, water, timber, grazing land, and hydroelectric power, contribute substantially to virtually every sector of the economy.

4. Providing Science for a Changing World: The Department, through the U.S. Geological Survey, is the Nation's primary provider of natural resources science information related to natural hazards, certain aspects of the environment, and mineral, energy, water, and biological resources. We are also the federal government's principal domestic mapping agency. Interior is working hard to apply technology to increase efficiencies and expand the collection and management of natural resources science data for use by federal, state, local land management and regulatory agencies, and the public.

5. Meeting Our Trust Responsibilities to American Indians and Our Commitments to Island Communities: The federal Indian trust responsibility is a legal duty on the part of the United States to protect Indian land and resources, fulfill treaty obligations, and carry out the mandates of federal law for the benefit of American Indian and Native Alaskan tribal members. Under the self-determination and self-governance policies, tribes are increasingly assuming day-to-day management responsibility over programs formerly operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These initiatives require us to invest sufficient resources over the long term to assist tribes in developing their governmental, economic, social, and educational institutions while preserving tribal cultures. Our island commitments are mandated in law and through Presidential Executive Orders. We provide significant resources to island communities to assist them in delivering better and more cost effective services to their people.

This report summarizes our 1999 accomplishments in fulfilling Interior's broad mission goals. I thank you for your interest in our programs that serve the Nation in so many and varied ways.



Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior

