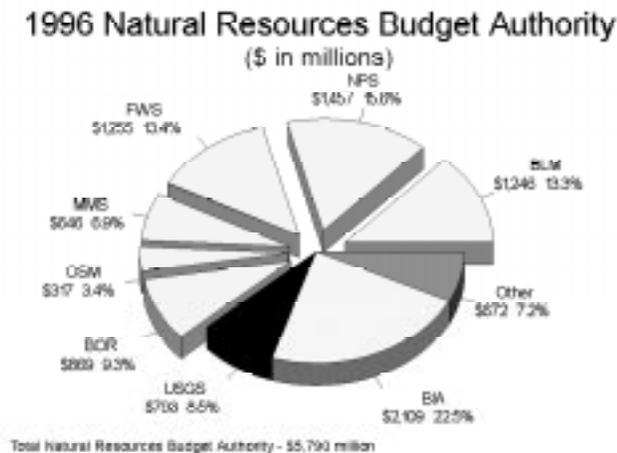


NATURAL RESOURCES

A major responsibility of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage. Managing the Nation's public lands and resources are the combined responsibility of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minerals Management Service, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and the Bureau of Reclamation. Figure 5 provides 1996 budget authority amounts for Interior's natural resource agencies.

Figure 5



Arches National Park (photo by D. Carey).

and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Fish and Wildlife Service administers the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest and most diverse collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife. The refuge system protects those lands dedicated for fish and wildlife, sustains habitats of endangered species, and provides a network of key stepping stones for migratory species.

The **Bureau of Land Management** is responsible for managing 264 million acres of public land and an additional 300 million acres of subsurface minerals estate. The Bureau is charged with sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The **National Park Service** is responsible for conserving unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System. The National Park System comprises 369 units that encompass approximately 83 million acres, of which more than 2.8 million acres remain in private ownership. The largest area is Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska, at 13.2 million acres and the smallest unit in the National Park System is Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial, Pennsylvania, at two-tenths of an acre.

The **Fish and Wildlife Service** is charged with conserving, protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife,

The **Minerals Management Service** is charged with the responsibility of collecting, accounting for, and distributing revenues owed by holders of mineral leases on Federal onshore and offshore lands and Indian lands, and managing the energy and mineral resources on the Nation's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) lands in an environmentally sound and safe manner. The Minerals Management Service administers over 112,000 mineral leases which supply over 25 percent of the natural gas and 15 percent of the oil produced in the United States. Revenues from these leases support a broad constituency of 38 States, 42 Tribes and about 20,000 individual Indian mineral owners. During 1996, the Minerals Management Service collected and disbursed \$4.7 billion -- \$3.6 billion in royalties, rents and bonuses from mineral leases on the OCS, and \$1.1 billion from onshore mineral leases.

The **Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement** is responsible for ensuring that coal mines are operated in a manner that protects citizens and the environment during mining and that the land is restored to beneficial use following mining, and to mitigate the effects of past mining by aggressively pursuing reclamation of

abandoned mines. The programs and operations of the Office of Surface Mining span over 39 states and depend on strong, mutually supportive relationships with the states, Indian tribes, industry and citizen groups.

The **Bureau of Reclamation** is charged with managing, developing, and protecting water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the best interest of the American people. The Bureau's projects provide water supply and flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Reclamation's responsibilities include the Dam Safety Program involving 475 dams and dikes of which 379 could endanger people and property downstream if a failure occurred. Reclamation is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 western States, delivering water to 31 million people for agriculture, municipal, industrial, and domestic uses, and is also the fifth largest producer of electric power in those States, generating nearly a billion dollars in annual power revenues.

In addition, the Department also administers more than 43 million acres of land owned by Indian Tribes and 10 million acres of individually-owned Indian land held in trust status. This responsibility is discharged by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Partnerships

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. To this end, the Department has forged strong partnerships with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, community groups, and the private sector to address a number of regional environmental issues. Some of the largest efforts are discussed in this section.

Everglades Watershed Restoration (South Florida)

The restoration of the Everglades and the South Florida ecosystem continues to be a critical environmental



Fieldwork in the Everglades (photo by USGS).

initiative for the Department and the Administration. This vast region is home to over six million Americans and seven of the ten fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country. In addition, this region supports a large tourism industry and significant agriculture, and is one of the world's unique environmental treasures as evidenced by the location of four national parks and three national wildlife refuges in the region.

Restoring the Everglades watershed while maintaining sustainable development in South Florida requires a partnership effort that transcends political boundaries and agency jurisdictions. During 1996, the Department worked closely with Congress to enact two statutes that have done much to further Everglades restoration. As part of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Farm Bill), Congress appropriated \$200 million to the Department to provide for additional land acquisition and restoration needs. To date, the Department has expended \$21.5 million of this amount, resulting in the acquisition by the State of Florida of 3,459 acres.

The Water Resources Development Act of 1996 (WRDA), expanded the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, to include State, local, and tribal members. This legislation also authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to engage in a comprehensive restudy of the Central and Southern Florida Project, particularly so that future project changes would restore, preserve, and protect the South Florida ecosystem.

Denali Ranger Wins International Honor

Daryl Miller, a mountaineering ranger at Denali National park and Preserve in Alaska, has become the first American to earn the prestigious International Alpine Solidarity Award.

The tribute, given annually for the past 25 years by the mountaineering community in Pinzolo, Italy, is presented to a person who has "carried out perilous rescue operations, risking one's own life in favor of another's life." Miller received the award in a ceremony in Italy on September 28.

Miller credits his ranger colleagues, rescue pilots, and even the climbers he has helped rescue. "It's always a team effort," he said. "You don't do this stuff alone. McKinley is just too big a mountain."

A Marine Corps veteran and former college instructor, Miller, 51, has been a ranger at Denali since 1991. He has participated in lifesaving rescues involving 25 climbers, and provided another 15 climbers with critical lifesaving medical care. The award highlights the 1991 rescue of a Polish climber from Mount McKinley, a feat that caught the attention of the mountaineering world.

In attempting to reach the summit, Krzysztof Wiecha had been trapped for three days at the 19,500-foot level on the West Buttress of Mount McKinley. Miller and fellow ranger Jim Phillips, dropped by helicopter 100 yards below the stranded climber, had to swing the frostbitten and immobilized mountaineer in a litter across the face of the mountain to avoid several massive crevasses.

The rangers moved him 500 feet horizontally with this pendulum traverse, before lowering him to the safety of a waiting helicopter, only to be trapped themselves for three days by a fierce storm. In saving Wiecha, Miller and Phillips carried out the highest altitude mountain rescue in North American history.

California Bay-Delta Ecosystem Restoration

The California Bay-Delta, the region where the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers meet the San Francisco Bay, is the largest estuary on the west coast of North America. The region is critical to California's economy, providing water to two-thirds of all homes and businesses in the State and irrigating more than four million acres of farmland where, among other crops, 45 percent of the Nation's fruits and vegetables grow.

In December 1994, Federal and State officials signed the historic Bay-Delta Accord that covered a comprehensive package of actions designed to restore and protect the Bay-Delta ecosystem while strengthening the State's long-term economic health. Implementation of the accord is coordinated by CALFED, a consortium of Federal and State agencies with management and regulatory responsibilities in the Bay-Delta.

In 1996, the California Bay-Delta Environmental Enhancement and Water Security Act was signed by the President. This legislation authorizes \$143.3 million per year in additional Federal spending for Bay-Delta ecosystem restoration activities in 1998, 1999, and 2000.

Habitat Conservation Plans

The Department is committed to working closely with private landowners, local governments, and other groups to develop Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) that allow economic development activities without harming listed, proposed, and candidate species. The Department has forged strong partnerships with private, local, and State landowners to find endangered species habitat solutions that are biologically and economically feasible for all parties. These partnerships have become an immensely popular approach for protecting threatened and endangered species while allowing economic development to proceed. In addition to successful HCPs in the Pacific Northwest, two other examples of successes in this area are agreements in the Southeast with states and

the private sector, and the Department of Defense to protect the red-cockaded woodpecker and to provide habitat for the desert tortoise in Utah. The Department has made great strides over the last four years in developing and approving HCPs. From 1982 to 1992, only 14 HCPs were approved. In comparison, as of September 1996, the Department had approved 197 HCPs since 1992.

Northwest Forest Plan

The Northwest Forest Plan is a comprehensive interagency blueprint to strengthen the economic and environmental health of the Pacific Northwest. This innovative plan provides for sustainable timber production on Federal lands while protecting critical wildlife and fish species and habitats on Federal, State, local, and private lands.

The plan has refilled the timber pipeline by allowing over 1.7 billion board feet of timber to be offered for sale from Federal forest lands in Washington, Oregon, and



Acid mine drainage destroys vegetation and impacts downstream areas many miles from the pollution source (photo by OSM).

Northern California from 1994 to 1996. The plan has helped streamline the Section 7 consultation process of the Endangered Species Act, reducing average consultation from 135 days to 35 days and promoted the establishment and signing of Habitat Conservation Plans to find habitat solutions that are biologically and economically feasible to State, local, and private landowners. In addition, four Adaptive Management Areas have been developed to demonstrate new ways to integrate ecological and economic objectives, and establish a comprehensive system of old growth preserves.

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

streams have been devastated by the effects of this drainage which causes direct human health effects and kills fish and wildlife. As the environmental and recreational value of the region's streams have deteriorated, local economies that depend on these natural resources for jobs and tourism have suffered. While this is a regional problem, the cost to correct the problem exceeds regional capabilities.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement established the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative as a focal point for Federal action. This initiative involves key partnerships with Federal agencies, State coal regulatory authorities, fish and wildlife agencies, local water conservation districts, industry, environmental groups and coal field residents to use the latest technology to address acid mine drainage and restore and enhance high priority streams in the region.

