

# MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

I am pleased to present the U. S. Department of the Interior's Accountability Report for fiscal year 2000. For over 150 years, the Department has carried out its stewardship mission to preserve the Nation's natural and cultural heritage and fulfill its trust responsibilities to Native Americans and commitments to island communities. Interior is responsible for protecting the environment; managing natural and cultural resources; providing parks, refuges and reserves for recreation; enhancing natural science; and, meeting America's trust commitments. This report provides a summary of the Department's 2000 performance and its accountability to the American people.



In January 2001, I began my tenure as the 48th Secretary of the Interior. As Secretary, I believe that conserving our Nation's natural resources should be a top priority of the Department. America is a land of singular beauty. Americans are proud of the many exquisite natural treasures within our shores. The great wild places and the unspoiled landscapes of this country are the common heritage of all Americans. We must conserve and manage them for Americans living today and for the Americans of the future, our children and our children's children. Working together, we can protect our national park system by eliminating the major maintenance backlogs that have been obstacles to resource protection and promoting conservation in the United States through proposals such as conservation partnerships that enable states, local communities and private land owners to conserve wildlife habitat, watersheds and open space. We must make responsible use of natural resources, particularly energy resources, to ensure a sound and stable economy for our Nation.

I believe that my special responsibilities as the Secretary of the Interior to American Indians require careful attention. All of us recognize that the situation in Indian Country is not as it should be. There is much that we can do in partnership with Indian tribes to improve living and economic conditions and provide a more hopeful future. A good education is the key to a better life for any child, whether that child lives in Washington, D. C., Miami, or on a reservation in New Mexico. Recognizing the historic relationship of the federal government and Indian tribes, this Administration intends to work very hard to achieve real results for every Indian child.

Interior continues to enhance management accountability with particular focus on: (1) continuing to achieve unqualified (clean) audit opinions on financial statements prepared by the Department and its bureaus; and (2) maintaining an effective management control program that holds program managers accountable for the correction of any weakness identified in audits or management reviews. I am pleased to report that this is the fourth consecutive year that Interior's financial statements have received an unqualified audit opinion. The performance and financial data used in this report have been reviewed and assessed by the Department to be complete and reliable for purposes of reporting these results in the Accountability Report. In the years ahead, I anticipate that we will provide even more information in future reports on our annual performance results. The American people deserve to know the results for its annual investment in the programs of the Department.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gale A. Norton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

**Gale A. Norton**  
**Secretary of the Interior**