

## Message from the Secretary



No matter what you do or where you live in the United States, the Department of the Interior touches your life.

We are stewards of the Nation's treasures, conserving lands and waters and preserving natural and cultural resources. We provide the parks, refuges, and recreation areas for your enjoyment, manage many of the Nation's natural resources, expand natural sciences, and take care of America's trust responsibilities to native peoples. Our responsibilities range from petroglyphs to satellites.

Fulfilling those broad mission goals is an increasingly complex responsibility, as this, our Fiscal Year 2003 Performance and Accountability Report, makes clear. The financial and performance data presented in this report are fundamentally complete and reliable as outlined in the guidance available from the Office of Management and Budget. This report also presents the status of the Department's compliance with certain legal and regulatory requirements. The annual assurance statement required by the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) concludes that, with the exception of the Department's concerns regarding the controls over Indian Trust Funds and other material weaknesses reported herein, the Department can provide qualified assurance that its systems of management, accounting, and administrative controls, taken as a whole, meet the objectives specified in Section 2 of the FMFIA. It also concludes that the Department does not fully comply with applicable Federal financial management systems and accounting standards or U.S. Standard General Ledger reporting requirements as specified in Section 4 of the FMFIA.

The FY 2003 Performance and Accountability Report tells many stories. It is a gauge of the Department's successes and shortcomings over the past year, measured against 323 different targets. It is the way we judge ourselves, and the way we expect to be judged by the American public. Moreover, it shows the Department in a broader perspective as well, both looking forward and looking back. It highlights the trends and describes the forces of change that are adding to mission complexity.

The report illustrates how the Department's performance is driven by shared values. Our vision for effective stewardship centers on the "4 Cs"—communication, consultation, and cooperation, all in the service of conservation. The better we communicate, consult, and cooperate with the American people, the better we can serve our shared conservation mission. Serving with excellence requires a management focus that provides value to those who receive our services, maintains accountability, modernizes our operations, and integrates our activities to avoid duplication and reduce costs.

FY 2003 was marked with several significant accomplishments by the 70,000 men and women of Interior. We built 4 Cs partnerships inside and outside the Department, among bureaus and with other agencies and other levels of government, with private sector and advocacy groups, and with thousands and thousands of individual interested citizens. We expanded the Vital Signs Monitoring Project of the National Park Service, organizing 270 park units into 32 monitoring networks that track key indicators of change or "vital signs" occurring on park lands. We revived the Take Pride in America program, reaching out to focus public attention on volunteer opportunities for citizen stewardship. We unveiled a draft of the new scientific code of conduct to ensure that the research and science we use have been developed with the highest possible standards. We continued to innovate, building greater efficiencies for everything from facilities maintenance to

resource exploration and development coordination. We continued to work together, to improve our law enforcement, public safety, and homeland security capabilities.

FY 2003 was marked as well by a new focus on the future, and a new strategic plan to meet it. Almost two years in the making, our new plan brings all of our mission responsibilities together in an integrated blueprint for success. It aligns bureau responsibilities under four major mission goals and places a strong new emphasis on results and performance measurement. It will be implemented in the same manner that it was developed, using the 4 Cs.

At a time when the Department's responsibilities have never been greater and its management challenges never more demanding, this strategic plan offers clear guidance for the road ahead, as I believe next year's Performance and Accountability Report will show.

Our responsibilities and challenges will continue to grow in the years ahead. Continued success will demand continuous performance improvement and a steady stream of innovation. We look forward to that work, and continuing to serve the American people.

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

Gale A. Norton  
Secretary of the Interior

*November 28, 2003*