

Serving Communities



The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 gives the land management agencies new tools to help protect families and habitat from the enormous risk of devastating wildland fires through a collaborative process.

Secretary Gale A. Norton, August 28, 2003

The Department of the Interior is responsible for protecting lives, resources, and property; providing scientific information for better decision making; and fulfilling the Nation's trust or other special responsibilities to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and residents of our affiliated island communities. The Department protects communities from catastrophic wildland fires; safeguards visitors on Interior lands from illegal activities; and provides scientific information to reduce risks from earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions. The Department also provides scientific assessments on the quality and quantity of the Nation's water resources and conducts multi-purpose natural science research. The 2005 serving communities budget proposal totals \$5.3 billion.

SERVING COMMUNITIES MISSION

Safeguard lives, property and assets, advance scientific knowledge, and improve the quality of life for communities we serve

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The Department's 2005 budget increases funding for unified Indian trust programs by \$157.8 million. This proposed increase will fund continued improvements in trust management, support implementation of the Department's plan to conduct a historical accounting for individual Indians and Tribes, and substantially expand efforts to consolidate fractionated interests in lands. The increase also provides funding for improved computer security.

Working closely with federally recognized Tribes, Interior also promotes economic development and an improved quality of life for 1.5 million Native Americans in communities across the Nation. To support the goal of advancing quality communities for Tribes, the 2005 budget includes a total of \$2.3 billion for Indian programs, continuing the President's commitment to Indian school construction and promoting self-determination and economic development for the Tribes.

AFFILIATED ISLAND COMMUNITIES

In serving communities, the Department coordinates Federal policy for, and provides technical and financial assistance to, the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Department also oversees financial assistance to the freely associated states: the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The 2005 budget requests \$78.9 million in discretionary appropriations for the Office of Insular Affairs to improve the financial management practices of the insular governments, increase economic development within the insular areas, and increase Federal responsiveness

to the unique needs of the island communities. Permanent appropriations for OIA in 2005 will total \$303.0 million, including \$195.0 million for payments to the freely associated states under the recently revised and ratified Compact of Free Association.

WILDLAND FIRE

Over the past four years, the National Fire Plan has generated a more effective response to wildland fires and fostered tremendous progress to reduce fuel loads, improve forest health, and reduce risks to communities. In 2005, continued progress in fuels treatment performance to support the President's Healthy Forests Initiative will be a primary focus of the Department's wildland fire program. A second focus will be on continued improvement in the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of fire preparedness and suppression activities. The 2005 budget proposes \$743.1 million to carry out the Department of the Interior's responsibilities under the National Fire Plan, an increase of \$57.9 million.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY

Law enforcement and security activities of the Department are critical components for successfully managing and protecting public lands and surrounding communities. The 2005 budget requests \$576.5 million for law enforcement programs throughout the Department, which is an increase of \$39.2 million. The increase will bolster security and protection at borders, critical infrastructure, and national monuments. It will also support Departmental reforms to improve the accountability and efficiency of law enforcement programs.

SCIENCE

Science is the cornerstone for the Department's land management decisions, supporting work to achieve resource protection, resource use, recreation, and serving community goals. The 2005 budget continues science programs that generate relevant, objective information for land managers and for communities throughout the Nation. A total of \$919.8 million is requested for U.S. Geological Survey scientific leadership and partnerships with communities in information sharing, mapping, and technology and standards development.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

The 2005 budget proposes \$226.0 million for PILT, a \$1.3 million increase over the 2004 enacted level. Congress passed the PILT Act in 1976 to provide payments to local governments in counties where certain Federal lands are located within their boundaries. Local governments incur costs associated with Federal lands within their boundaries, but are unable to collect taxes on the lands. These payments are made to local governments in lieu of tax revenues and to supplement other Federal land receipts shared with local governments. Local governments use PILT payments to improve local school, water, and road systems, as well as for other necessary infrastructure. As part of an ongoing commitment to improve PILT payment distributions, Interior signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Association of Counties to continue a dialogue with counties about PILT. The Department will continue to explore how to ensure that the PILT program is fair and equitable.