Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Julie Rodriguez (DOI) (202) 208-6416 | Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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Albuquerque, NM – Today Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget at the Department of the Interior Rhea Suh delivered welcoming remarks at the Federal Employment Workshop: Accessing Employment with the Department of the Interior at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Federal Employment Workshop is part of Secretary Ken Salazar's Youth in the Great Outdoors Initiative aimed at employing, educating, and engaging youth in America's great outdoors.

"Today, young Americans face a multitude of challenges, among them record unemployment rates, rising health risks, such as childhood obesity, and declining exposure to the great outdoors," said Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget Suh. "The Department's Federal Employment Workshop is an opportunity to engage young American Indians and Alaska Natives in the Federal workforce."

"Unemployment is a problem that affects many tribal communities throughout the country," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk. "Today's workshop is a step in the right direction to help provide much needed jobs to Indian Country."

In February, Secretary Salazar told the annual Corps Network Forum that he has challenged the Interior bureaus to increase youth employment opportunities in 2010 by 50 percent over 2009 figures and in 2011 by 60 percent. This new challenge will give a big boost to youth employment and education programs throughout the nation.

The Federal Employment Workshop was a collaboration of many Bureaus and Offices within the Department of the Interior, including Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs Fire Department, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, Office of Surface Mining, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, and National Conservation Training Center.

Office of Youth in the Great Outdoors:

Employ, Educate, Engage In 2009 Secretary Salazar established a new departmental Office of Youth to catalyze these programs. The office will lead efforts to "employ, educate and engage" Youth in the Great Outdoors.

Employment

The Secretary noted that today's programs have inherited the spirit of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided employment during the Great Depression of the 1930s and also helped build trails, facilities and conservation projects in national parks and other areas.

"Our economic troubles are particularly tough on young people, just as they were during the Great Depression," said Secretary Salazar. "Young people again face double-digit unemployment rates (20%

according to some estimates). And Interior is again in a unique position to put thousands of young people to work – especially during the summer, when young people need jobs the most."

The Youth in the Great Outdoors Initiative places a special emphasis on engaging youth from underserved communities where unemployment is highest, as well as young women and girls.

Education and Engagement

In addition to employment, the Department of the Interior engages millions more youth each year through educational and other programs.

"The future of America's treasured landscapes depends upon the next generation's understanding of and connection to the Great Outdoors, so getting younger children outside in nature and providing educational programs for them is just as important as providing jobs for older youth," said Secretary Salazar.

For example, Department of the Interior and bureau programs serve:

- More than 30 million youth each year in meaningful environmental education and service-learning programs in parks and refuges and thousands in historic preservation projects.
- More than 42,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students, in elementary and secondary schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education and located in 23 states across America.
- More than 6 million children through recreation programs and opportunities in parks, refuges and other public lands that take young people into the great outdoors where they can connect with nature and build relationships with their families and communities.

For more information on youth programs, please visit http://doi.gov/whatwedo/youth/.
