Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: John Wright , OPA-IA Phone: 202-208-6416
For Immediate Release: November 18, 2003
Print PDF

(LOS ANGELES) - Interior Secretary Gale Norton today commended federal and private land managers for the conservation partnerships they have forged with communities and urged them to find new ways to connect citizen stewards with landscapes and habitat.

Speaking to the opening session of Joint Ventures: Partners in Stewardship Conference, Norton said for conservation to succeed in the 21 st century, "we must involve the people who live on, work on and love the land."

"The environmental challenges we face today are in many ways more subtle and more difficult than we have faced in the past," Norton said. "This conference will supply the knowledge, skills and tools needed to work with partners and create opportunities."

Noting President Bush's strong support for citizen stewardship initiatives, Norton said the Interior budget the president signed last week contains almost $120 million for the Cooperative Conservation Initiative in 2004, an increase of about $19 million over FY 2003.

At President Bush's request, more than $42 million is included in the Department's 2004 budget for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, a 13 percent increase over 2003 levels. This will allow more than 1,000 additional private landowners to participate in the program.

The conference, which opened today at the Los Angeles Convention Center, focuses on the importance of federal, public-private partnerships and how planning and working together will provide for future success. An estimated 1,500 participants will take part in the three-day conference, which has 250 educational sessions.

The meeting brings together much of the senior leadership of Interior's National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs; along with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Several hundred representatives of state and local governments, non-profit associations, concessionaires, universities and many others who work with federal and state land management agencies also are participating in the conference. More information is on-line at www.partnerships2003.org

Â