Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: January 29, 1990
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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan said today his Department looks forward to a major role in implementing the America the Beautiful initiative in President Bush's fiscal year 1991 budget. "With increased funding for land acquisition, recreation enhancement and resource protection, the President shows his strong commitment to meeting the diverse Federal land management challenges of the 1990s," Lujan said.

Along with America the Beautiful, the Interior Department will launch a Legacy '99 initiative to substantially reduce its backlog of rehabilitation and maintenance projects, including the repair of unsafe dams and the clean-up of hazardous materials. "Our goal will be to assure the American people a natural resources legacy we can all celebrate when Interior marks its 150th anniversary in 1999," Lujan said.

The Department's budget request totals $7.7 billion, 6 percent lower than 1990 fiscal year funding levels. Included in this budget request is more than $360 million to implement Interior's part of the President's America the Beautiful initiative.

Lujan said major environmental efforts will be made in the coming fiscal year to improve resource protE3Ction, make high priority land acquisitions, restore public lands and facilities, move ahead with a national water quality assessment program, increase global change research and support an enhanced Department-wide wetlands program.

"In addition, one of our primary goals in the human resources area is the improvement of Indian education," Lujan added. "There is increased funding both for an education initiative and for improved basic administrative functions in the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

Secretary Lujan also noted that he has secured increased funding for several other Departmental initiatives including the War on Drugs, Opportunities for Women and Minorities, Volunteers and the Take Pride in America campaign.

"The President's budget sets forth an action agenda that will enable the Interior Department to improve our stewardship of the Nation's public lands," Lujan said. "We cannot afford to stand by watching the environment that sustains us suffer continued insult and abuse. We must be mindful of our mission to develop in an environmentally sensitive manner the resources needed to sustain our economic growth."

In addition to Department-wide proposals, Secretary Lujan noted the following Interior bureau-specific highlights:

Funding will be increased within the Bureau of Indian Affairs to improve the basic administrative functions of the agency and finance several Indian education initiatives.

Budget increases within the Bureau of Land Management will enable that agency to support its growing recreation and wildlife responsibilities within its overall multiple-use land management mission.

The Bureau of Reclamation will continue to reduce its operations and maintenance backlog, support new bureau water resource studies and incorporate dam safety programs being transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Increased funding will enable the Geological Survey to begin full-scale implementation of the National Water Quality Assessment Program, and new research activities related to global change.

The Fish and Wildlife Service budget includes monies in support of the President's goal of "no net loss" of wetlands, and to implement both the Endangered Species Act amendments and conservation efforts on behalf of the African elephant.

The Minerals Management Service will receive additional funds to strengthen its outer continental shelf environmental studies program and expand auditing of oil and gas leases on Indian lands.

The National Park Service's Historic Preservation Grants Program will be increased, as will funding for new, expanding and small parks.

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The Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement will be given increased funding for State Regulatory Grants.

Territorial and International Affairs will be given funding to eliminate the trust territory deficit, to mitigate adverse effects of Compacts of Free Association for Guam and the Northern Marianas, and for contributions to the Guam hospital and American Samoa school construction.

[Editor's Note: Departmental and Bureau budgetary highlights from the FY1991 Interior Department budget are attached together with fact sheets on America the Beautiful and Legacy '99.]