

Office of the Secretary
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Contact: Tina Kreisher/Shane Wolfe
202-208-6416

Secretary Norton Announces Departure from Interior

Norton Era Emphasizes Cooperative Conservation and Responsible Energy Development

WASHINGTON, — After five years of leading cooperative conservation efforts and responsible energy development, Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton today announced she will leave the President's Cabinet at the end of March. In a letter to President Bush, Secretary Norton thanked the President, "for inviting me to be part of your Administration for a meaningful and rewarding five years."

The letter reads in part:

"With your support and leadership, your team at Interior has accomplished great work in the face of hurricanes, record-setting wildfires and droughts, acrimonious litigation, and expanded post 9-11 security responsibilities. The Interior Department has conserved millions of acres of public and private lands and steered the nation toward cooperative conservation by working with landowners and local groups. Hundreds of communities are better protected from catastrophic wildfire. State and local officials have a greater role in federal land decisions affecting their jurisdictions. More than 6,000 projects for improving our national parks are completed or underway. Millions of Americans have more certain water supplies through historic agreements that are ending decades of uncertainty and water conflicts in the West. We have re-engineered our Indian trust system to provide better service to beneficiaries. We are on track to meet the tasks Congress and you set in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

"Mr. President, this department has climbed the mountaintop in terms of achieving the goals we set out to accomplish. In that process, I have shaped six departmental budgets, encouraged cooperative conservation in travel all across America, implemented your management agenda and testified in Congress many times.

"Now I feel it is time for me to leave this mountain you gave me to climb, catch my breath, then set my sights on new goals to achieve in the private sector. Hopefully, my husband and I will end up closer to the mountains we love in the West."

Norton, 51, is the first woman to serve as the Secretary of the Interior. She is the 48th Interior Secretary and has been in office longer than all but six of her predecessors. Norton was sworn in as Secretary on January 31, 2001. After winning re-election, President Bush asked Secretary Norton to continue serving in his Administration.

In the past year, Norton completed nearly all of the goals that she had set to accomplish. Congress passed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 in July. The Department initiated the first-ever White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in August. The House of Representatives passed legislation to improve the Endangered Species Act in September. In November, Congress came within three votes of opening the 1002 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to responsible energy development. In February, at Norton's urging, the seven states of the Colorado River Basin reached preliminary agreement on issues that had been unresolved for decades. Also in February, Secretary Norton released the draft five-year plan for offshore energy development.

"There will never be a perfect time to leave," Norton wrote. "There is always more work to do. My leaving now gives you the opportunity to appoint a new Secretary to accomplish the goals you set for the rest of your Administration," Secretary Norton wrote to the President.

Secretary Norton said she would leave at the end of March, noting that the Senate took 34 days to confirm her after she had been nominated.

"I trust the Senate will move quickly on the confirmation of my successor," Norton said.

In her five years at Interior, Secretary Norton's focus has been to:

- Encourage Cooperative Conservation throughout the United States
- Implement the President's Healthy Forests Initiative
- Negotiate an end to decades-long water conflicts in the West
- Improve national parks and wildlife refuges
- Promote responsible energy development
- Improve services to Indian country
- Improve science for a changing world
- Implement the President's Management Agenda

Under Secretary Norton's leadership, the Interior Department has worked to:

Implement across the United States the "4Cs": Communication, Cooperation and Consultation, all in the service of Conservation.

The department has:

- Initiated the first-ever White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation, attended by four Cabinet Secretaries, and more than a thousand conservation leaders where new conservation partnerships emerged and practical tools were identified that will facilitate cooperative conservation of our nation's lands and waters.
- Granted cooperating agency status to states and local governments to give them a greater role in the federal land use planning performed within their jurisdictions.
- Established effective working relationships with state fish and game agencies. States submitted and Interior approved wildlife management action plans.
- In five years, invested \$2.1 billion in cooperative conservation efforts that are typically matched by non-federal contributions to have an even greater conservation impact.
- Launched, through the Office of Surface Mining, the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative, which, in the last two years, has led to the planting of millions of trees on reclaimed mining lands.
- Helped restore or protect more than five million acres of lands and 10,000 miles of stream and shoreline miles through the voluntary initiative of thousands of Americans across this nation.
- In 2003, re-launched the Take Pride in America® program, a partnership program that supports and recognizes volunteers on public lands. Since 2003, Take Pride volunteers have completed more than 5,000 volunteer projects on public lands in all parts of the

country.

Develop and implement the President's Healthy Forests Initiative.

This policy calls for active management of public lands as the best means to avoid catastrophic fires.

- In five years, Interior and the U.S. Forest Service have thinned and treated more than 16 million acres, making those acres and surrounding communities safer from catastrophic fire.
- With the U.S. Forest Service, the department created the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, a federal, state and local group that coordinates wildland fire policy decision making.

At a time of record drought, successfully end water conflicts in the West.

During the worst five years of drought in the past five centuries, Secretary Norton addressed areas of potential crises and negotiated historic water agreements that will help supply water to millions of Americans for decades to come. Through these efforts, Interior has:

- Resolved issues in dispute for more than 75 years when California water users reached agreement with the federal government and six other states on a multi-decade agreement for sharing and using water in the Colorado River.
- Building on this success, Secretary Norton initiated the process for seven Western states to establish water transfers and conservation measures for decades to come. In response, states have submitted detailed consensus recommendations, including recommending that interstate consultation will occur prior to any litigation.
- Working with California, Arizona and Nevada, Interior approved a \$626 million, 50-year program to protect river habitat for endangered species along and near the Colorado River between Las Vegas and Mexico.
- Established the Water 2025 program that funded 68 challenge grants to address western water conflicts before crises occur. Grants have been awarded in 16 states, potentially saving 285,000 acre-feet of water.

Expand and improve national parks and wildlife refuges.

During Secretary Norton's five years, several national park units and wildlife Refuges were created or significantly expanded. They include:

National Park Service

- Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado, home to North America's tallest sand dunes, contains six mountains taller than 13,000 feet and diverse wildlife habitat and significant recreational opportunities.
- Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Washington and Oregon combines state and national units into one comprehensive park that preserves sites used by America's most famous explorers.
- Flight 93 National Memorial commemorates the heroes aboard the plane that was hijacked and subsequently crashed on September 11, 2001.
- Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park in Virginia. This 3,500 acre park is a nationally significant Civil War landscape and antebellum plantation.
- Minute Man Missile National Historic Site in South Dakota. This site illustrates the history of the Cold War and the arms race.
- African Burial Ground National Monument in New York City is a site that honors free and enslaved Africans who lived and died in New York during the 1700s.

National Wildlife Refuges

- Baca National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado. With 92,500 acres, this is Colorado's largest national wildlife refuge.
- Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota. This 35,000-acre refuge is the largest tall-grass prairie and wetland restoration project in history. It is a major waterfowl breeding and nesting area.
- Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge, once a national defense site, formally joined the wildlife refuge system on April 17, 2004. Another former national defense site in Colorado, Rocky Flats, is in the process of becoming a wildlife refuge next year.

In addition to these expansions, billions of dollars were invested in national parks and wildlife refuges. More than 6,000 facilities maintenance projects have been completed or are underway in national parks in the past five years. President Bush's commitment to invest nearly \$5 billion in national parks is being fulfilled. Examples of these investments include improving the Statue of Liberty and Washington Monument and making these safer from terrorist attack. Secretary Norton also transferred 27 lighthouses to local community groups dedicated to their preservation.

Promote responsible energy development to meet America's energy needs.

One-third of the oil, natural gas and coal produced in the United States comes from resources managed by the Department of the Interior. Secretary Norton implemented the President's 2001 National Energy Policy that calls for increased environmentally responsible energy production, and is implementing the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Under Secretary Norton's leadership, the Interior Department:

- Proposed and is implementing the 2002-2007 plan for offshore oil and gas production. This plan is projected to produce 22 billion barrels of oil and 61 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. This is enough to fuel every U.S. car and home for at least two years. In FY 05 alone, Interior collected more than \$10 billion in mineral revenue, most of that coming from oil and gas production.
- Developed a new draft five-year plan for 2007-2012 that proposes additional areas for offshore energy development.
- Issued double the number of permits to drill onshore for oil and gas in the past five years when compared to the previous five years.
- Produced almost 11 trillion cubic feet of natural gas onshore during 2001-2004, a 17% increase above the previous four years.
- Increased use of best management practices. These are innovative environmental protection practices that protect wildlife and landscapes by reducing the footprint of energy development.
- Led efforts to increase renewable energy on public lands. Land use plans are being amended or revised to accommodate wind energy development. The amount of biomass offered for production of energy doubled in one year, from 27,000 tons to 71,000 tons.
- Increased coal production on multiple use lands in the past four years by 22% when compared to the previous four years.
- Has been on track to meet all of the goals and tasks established in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. This includes conducting research and development oil shale demonstration projects and providing economically sound incentives to encourage development of high-risk, high-cost areas in the Gulf of Mexico.

Improve services to Indian country.

The Department has:

- Invested \$1.6 billion to replace 37 schools and undertook major facility improvement

and repair projects at 45 schools. Ten replacements have been completed and another 19 are scheduled to be completed in 2006 and 2007. Nine major facility improvement and repair projects have been completed and another 25 are scheduled to be completed in 2006 and 2007.

- After extensive consultation with Indian country, reorganized the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians to improve services to individual Indians and tribal trust beneficiaries.
- Successfully completed a negotiated rule making to implement in Indian country the President's No Child Left Behind Act. This led to more than \$33 million in funding being awarded to improve student reading, school performance and teacher quality in BIA-funded schools.
- Established a world-class underground archival facility in Kansas to store and protect more than 250-million pages of electronically indexed Indian records.
- Increased historical accounting of individual Indian monies by the Department. This accounting has provided ample evidence that monies collected for individual Indians were, for the most part, distributed to the correct recipients.

Improve science for a changing world.

- The U.S. Geological Survey, in partnership with other agencies, initiated an early detection effort for highly pathogenic wildlife diseases where there is a risk of infecting domestic animals or humans.
- USGS just issued a study of the occurrences of pesticides in streams and groundwater, concluding that pesticides are typically present in streams in urban and agricultural areas but less common in groundwater. The report also concludes that pesticides are seldom at concentrations likely to affect humans.
- As a result of the 2004 Indonesian earthquake and tsunami, the USGS implemented a new 24 hour/7 day a week seismic operations system that cuts in half the time required to report information about earthquakes around the globe. This advanced warning will help save lives.
- The USGS recently proposed a \$2.2 million multi-hazards initiative to merge information on different hazards into integrated products to support land use planning, hazards mitigation and emergency response.
- During Hurricane Katrina, USGS employees used their geographic information systems expertise to help locate and rescue flood victims.

Improve Interior Department management.

- When Secretary Norton took office in 2001, it routinely took five months to complete the annual department audit. This year's audit was completed in 45 days - an accomplishment that exceeds performance in most large corporations. The 2001 audit identified 17 significant management weaknesses, and last year that number was reduced to four. Interior eliminated more weaknesses than any other federal department.
- In e-government, Interior consolidated 33 Internet connections to just five centrally managed, secure gateways and retired 171 duplicative systems.
- Interior completed the first-ever strategic plan for managing Interior's more than 180,000 structural and physical assets.
- The department implemented proposals to save tax dollars. Bureaus saved \$65 million by consolidating offices and locations and advancing information technology.

For more information on Interior's efforts and accomplishments during Secretary Norton's tenure, visit:

- <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/conservation.html>

- <http://www.doi.gov/news/finalweb2.pdf>
- <http://www.doi.gov/indiantrust/iimaccounting.pdf>
- <http://www.doi.gov/iepa/index.html>
- http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/Healthy_Forests/index.shtml/
- <http://www.doi.gov/water2025/ppt.html>
- http://www.doi.gov/accomplishments/bia_report.pdf

[Secretary Norton's resignation letter to President Bush](#)

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