

# America's Great Outdoors

2012 Progress Report  
December 2012



*“Through the America’s Great Outdoors initiative, President Obama has made it a priority to ensure that all Americans can enjoy one of our nation’s greatest assets: its outdoors. From restoring national treasures like the Everglades and the Great Lakes to connecting young people with recreational activities, the Administration has pursued a 21st century conservation agenda that builds healthy communities, grows our economy, and safeguards our most cherished natural resources.”*



–Nancy Sutley

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*“From the mountains to the oceans and everything in between, our country’s incredible landscape has defined America in so many ways. Places we may not think of as ‘the great outdoors’—urban waterfronts, parks in our cities—also play a huge role in shaping communities. But, too often, local water bodies are polluted and degraded, and parks are unkempt, littered and uninviting. That’s why I’m so proud of the work EPA and our federal partners are doing to restore and revitalize America’s natural resources through the AGO initiative. By protecting America’s wide open spaces and by transforming overgrown lots into urban parks and forgotten water bodies into community centerpieces, we’re helping communities across the country become healthier, more prosperous and more sustainable places to live.”*



–Lisa Jackson

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*“The America’s Great Outdoors initiative underscores the President’s commitment to empowering locally-led conservation and restoration partnerships, whether supporting working lands conservation in the longleaf pine forests of the southern U.S., or preserving iconic places on our public lands such as Chimney Rock National Monument in Colorado.”*



–Tom Vilsack

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*“In all 50 States and across all walks of life, the AGO initiative is making a difference in people’s lives. Whether by connecting Americans to their backyard treasures in places like New York City, protecting wetlands and the ranching livelihoods that depend on it in the prairie pothole region of the Upper Midwest, or restoring First Nations’ connection to their heritage on rivers like the Elwha in Washington or the Penobscot in Maine, I’m enormously proud of what we have accomplished in partnership with communities and private citizens around the country and I’m excited by what is to come.”*



–Ken Salazar

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*“The Corps of Engineers is an enthusiastic partner in the America’s Great Outdoors initiative and is strengthening partnerships and increasing both awareness and participation in outdoor activities while taking care of our natural surroundings. We are proud of our work to engage the youth of this country, through programs like the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. It is important to tell the story to the next generation. We thank our veterans for their service and profit from their expertise through initiatives such as the America the Beautiful park access pass and the Veterans’ Curation Program. The continued momentum and public support of such AGO programs is encouraging. In the future, we will further our role in river restoration, urban infrastructure renewal, and restoration opportunities for the public to participate in while having fun.”*



–Jo-Ellen Darcy

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Throughout American history, the great outdoors have shaped our character and strengthened our economy. In the increasingly urbanized and plugged-in society of the 21st century, the threat of a diminished connection between people and the outdoors has never been greater. President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative in April 2010 to address this challenge, charging his cabinet—through the leadership of the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality—with developing a 21st century conservation agenda. These leaders turned first to the American people to learn which conservation and outdoor recreation issues mattered most. Through over 105,000 written comments and in 51 listening sessions in cities and communities across the country, Americans collectively expressed that they care deeply about enjoying our shared outdoor heritage, and they have a vibrant vision of how best to protect it.

*“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.”*

—John Muir

Led by this public dialogue, the Administration developed an action plan, detailed in the February 2011 report [America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations](#). Implementation of this plan is now connecting Americans to the outdoors with jobs, education, recreation, and service, and it is protecting and restoring our treasured lands and waters. Together with farmers, ranchers, outdoor enthusiasts, hunters, anglers, business leaders, tribes, states, and local governments, we are connecting Americans and expanding access to the outdoors; establishing and revitalizing great urban parks and community green spaces; conserving and restoring large landscapes and working lands and waters; and enhancing rivers and other waters.

We continue to be guided by public input through events like the March 2012 White House Conference on Conservation; and in less than two years since AGO's launch, we have made significant progress. But AGO has become more than a collection of individual projects. At its core, it enables the Federal government to be a better partner by sourcing ideas from the community level; using the best available science to make decisions; and breaking down silos by aligning efforts, prioritizing funding, and valuing communication and collaboration among Federal, state, local, and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector.

AGO builds on this Nation's long history of conserving and preserving our natural and cultural resources.

As a Nation, we have publicly and privately invested in a remarkable range, scope, and diversity of actions to protect our outdoor heritage. Some of these actions are led by a particular agency, such as the U.S. Forest Service's 193 million-acre [National Forest System Planning Rule](#). Others exemplify the power of an interagency collaboration partnering with local efforts, such as the [Urban Waters Federal Partnership](#) initiated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is working to revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them. And still other AGO actions respond directly to the conservation priorities of local communities and state governors, such as the portfolio of 130 projects featured in the Department of the Interior's (DOI's) [AGO Fifty State Report and Rivers Initiative](#).

All of these examples, as well as hundreds of additional projects, share the common principles inherent to AGO: empowering communities to protect, connect with, and restore the great outdoors; leveraging public-private partnerships; and increasing collaboration within and across agencies and sectors. This progress report highlights the AGO achievements that successfully embody those principles. These accomplishments honor those who came before us and will leave a lasting legacy for those who come after us.

The Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the

Interior (DOI), and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) are proud to report the accomplishments that follow. We are appreciative of our partners at the Departments of Commerce (DOC), Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Homeland Security (DHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Justice (DOJ), Transportation (DOT), and Veterans Affairs (VA). To find out more about what we have accomplished together and how you can support AGO, please visit [www.americasgreatoutdoors.gov](http://www.americasgreatoutdoors.gov).



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# Connecting Americans to the Great Outdoors

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While many Americans depend on the outdoors for jobs and a way of life, we all appreciate outdoor places for relaxing, thinking, playing, learning, or spending time with family and friends. AGO is increasing opportunities throughout the country for Americans to connect to the great outdoors. Engaging young people in conservation and outdoor recreation through employment, education, and volunteer activities is a focal point of AGO that will cultivate a new generation of stewards to protect the outdoor places we cherish. Spending time in the outdoors provides many ways to stay active, allowing young people to improve physical and mental health while having fun and engaging in new experiences. With childhood obesity rates that have tripled in the past three decades, we must ensure that our children can easily and regularly experience activities outside. AGO's efforts are providing outdoor opportunities to Americans of all ages, ultimately enhancing understanding of the importance of the outdoors to our fiscal and physical health.

*“Every year we help bring hundreds of thousands of Americans outdoors on a Saturday in late September where these volunteers donate millions of dollars worth of labor in public spaces and parks all over the country. Building on that interest, Toyota and the National Environmental Education Foundation developed the Public Lands Every Day Program to help local organizations engage their communities in year-round stewardship activities. We are delighted that the President’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative has chosen to highlight the immense value of our public spaces and the role every citizen can play in preserving this national inheritance for future generations.”*

–JL Armstrong, National Manager, External Affairs at Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc.

## **Employing Young People**

(CEQ, DOI, EPA, USACE, USDA, DOC, DOT) DOI and USDA investments in Youth Conservation Corps programs have increased this year’s participation 20% above 2011 levels. The new [21st Century Conservation Service Corps](#) (21CSC) will put young Americans to work protecting and restoring America’s lands and waters. The initial target is to double the current number of conservation corps participants, with a goal of scaling up to 100,000 participants per year. Additionally, the [Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act](#) (MAP-21) included a provision for DOT to encourage the use of youth service and conservation corps in transportation and recreational trail projects.

## **Bringing Education Outside**

(DOI, ED) In February 2012, DOI and ED signed an historic [agreement](#) to expand outdoor learning opportunities and access for an estimated 54 million students and teachers. Together, DOI and ED will focus on expanding opportunities in the outdoors for

students attending Title I schools and schools in rural and other high-need areas.

## **Supporting Military Families**

(DOI, USACE, USDA) Using the new [“America the Beautiful Pass,”](#) members of our armed forces and their families can now visit more than 2,000 national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, and other public lands around the Nation without paying entrance or amenity fees.

## **Promoting Volunteerism on Our Public Lands**

(CEQ, DOC, DOI, USACE, USDA) Throughout the country, volunteers are giving back to their communities by working on public lands. Over the past year, more than 400,000 volunteers for USACE, USDA, and DOI contributed over 15 million hours of work on a wide variety of projects. And in just one day, 170,000 [National Public Lands Day](#) volunteers contributed approximately \$18 million worth of in-kind services.

## Success Story

### Protecting America's Special Places

(CEQ, DOI, USDA) In response to strong public support from communities and across the country, the President has protected three of America's most special places this year through National Monument designations: Fort Ord in California, Chimney Rock in Colorado, and the César E. Chávez site in California. The establishments of these National Monuments embody the ideals of AGO by harnessing community support for designation and management, opening more opportunities for Americans to connect to the outdoors, providing economic benefits for the local area, preserving history as it relates to our land, and protecting America's special places for future generations to enjoy forever.

Located on California's central coast, the former [Fort Ord](#) encompasses a landscape of vivid beauty and rich natural diversity on over 14,000 acres. One of the few remaining expanses of large, contiguous open space in the Monterey Bay area, this area is treasured for recreation, scientific research, outdoor education, and historical significance. The monument designation of Federal lands within the former Fort Ord honors its past as a military base where generations of American soldiers received training prior to and returning from combat. The designation also opened this spectacular California coastal property to the general public, including hikers, mountain bikers, and outdoor enthusiasts who come to enjoy this world-class outdoor recreation destination. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) anticipates that annual visitation—currently estimated between 100,000-150,000—will double within 15 years. This will enhance California's vibrant recreation economy, which contributes an estimated \$980 million to local California economies and provides 7,600 jobs.<sup>1</sup> The BLM is working closely with community, state, and Federal partners to effectively manage the national monument, which is a unit of the 27 million-acre National Landscape Conservation System.

The designation of spectacular [Chimney Rock](#) in southwest Colorado honors a place rich in beauty,

history and Native American culture. A thousand years ago, Chimney Rock was home to Ancestral Pueblo People who built more than 200 homes and ceremonial buildings high above the valley floor. The buildings were designed to perfectly align with lunar events such as seasonal solstices and equinoxes, a unique aspect of this site that draws visitors from across the world. The site remains archaeologically and culturally significant to many descendant tribes and pueblos. The U.S. Forest Service is developing a management plan for the monument that will provide for the protection and interpretation of scientific and historic objects and for continued tribal and public access. Beyond protecting this special place, the designation will encourage additional cultural tourism in southwest Colorado. According to a study<sup>2</sup> commissioned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the national monument designation is expected to double economic activity from tourism in the area over the next five years.

A [national monument](#) in Kern County, California honors the American civil rights icon César Chávez and the farm worker movement. The monument encompasses the property known as Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz (Our Lady Queen of Peace), or La Paz. This site served as the national headquarters of the United Farm Workers as well as the home and workplace of César Chávez and his family from the early 1970s until Chávez' death in 1993, and includes his grave site. From this rural headquarters in the Tehachapi Mountains, Chávez played a central role in achieving basic worker protections for hundreds of thousands of farm workers across the country, from provisions ensuring drinking water was provided to workers in the fields, to steps that helped limit workers' exposure to dangerous pesticides, to helping to establish minimum wages and health care access for farm workers. The monument is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) in consultation with the National Chávez Center and the César Chávez Foundation. Its protection ensures that this significant piece of American civil rights history is never forgotten and reminds us of the critical roles that farms and working lands play in feeding and supporting our Nation.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/20/president-obama-sign-proclamation-designating-fort-ord-national-monument>

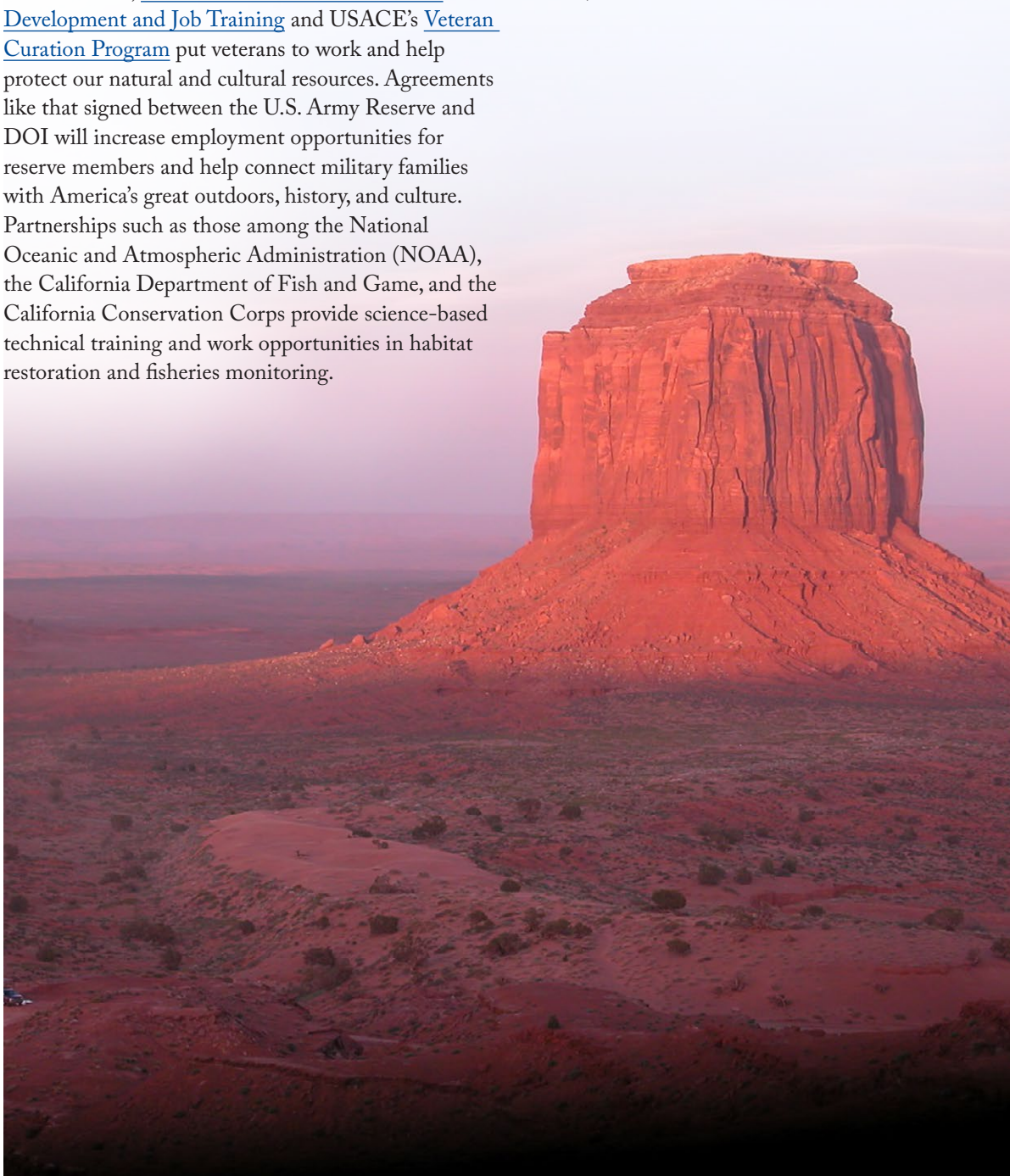
<sup>2</sup> [http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/saving-a-place/public-lands/additional-resources/ChimneyRock\\_FINAL-Report\\_06-15-12.pdf](http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/saving-a-place/public-lands/additional-resources/ChimneyRock_FINAL-Report_06-15-12.pdf)

## Success Story

### Employing Our Veterans

(DOC, DOI, EPA, USACE, USDA) Members of our armed forces and their families make enormous personal sacrifices to protect our country. Connecting veterans with jobs in conservation and restoration is a small way to thank them for their service while benefiting from their skills and experiences. Programs like the [Veterans Fire Corps](#), supported by the U.S. Forest Service, [EPA's Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training](#) and USACE's [Veteran Curation Program](#) put veterans to work and help protect our natural and cultural resources. Agreements like that signed between the U.S. Army Reserve and DOI will increase employment opportunities for reserve members and help connect military families with America's great outdoors, history, and culture. Partnerships such as those among the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Conservation Corps provide science-based technical training and work opportunities in habitat restoration and fisheries monitoring.

The Veterans Job Corps initiative calls for a dramatic expansion of current efforts to help veterans, with a \$1 billion investment to provide employment opportunities for up to 20,000 veterans in conservation and first responder jobs over the next five years. This initiative, called for in the President's State of the Union address and FY 2013 Budget, would hire more transitioning service members and veterans while restoring and protecting America's public lands and waters through opportunities with the DOD, DOI, NOAA, USACE, USDA, and VA.





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# Expanding Access to the Great Outdoors

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America's lands and waters offer a multitude of benefits for our health, environment, and economy. Taking advantage of these benefits relies on access. Our Federal lands and waters provide a vast array of trails, roads, and facilities that support and promote a broad range of recreation and tourism opportunities. According to a report<sup>3</sup> released in June 2012 by the Outdoor Industry Association, the American outdoor recreation economy provides 6.1 million jobs, spurs \$646 billion in spending, and brings \$39.9 billion in Federal tax revenue and \$39.7 billion in state and local tax revenue. AGO is committed to increasing access to the great outdoors so that this economy can continue to thrive and grow. We are working to provide better information on recreational opportunities, improved safety, expanded public transportation, and easier access to urban lands and waters. These measures are providing more ways for more people to experience all the benefits the outdoors have to offer.

*“Hunters and anglers are passionate conservationists who recognize that investing in clean air, clean water, and healthy fish and wildlife populations not only ensures the future of our sporting traditions but also directly benefits our nation’s economy. We believe that the America’s Great Outdoors initiative benefits from multi-sector partnerships that help strengthen the call to action for public and private habitat conservation and expanded access for outdoor recreation.”*

–Katie Eckman, Board Chair,  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

## **Improving Online Recreational Resources**

(DOC, DOI, USACE, USDA) Managed by the Forest Service under the direction of AGO's Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation, [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov) is the most comprehensive website for outdoor recreation information and reservations available anywhere in the world, with 12 million visits annually. In August 2012, the site re-launched with expanded content to more effectively and efficiently help millions of visitors plan travel, find outdoor adventures, and explore activities at national parks, lands, waters, and historic and cultural sites.

## **Promoting Recreation for People with Disabilities**

(DOI, USACE, USDA, DOC) Numerous Federal agencies are partnering with the Catch a Special Thrill Foundation to facilitate recreational fishing experiences and access on Federal lands and waters for over 2,000 veterans and children with disabilities each year.

## **Establishing a New National Water Trails System**

(DOI, EPA, USACE, DOC, DOT) The [National Water Trails System](#) supports a network of public ac-

cess points that connects people and communities to recreational opportunities on shorelines and waterways. Nine National Water Trails were established in 2012 on sections of the Alabama River (AL); Chattahoochee River (GA); Okefenokee Swamp (GA); Kansas River (KS); Mississippi River (MN and MO); Bronx River (NY); Hudson River (NY); and the Willamette River (OR). In the Bronx, this effort leverages the work of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The system will continue to expand across the Nation and within our urban communities to offer Americans affordable, close-to-home recreational opportunities.

## **Highlighting Recreation Opportunities on the Los Angeles River**

(DOI, EPA, USACE) USACE, DOI, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, and local partners are working together to support outdoor recreation on the Los Angeles River. Last summer, the river was opened for the first time in decades for kayaking and canoeing with the “[Paddle the LA River](#)” program. A thousand people, including groups of urban school children, enjoyed a guided tour on a scenic 1.5 mile stretch

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA\\_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167](http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167)

of the river. To restore and sustain this neighborhood resource, DOI has allocated \$1 million for the Los Angeles Basin Stormwater Conservation Study through its WaterSMART Basin Study Program. Additionally, the City opened the new South Los Angeles Wetlands Park, which protects river water quality and provides recreational space to an underserved urban neighborhood on a former railcar and bus maintenance yard. EPA Brownfields grants provided financial assistance for the cleanup of this site.

### **Revitalizing Selma to Montgomery National Historic Civil Rights Trail**

(DOI, DOJ, DOT, EPA, HUD, USACE) The cities of Selma and Montgomery, Alabama are actively revitalizing the [Selma to Montgomery National Historic Civil Rights Trail](#). Federal, state, and local partners, including the [Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#), catalyzed the restoration on the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March. DOI has worked with other Federal agencies to improve signage and trail pull-offs, make the trail more inviting for pedestrians, and create the \$10 million Montgomery Interpretive Center. Restoration efforts are focused on reinvigorating urban neighborhoods as well as rural, underserved communities through brownfield site assessments and remediation, community outreach, and green infrastructure development. DOI has partnered with other Federal agencies and local organizations to collect the oral histories of participants in the Voting Rights Movement from communities in Marion, Selma and Montgomery for sharing at the Interpretive Centers. After these enhancements and programs were put into place, visitation increased by 60% in just one year.

### **Transforming an Urban Landfill into Walkable Green Space**

(DOC, USACE) At [Lincoln Park](#) in Jersey City, New Jersey, a barren landfill, only a few miles from Manhattan on the banks of the Hackensack River, was transformed into 42 acres of wetland habitat made accessible for recreation by walking paths, including a path that connects the park to the Liberty Water Gap National Trail. This is part of a larger effort to restore coastal habitat for fish and wildlife while providing access for the public including boaters, hikers, and anglers.

## Success Story

### **Expanding Access for Hunters and Anglers**

(DOI, USDA) Sportsmen increasingly rely on public lands and waters for hunting and fishing opportunities and have called on the Administration to increase recreational access options. In response, DOI and USDA are investing dedicated portions of their appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire parcels important to hunters and anglers where access is currently impeded or unavailable. Partnering with local sportsmen and conservation organizations, this Federal funding will be leveraged through a 25% cost-share match. In addition, USDA and DOI are collaborating with 40 private organizations across the country to enhance recreational shooting and hunting opportunities on public lands by improving motorized and non-motorized access; disseminating information through signs, brochures, and maps; and promoting hunting ethics and heritage education. Historically, private lands have also provided tremendous recreational opportunities. In order to encourage continued access to private lands, in 2011-2012, nearly \$29 million was invested in the [Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program](#) ("Open Fields"), enabling an estimated 3,000 landowners to open to public access over 2 million acres of land across 26 states and tribal lands. The [Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program](#) provided \$900 million to states for acquiring, maintaining, or improving land for fishing and hunting on over 31 million acres across all 50 states.





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# Establishing Great Urban Parks and Community Green Spaces

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Undertaking ambitious projects in urban areas and bringing parks to people is a hallmark of AGO's vision. With more than 80% of Americans living in urban areas, prioritizing urban projects makes it possible to bring the benefits of the outdoors to millions of people. Collaborations such as the 13-agency Urban Waters Federal Partnership support locally driven priorities by integrating Federal resources from natural resource, environmental, human health, urban infrastructure, and community and economic development agencies. These agencies are working together to create new models of Federal collaboration and community engagement. Through this and other community-driven and community-supported efforts, we are working together to ensure that Americans in urban areas have outdoor spaces that are inviting, close-to-home, safe, and affordable.

***“Parks and close-to-home recreation are vital to healthy and vibrant communities. Here in Knoxville, investing in our rivers and open spaces has revitalized the community and the business sector. America’s Great Outdoors, with a focus on local, community-driven conservation, echoes what we found so successful in Knoxville. With the city, county, and community working together, Knoxville and my business are thriving.”***

—Ed McAlister, Owner, River Sports Outfitters, Knoxville, Tennessee

## **Improving Management of Jamaica Bay**

(DOI, DOT, EPA, USACE) New York City and DOI are coordinating efforts to manage more than 10,000 acres of parkland and estuary stretching across south Brooklyn and Queens in Jamaica Bay. The City and DOI are working together on increasing public access, service, and programs; conducting research and establishing pilot projects to improve water quality; marketing to increase tourism; expanding campgrounds to 60 sites; and developing education programs that connect the City's children to service activities on the Bay. The City and DOI also used \$1.4 million in Department of Transportation (DOT) funds to make major improvements to the Jamaica Bay Greenway, especially increasing access for the 200,000 people who live within a half-mile of the Bay and park sites but are currently blocked by highways. EPA designated most of Jamaica Bay as a “no-discharge zone,” prohibiting boats from dumping sewage, which will protect the waters and marshlands that serve as a migratory stopover for 300 species of birds. And USACE constructed a \$19 million project rebuilding a 40-acre marsh island to provide 180 acres of habitat for wildlife integral to the quality of the popular Gateway National Recreation Area. The collaborative approach and the relationships established on these projects have facilitated recovery

efforts in the area from Hurricane Sandy.

## **Creating Open Space: Millennium Reserve**

(DOC, DOI, EPA) By converting industrial areas to open space, Chicago's [Millennium Reserve](#) will enhance public recreation opportunities on 140,000 acres of land in the Calumet region—an area ten times the size of Manhattan. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) granted \$1 million to support restoration and conservation projects including planting 100,000 trees, restoring native habitat for migratory birds, and restoring coastal wetlands. NOAA also granted \$1 million from its Coastal Zone Management program for restoration of 15 miles of Lake Michigan's shoreline as part of this project. And EPA has provided nearly \$1 million in funding for the control of invasive species in the Reserve and for identifying, developing, and implementing green infrastructure projects in adjacent communities.

## **Connecting St. Louis to the Gateway Arch**

(DOI, DOT) A \$20 million grant from DOT was locally matched by \$25 million from the Missouri Department of Transportation and by \$10 million from the CityArchRiver 2015 Foundation in St. Louis. Aligning these resources will provide the City's 2.8

million residents and 21 million annual visitors with easier access to explore the riverfront by bike or on foot, and an improved connection to the 90 acres of urban national parkland around the base of the St. Louis Gateway Arch.

### **Linking Colorado's Peaks to Prairies**

(DOI, EPA, USDA) In 2012, a \$93,000 Federal investment in the 60-mile Peaks to Prairies Children's Forest Corridor leveraged over \$250,000 in additional private and public funding. The Corridor is linking existing parks and nature centers to create a network of outdoor spaces connecting people, communities, and outdoor experiences in Denver to neighboring National Forests and grasslands. DOI and local governments are connecting Denver to Rocky Mountain National Park through a new trail system, and on the Rocky Mountain Greenway, which will connect three National Wildlife Refuges. Additionally, EPA is improving water quality along Denver's river as part of the South Platte River Urban Waters Federal Partnership pilot. As a result of these synergistic efforts, nearly 3 million residents and millions of tourists who travel to this region will have improved access to Colorado's natural splendors.

### **Restoring New Orleans Landmarks**

(DOC, DHS, DOI, DOT, ED, EPA, HHS, HUD, USACE, USDA) The Urban Waters Federal Partnership worked with local partners to restore iconic local landmarks devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Innovative leasing agreements and Federal coordination helped leverage over \$800,000 in local investments for transforming the historic New Canal Lighthouse into an environmental education center, a community asset which will serve schoolchildren throughout the state of Louisiana. The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced \$1.3 million in assistance to repair Pontchartrain Pier, another Urban Waters Federal Partnership priority area, strengthening the local economy and creating an opportunity for thousands of visitors to experience the waterfront.

## **Success Story**

### **Anacostia River and Trail Restoration**

(DOC, DOI, DOT, ED, EPA, HHS, HUD, USACE) An array of local, state, and Federal organizations have partnered to improve the health, accessibility, and economic viability of the Anacostia River as part of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The river flows through one of the area's poorest neighborhoods where residents have few safe and accessible recreation opportunities. Groundwork Anacostia, a community-based organization supported by NPS and EPA, played an important role in engaging the community to address these issues. In spring 2012, the District of Columbia, DOI, USDA, and other partners completed a major stream restoration project, preventing an annual 1,500 tons of sediment and runoff from entering the river, while providing community greenspace for 150,000 District residents. In summer 2012, DOT awarded a highly competitive, data-driven \$10 million grant to the District of Columbia to complete bicycle and pedestrian paths on the Kenilworth Gardens Trail, connecting hundreds of miles of existing trail networks and unlocking new commuting options in 16 largely underserved Maryland and District of Columbia neighborhoods. EPA and other Federal agencies have partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to create the Anacostia Revitalization Fund, which will invest \$5 million over the next three years for additional watershed restoration and outdoor recreation projects. Through increasing recreational access for boating; creating rain gardens, green roofs, or green streets to prevent pollution from entering the river; establishing urban gardens to address food security issues; and supporting the first environmental group located east of the Anacostia River, Federal agencies are working cooperatively with local partners to restore this urban river.





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# Conserving and Restoring Large Landscapes and Working Lands

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Large, connected natural areas and working farms, forests, and ranches are integral to the American character and economy. These areas range from iconic public lands like Yellowstone National Park to private working farms, forests, and ranchlands found in every region of the Nation. Conserving and restoring those large landscapes and working lands protects ecosystems, the communities that depend on them, our shared heritage, and a way of life. Through AGO, this Administration is partnering with communities across the country to catalyze and bolster local conservation efforts. Whether through Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, or by aligning USDA and DOI investments and authorities in the Great Plains grasslands, we are demonstrating the power of Federal agencies to more effectively align, target, and leverage our resources to accomplish shared goals and objectives.

*“As a private landowner, it is a privilege to partner with the many agencies, corporations, and grassroots organizations that are working to restore and maintain this cherished ecosystem; to be part of something bigger and stand alongside others who share an appreciation for a landscape that is such an important part of America’s heritage.”*

–Dr. Salem Saloom, Longleaf Stewardship Council,  
Brewton, Alabama

## Restoring the Everglades

(CEQ, DOI, EPA, USACE, USDA) Using the partnerships and community-led approach that is a trademark of AGO, the Administration has invested more than \$1.5 billion in [Everglades](#) projects and initiatives that will make a measurable impact on the ground, including nearly \$900 million to jump start key construction projects that will restore water flow and essential habitat. In 2012, DOI and USACE broke ground on the Tamiami Trail one-mile bridge to restore a more natural water flow to Everglades National Park. USACE has started an accelerated planning initiative to restore the heart of the remaining Everglades; under its accelerated approach, the Corps plans to complete its Central Everglades Planning Project in less than three years. EPA and the State of Florida reached a milestone agreement to commit \$879 million to dramatically reduce the flow of farm and suburban pollution into the Everglades, improve water quality, and add nearly 50,000 acres of artificial marshes that will absorb damaging nutrients from contaminated storm runoff. And USDA announced additional funding of \$80 million to restore an additional 23,000 acres of wetlands through voluntary conservation actions by farmers and ranchers, complementing DOI’s

establishment of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. To build on this remarkable progress, the President has requested an additional \$246 million for the Everglades in the FY 2013 Budget.

## Protecting Wildlife Habitat

(DOI, USDA) USDA and DOI announced complementary actions to protect and restore grasslands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat with enormous benefits for farmers, sportsmen, and all Americans. In March 2012, USDA committed to a 1 million acre increase dedicated to wildlife and wetland protection through the [Conservation Reserve Program](#). These initiatives target restoration of drained wetlands; duck nesting habitat in the Prairie Pothole region; upland birds, such as the Northern Bobwhite Quail; and other wildlife of local or regional concern. In October 2012, the Secretary of Agriculture fulfilled that commitment by announcing the allocation of 400,000 additional state acres for wildlife enhancement (SAFE acres). And DOI is investing \$18 million from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and \$1 million from Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations to leverage USDA’s commitment.

### **Leveraging Investments for Longleaf Pine Restoration**

(DOD, DOI, USDA) Building on nearly a decade of investment to restore longleaf pine forests in the southeast, a vibrant public-private partnership between NFWF, Federal agencies, and the Southern Company established a \$3 million [Longleaf Stewardship Fund](#). In its first year, 16 projects in seven states will lead to 11,000 acres of longleaf restored and more than 122,000 additional acres of enhanced longleaf wildlife habitat. Additionally, 1,600 private landowners are receiving education and technical assistance related to longleaf restoration and available cost-share programs, with 235 entering into stewardship programs on private lands.

### **Partnering with Local Communities on Forest Landscape Restoration**

(USDA) The [Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program](#) was established specifically to create job stability and a reliable wood supply through a ten-year commitment of restoration support; restore forest health; and reduce the costs of fire suppression all within the framework of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder, science-based initiative. Working with local governments, tribes, small businesses, and conservation groups, USDA is investing \$44.6 million in 23 high-priority and Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects that are creating or maintaining 1,550 jobs, reducing wildfire risk, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitats. In 2012, projects were funded in California, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Idaho, Oregon, New Mexico, and North Carolina.

### **Protecting the Crown of the Continent**

(DOI, USDA) The Crown of the Continent is one of several AGO large landscapes that is demonstrating the advantages and opportunities of coordinated agency and partner action through focused investment and collaboration. In 2012 alone, habitat restoration and acquisition investments from DOI and USDA will restore 4,200 acres of wetlands and uplands and 32 miles of river; provide approximately \$1.1 million

in eight counties as well as on the Flathead Indian Reservation to private landowners who are implementing conservation practices; remove seven fish barriers; and invest nearly \$5 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund easements and acquisitions.

### **Supporting Shared Conservation Goals**

(DOI, USDA) Through a ground-breaking and innovative approach to large landscape planning, USDA and DOI collaboratively identified projects and will invest \$108 million in Land and Water Conservation Funds to protect 73,000 acres of high-value conservation, recreational, and working lands that span multiple agencies and landowners. This approach supports communities that are developing shared conservation visions for large, connected areas.

## **Success Story**

### **Working Lands for Wildlife**

(DOI, USDA) Working Lands for Wildlife is a new partnership between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USFWS to provide financial assistance and the technical expertise of multiple agencies to combat the decline of seven keystone wildlife species. In 2012, NRCS obligated over \$21 million from the [Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program](#) to assist landowners in enhancing habitat for these key species while providing regulatory predictability that the actions will not be subject to further requirements under the Endangered Species Act. In just the first six months, more than 800 landowners enrolled in the program and over 310,000 acres of wildlife habitat is being restored for the seven imperiled species. Working Lands for Wildlife is an innovative partnership that empowers America's farmers and ranchers to continue working their lands while furthering conservation of species through voluntary measures. It serves as a model for a more efficient, more effective, and more cooperative way to improve the health and diversity of working landscapes while strengthening local economies.

***“All the agencies and private landowners involved here are working together in the same direction. That’s the kind of cooperation and continuity we need.”***

**–Ray Ackley, Cattleman,  
Tulelake, California,  
commenting on Working Lands for Wildlife**



BLM



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# Enhancing Rivers and Other Waters

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Healthy rivers and waters support thriving communities and sustainable economies. Rivers provide close-to-home recreational opportunities and support diverse cultural traditions for Americans, nearly all of whom live within a mile of a river or a stream. Rivers also provide vital habitat and migration corridors for fish and wildlife. The United States has the highest freshwater aquatic species diversity in the world. Maintaining this level of diversity depends upon protecting and restoring freshwater habitat. Healthy rivers and waters also support the national economy and local businesses, with the fishing and water sports industries delivering \$122 billion<sup>4</sup> in direct spending and supporting over 1.1 million jobs across the country.

*“The Penobscot project partners are demonstrating an innovative solution that benefits both hydropower and sea-run fisheries restoration – both good for business throughout the Gulf of Maine region.”*

–Scott D. Hall, Vice President, Environmental & Business Services,  
Black Bear Hydro Partners, LLC, Milford, Maine

## **Establishing the National Blueways System**

(DOI, USACE, USDA) In May 2012, the Secretary of the Interior established the National Blueways System to enhance river-oriented outdoor recreation and education, natural resource stewardship, and sustainable economic development. The first National Blueway designated is New England’s Connecticut River and its 7.2 million-acre watershed, where more than 40 organizations and agencies have come together to restore and connect the public to the river and nearly 2 million acres of conserved land. This designation is a call to action for communities, stakeholders, and agencies to attract investment, promote best practices, share information, leverage public and private resources, and encourage collaborative stewardship of large river systems across the country. We have learned through decades of experience that river restoration requires integrated and adaptive land and water management strategies and a watershed-wide approach. The National Blueways System recognizes and supports stakeholder partnerships taking this approach.

## **Protecting Wetlands in the White and Cache Rivers Watershed**

(DOI, USACE, USDA) Led by USACE, the Administration has leveraged AGO to establish an integrated conservation strategy in the White and Cache Rivers Watershed, a 3.8 million-acre forested wetland system in Arkansas and Missouri, which is the most important wintering area for mallards in North

America, and a Wetland of International Importance. Together with local, state, and tribal partners, the project has established 72,896 acres of conservation easements, proposed to enlarge existing wildlife refuges by up to 125,000 acres, begun the restoration of four miles of river, and established over 13 miles of canoe trails.

## **Investing in Priority Watersheds**

(EPA, USDA) The [National Water Quality Initiative](#) is a commitment to improving impaired watersheds in every U.S. state and territory. State and local partners worked together to select 154 watersheds for the initiative. This year, USDA has made \$33 million available to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to implement conservation practices to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities in these watersheds. EPA is working closely with USDA and state agencies to leverage funding in these priority watersheds, and to gauge projects’ success in addressing water quality impairments.

## **Providing Multi-Faceted Recreation on the Colorado River**

(DOI, USACE) DOI collaborated with Federal, state, and local partners on the Colorado River Heritage Greenway Park and Trails, a 1,191-acre, \$27 million public park and trail system serving the states of Nevada, Arizona, and California, and consisting of more than five miles of trails, four day-use areas, three

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA\\_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167](http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167)

fishing piers, 15 picnic and shade shelter sites, equestrian facilities, and a highway pedestrian bridge with river access. The project is also restoring two miles of stream habitat and floodplain connectivity with the removal of 700,000 cubic yards of fill material along the Colorado River.

### **Collaborating to Benefit Fish and Farms**

(DOC, DOI, EPA, USACE, USDA) On the Sacramento River in Red Bluff, California, DOI, in collaboration with Federal and state regulatory agencies, environmental and local interests, and project beneficiaries, has completed the [Red Bluff Fish Passage Improvement Project](#). The Project allows migrating salmon and green sturgeon unimpeded access to nearly 60 miles of productive river habitat while maintaining irrigation water deliveries to 150,000 acres of prime farmland. Also included is construction of a 25-acre riparian restoration mitigation area adjacent to the river. Completion of this large-scale undertaking in a short timeframe was accomplished through interagency and stakeholder collaboration, and the Project has been touted as a model of multi-agency partnership.

### **Strategically Investing to Restore the Chesapeake Bay**

(EPA, USACE, USDA) The EPA Chesapeake Bay Program and NFWF awarded \$9.2 million in 2012 grants for restoration and outreach activities in the District of Columbia and the six states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Forty-one funded projects will engage 9,000 volunteers in restoration work, improve 176 miles of streamside forests, and restore 158 acres of wetlands. These grants add to DOI's investment in 2012 of nearly \$29 million in the watershed, USDA's \$40 million investment for on-the-ground projects to reduce nutrient and sediment loads running off private lands, and USACE's partnership with NOAA and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to continue oyster reef construction and monitor restored oyster habitat. Additionally, USACE restored, planted and opened 35 acres of wetland and tidal habitat to fish and natural tidal flow at Poplar Island, a popular destination for tours and educational programs and a nesting and nursery habitat for over 170 species. Throughout the Chesapeake, diverse agencies led by EPA and USDA have pooled resources with private funding to make smart and cost-effective investments that are directly benefiting rivers and watersheds.

## **Success Story**

### **Restoring a Historic Fishery While Maintaining Hydropower**

(DOC, DOI, USDA) The Penobscot River restoration project tells a compelling story: of a diverse public-private partnership helping endangered Atlantic salmon and struggling populations of ten other native sea-run species to return to their spawning ground for the first time in over 150 years; of restoring a tribal nation's connection to their heritage; of an ecosystem-wide approach to reconnecting the Gulf of Maine to upriver habitat for the benefit of people and nature; of undertaking all these goals without compromising hydropower production; and of the power of AGO in raising the visibility of the project and bringing it to the cusp of completion.

Since 2004, Federal, state, and tribal agencies, corporate interests, and non-governmental partners have worked to secure nearly \$62 million in public and private funds for restoration to benefit Federal trust species, tribal culture, and Gulf of Maine fisheries, to spur community and economic development, and to create construction and engineering jobs in New England's second largest watershed. NOAA and USFWS have invested more than \$22.6 million to date for carrying out an innovative public-private partnership plan to remove the Great Works and Veazie dams and install a fishway around Howland dam. Earlier this summer, we celebrated the beginning of Great Works dam removal, an important step on a long-term path to restore 1,000 miles of fish habitat along the Penobscot and its tributaries. USDA, USFWS, the State of Maine Fisheries management agencies, Penobscot Indian Nation, the Atlantic Salmon Federation and large private forest landowners are focusing on the thousands of road stream crossings and log driving dams affecting stream connectivity. During 2012, NRCS and partners reconnected close to twenty miles of stream habitat and a thousand acres of lake habitat, a priority for restoration of alewife populations. Atlantic salmon, Atlantic sturgeon, American eel, shad, blueback and river herring, and five other migratory fish stocks are expected to increase substantially as a result of the reopened river and stream habitat.



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# The Path Ahead

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The AGO initiative was built from unprecedented public input. It provides great insight into what it takes to successfully conceive and implement a conservation agenda in the 21st century. The tangible results achieved through AGO have relied on an approach that is science-based, community-driven, landscape-scale, interagency, and multi-sectored. It has brought communities and citizens together and has helped Federal agencies become better conservation partners.

Through partnerships, we have shared responsibility for the work that has led to our collective success. Connecting people and places across the nation through conservation requires commitment and resources from more than any one agency or organization. We strive to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The collaboration AGO has demonstrated between the public and private sectors; between Federal, State, local, and tribal governments; between natural resource and cultural resource interests; and between local communities and the Federal government has led to innovative approaches and will continue to support existing programs for conservation and connectivity in America. The creativity, experience, and insight of individuals and organizations across sectors promise to extend the reach and impact of AGO into communities and conversations far beyond the Federal government.

Enjoying and protecting our lands and waters is an American value that crosses regional, demographic, and political lines. More than 80% of American voters polled in 2012 said that “conserving our country’s natural resources—our land, air, and water—is patriotic.”<sup>5</sup> Such widespread enthusiasm coupled with AGO’s strategies ensure that future efforts will continue to produce success. We are proud of our shared accomplishments thus far; but more than ever, we look forward to what can be achieved in the years ahead.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nature.org/aboutus/june-2012-public-key-findings.pdf>



USFS

## List of Acronyms

<b>21CSC</b>	21st-Century Conservation Service Corps
<b>ACHP</b>	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
<b>AGO</b>	America's Great Outdoors
<b>BIA</b>	Bureau of Indian Affairs
<b>BIE</b>	Bureau of Indian Education
<b>BLM</b>	Bureau of Land Management
<b>CDBG</b>	Community Development Block Grants
<b>CELCP</b>	Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program
<b>CEQ</b>	Council on Environmental Quality
<b>CNCS</b>	Corporation for National and Community Service
<b>CRP</b>	Conservation Reserve Program
<b>CSC</b>	Coastal Services Center
<b>DOC</b>	Department of Commerce
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense
<b>DOI</b>	Department of the Interior
<b>DOJ</b>	Department of Justice
<b>DOL</b>	Department of Labor
<b>DOT</b>	Department of Transportation
<b>EDA</b>	U.S. Economic Development Administration
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency
<b>EQIP</b>	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
<b>FACA</b>	Federal Advisory Committee Act
<b>FICOR</b>	Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation
<b>FWS</b>	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GRP</b>	Grassland Reserve Program
<b>HHS</b>	Department of Health and Human Services
<b>HUD</b>	Department of Housing and Urban Development
<b>LWCF</b>	Land and Water Conservation Fund
<b>LMO</b>	Let's Move Outside!
<b>NCCC</b>	National Civilian Community Corps
<b>NOAA</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<b>NPS</b>	National Park Service
<b>NRCS</b>	Natural Resources Conservation Service
<b>OMB</b>	Office of Management and Budget
<b>RTCA</b>	Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
<b>SCORPs</b>	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans
<b>Tiger Grants</b>	Transportation Investment Generation Economic Recovery Grants
<b>USACE</b>	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
<b>USDA</b>	Department of Agriculture
<b>USFS</b>	U.S. Forest Service
<b>USGS</b>	U.S. Geological Survey



