



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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**News Release**

## **Secretary Jewell Offers Vision for Next 100 Years of Conservation in America**

**WASHINGTON** – In remarks at the National Geographic Society and [released early on Medium](#), U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today laid out a vision for actions the nation can take to build upon America’s rich conservation legacy and pass on healthy public lands and waters to the next generation.

The Secretary delivered the remarks during National Park Week to help mark the 100th birthday of the National Park Service. During the speech, Jewell called for a “course correction” for conservation that includes inspiring all Americans from all backgrounds to connect with public lands; implementing smart, landscape-level planning to support healthy ecosystems and sustainable development; and greater investments in national parks and public lands to prepare for the next century of conservation.

During her remarks, Jewell also announced that the federal government will undertake a first-of-its-kind study to analyze the impact outdoor recreation has on the nation’s economy. The Commerce Department’s Bureau of Economic Analysis feasibility study will present detailed and defensible data on the importance of outdoor recreation as a distinct component of the economy that can help inform decision making and management of public lands and waters.

“By producing credible data on the tangible economic benefits of public lands, we can help the public and Members of Congress better understand the benefits of investing in them,” Jewell said. “Industry estimates show that consumer spending for outdoor recreation is greater than household utilities and pharmaceuticals combined – and yet the federal government has never fully recognized or quantified these benefits. This project is the start of a multi-year effort to count these contributions in a comprehensive and impartial way.”

For more on the outdoor recreation economic report, [click here](#).

To view the speech online, visit [doi.gov/parksforall](http://doi.gov/parksforall).

### ***Secretary Jewell's remarks as prepared for delivery:***

This week is National Park Week – a time when we celebrate the more than 400 natural, historical and cultural sites that make up the most incredible parks system on Earth. Places that attract visitors from around the world and inspire other nations to follow our lead.

But being the “best” wasn’t always a forgone conclusion.

During World War II, national parks fell into a state of disrepair. Congress, needing to fund the war effort, directed much-needed resources elsewhere.

After the war, veterans packed up their families and drove to the national parks, looking to heal and reconnect in the way that we know getting outside can uniquely do. Instead, the war heroes and their families were greeted by crumbling buildings, roads full of potholes and huge crowds.

The state of the parks got so bad that Harper’s Magazine ran an essay in 1953 entitled, “Let’s Close the National Parks.” The author, Bernard DeVoto, hoped the shock of suggesting that Yellowstone, Yosemite and the Grand Canyon should be shut down until they were worthy of visitors would push Congress to properly funding the nation’s crown jewels.

So that could have been the end of the story, the tombstone reading: Here lies the national parks. Loved to death.

But DeVoto’s essay, plus a few visionary leaders – like Conrad Wirth, who was Park Service Director in the Eisenhower Administration – spurred a historic investment in our national parks. Starting in 1956 – the year I was born – and over the course of the next 10 years, more than a billion dollars of capital improvements were completed. Roads were fixed, sewer systems upgraded, and visitor centers added – just in time for the Park Service’s 50th anniversary in 1966.

Mission 66, as it was called, was rooted in the simple idea that investing in our national parks was an investment in the heart of our nation – not only our economy, but our very identity.

Corporations also stepped up to help, like the memorable ad campaign of the day: “See the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet,” a jingle that my generation can still hear in our minds.

And what happened to all those kids who were loaded into the backs of station wagons and taken to Rocky Mountain National Park for their summer vacation?

They grew up. They became today’s champions for the national parks.

The real legacy of Mission 66 is that it inspired an entire generation – baby boomers, my generation – to love and visit and support the great outdoors.

You don’t need to look too hard to see the parallels to today.

Our national parks are being visited in record numbers – 307 million visits last year alone.

But our maintenance backlog – nearing \$12 billion – is also at record levels. And budget crunches have left our national parks and public lands understaffed and struggling to keep up with day-to-day operations.

And the people visiting the parks? It’s still the baby boomers. The majority of visitors to national parks today look like me: older and whiter.

Which means we haven’t found a way to connect with the young people of today, who are more diverse, more tech-savvy, and more disconnected from nature than ever before.

Those trends coincide with the emergence of an extreme movement to seize public lands – from Oregon to Puerto Rico – putting lands that belong to all Americans at risk of being sold off for a short-term gain to the highest bidder. This movement has propped up dangerous voices that reject the

rule of law, put communities and hard-working public servants at risk, and fail to appreciate how deeply democratic and American our national parks and public lands are.

What's more, climate change – the most pressing issue of our time – threatens our land and water in existential ways, with longer, hotter fire seasons, record-breaking droughts, and more frequent and severe superstorms.

Some experts believe that we're on the brink of the planet's sixth mass extinction, with humans playing a major role in wiping out species at a rate 53 times greater than normal.

And a new analysis by the non-profit Conservation Science Partners finds that natural areas out West are disappearing at the rate of a football field every two and a half minutes.

If you add that all up, you're looking at a pretty bleak picture. If we stay on this trajectory, 100 years from now, national parks and wildlife refuges will be like postage stamps of nature on a map. Isolated islands of conservation with run-down facilities that crowds of Americans visit like zoos to catch a glimpse of our nation's remaining wildlife and undeveloped patches of land.

Now, that can't – and won't – happen.

But we, as a country, need to make a major course correction in how we approach conservation to ensure a bright future for our public lands and waters.

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Here's what I believe that course correction looks like:

First and foremost, we need to kick off the new century of American conservation by issuing a giant, open invitation to every American to visit their national parks and public lands.

The National Park Service's Centennial is about inspiring people – from all ages and all backgrounds and all walks of life – to love the great outdoors and our rich history and culture.

If we're successful, the next generation of America's elected officials, scientists, philanthropists, teachers, and Supreme Court justices will understand the value of conservation and public lands.

I'm proud of the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation for launching the Find Your Park campaign. The campaign, which kicked off last year, has already made nearly six billion impressions, which is marketing speak for 'they've reached a lot of people.'

The campaign is making a special effort to target Millennials and a diverse, young audience. For example, I will admit that I did not know who Bella Thorne was a year ago, but her six million Twitter followers did. So when she tweeted #findyourpark, I humbly submit that meant a lot more than when I did it.

I'm also proud of the President's Every Kid in a Park initiative. By providing every fourth grader in America with a free pass to visit our nation's public lands and waters with their families, we're breaking down barriers that can keep underserved communities from discovering the great outdoors.

Some of my favorite moments in this job have been handing out the passes – like to a fourth grade class of Native American students outside Tucson, Arizona. Along with several elders from the Tohono O'odham Nation, we took a hike in Saguaro National Park where we learned how the kids' ancestors and the desert have co-existed for thousands of years. It was a magical experience.

I am committed to making sure that this program lasts long after I leave this office, so that 12 years from now, we'll have a whole generation of students whose love for public lands was sparked in fourth grade.

We also need to ensure that when a diverse class of 4th graders does visit, that they see park rangers who look like them. Or talk to wildlife biologists who share their background. Or see signs in their first language.

Or, that they can visit a place that honors their heritage or culture.

For too long, our national parks have ignored important parts of our nation's story. I'm proud of what this President has done to expand that story and make our national parks and public lands more relevant to all Americans.

People like César Chávez, Harriet Tubman and the Buffalo Soldiers now have their contributions to this country rightfully recognized through the national parks.

Just last week, President Obama acted again. In establishing the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, he honored a key chapter in the ongoing fight for political, social and economic equality.

Still, with only a sliver of national parks and historic sites focused on women, minorities and underrepresented communities, there's more to be done. Right now, there's not one national park or national monument focused on the struggle for LGBT rights. And we haven't done enough to celebrate the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or Latinos, or Native Americans, or African Americans.

That needs to change, and I look forward to continuing our efforts to leave our national parks and public lands decisively more inclusive places than they were in 2009.

To that end, throughout this summer, my team and I will travel across the country to hear from communities about their vision for conservation as we look to the next 100 years. Our goal will be to find and highlight opportunities where we can make progress – both in the near and long term – to ensure that our parks and public lands are benefiting all Americans.

From coast to coast, we'll talk to communities about: What places are special to you and why? What's important to your community's economy, your identity, your heritage? And how can we make it easier for you to visit and enjoy your public lands?

This is about lifting up what's working and learning what we can do better when it comes to supporting our public lands. My first stop will be this Friday in Florida to celebrate another major milestone in the effort to restore the natural water flows in the Florida Everglades. Then, in the coming weeks, I'll visit Montana to talk about the nexus between public lands and outdoor recreation. I plan to visit Idaho to discuss building resilient sagebrush landscapes in the face of wildfires. And I plan to visit places, like Utah, where there are a range of conservation proposals – legislative and otherwise – to further protect public lands.

My team and I look forward to getting out into communities across the country this summer.

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Let me pause for a minute here to talk about the Antiquities Act, because there's a lot of discussion about it in this final year of the President's term.

For over 100 years, since Congress passed the law in 1906, Presidents have used this authority to protect special places that, without action, might be lost forever to wrecking balls, looting or other destructive activities.

I believe it's one of the most important tools a President has to improve our country. It's a tool that should not be used lightly or invoked without serious consideration of the impacts on current and future generations. President Obama has been judicious and thoughtful in his use of the Antiquities Act.

I do not think the Act should only be used in places where there is complete agreement, as some are suggesting.

If that were the case, then Teddy Roosevelt would never have protected the Grand Canyon or Muir Woods. And Franklin Roosevelt would never have protected Zion or Joshua Tree.

These were all controversial when they were established. Just go look up old quotes in the local papers from Members of Congress or developers who decried that a national monument would tie up resources and halt economic progress – all for a little bit of scenery.

But their doomsday predictions didn't come true. And today, every one of those (now) national parks is an economic engine and huge source of pride for its respective state.

There are communities across America who believe that President Obama should act to protect more special places. Places that, yes, help tell a more complete story of America. Places with incredible antiquities at risk of looting or development. Places that could create local jobs and boost small businesses should they be recognized on the national stage. Places that future generations should have the chance to experience for themselves.

I believe these ideas should be heard and discussed. Even when – in fact, especially when – there's a spectrum of opinions. Or when the path forward isn't always clear. In some cases, I imagine the best next step will simply be more conversations.

But I've found in my life – whether as a parent, a banker, a CEO, a volunteer, or an Interior Secretary – that the best results start with the simple act of listening. So that's what I plan to do.

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The second course correction we need to make is to think big. It's simply not enough to protect a few isolated places.

The same analysis I cited earlier by Conservation Science Partners found that, if you were to randomly drop a pin in a natural area in the West, on average it'd be only 3.5 miles from some form of human development.

Think about that. That's a great statistic if you're a lost hiker looking to be rescued. But it has highly alarming implications for the mule deer or the grizzly bear who need connected corridors of land to survive.

When I was walking into National Geographic today, I stopped in the lobby to check out the display on Yellowstone. There's a panel that reminded me that it wasn't that long ago that we didn't quite know where or why animals disappeared for half the year. Even into the 1800's, many believed that migrating birds spent the winter buried in mud at the bottom of ponds.

Well, we know better now.

We know that healthy, intact ecosystems are fundamental to the health of our wildlife – and our nation. They clean our air and provide our drinking water, they store carbon and combat climate change, and they are critical to our economy.

But if their integrity is undermined by a haphazard web of transmission lines, pipelines and roads, where does that leave us 50 years from now? Or 500?

It's an issue that can't be solved by simply creating a new national park or wildlife refuge – although there's no doubt that we need those places to serve as critical anchors for conservation.

What we need is smart planning, on a landscape-level, irrespective of manmade lines on a map. We need to take a holistic look at an ecosystem – on land or in the ocean – to determine where it makes sense to develop, where it makes sense to protect the natural resources, and where we can accomplish both.

This isn't a pie-in-the-sky idea. We need look no further than the greater sage-grouse conservation effort to see what's possible when people work together across a landscape.

The bird's 173-million acre range spans federal, state, and private lands across 11 states in the West. Lands that – not surprisingly – overlap in some places where folks want to mine, graze, or drill for oil and gas. Lands that are also home to hundreds of other species, like elk and pronghorn.

Rather than shut down all economic activity to save the sage-grouse, or let it go the way of the dodo, stakeholders came together to map out what areas are too important to the bird to disturb, what areas should have development activity modified or adjusted, and what areas should have the green light to continue business as usual.

You know how this ends. As a result of this unprecedented planning effort, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the greater sage-grouse does not need the protection of the Endangered Species Act.

I'm not suggesting that this was an easy task. It wasn't, by any stretch of the imagination. But the epic collaboration did result in a thoughtful, science-based roadmap for a healthy ecosystem and sustainable development across a landscape.

That's the model for the future of conservation. That big-picture, roll-up-your-sleeves, get-input-from-all-stakeholders kind of planning is how land management agencies should orient themselves in the 21st century.

That's why, this year, I look forward to getting a number of things across the finish line to cement the forward-thinking path we have embarked upon.

That includes completing the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, where the Bureau of Land Management is working with state and local partners to map out our part of 22 million acres in the California desert where we want to encourage wind and solar projects, and where we want to manage for conservation.

That includes issuing Master Leasing Plans for places like Moab, Utah, where we are collaborating with local stakeholders to develop a blueprint for balancing energy development with conservation and outdoor recreation.

That includes finalizing the Bureau of Land Management's Planning 2.0 rule, which institutionalizes this new way of doing business – engaging early and often with stakeholders.

And that includes a comprehensive review of the Federal coal program.

In the meantime, we also have some work left to reexamine whether decisions made in prior administrations properly considered where it makes sense to develop and where it doesn't. Or where science is helping us better understand the value of the land and water and potential impacts of development. Places like Badger Two-Medicine in Montana, or the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, or the Roan Plateau in Colorado.

These are special areas, and I look forward to making progress on them this year.

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The third and final area where I believe we need to make a course correction is related to resources.

The National Park Service is about to release a report that parks generated \$32 billion in economic activity for the nation in 2015.

They did that on a budget of about \$3 billion, meaning that for every dollar invested in the national parks, taxpayers saw a 10 to 1 return on investment. As a businessperson, I can tell you that's pretty darn good.

But just as we did with Mission 66, our nation needs to make serious investments in our national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, public lands and waters to ensure that they are prepared for the next 100 years.

That not only means investments in roads and bridges, but also in "green" infrastructure to check the spread of invasive species, build resilient coastlines in the face of climate change, and restore wetlands and watersheds.

Congress took a good step with last year's Omnibus, but we need to do more to give national parks and public lands the resources they need to fund critical infrastructure projects, leverage private donations, and enhance visitor experiences. The Administration's Centennial Act proposal, introduced in Congress by Senator Cantwell and Representative Grijalva, does just that – and I remain hopeful that, working together, we can get it across the finish line.

Congress can also do right by permanently authorizing and fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million as originally intended. Congress took an important initial step to reauthorize the fund for three years, but it should not have been the battle it was, and it should not be seen as enough.

And Congress can help greatly in dealing with the ever-increasing threat of wildfires by making a simple change in the budget to treat large-scale fires like the disasters they are. This will help the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management avoid borrowing money from other programs – including those designed to prevent future wildfires.

To be sure, there are many great champions for conservation in Congress. I'm hopeful that we can convince even more Members to support public land management agencies in accomplishing what the American public expects of us, which is being in the "forever business."

The federal government can do our part by spending our money wisely, encouraging public-private partnerships and inspiring volunteer service, which fosters a deep personal connection to public lands and has become essential in supporting our visitors.

We can also do a better job of capturing the value of public lands.

Now, I'm not talking about the value of hearing the quiet of the night pierced by the howl of wolves that once again roam Yellowstone. Or the value of feeling the first rays of sun while catching the sunrise on Cadillac Mountain in Acadia. Or the value of seeing your grandchild try in vain to wrap his little arms around the old growth trees in the Pacific Northwest.

There are some things you can't put a price tag on.

But by producing credible data on the tangible economic benefits of public lands, we can help the public and Members of Congress better understand the benefits of investing in them.

That's why, today, I'm pleased to announce that we will work with the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis to produce an independent study on what impact outdoor recreation has on our nation's economy. Hunting, boating, hiking, OHVing, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor activities are so closely tied to the health and accessibility of our public lands, yet this sector has, for too long, been overlooked and undervalued.

Industry estimates show that consumer spending for outdoor recreation is almost equal to pharmaceuticals and motor vehicles and parts combined – and yet the federal government has never fully recognized or quantified these benefits.

We want to know the impact of everything from buying gear, to hiring a guide, to renting hotel rooms in gateway communities. This project is the start of a multi-year effort to quantify these contributions in a comprehensive and impartial way.

So today, we are putting America's outdoor economy on equal footing with every other major economic sector. This fast-growing economic powerhouse deserves to be counted.

I'd like to thank the bipartisan group of Members in the House and Senate for championing this issue.

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We're celebrating the 100th birthday of the National Park Service this year – but there's another, much less well known anniversary also happening in 2016. That's the 40th anniversary of a landmark piece of legislation that provided a framework in which public lands could be managed in perpetuity for the benefit of present and future generations. It defined the Bureau of Land Management's mission as one of multiple use and sustained yield – a new concept for the times, but which today stands as the agency's greatest strength.

That legislation is called the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, or FLPMA.

It just rolls right off the tongue, doesn't it?

I raise this because being in the forever business doesn't always lend itself to the best soundbites. I imagine that Mad Men's Don Draper would not have suggested the name 'FLPMA' if given the task of marketing what the Bureau of Land Management does for the American people.

And yet, this country's public lands, national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and federal waters are some of the most valuable assets that we collectively own.

At a time when they face threats from land grabs to climate change, we can't afford to turn our backs on them.

That won't happen because I believe we are at the dawn of a new conservation era in America.



Americans are more determined than ever to solve the problems we face. To take action to confront climate change. To pass ballot initiatives to fund parks and open space. To work the lands in a sustainable way. To give everyone an equal chance to get outdoors.

Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, Rachel Carson – the conservation movements they ignited fit their particular historical moment.

And likewise, the groundswell for conservation that is building today is different from any other we have seen. It is digital, it is diverse, and – more than ever – it is motivated by values that are widely shared among Americans of all political beliefs.

Find me someone who doesn't take pride in America's wildlife, in our clean air and clean drinking water. Find me someone who really wants to privatize the national parks. Find me someone who doesn't want to pass on a healthy planet to their children.

When I am with young people in nature – like the 4th graders from a California farming community who squealed when they saw island foxes on the Channel Islands after studying how they have been brought back from the brink of extinction – I am confident that we are waking up as a people to recognize what's at stake.

The truth is that – outside of Washington, D.C. and the rhetoric heard on some campaign trails, at least – Americans know we need to correct course if we are to ensure a bright future for our public lands and waters.

As Americans who continue to benefit from the foresight of Mission 66, we now have a responsibility to inspire a new generation of outdoor stewards to keep public lands public.

So, let us use this special year of the Centennial to set a new path for conservation in the 21st century. One that celebrates the diversity of public lands. One that relies on science and collaboration to chart a sustainable future for entire landscapes and ecosystems. One that invests the necessary resources into these incredible places. And one that welcomes all Americans to help care for our most treasured assets as though they were their own – because they are!

Thank you to the public servants, public lands advocates, National Geographic and all of you in joining this effort to start the next 100 years of American conservation on the right foot.