Interior Department to Hire Nearly 17,000 Young People to Work on Public Lands

Secretary Jewell Announces $4.2 Million in Competitive Grants to Employ more than 600 Young Americans at 22 Projects

PORTLAND, Ore. – In response to President Obama’s challenge to expand employment opportunities for youth, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced $4.2 million in grants to support conservation employment and mentoring opportunities for more than 600 young people ages 15-25 on public lands across the country.

The grants, which support the Obama Administration’s efforts to develop a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC), include $1.27 million from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), which helped leverage $2.65 million from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and $275,000 from Wells Fargo.

“This initiative is a model of how public-private partnerships can both conserve our land and provide opportunities for our young people to obtain jobs skills and broaden their horizons by connecting with the great outdoors,” said Secretary Jewell. “Through the 21CSC, we hope to expand these partnerships that foster economic opportunities and create a connection with nature for young people that lasts a lifetime.”

The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps is a national collaborative effort to put America’s youth and returning veterans to work protecting, restoring and enhancing America’s great outdoors. This year, the Department plans to provide conservation employment opportunities to nearly 17,000 youth in national parks, wildlife refuges, and on other public lands.

Jewell and Portland Mayor Charlie Hales kicked off the summer work season at an event in Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge in Oregon where they were joined by Krystyna Wolniakowski, Pacific Northwest Regional Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and members of the Northwest Youth Corps, one of this year’s grant recipients.

“By providing more than 600 conservation jobs, this partnership will help introduce young people from diverse backgrounds to meaningful employment opportunities, mentorships and the joy of the
great outdoors,” said Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director and CEO of NFWF. “Our investment will be matched by more than twice that amount from the grantees, and helps to foster a new generation of conservationists.”

In 2009, the Department established a Department-wide program and strong performance goals with participation of all of the bureaus and offices led by the Office of Youth in the Great Outdoors to engage, educate, and employ youth. Since then, the Department has built one of the largest and most visible youth programs at the national level, employing more than 84,000 youth through direct hires and partnerships on public lands.

The grants announced today, awarded through a competitive process, will support 22 projects on public lands throughout the West. They are funded through the America’s Great Outdoors: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationists initiative.

In addition to providing valuable conservation work experience, the grants will result in more than 1,000 volunteer opportunities to expose young people to the great outdoors.

The 22 projects announced today are below. Additional details are available here.

**PROJECTS**

**ALASKA:**

64 Degrees North Restoration: The Salcha Delta Soil and Water Conservation District, housed in Delta Junction Alaska, is working with the BLM and other federal agencies in environmental stewardship programs to connect the land and people through technical guidance resource management assistance. This project, 64 Degrees North Restoration, will connect youth to the environment by hiring five rural Alaskan youth (ranging in age from 14 to 25) and one crew leader through an eight-week educational instruction and hands-on conservation program working with BLM field staff and wildlife biologists to develop skills for conservation careers. $19,850 BLM; $25,000 Wells Fargo; $50,000 non-federal funds.

**ARIZONA:**

Youth & Wildlife Conservation at Las Cienegas Grasslands: The Arizona Antelope Foundation (AAF) will expand an existing youth education opportunity focused on black-tailed prairie dog (BTPD) reintroductions and the AAF’s Southeast Arizona Grasslands Pronghorn Initiative in the summer season of 2013. The AAF will partner with the Southwestern Conservation Corps to hire and equip eight youth to accomplish the necessary pronghorn fence modifications on Las Cienegas and to support intensive observation and mark and recapture efforts on four newly BTPD established colonies. The youth will work for 12 weeks in the summer spending half of their time on the BTPD project and half on the pronghorn fence modification project. $79,400 BLM; $95,000 non-federal funds.

Arizona Youth Conservation Engagement Pathway Pilot Project: The Gila Watershed Partnership, in collaboration with Friends of the Verde River Greenway and Ironwood Tree Experience, will develop an innovative pilot project called the “Arizona Youth Conservation Engagement Pathway Pilot Project”. This pathway will begin early in high school, continue through community college, and include experiential activities, training and participation in youth conservation corps programs. $70,000 BLM; $10,000 Reclamation; $227,338 non-federal funds.
CALIFORNIA:

Engaging Youth as Land Stewards: The Student Conservation Association, Inc. (SCA) will provide stipends to six conservation crews working throughout the state to improve wildlife habitat in California. Through this project, 42 youth will receive work skills and career training and 10 young adults will be employed as crew leaders. The crews will be mentored by field staff from the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and SCA while working on lands of high conservation value: King Range Conservation Area, Lacks Creek Management Area, Mike Thompson Wildlife Area, South Spit of Humboldt Bay, Headwaters Reserve, Tunnison Mountain, Skedaddle, Bodie Hills WSAs and Travertine Hot Springs ACEC. $55,000 BLM; $12,500 Reclamation; $25,000 Wells Fargo; $192,500 non-federal funds.

San Joaquin River Weed Management and Jobs Creation Project: River Partners will work with the San Joaquin Regional Conservation Corps (SJRCC) to employ local youth, ages 18 to 25, in invasive species mapping, monitoring and management along the San Joaquin River in Merced County. This is an area which reports high unemployment and poverty rates, as well as high rates of childhood obesity and asthma – maladies that have been linked to lack of access and exposure to the outdoors. The San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) seeks to restore a self-sustaining population of native fish to the highly degraded San Joaquin River. $72,313 Reclamation; $25,000 Wells Fargo; $25,000 non-federal funds.

The California Public Lands Education Project: The Public Lands Education Project is a collaborative effort between the BLM and community-based organizations to educate and employ under-served youth from inner city communities that are diverse in race, gender, and ethnicity. The project will build a bridge from diverse communities to public lands through a three-day LEARN AND EARN program for 48 youth who will earn a stipend while learning how to monitor and restore natural habitats significant to California's landscape legacy on BLM lands in or near the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument. $50,000 BLM; $25,000 Wells Fargo; $80,000 non-federal funds.

Coastal Habitat Restoration at Dockweiler State Beach: The Los Angeles Conservation Corps (Corps) will continue to implement the ongoing restoration plan for Coastal Habitat Restoration at Dockweiler State Beach by restoring native dune and bluff habitats and creating conditions to promote the return of native plants and wildlife, including the endangered native El Segundo blue butterfly. Through this project, 16 young adults will be employed as corpsmembers to participate in the Corps’ SEA Lab (Science Education Adventure Laboratory) paid job training program at the site and complete the habitat restoration work to create coastal bluff stability and viable breeding ground for the butterfly. $50,000 Wells Fargo; $74,000 non-federal funds.

Hat Creek Youth Initiative: California Trout will launch its Hat Creek Youth Initiative (HCYI), developed by California Trout and supported by the BLM Alturas Field Office, to provide meaningful natural resource mentorship and conservation job-readiness internships for at least 32 at-risk and minority youths from predominately Native American backgrounds. This youth initiative will also engage participants in a tangible, meaningful, hands-on conservation project: the restoration of the Hat Creek Wild Trout Area in North-east California. The HCYI will bring local minority youth into a collaborative, high-profile and dynamic stream restoration effort and will connect youth with government officials, researchers, tribal members and NGOs, who can provide vitally needed education and mentoring. $86,250 BLM; $447,274 non-federal funds.

CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, OREGON & WASHINGTON, DC:

Celebrate Shorebirds (Celebrar las Aves Playeras): The Environment for the Americas (EFTA) will engage Latino youth in natural resource careers and conservation activities for a second year through its Celebrate Shorebirds Program, which was supported by an America's Great Outdoors project in 2012/2013, and addressed the challenge agencies face recruiting and retaining underserved audiences. The project also supports agency efforts to increase Latino staff and will involve youth in gathering valuable data on migratory shorebirds in Colorado, California and Oregon in collaboration with the BLM. Building on its successful implementation in 2012/2013, the project will introduce Latino youth to birds, their migrations and the conservation issues that threaten them. It will provide training and mentoring for eight interns. $82,600 BLM; $132,940 non-federal funds.
COLORADO:

**Snook’s Bottom Riparian Restoration Project:** This project will be carried out through a Cooperative Agreement between Reclamation and the Western Colorado Conservation Corps to employ youth crews to assist in habitat revegetation efforts. This project will employ eight youth to transplant wetland plants from other wetlands in the area to vegetate the constructed wetlands, cut and plant willow and cottonwood poles, and install additional native riparian plants that will be purchased as nursery stock. $15,000 BOR; $5,000 non-federal funds.

**San Luis Valley Engaging Youth in Conservation:** The Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) will engage 70 local youth from Colorado’s San Luis Valley in 12 weeks of service work and educational activities in partnership with the BLM. The “San Luis Valley Engaging Youth in Conservation” program will expand the SCC Los Valles Region’s current youth programs by providing more opportunities for 14-20 year old participants to explore career paths in natural resource conservation while completing high-priority projects on public lands in their own communities. The program will combine hands-on field work, outdoor living, experiential education activities and career preparation resources during four-week summer sessions in 2013 and 2014. $47,000 BLM; $25,000 Wells Fargo; $162,652 non-federal funds.

IDAHO:

**Twin Falls District Sage-grouse Habitat Restoration:** The BLM, Twin Falls District, will conduct habitat restoration throughout the district on areas burned by wildfires in 2011 and 2012 to benefit the sage-grouse, a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act, and other wildlife dependent on sagebrush-steppe habitats. Youth volunteers from communities in south-central Idaho will work with BLM and Idaho Department of Fish and Game biologists and ecologists to implement shrub planting and seed collection projects and will have the opportunity to learn about species biology and ecology, as well as the importance of habitat conservation and restoration. The project activities will foster an appreciation for wildlife, the outdoors and public lands management and will directly benefit sage-grouse, other sagebrush-steppe species and mule deer. $35,000 BLM; $37,368 non-federal funds.

MONTANA:

**Corps of Recovery - Youth Conserving Lewis & Clark's Montana:** The Montana Conservation Corps will partner with the BLM and Reclamation and receive support from the World Wildlife Fund and others to restore and enhance habitat at multiple priority sites that mirror Lewis and Clark’s 1805 journey in Montana, including the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument. Youth from urban communities, Indian reservations and small Montana towns will be exposed to career opportunities in conservation and complete 8,000 hours of conservation activities to benefit wildlife. $80,000 BLM; $20,000 Reclamation; $174,642 non-federal funds.

NEVADA

**Reclamation and Nevada Conservation Corps Collaborative:** The Great Basin Institute, in partnership with Reclamation and the Nevada Conservation Corps (NCC), will provide youth crews to support conservation projects at sites along the Colorado River between Boulder City and Laughlin. The goal is to continue habitat restoration work at the Big Bend of the Colorado Conservation Site by targeting tamarisk and other invasive plants for eradication, and to continue trail construction and maintenance at the Colorado River Heritage Greenway Park and Trail project near Laughlin, Nev. $19,600 Reclamation; $4,900 non-federal funds.

**Youth Restoration of Forests and Rangelands in Nevada:** The BLM will employ a 10-person NCC crew to accomplish approximately 850 acres of sage-grouse habitat enhancement and forest and woodland restoration projects on Carson City District (CCD) BLM lands. The project will start in this summer and conclude in the fall of 2014. The CCD currently partners with the NCC on several projects that were implemented in the last five years. This project expands on this already successful partnership by recruiting local Native American youth to become NCC crew members. $100,000 BLM; $210,472 non-federal funds.
**Walker River Youth Conservation Initiative:** The Mason Valley Conservation District (MVCD) will partner with the Rite of Passage School in Mason Valley, Nev. to provide opportunities for at-risk youth attending the school to participate in natural resource education while simultaneously gaining employment in these fields. MVCD will employ a part-time educator to coordinate classroom lectures on conservation topics in the Walker River Basin such as noxious weeds, abandoned farmland restoration, hydrology, ecology, geology, wildlife and native plants. The educator will give weekly presentations for a period of from seven to nine months and provide job shadowing with resource professionals at the school and field sites. This project will provide the opportunity for eight-10 youth who successfully complete classroom activities and job shadowing tasks to be employed on actual MVCD projects to perform pertinent restoration tasks. $50,000 Reclamation; $56,655 non-federal funds.

**NEW MEXICO**

**Wind Mountain Stewardship Project:** The Rocky Mountain Youth Corps will partner with New Mexico State Land Office, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the BLM to restore Wind Mountain area mule deer habitat while providing job training and education to eight northern New Mexico low income and tribal youth over a 48-day period. The conservation crew will use chain saws to thin juniper and pinon pine from a 33-acre parcel of state land and create 3,800 feet of enclosures to stimulate aspen regeneration. $39,720 BLM; $40,000 non-federal funds.

**¡YouthWorks! New Conservationists Youth Crew Project:** The ¡YouthWorks! New Conservationists Youth Crew project will expand on 10 years of experience and partner with the BLM Taos Field Office to create meaningful employment for youth through environmental restoration and conservation activities in three areas at project sites north and south of Santa Fe, N.M. The three areas have been designated as high need by the BLM. Project activities will include: (1) fire hazard reduction; (2) invasive species removal; (3) native species planting; (4) kiosk construction; (5) watershed restoration; and (6) fence repair and construction to protect designated areas of public lands threatened by illegal activities such as dumping and off roading. $47,350 BLM; $50,000 Wells Fargo; $113,825 non-federal funds.

**OREGON**

**Portland Urban Youth Corps:** The Portland Urban Youth Corps (PUYC) is a partnership between the Northwest Youth Corps (NYC), the BLM, WolfTree, Inc. and the Sandy River Basin Watershed Council. The PUYC will build upon NYC’s existing conservation programs to expand opportunity for 40 Portland, Ore. teens, ages 16-19, who are minority, urban and at-risk. This project will support crews as they carry out a total of 7,650 hours of paid conservation projects through a five-week program. Activities will improve habitat for endangered steelhead trout, fall chinook and coho salmon and maintain and create recreational trails in the BLM’s Sandy River Basin. Other partners include the Port of Portland and the Johnson Creek Watershed Council. $28,500 BLM; $50,000 Wells Fargo; $99,480 non-federal funds.

**Habitat-fish status in Northeast Oregon ESA Chinook populations:** The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will enhance an existing program in the Upper Grande Ronde Basin. With the aid of three student interns from the Student Conservation Association, the students will be monitoring restoration activities in Catherine Creek and reference sites in the Minam River. Wild populations of salmon and steelhead throughout the Pacific Northwest have declined to levels posing serious risk of extinction. Populations of chinook and steelhead in the Grande Ronde Basin are now federally listed as threatened. Scientists from state, federal and tribal agencies are monitoring salmonid adult and juvenile abundance, life stage specific survival and habitat conditions to assess status and evaluate responses to recovery actions. $75,587 Reclamation; $72,280 non-federal funds.

**Engaging Young Adults in Native Plant Propagation:** The Northwest Oregon Restoration Partnership (NORP) will engage young adults from the Columbia River Youth Corps, Tillamook Options Program School, Nestucca High School and the Oregon Youth Authority in the propagation of native plants to restore riparian, wetland and upland landscapes in northwest Oregon. NORP, which is coordinated by the Tillamook Bay Watershed Council, oversees the propagation of more than 75,000 native plants annually for landscape-scale watershed restoration projects implemented by its partners on private lands adjacent to or administered by the BLM Salem District in Oregon. The service area of NORP
covers approximately 4,000 square miles within five counties (Tillamook, Columbia, Washington, Clatsop and Yamhill). Partners include the BLM, watershed councils, land trusts, Oregon State Parks, the National Park Service, Soil and Water Conservation Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, local schools and communities. $83,930 BLM; $180,000 non-federal funds.

**UTAH**

**Escalante Watershed Restoration, Woody Invasive Control:** The Grand Staircase Escalante Partners will hire 64 youth conservation corps members, ages 18-26, to assist in removing woody invasive species (primarily Russian olive) from 20 acres on Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and 25 acres on private lands directly upstream from Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. This project is part of a watershed-wide restoration effort to increase the number of sustainable, healthy riparian and floodplain communities in the watershed while reducing those dominated by woody invasive species. As part of the restoration effort, conservation job opportunities for youth will be created on public and private lands which expose young people to the natural world and career opportunities available in conservation. $95,000 BLM; $175,012 non-federal funds.

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