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AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS: Salazar Highlights Two Proposed Projects in Nebraska to Promote Outdoor Recreation, Conservation *Projects Will Be Part of 50-State Report*

WASHINGTON — Just days before the release of a 50-state report outlining some of the country's most promising ways to reconnect Americans to the natural world, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today highlighted two projects in the state of Nebraska that will be included in the final report — representing what states believe are among the best investments in the nation to support a healthy, active population, conserve wildlife and working lands, and create travel, tourism and outdoor-recreation jobs across the country.

Improving and maintaining wildlife habitat and increasing recreation along the central Platte River are among 100 projects nationwide that will be highlighted in next week's report — two in every state — as part of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative to establish a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda and reconnect Americans to the outdoors.

The report is a result of 50 meetings with governors and stakeholders held by Salazar and other senior Interior officials to solicit ideas on how to best implement AGO in their states. These projects were identified for their potential to conserve important lands and build recreation opportunities and economic growth for the surrounding communities as part of close engagement with Gov. Dave Heineman and the state of Nebraska, as well as private landowners, local- and tribal-elected officials, community organizations and outdoor-recreation and conservation stakeholders. The full 50-state report will be released in the coming weeks.

“Under the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, we are listening to the people of Nebraska and communities across America and working with them on locally-based projects that will conserve the beauty and health of our land and water and open up more opportunities for people to enjoy them,” Salazar said. “My staff and I have been asking each governor for the most promising projects to support in their states, and we will do all we can to help move them forward.”

The two projects in Nebraska highlighted by Salazar in the forthcoming report are:

[Platte River Recovery Implementation Program](#)

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program is a basin-wide effort by Interior and the states of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming to manage the Platte River, whose waters support multiple uses. The program's long-term objective is to use incentive-based water projects to provide sufficient water to and through the central Platte River to improve and maintain habitat for target species.

Platte River habitat is essential to the recovery of the whooping crane, interior least tern, piping plover, and pallid sturgeon, all threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The program provides measures to help recover these species, thereby providing ESA compliance for existing water projects and certain new water projects in the Platte River Basin.

The program has three main elements: (1) increasing stream flows in the central Platte River during relevant time periods through retiming and water conservation/supply projects; (2) enhancing, restoring and protecting habitat for target bird species; and (3) accommodating new water-related activities.

Top priorities for Nebraska include (1) increasing streamflow during relevant periods and (2) making certain areas accessible to the public for recreation purposes.

Platte River Access

One of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program's long-term objectives is to use incentive-based water projects to provide sufficient water to and through the central Platte River habitat area to improve and maintain habitat for target species. To this end, it has acquired approximately 8,600 acres of habitat through sponsorship agreements, purchases, leases, or perpetual easements from willing sellers and partners.

This land is now also part of the Platte River Recreation Access program, a part of PRRIP that allows the public an opportunity to access riverside habitat for recreational use, while still protecting targeted species.

Currently, PRRA lands are open for limited activities during certain periods of the year. Deer and turkey hunting, fishing, bird watching, mushroom gathering, and hiking are permitted in winter and early fall, with certain time windows blocked out during migration season to protect native birds. At other times, only certain PRRA properties are open for recreational activities.

With this initial limited use policy PRRA is taking steps to both ensure the continued conservation of habitat along the Platte River and allow people to take advantage of the wildlife-rich open space. Eventually, people will be able to reserve access to the land through an online system.

Additional access and access improvements will allow for this program to expand and serve more people drawn to this landscape.

The report will also include potential actions by Interior and its bureaus to support the projects identified. In Nebraska, for example, the Department could provide technical and financial assistance to support the continuation and expansion of the PRRA program. The Department could also work to

improve the Platte River flow for species recovery and provide financial support for habitat protection and recreation access.

The Department of the Interior will work with each of its key bureaus — including the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — to direct available resources and personnel to make these projects a reality.

“The America’s Great Outdoors Initiative turns the conventional wisdom about the federal government’s role in conservation on its head,” Salazar said. “Rather than dictate policies or conservation strategies from Washington, it supports grassroots, locally driven initiatives.”

For more information on the President’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative, click [here](#).

To view a map of the projects already announced, click [here](#).

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