

We have for over 300 years depended on these natural resources to furnish the bone, muscle, and lifeblood of the most highly developed industrial society in mankind's history. Our resources, however, are not inexhaustible, and predictions have been made that by the middle of the 21st century people will face a grim struggle for existence, with food and water in short supply and with reserves of many minerals depleted.

No one really knows whether such grim predictions will come to pass. Human resourcefulness, ingenuity, and invention—coupled with creative determination—can prevent this predicted calamity. We must work creatively, therefore, to provide for the development, conservation, and wise utilization of the Nation's natural resource base to meet the requirements of today's citizens and to pass along our resources to the generations of unborn.

The Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the other Departments and agencies of the Federal Government, with State and local governments, with private foundations, and with interested individuals, has worked to develop, utilize, conserve, and perpetuate for the future our natural resources.

Representatives of the Department of the Interior can estimate that the Nation's natural resources are worth \$1.5 billion annually.

We exercise Federal trust responsibilities for about 380,000 Indians, working constantly to improve both the natural and the human resources of the Indians.

We increase the mineral and fuel potential of our Nation by assisting technically—and in the case of strategic minerals, financially—in developing and improving mining methods and geologic knowledge, and by promotion of conservation through wise utilization of our mineral and fuel resources.

We protect and administer more than 230 national parks, monuments, and historic sites, and create new recreational areas at multipurpose water resource projects—as well as make public lands available for recreational needs to States and municipalities. The various recreational lands and areas of the Department are the scenes of some 200 million visitor days of use annually.

We promote the conservation and development of our vital fish and wildlife resources and protect these resources from unnecessary depletion and selfish use.

We finance and conduct research on the water and mineral resources of the Nation with an eye to the future. We provide for the basic geologic and topographic mapping of the Nation.

We administer laws and programs to solve water pollution problems of the Nation. We direct and coordinate the national effort to achieve the economical conversion of the waters of the oceans into fresh water for human use.

We are responsible for the administration, economic improvement, and social and political betterment of the few remaining territorial areas of the United States—Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the United Nations-mandated Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

We strengthen, through several of our offices and bureaus, by means of grants and other cooperative arrangements with colleges and universities, the scientific study of our natural resources.