DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
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SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TO BE REORGANIZED UNDER NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SURVEY AT INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt today outlined a reorganization of biological science conducted by the Department of the Interior that consolidates its biological research and inventory activities under a National Biological Survey.

Secretary Babbitt provided details of the proposal in an appearance today before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies.

"The National Biological Survey will provide a map to help us avoid environmental and economic conflicts," Secretary Babbitt said. "The Survey will fill a tremendous vacuum by providing a coordinated biological science capability that will serve all the bureaus within the Department. Both economically and environmentally, the NBS will be a useful tool for sound resource management decisions."

The National Biological Survey will be created October 1, 1993, by assembling substantial portions of the biological research and survey elements of three Departmental bureaus -- the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management -- and smaller contributions of activities from five other bureaus. Through this reorganization, the National Biological Survey will serve as an independent, free-standing biological science bureau that will build upon existing biological research conducted inside and outside government.

"What we're doing is strengthening the credibility of science," said Secretary Babbitt. "The Survey will not incorporate regulatory or resource management responsibilities. Its function will be to provide information for resource managers. The resource managers will retain responsibility for management decisions, and the decisions confronting them will largely shape the agenda of NBS."

The reorganization plan will be implemented within the Department's 1994 Budget by moving approximately $180 million in inventory, research and support capabilities into the newly created National Biological Survey. The NBS will be comprised of approximately 1,600 scientists and support personnel. Specific

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projects will be undertaken by a network of field scientists, and all biological data integrated by NBS will be made available for transfer to resource managers and scientists outside the Survey.

The NBS will replicate a partnership among the Department, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Smithsonian which led to the creation of the U.S. Geological Survey. The National Academy of Sciences is conducting a review of the proposal to help define its long-term mission and relationships to other federal and state research activities. Dr. Thomas E. Lovejoy, Assistant Secretary of External Affairs for the Smithsonian Institution, is serving as Science Advisor to Secretary Babbitt to coordinate the program with other science activities.

The National Biological Survey will use and establish scientific protocols in cooperation with other agencies to enhance comparability of research and long-term trend analyses. Research and biological inventory methods will include the National Wetlands Inventory, the Gap Analysis Project, and other new components. Additionally, the inventory program will be conducted in concert with other federal and state agencies, the State Heritage Program directed by The Nature Conservancy, and other non-governmental organizations and academia.

Some examples of projects to be included under NBS include:

* Expanding research on Everglades National Park to provide an ecosystem perspective on the forces causing severe ecological problems facing the Everglades.

* Boosting a collaborative effort to restore and preserve sensitive habitat areas within southern forested wetlands.

* Examining the causes and developing recommendations to reverse the decline of salmon stocks in the Pacific Northwest.

The National Biological Survey will produce a biennial report on the status and trends of the nation's biological resources.

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FACT SHEET

THE NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SURVEY:
INTEGRATING BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
APRIL 26, 1993

The National Biological Survey (NBS) will focus on national, regional and local ecological science needs. It will help resource managers acquire and apply the scientific tools necessary for sound management decisions. The NBS will provide scientific research and biological data to other federal agencies, state and local governments and other entities.

The National Biological Survey will:

* Provide a national focus for inventorying and monitoring of biological resources, and integrate Interior's biological research activities.

* Ensure that resource managers receive high quality, independent scientific advice.

* Consolidate many related functions into one organization, enhancing productivity and efficiency.

* Provide proactive, anticipatory research that will help avoid environmental and economic conflicts.

Effective October 1, 1993, the National Biological Survey will consolidate approximately 1,600 scientists and support personnel within the Department; however, most scientists involved in applying the results of biological science will remain with their bureaus. For example, there are about 4,500 Fish and Wildlife Service employees classified as biologists; and of that total, about 950 will be transferred to NBS. Researchers moving to NBS are involved in formation and testing of hypotheses, the study of population dynamics, physiology, behavior, ecology, habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystem processes and functions; and national inventories or those of national significance.

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The NBS will begin a collaborative process for biological monitoring and ecosystem mapping.

* A national status and trends program will work with federal agencies, states and non-governmental programs, including The Nature Conservancy, to provide a report by September, 1994, offering a picture of the nation's biological resources and outlining the structure of a long term monitoring effort.

* Standardized scientific protocols will be established in cooperation with other agencies to enhance comparability of methods and long-term trend analysis. Biological inventory methods will include the National Wetlands Inventory, the Gap Analysis Program, and several new components.

Research activities within NBS will be undertaken by four regional centers, twelve research laboratories, 40 field stations, over 70 cooperative research units. Cooperative research units are collaborative ventures involving a federal agency (FWS, NPS, or BLM), a state university, and in some cases, a state fish and game agency. Additional funding will be provided for the program ($6.6 million).

The NBS science agenda will place a great deal of emphasis on field-driven research priorities. Over two-thirds of the National Biological Survey budget will be dedicated to research on species biology, population dynamics, ecosystems, and inventorying and monitoring functions.

The National Biological Survey is consistent with other scientific investments in the Department's 1994 Budget. Those initiatives include:

* $24 million for Bureau of Land Management's renewable resources management, including a 58% increase in the Bureau's riparian habitat restoration efforts.

* $34 million of the Bureau of Reclamation's Central Valley Project (California) restoration of wildlife and fishery habitat.

* $6 million increase for National Wildlife Refuges & Hatcheries.

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* $31 million increase (65%) for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to launch habitat protection efforts before species are listed as endangered, and draft recovery plans for a back-logged list of endangered species.

By consolidating existing fragments of biological research within the Department into an independent, non-advocate science bureau, the National Biological Survey will improve research quality and productivity at a lesser cost.

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