



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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INTERIOR SECRETARY LUJAN PRAISES VOLUNTEERS IN ALASKAN OIL SPILL CLEAN-UP

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today praised the many citizens who have expressed a desire to volunteer to assist in wildlife rescue efforts associated with the Alaskan oil spill. He noted that volunteer centers have been established in Anchorage and Valdez.

"We deeply appreciate the many offers by volunteers who wish to help rescue wildlife and clean up habitat contaminated by the oil spill," Lujan said. Contrary to some reports indicating that the Fish and Wildlife Service is discouraging volunteers, we are working with the Fish and Wildlife Foundation to increase opportunities for volunteering.

"Furthermore, Response Centers coordinating bird and mammal rescue efforts are being run by an umbrella organization, directed by Seaworld of California involving a number of environmental and conservation groups with oversight and cooperation by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Those wishing to work directly with the animals in Valdez should have previous experience in bird and/or mammal clean-up", Lujan said. "We especially need veterinarians. Volunteers interested in working at the Anchorage response center need clerical and computer skills."

A spokesman for the Response Centers said volunteers are paying their own expenses, including transportation and housing. The Valdez center has said, however, that it will try to provide shelter for volunteer veterinarians. Camping at Valdez is very difficult because of the weather conditions and limited space. Housing is easier to find in Anchorage and that center says it will make recommendations to volunteers.

For additional information concerning volunteering or making monetary contributions to the clean-up efforts, individuals can call the following: Valdez Response Center at 907-835-2674, or Anchorage Volunteer Response Center at 907-276-3688.

(more)

As Secretary Lujan indicated, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation -- a private nonprofit organization founded to assist activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -- has established a special Alaskan Fish and Wildlife Restoration Fund. The Foundation will disburse the money raised in accordance with recommendations by officials from the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Fish and Game Commission to assist in the Alaska effort. Contributions should be made payable to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and sent to: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, "Alaskan Fish and Wildlife Restoration Fund," 18th and C Streets NW, Room 2556, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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