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Secretary Jewell Announces Completion of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, First Urban Refuge in Southwest

Calls on Congress to Approve Full, Permanent Funding of Land and Water Conservation Fund, Which Helped Purchase 570-Acre Tract

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Standing with members of the New Mexico congressional delegation, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced that a diverse group of federal, state, and local partners and conservation groups supported by the Land and Water Conservation Fund have made it possible to acquire the lands needed to complete the 570-acre Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, the Southwest’s first urban national wildlife refuge.

“The vision for Valle de Oro was one that could only be fulfilled by people working together, pooling resources, and sharing ideas,” Jewell said. “This new urban refuge is a wonderful example of how Land and Water Conservation Funds can be used to leverage strong community partnerships and serve as a foundation for on-the-ground conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the country.”

“Making the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge a reality has truly been a community effort and is representative of New Mexico's tremendous role in preserving America's outdoor heritage,” said U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich. “Our state is now home to the Southwest’s first urban national wildlife refuge--enriching not only the lives of our children and all who visit, but also strengthening the local economy. I commend Secretary Jewell for her unwavering support for full and permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which makes projects like the Valle de Oro possible.”

"Today is a shining example of what can be accomplished when partners share a vision and goal," said U.S. Senator Tom Udall. "Valle de Oro is a 570-acre urban oasis, and its creation will inspire generations to come. I'm thrilled to celebrate this special day for wildlife and watershed protection and for our ability to work together as a community."

“I’m very proud that the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge has been completed and will provide many long-lasting benefits to our community,” said Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “This project couldn’t have been accomplished without the partnership between local, state and federal

partners. By working together, we were able to make this dream of an urban refuge a reality. The Valle de Oro Refuge will provide educational and recreational opportunities for students and families and I'm proud to join with my colleagues here today to celebrate it."

To view additional statements from partners who supported this effort, [click here](#).

Jewell's visit to New Mexico is part of a [weeklong tour](#) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the fund, which was established by Congress in 1964 to ensure access to outdoor recreation resources for present and future generations, and to provide money to federal, state and local governments to conserve our land, water and wildlife heritage for the benefit of all Americans. The primary source of revenue for the Land and Water Conservation Fund is from federal oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Without using taxpayer dollars, the Land and Water Conservation Fund enables state and local governments to establish everything from baseball fields to community green spaces; to provide public access to rivers, lakes and other water resources; to expand the interpretation of historic and cultural sites; and to conserve natural landscapes for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment.

Jewell called on Congress to fully and permanently fund this landmark program, something that has happened only once in its history, as a portion of the revenue intended for it has been used for other purposes. President Obama's budget request includes a legislative proposal to establish dedicated mandatory funding for Land and Water Conservation Fund programs, with full funding at \$900 million beginning in 2015.

"The goal of the fund is simple: we put back into our land part of which we have taken out of it to promote conservation and recreation in places like Albuquerque," said Jewell. "By re-investing a small portion of revenue from offshore oil and gas development in waters owned by the American people, we have helped fund more than 40,000 local conservation and outdoor recreation projects since 1964 that not only improve our quality of life but also serve as economic engines supporting businesses in local communities and job creation."

Valle de Oro is one of eight refuges in New Mexico. Originally approved in September 2012, the refuge will provide educational and recreational opportunities as well as environmental benefits for the greater Albuquerque metropolitan area, which is within a 30-minute drive of half of New Mexico's population.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund contributed nearly \$6 million of the \$18.5 million total cost of the refuge, with Bernalillo County contributing \$5 million. Other contributing partners included the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority, the State of New Mexico, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, the Trust for Public Land, New Mexico Community Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Ducks Unlimited.

Since 1964, New Mexico has received more than \$230 million through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In addition to creating parks, playgrounds and ballfields, New Mexico has

used the funds to protect treasured places like the Petroglyph National Monument, the Cibola National Forest and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River.

A recent study found that for every \$1 invested in federal land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, there is a return of \$4 to state and local communities.

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