

Interior: Budget protects, promotes nature

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Interior Department 2010 budget contains \$12 billion to protect lands and waters as well as promote energy security, the White House said.

National park protection and preservation initiatives would receive \$100 billion in additional funds, and an additional \$25 million would be available to leverage private donations in the department's budget proposal presented by President Barack Obama Thursday.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund will receive \$420 million with annual increases to reach full funding of \$900 million by 2014, the budget document said.

State and federal land management agencies would be aided by more than \$130 million in additional funding to monitor, manage and assess impacts of climate change on U.S. lands, fish and wildlife.

An increase of more than \$100 million for enhanced law enforcement would help to strengthen Native American communities, the budget document said.

The budget provides \$75 million to create a contingency funding reserve to offset future costs for fighting catastrophic wildfires. Renewable energy projects on federal lands and waters would be encouraged with an allocation of more than \$50 million.

The Interior Department allocation also would close loopholes that have given oil companies what the administration called excessive royalty relief for offshore leases.

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