



## U.S. Department of the Interior

### Transcript - U.S. Department of the Interior - 160th Anniversary Event

**Man:** Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Department of the Interior chorus.

**Chorus:** ((Singing)).

**Man:** Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for the presentation of the colors by the United States Park Police Armor Guard and please remain standing for our National Anthem, sung by (Delva Fletcher).

**(Delva Fletcher):** ((Singing the National Anthem)).

**Man:** Please remain standing for a blessing offered by Mr. Jerry Cordova, Native American Coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management and an enrolled member of the Taos Pueblo Tribe.

He'll be offering the blessing in his native language Tiwa and in English.

**Jerry Cordova:** As I invoke the presence of the creators, I ask that you communicate with him in your own way.

((Tiwa Spoken))

**Jerry Cordova:** Great Father, as we commemorate the presence of the Department of the Interior for 160 years, we ask that you be with us today. Be with the men and women who staff the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, USGS and all the other entities that make up the department.

We thank you for their dedication as they toil to preserve your creation and provide that stewardship that you left us in charge of.

We thank you for our leaders. We thank you for President Obama whom some of my relatives have named Black Eagle. And has therefore made him one of my relatives.

We ask that you be especially generous in your blessings upon him as he shoulders the monumental task of addressing this prob - nation's problems.

We also ask your blessing on Secretary Salazar and those whom he has selected to assist him in running this department.

We thank you for your creation overall. And we thank you for the moisture that you have provided, not only in DC but throughout the country.

We thank you for this clean air and the clean water that we still enjoy. We ask that you instill in us a renewed dedication to safeguard your creation so that we may pass on this world as we know it to our children and grandchildren and seven generations henceforth.

We ask that you be with us today and into the future as we all struggle to make this a better world for all to live in. In that vein we ask you to impart your wisdom and your grace to leadership throughout the country and in the world.

To seek other means other than solving differences through war and other conflicts so that this creation of yours can go on as long as we abide by your wishes.

This we ask in your name, Amen.

**Man:** Ladies and gentlemen please welcome the Chief Historian of the National Park Service, Robert K. Sutton.

**Robert K. Sutton:** On the 160th Anniversary of the Department of Interior, as we embark on a program to deal with our current economic situation, it's useful to reflect back on our last great crisis and how we responded to it.

The Great Depression was a shock to the system because nothing quite like it had happened before.

Shortly after the stock market crash of October 29, 1929, President Hoover said, "The fundamental business of the country was sound". To its credit the Hoover Administration did more than any previous administration to deal with the crisis.

But, by the end of 1932 the nation's economy was in shambles. Personal income was half of what it was in 1929. Unemployment went from 3% in 1929 to 25% in 1933.

Nine thousand banks closed, entire cities were abandoned. Farms were sold for debt in part because food prices had dropped by half.

As the depression deepened in the spring of 1932, World War I Veterans marched on Washington demanding that Congress give them the bonus they were scheduled to receive in 1945.

The roughly 15,000 bonus marchers camped out around Washington, including Anacostia Flats, which is now a National Park.

When Congress refused to pass the bonus many left town, but some stayed on in their shantytowns and continued to press for their demands.

Eventually the Secretary of War sent 700 soldiers under the command of General Douglas MacArthur whose Junior Officers were Dwight Eisenhower and George Patton through a move of the marchers, thus ending the bonus march and ending any chance for Hoover's re-election.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, but at that time he had to wait until March 4, 1933 to take office.

At the (argades), the first of his fireside chats on the radio on March 12 telling Americans it was safer to put their money in banks rather than under the mattress.

The next day deposits exceed withdrawals and by March 15 the banks controlling 90% of the nation's banking resources were once again open.

In the first 100 days Congress passed more than a dozen major proposals with the familiar alphabet soup of names such as the PWA, the WPA and so forth, aimed at helping the destitute and getting businesses and farmers back on their feet.

The FDR Memorial on the title basin here in Washington depicts the New Deal programs in graphic detail.

To put young men back to work Congress established the Civilian Conservation Corp, what we call the CCC, employing 18 to 25 year-olds.

By then end of 1933 over 3 million men enrolled in the CCC. And this program became one of the most important legacies for the Department of Interior.

The arms of the New Deal spread wide in the 1930s. For example, early in his administration President Roosevelt appointed the committee on wildlife restoration to explore ways to improve habitat for dwindling wildlife around the country.

The committee identified far-reaching changes to the habitats for birds and animals recommending acquisitions of millions of acres of marginal land and money for restoration.

Young men in the CCC set to work constructing dams and dikes, planting vegetation and millions of trees, stabilizing stream banks and erecting numerous structures.

By 1942 53 national wildlife refuges in the recently established fish and wildlife service benefited from their work, and wildlife habitats on other public lands were improved as well.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs entered perhaps its most dynamic period when John Collier became commissioner in 1933. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 highlighted the new administration's reforms, which allowed tribes to form governments that acted as Federal Municipalities.

Collier shifted the emphasis of his agency to an advisory rather than a directing role. He further hired over 4,500 American Indians to the BIA jobs by 1940, expanding the numbers from a few hundred American Indian employees in 1933.

The CCC program operated a separate division for members of federally recognized Indian tribes called the CCC

ID. Enrollees were between the ages of 18 and 35 years, and a total of 85,000 Native Americans participated.

Native American men, men in many cases half the male house - heads of households from some of the most remote reservations worked on roads, bridges, schools, clinics, shelters and other public works near their reservations.

In part because the CCC ID trained men as carpenters, truck drivers, radio operators, mechanics, surveyors and technicians, they learned skills that would be useful for future employment.

The National Park Service became one of the largest employers of the CCC workers. Supervising over 600 camps nationwide with a total of over 120,000 young men by 1935 supervised by 6,000 professionals.

Most men worked in state parks, but there were 118 camps in national parks. And some of our parks here in Washington DC were created by the CCC, principally in Forest Park and (Catachtin Mountain Park) were built by the CCC.

In the Works Progress Administration Art Program, artists produced the National Park Service Ranger Naturalist Series of 14 posters that were silk screened by hand and then distributed to Chambers of Commerce and other tourist organizations to encourage visitation to national parks.

In my mind one of the most fascinating stories, and one of the enduring legacies of the New Deal was the establishment of the Historic American Building Survey, again alphabet soup, HABS.

Which began in December 1933 when Charles Peterson of the National Park Service submitted a proposal for 1,000 out of work architects to spend 10 weeks documenting America's antique buildings.

HABS spawned Historic American Engineering Records, HEAR, in 1969 to parallel HABS to document engineering works in industrial sites.

Then in 9 - in 2000 the Historic American Landscape Survey was formed to record historic American landscapes. To date these programs have documented more than 35,000 historic structures and sites dating from pre-Columbian times to the 20th Century.

Today, we are in one of the most important products of the New Deal, our own Department of Interior building. It was the first government building designed and constructed as part of the New Deal.

One percent of the total cost of the building was set aside for art to provide artists with commissions during the depression, which is still part of urban and public architecture today.

Twenty-five floor to ceiling murals were commissioned for each floor of the interior building, and for main gathering areas as well.

Not only did the New Deal provide jobs, hope and change during the desperate times in our history, it created legacies that we still enjoy and appreciate today.

Now sit back and enjoy a video that has been prepared on the history of (unintelligible)...

((VIDEO))

**Man:** (Unintelligible).

**Man:** As President Obama said in his inaugural address, this is a moment of opportunity for our nation. An opportunity to remake America. An opportunity to inspire a new ethic of public service.

A new strong economic recovery (unintelligible) helps create jobs, and build our clean energy economy for the future and remake America. I have worked for these plans and can tell you that the Department of the Interior will be an essential part of that economic recovery program.

((END VIDEO))

**Man:** Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States accompanied by the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar.

**Ken Salazar:** How about that Department of Interior, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama.

Thank you. Thank you all very much. I wanted to welcome all of you to the 160th Anniversary of the Department of Interior. The Department of Interior's history mirrors the story of our nation.

We have changed as America has changed. And we have taken on new challenges and responsibilities as the issues

facing our national and our world have changed over time.

We have been entrusted to serve as the stewards of American the Beautiful, purple mountains, fruited plains, the landmarks of our history and the icons of our heritage.

When Secretary of the Interior Thomas Huey took the Oath of Office on March 3, 1849, the United States of America ended at the Mississippi River. And there were only 29 stars on the Flag of the United States.

The Department of the Interior today now reaches across 12 time zones. It includes responsibility for places as grand as Yosemite, structures as mighty as the Hoover Dam and creatures as small as the tinniest songbird.

Along the way our nation has passed through times of deep crisis. A war between the states, 13 economic recessions, the Great Depression.

But with each crisis the Department of Interior has helped our nation not only preserver, but grow stronger.

At the dawn of the 20th century when America was losing its forest, its wildlife and its open spaces, President Teddy Roosevelt turned an environmental crisis into the legacy of stewardship that we still enjoy today.

He expanded our national parks. Laying the foundation for our modern day national park system.

And he built the word - world's largest system of lands dedicated to wildlife conservation, the National Wildlife Refuse System.

And in the dark days of the Great Depression, in those dark days of economic crisis never seen before, President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corp put 3 million to - 3 million people to work on conservation and construction projects in our parks, refuges and public works around America.

Many of those projects were planned and designed in this very building. When faced with a crisis, Americans always build a path to progress. And we will do the same as we face the economic crisis of today, President Barack Obama.

President Barack Obama and the American people have entrusted this department with the responsibility of helping lead our economy back to prosperity and economic security.

Since the President signed the Recovery Act two weeks ago, we have been working tirelessly in this department to finalize a list of projects so that we can rapidly and wisely invest the \$3 billion coming through the Department of the Interior.

These projects must be projects that are ready to go. They must be projects that will create jobs in today's climate. And they must also advance the nation's long-term priorities.

We will act with a vision that allows us as Franklin Roosevelt did in the 1930's to transform the crisis of today into the opportunity of tomorrow.

When generations or the future look back at us, we want them to see and to say that we didn't simply talk about renewable energy and energy efficiency, we took action on this time of opportunity.

I want them to see that we moved ahead to restore our national treasures and our icons from the Statue of Liberty in New York to the Great Sand Dunes in Colorado.

And I want generations that follow to see that we use this moment to encourage a 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corp for our young people.

From the jobs we create in Native American communities, to the work that is done to build new trails across our country, our young people will be a keystone of our recovery.

But the Recovery Act is only the first step. Today as the Department of the Interior celebrates our 160th birthday, we look forward to a new era of change for our nation and for our department.

That new era will have us play a central role in building our clean energy economy and tackling climate change. That new era will usher in an unprecedented commitment to preserving American's treasured landscapes.

And that new era will usher in new responsibilities and opportunities for the young people of America. This is a moment of change. That is why the work of the 67,000 public servants in this department is so exciting and so important to our country.

That is why I am so proud of your work. And that is why I am so honored and so proud today that this Department

of Interior in it's 160th birthday has in our presence a transformational president, my good friend, the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

**Barack Obama:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Please, have a seat.

Thank you Ken. Thank you Mr. Secretary. It is my honor to join you and the hard working public servants here at the Department of the Interior as we mark a milestone in the distinguished history of this department.

As Ken mentioned, 160 years ago today with the tally of a contentious vote, amidst growing tensions between north and south, as our nation expanded westward, a deeply divided Senate passed the bill that created the Department of the Interior.

The department was born less of a singular purpose than of a multitude of needs. It was founded to serve a growing nation whose roles and responsibilities were growing as well.

The department even earned a nickname, the Department of Everything Else. Yet throughout our history, as Interior has performed a set of ever changing and often unrelated duties, an overarching mission has emerged, to defend the natural bounty of this country and the welfare of its people.

As Secretary Salazar has said, you have become the Department of America. For the services you provide touch the lives of all Americans. From the clean water we drink to the clean energy we must generate.

From historic monuments and museums that educate and inspire, to the vast wilderness that each new generation can discover and explore.

You manage 500 million acres of land, or roughly 1/5 of the area of the United States and 1.7 billion acres off shore.

It was under this department - it was this department under President Teddy Roosevelt that helped lead an unprecedented effort to protect our natural resources.

It was under this department, under President Franklin Roosevelt that Secretary Harold Ickes supervised the Civilian Conservation Corp to help us overcome the Great Depression.

And your mission is more important than every before. The Interior Department manages the land on which 30% of the nation's energy is produced.

So you have a major role to play, all of you, in our clean energy future. The nation is depending on you to help us end the (tierney) of foreign oil and become energy independent by harnessing the wind and the sun or water or our soil and American innovation.

That's why I'm proud to join you this afternoon. That's why I am pleased that this department is in the capable hands of my great friend Ken Salazar.

And that is why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act creates jobs by making historic investments in the Department of the Interior.

This plan will provide more than \$3 billion to the department to create jobs doing the work that America needs you to do.

It will create jobs increasing our capacity to generate renewable energy on public lands. And retrofitting facilities to be far more energy efficient.

They will provide for the renovation of laboratories and the replacement of research equipment that in some cases is half a century old.

We'll fund the long delayed work to preserve our natural wonders and historic landmarks, from Yellowstone National Park to the Statue of Liberty.

And we will invest in the roads on which 275 million visitors travel to reach these sites across our country. We'll provide clean, reliable drinking water to rural areas, repair aging water infrastructure.

And the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will rebuild and remodel schools on Indian reservations across the country while providing more than \$100 million in loans to spur job creation in the Indian economy.

Under the leadership of Secretary Salazar these investments will be made with unprecedented oversight. In the past, as all of you know, we've seen (latches) that have damaged the reputation of this department, despite the integrity and faithful service of the vast majority of people who work here.

In just these first five weeks Secretary Salazar has helped bring about a new era of responsibility and accountability. It is in this spirit that my recovery plan is being implemented.

Finally today I signed a memorandum that will help restore the scientific process to its rightful place, at the heart of the Endangered Species Act, a project undermined by (that) administration.

The work of scientists and experts in my administration, including right here in the in Interior Department, will be respected.

For more than three decades the Endangered Species Act has successfully protected our nation's most threatened wildlife. And we should be looking for ways to improve it, not weaken it.

Throughout our history there's been a tension between those who sought to conserve our natural resources for the benefit of future generations, and those who have sought to profit from these resources.

But I'm here to tell you this is a false choice. With smart, sustainable policies we can grow our economy today and preserve the environment for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. That is what we must do.

For you know, you know that our long-term prosperity depends upon the faithful stewardship of the air we breath, the water we drink and the land that sow.

That's a sacred trust, the importance of which cannot be measured merely by the acres we protect, the miles of rivers we preserve, the energy we draw from public lands.

It's a child wandering amidst ancient redwoods. A love for science stirred, as she looked skyward. The young man running his hand along the walls at Ellis Island where his grandmother once carried her every possession and the hope of a new life.

The family hiking along canyons carved by ancient floods or mountains shaped by shifting continents. Finding peace in the beauty of the natural world.

These are experiences that enrich our lives and remind us of the blessings that we share. And that was certainly the case for me.

As many of you know I spent much of my childhood in Hawaii, a place of extraordinary beauty, and we got a Hawaiian in there? A place of extraordinary beauty and one that's home to several national parks and historic sites.

But before my 11th birthday my grandmother decided it was time for me to see the mainland. So my grandmother, my mother, my sister and I all flew to Seattle.

And we drove down the coast, along the coast of California, and then east to the Grand Canyon. We headed across the Great Plains and to the Great Lakes before heading back west through Yellowstone.

That was an experience I will never forget. It's an experience I want for my daughters and for all of our daughters and sons to see the incredible beauty of this nation.

It's an experience that's only possible because of the work you do each and every day. So thank you. God bless you. And God Bless the United States of America. Thank you everybody.

END

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