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**Interior Secretary Norton Announces \$1.8 Million in Grants
To Support 40 Cooperative Conservation Projects in Oregon**

Interior Secretary Gale Norton today announced \$1.8 million in challenge cost-share grants to support 40 cooperative conservation projects in Oregon, from removing invasive species near Eugene to restoring riparian habitat along two state rivers.

The grant is part of \$21 million in challenge cost-share grants under President Bush's Cooperative Conservation Initiative to complete 377 conservation projects nationwide in conjunction with states, local communities, businesses, landowners and other partners. The projects involve more than 1,100 partners in 43 states and will conserve, restore or enhance more than 565,000 acres. Overall funding for the projects totals more than \$52 million including the matching contributions of partners.

"The goal of the Cooperative Conservation Initiative is to empower federal land managers to form partnerships within local communities to better care for the land and its wildlife," Norton said. "By promoting these partnerships, we not only leverage federal conservation dollars with private funds but also tap into the ingenuity and local knowledge of the people who live and work on the land."

A state-by-state breakout of the grants announced by Norton today is available on the Interior Department Web site, www.doi.gov.

Partners will contribute \$2.6 in matching contributions to the 40 Oregon projects, bringing the total for the state to \$4.4 million.

For example, the Bureau of Land Management is awarding a grant of \$85,000 to provide weed treatments and restore native riparian plants along one mile of the McKenzie and Mohawk Rivers. The Mohawk Watershed Partnership, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the McKenzie Watershed Council are contributing \$99,000 to the project.

President Bush proposed the challenge cost-share grants in 2003 as a tool for federal land managers to use in creating cooperative conservation projects. Last year, the department awarded \$12.9 million in grants in 40 states and Puerto Rico. For Fiscal Year 2004, the President proposed and Congress appropriated an increase of more than \$8 million, or 62 percent, in the program.

Overall, the department has awarded nearly \$34 million in grants over the past two years to help more than 1,500 partners complete 633 projects. These projects have conserved, restored or enhanced more than 700,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

The Cooperative Conservation Initiative challenge cost-share grants are part of an overall commitment by the Bush administration to support cooperative conservation efforts. Over the past three years, the Interior Department has provided more than \$1.3 billion in grants to states, tribes, local governments and private landowners.

The projects supported by these grants have restored millions of acres of habitat, removed invasive exotic species, replanted native grasses, improved riparian habitat along thousands of

miles of streams, conserved limited water resources and developed conservation plans for endangered species and their habitat.

The President is proposing to build on this success in his Fiscal Year 2005 budget, which includes more than \$507 million to support Interior's cooperative conservation programs.

"The power of partnership produces results for conservation that far exceed the dollars we put into these partnerships," Norton said. "By empowering citizens, we are tapping into the greatest conservation resource we have – the American people themselves – and helping them to become citizen-conservationists."

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