

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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JOSEPH STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC AWARENESS IN ACHIEVING SOUND CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Under Secretary of the Interior James A. Joseph said today that "the key to effective conservation lies in the education of all Americans, especially those who live in the cities."

Speaking at the opening of the new Education-Administration Building at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, Joseph said: "Public understanding and appreciation of our natural world is essential. It is essential so that we will have the public support necessary to enact and carry out effective conservation programs whether in the heart of Chicago or in the wilds of Alaska. It is essential so that when the people of the cities venture into the wilds they will fully enjoy the experience. It is essential so that these people will treat their environment and their fellow creatures in the city and in the wilderness with care and respect due them."

Joseph noted that the zoo and Interior Department were working together to develop a program usable by all zoos in helping educate the public regarding animals.

Stressing the important role of the zoo, Joseph said: "It is our most intensive form of wildlife and environmental management. Here in the city you have created in as natural a setting as possible a chance for people to share the wonders of nature, not only to be entertained but to gain an understanding and appreciation of wildlife closeup. You are bringing nature to the people."

Joseph said that zoos have also been important in the effort to save and restore endangered species. The Under Secretary acknowledged that the past regulations under the Federal Endangered Species Act have hindered zoos in their efforts, but changes are being made to reduce red tape. Recent proposed changes in regulations "recognize the vitality and importance of non-government endeavors with captive endangered wildlife, and how these efforts also enhance the propagation and survival of a species," Joseph said.

As important as zoos are, Joseph said, there is great need for a full range of other conservation programs including parks, refuges, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness.

"I hear statements everyday by people --whether they admit it or not -- who are saying that the economic values of the land are always the most important regardless of the consequences for wildlife or for the environment in general," Joseph said. "These people would relegate all wildlife to the zoo if necessary to squeeze the last ounce of oil from the land, to mine the last ounce of ore,

(more)

to produce one more crop whether needed or not. But I would argue that in many instances the recreational, scenic, wildlife and other life sustaining resources of certain areas are such that the highest and best use is not for economic development but for refuges, parks, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness."

The Under Secretary urged that "we use our intellect and tremendous technological power to work together to achieve a balance whereby we carefully take what we must have from nature but conserve every bit we can to assure mankind a bright future. Our natural heritage is too precious to squander."

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