

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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REMARKS OF SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR CECIL D. ANDRUS
BEFORE THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 26, 1977

I am sure that many of you here today recall that sunny day in Plains when an Idaho Governor was designated by President Carter as the new Secretary of the Interior. And, some of you may remember that not too much later I came to Washington to go before the Senate Interior Committee to be confirmed, full of hope and as confident of my pending contributions to government as I was that the sun would continue to rise in the East.

Confident was I also that the great majority of men and women with whom I would be dealing, though less predictable than the sun, were by and large reasonable.

After only a few weeks as Secretary I became abruptly aware that within that great majority of reasonable men and women there are many "small majorities" who reason in their own distinct way.

I have also learned a great deal about the Washington Bureaucracy. Nearly every day has been filled with wonder. When I first arrived, I wondered how it ever ran without me. A few weeks and a few congressional hearings later, I began to wonder why it ran in spite of me. Now, after two months I wonder even more at the sight of it still running.

Levity aside, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am deeply honored to have been selected by our President to be Secretary of the Interior. I am hopeful that someday your distinguished organization will judge my stewardship to have been beneficial to the noble causes the National Wildlife Federation undertakes nationwide.

This is my first appearance before a national convention in my new role as Interior Secretary. It is no accident that this maiden speech comes before an organization which has done so much for conservation, for wildlife and for the preservation of a quality environment.

Too often in the past the National Wildlife Federation and the Department of Interior have been adversaries in this business of natural resources management. While I am Secretary, I hope that we can be partners--partners for common goals and interests that I believe are shared by most Americans.

When I went before the Senate to be confirmed, I told the members of the Interior Committee that I did not view my nomination as a mandate to do as I pleased. Rather, I accepted it as an obligation to work with the President, the Congress, and the people in making the tough resource decisions facing this nation. I stated my belief that conservation is no longer a pious ideal--it is an element of our survival, and my efforts will focus on curbing old habits of over-consumption and misuse, seeking instead to use less and to use better.

I meant what I said when I stated my personal and strong support for the national park and wildlife refuge systems, the wilderness system and the wild and scenic rivers of this nation. Parks, wilderness and wild rivers are meaningful gifts for future generations, and I intend to advocate these programs on behalf of the American people.

I remember a time in Idaho when the developers complained that there were too many wild and scenic rivers designated in our state. But I rejected that contention then, and I reject it now on a nationwide basis. We cannot have too many wild and scenic rivers. For, to protect is not to sacrifice or destroy. Wild rivers are an asset, not a handicap. Each represents a treasure too precious to be squandered or abused by ill-planned and unjustified water projects

Since the theme of this convention is "We all need clean water," let's start with the water issues. And, since I am going to tick off some of our actions, I might as well begin with the one that has "ticked-off" the most opposition in this town--the deletion of dam building and other water projects from the upcoming year's budget.

Although the economic consequences of the projects are substantial--nearly \$300 million for FY 78 and a total of \$5 billion overall--the environmental and safety consequences are more important than the dollars.

The project reviews were not arbitrary acts. As a native westerner, I am very much aware of the tremendous benefits that reclamation can bring to an area. Sound projects for irrigation, flood control and power generation have been a boon, especially in the West.

Some critics have asked how in the midst of a severe drought we can suggest terminating any dam building project. First, it must be emphasized that none of the projects could be completed in time to relieve the current drought. And, further, I am not convinced that these projects would necessarily have that much impact in averting drought in the future. Water projects don't create water, they move it around, and sometimes lose some in the process.

Common sense dictates that we shouldn't dam up every river, stream or creek in America. Let me suggest that we may have developed the best of the hydroelectric sites, that we have built some of the best reclamation projects, and that having done this, the law of diminishing returns requires that we proceed with ever increasing caution. We are coming to the end of the dam building era in America, and before any new barriers are constructed, we must weigh each proposal with a genuine process that considers all factors in an honest evaluation. We must, with the help of Congress, establish a water policy that will protect this most valuable resource for all Americans.

Your attractive poster, "We All Need Clean Water," features three magnificent Alaskan brown bears fishing for salmon, which brings me to another subject. Alaska is a land where there is still enough space, clean water and good fishing for such magnificent mammals to live as they always have--but will Alaska always be that way?

The highest environmental priority of this Administration is the establishment and protection of large areas and complete ecosystems in Alaska as units of the four systems called for in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. This is the most important land allocation and conservation program in this country.

In the Lower 48, we have belatedly managed to set aside portions of our finest scenery and wildlife habitat in national parks and wildlife refuges, but too often it has been too little, too late. In Alaska we have a chance to do it right the first time, and it is our last chance to do it right, for after Alaska where do we go?

In fulfilling the provisions of the Alaska Statehood Act and honoring the commitments to Alaska's native people, as provided in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, we find ourselves engaged in a massive land program--releasing millions of acres of land which have belonged to the people of the United States. Ultimately the State will gain title to 103 million acres and the Natives will receive some 45 million acres and 962 million dollars.

Through enactment of the conservation proposals in Section 17(d)(2), we can be certain that the crown jewels of Alaska--its most spectacular natural environments, recreation areas, and wildlife habitats--will remain in trust for the benefit of our Nation's citizens.

This task has required the most professional efforts of our various agencies, and they have done an excellent job gathering and seeking out information about Alaska's resources. We do not know all of the answers about Alaska, nor have we unlocked all of its secrets. We do, however, in my opinion know more than enough to make these decisions.

When the Congress begins its hearings on this important issue in a few weeks, several points of view will be represented: the Governor, the native people, the conservation community, the user groups. All of these viewpoints are important, for we are deciding the fate of Federal land, and all the American people have a vital interest in those decisions.

I believe that the four systems, including the park and refuge systems, have built into them enough flexibility to provide the necessary protection and recognition of Alaska's great natural resources, while still accommodating other uses. I hope that Congress will proceed expeditiously with this important legislation, and that the Federation will work for its passage.

In addition to the D-2 legislation, Alaska is also the focus of another great debate--this one over the route of a natural gas pipeline from the Prudhoe Bay fields.

Each of the proposed routes has varying social, political and environmental problems and as the oil pipeline experience has shown, construction in the sometimes formidable terrain and weather of Alaska offers a set of special problems. I am aware that one route would cross the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Range.

I am aware that many conservationists fear for the future of the Range and its magnificent wilderness and wildlife.

In the next few months the Department will be formulating a position, and under the terms of the Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Act will make a recommendation to the President by July 1. I will pledge to you that my recommendation will only be made after the most careful scrutiny of all the facts, especially the environmental impacts of this massive undertaking.

The fact that we are giving highest priority to Alaska does not mean we are going to allow the continued neglect of our national parks and wildlife refuges in the Lower 48 states. For too many years, maintenance and personnel have been inadequate to serve the burgeoning demands made by our increasing population and still protect the resources which these two systems were established to preserve.

Land acquisition of new parks and refuges and of inholdings in existing units of the systems has lagged. Now that Congress has increased the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we are in a good position to catch up on this backlog and to buy new lands before the resources are damaged.

In addition, the Administration's budget provides for a five-year program to substantially upgrade our parks and refuges.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is budgeted to receive nearly \$400 million over the five years. This includes 500 additional personnel, funds for habitat preservation, operation and maintenance of refuges, construction of new facilities grants to the States for endangered species programs, and acquisition of migratory bird habitat.

The Park Service will receive nearly 760 million dollars over the five year for 1,000 additional personnel, funds for operation and maintenance, planning and construction, and preservation of historic properties.

Provided that Congress appropriates these funds, and the climate seems to be favorable, the President's program will help us make up for the years of neglect and insure that future generations have an opportunity to enjoy our priceless natural heritage.

Another subject that I know has long been of interest to the Federation is the management of our public domain lands. Last fall after nearly five years of deliberations the Congress passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act which provides the Bureau of Land Management with basic statutory authority to manage the 470 million acres under its jurisdiction. Implementing this is a major undertaking because it is a complex, sweeping statute.

The initials BLM no longer stand for Bureau of Livestock and Mining. The days when economic interests exercised control over decision on the public domain are past. The public's lands will be managed in the interest of all the people because they belong to all the people. This doesn't mean we won't provide for the cattlemen and mines--we will, but we will achieve balance.

For too long, much of the land where the deer and the antelope play has been managed primarily for livestock often to the detriment of wildlife. For instance, "sheep-tight" fences have barred antelope from their traditional

travel routes, causing needless mortality. Now we are beginning to require modification of those fences so that antelope can get through. This has not been popular with some ranchers, but it reflects the fact that wildlife must be given consideration along with livestock and other economic uses.

In order to open up the implementation process to the public, the Bureau is planning to hold public meetings in advance of publishing drafts of new regulations as they are developed. I hope the National Wildlife Federation and its affiliates will participate in this process, because your views are needed and welcomed.

I believe that there is a new spirit in Washington and across this land, a spirit of new and refreshing interest in the quality of our daily lives. No one should be more pleased than those, like yourselves, who have labored and fought and sacrificed so long on behalf of conservation and environmental protection. This new spirit can be best utilized by bringing together government and conservationists everywhere.

Pundits tell us that the first one hundred days of an administration set the tone for the remainder. Well, this Administration has more than a month to go before it will have experienced its first one hundred days. Yet, the environmental tone has already been set. Our President has a deep personal commitment to end the waste and misuse of America's natural resources. He is cancelling the blank check which once went to those who would exploit resources and pollute the environment in the name of progress. Business as usual has been put out of business.

At Interior we have begun to make sweeping institutional and policy changes to end what I see as the domination of the Department by mining, oil and other special interests.

We intend to make Interior responsive to environmental needs.

We intend to exercise our stewardship of public lands and natural resources in a manner that will make the "three R's"--rape, ruin and run--a thing of the past.

We intend and have begun to break up the little fiefdoms which have divided Interior for years. For too long each of the interests--grazing, mining, timber and so forth--has had its own domain. The place was like a centipede with each little pair of feet scuttling off in its own direction. That is going to change.

Policy making will be centralized and it will be responsive to my philosophy and the philosophy of President Carter.

And, our philosophies do not include allowing developers to crank up the bulldozers and run roughshod over the Public Domain. We will meet the energy and mineral needs of America without destroying our land and ourselves in the process.

There is a time and place for a new environmental spirit in our land. This is the time, during the Carter Administration, and this is the place. Most of all we have an opportunity to bring our government back around to the practice of protecting and enhancing the environment instead of leasing or damming or ignoring it away.

With your help and the support of other members of the conservation community, we'll never have a better opportunity for the wise resource management you have worked so hard to achieve.

I hope you will work with me to form a lasting partnership that will leave strong evidence of our stewardship for generations yet unborn.

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