



NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications

The Washington Post

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1995

Tuesday, October 24, 1995

Springtime for Polluters

Behind Closed Doors, the Republicans Are Trashing the Environment

By Bruce Babbitt

REMEMBER THE 1994 election? Who can forget it? That was when Republican candidates for Congress ran on a platform to:

- Set up a commission to close national parks.
- Open Alaska's most pristine wilderness to oil drilling.
- Effectively repeal the 1972 Clean Water Act.
- Take away citizens' right-to-know about toxic chemicals.
- Block reform of a 123-year-old mining law that gives billions of dollars in public land minerals to foreign and U.S. conglomerates.
- Accelerate clear-cutting in the ancient forests of Alaska and the Northwest.
- Strangle the Endangered Species Act.

Whos . . . Stop right there, you say. Those weren't the themes of the last campaign. Nobody pledged to close national parks or to repeal the Clean Water Act. In fact, the word "environment" never once appears in the "Contract With America."

That, of course, is true. Those issues were never discussed in the last election, and for good reason: There aren't any voters out there saying we have too many parks, or our water is too clean. Yet without public debate, Republicans have engaged a quiet agenda to dismantle environmental and public resource protection. Their program is being rushed through Congress at dizzying speed, which is troubling, for in the frenzied blur, few people outside the committee chambers know how, much less why, it is being carried out at all.

If the Republican leadership has decided that it is in the national interest to roll back three decades of conservation legislation, irrespective of public opinion, it is their prerogative. They won the 1994 election.

But the least they could do is work in the open, using the constitutional process that we all learned about in high school civics: Draft a bill, hold hearings, issue statements on what you have done, argue it out in the media,

engage in open floor debate and hold a distinct vote on the agenda for which they may be held accountable.

Instead, their leadership is moving surreptitiously, circumventing the process entirely by inserting legislation into the appropriation process and the related "reconciliation bill," both of which move on an expedited, debate-restricted, all-or-nothing track.

What kind of business is being hidden from view?

Let's start in Alaska. It is no secret that the state's congressional delegation, two members of which chair the key natural resource and energy committees, is in a hurry to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. Yet the delegation is not about to introduce legislation to establish an "Arctic Oil Reserve" (their term) because even they acknowledge such a bill would have a slim chance of passing. Instead, the necessary drilling authorization was quietly stuck, like a stray Post-It note, on budget reconciliation measures in both the Senate and the House.

Then there's the infamous 1872 Mining Act, which has been ridiculed by environmentalists and fiscal conservatives alike. Once again, rather than holding a meaningful debate on reform, Republican leaders have chosen to tuck a cosmetic, industry-written "reform" bill—which one key senator observed "does not even pass the straight-face test among its sponsors"—back in the fine print of the budget reconciliation bill, where it will escape public attention.

Or consider the Mojave National Preserve, the newest unit of the National Park System. That park is the product of an extensive, decade-long debate that culminated in the California Desert Act of 1994. Enter the current Congress which, at the behest of the mining industry, has decided to abolish the park. There is one problem: No Americans are telling Congress that we have too many national parks.

So, lacking the courage to simply pass a bill that would close the park, the leadership has used an appropriation bill to reduce the funds for the Mojave park to \$1. It's called deniability.

Bruce Babbitt is secretary of the Interior.

"We didn't really spoil the park," they can explain. "It's just that budget realities require the National Park Service to stretch that buck to manage an area larger than Rhode Island."

Or consider the issue of clear-cutting on public lands. The sneak attack began with a "rider" to the so-called budget rescission bill, one that mandated increased timber cuts in the old growth forests of Washington and Oregon. Then came language in the Interior appropriations bill suspending environmental laws and mandating more clear-cutting in the Tongass forests of Alaska. Close on its heels is yet another provision, mandating suspension of environmental laws to force more timber cutting in the pristine forests of Montana and Idaho. The effect is that our Western forestry

is being managed in a way that will leave the most of it a sterile wasteland of the 21st century.

The same pattern is playing out on a variety of other issues. After an embarrassing disagreement last summer over how best to roll back the Clean Water Act, the Republican leadership has switched to a quieter, more convenient process. Upon writing the Environmental Protection Agency's funding bill, House Republicans agreed to 17 riders that, among other things, restrict regulation of lead in the air, weaken standards that keep radon and arsenic out of tap water and exempt industrial plants from federal water pollution controls.

Interestingly, on the few occasions the Republicans have operated in public, their plans have backfired. Several weeks ago, the House considered Colorado Republican Rep. Joel Hefley's bill to establish a commission to close national parks. After vigorous debate, the bill was defeated by 51 votes (including many Republican nays). But then, just 10 hours later, the same measure was sneaked

into the House floor, where it may become law without a voice separate vote. So much for open government.

I hope I'm not naive. I certainly wasn't Mr. Smith coming to Washington when I packed my bags to move here in 1993. For nine years as governor of Arizona I contended with a legislature dominated by lobbyists for timber, mining and other resource groups. But in the nation's center of democracy, I expected the level of play to be elevated. After watching six months of the constitutional process being corrupted, what happened in my home state legislature looks positively benign.

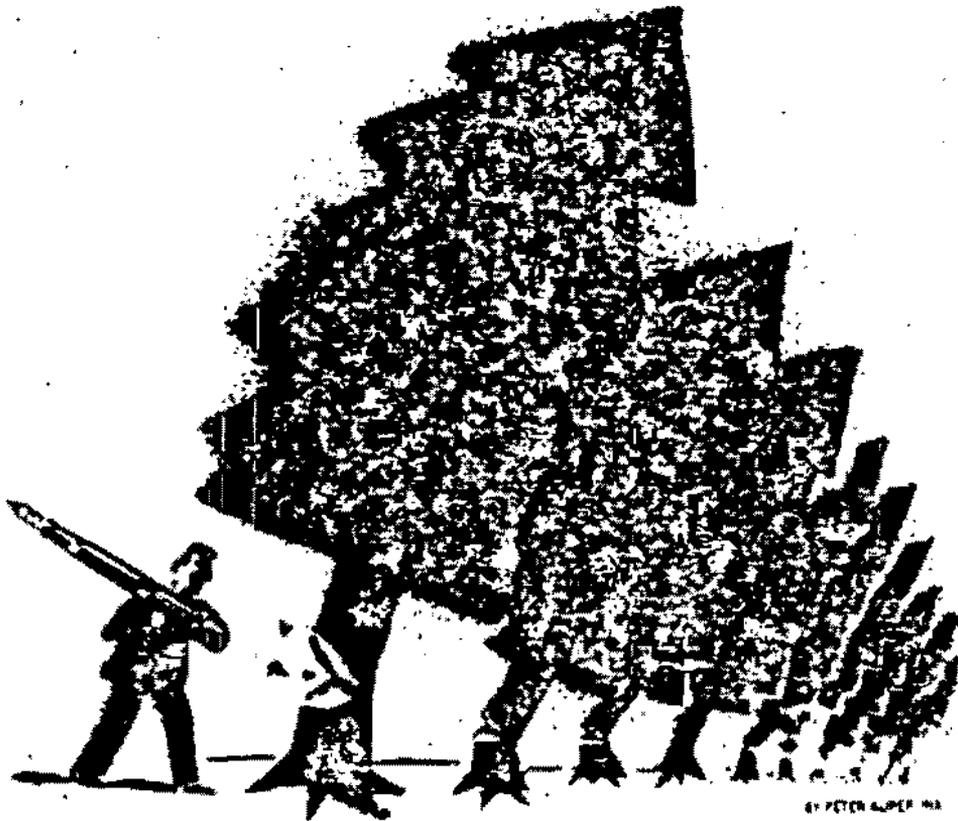
The lobbyists have made an invisible contract with the majority in the legislative branch, swarming through the seat of our democracy, literally rewriting our environmental and resource protection laws. The key difference is that in Arizona the legislators had the courage to operate in public. Here in Washington they are working in the dead of night, behind closed doors, hidden from C-SPAN cameras, without the candor to make their case before the public.

No matter how blurred and how covert their means, of course, the end result will eventually make its way out to the American people. And at some point there will be a public reckoning. As Justice Louis D. Brandeis observed back in 1913, "Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases. Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman."

But until then, the most puzzling aspect of this agenda, for me, is why Republicans are trying to rush it through in the first place. An environmental polls show again and again, there is no political reason for it.

Nor does it have any historical precedent. As hard as it may be for me to admit it, Republicans were originally, and for most of this century remained, the environmental party. Teddy Roosevelt started it by establishing national parks, forests and wildlife refuges. Richard Nixon advanced it with landmark air, water and endangered species protection acts. George Bush won praise for expanding clean air laws. This Congress deliberately undermines all of their efforts.

Perhaps it is not too late for the Republican Congress to open its work to sunlight and still too late for the leadership to remember that the root of conservatism is "to conserve."



BY PETER ALPERT 1993



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 14, 1995

Contact: Vicki M. Boatwright/
Diana Hawkins, (404) 679-7293
Stephanie Hanna, Department of the
Interior (202) 208-6416

MARINE CORPS TOUTS COMPATIBILITY OF MILITARY TRAINING, ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION

At a ceremony hosted by the Department of Defense on Friday December 15, 1995, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt will join Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Environment and Safety) Elsie Munsell and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Director Noreen K. Clough in unveiling a new endangered species poster at Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, N.C. The poster depicts Marines training in red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. The unveiling will take place at the Base's Marston Pavilion at 12:45 p.m., and the ceremony is open to the public.

The poster, a combined effort of the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the second in a series of posters that portray the compatibility of military training and endangered species conservation. The first poster depicting the western snowy plover, an endangered shorebird at Camp Pendleton, California, was unveiled in August 1994. A third poster is planned and will feature the desert tortoise.

"This poster shows the American people that the courageous men and women of our Armed Forces can conduct the vital military training they need to protect our Nation while also protecting an endangered species like the red-cockaded woodpecker," Babbitt said.

Munsell agreed, adding, "The Department of the Navy is proud of its record of good stewardship of the environment. We are equally proud of our partnership with the Interior Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as we work together to conserve and protect the precious natural resources entrusted to our care."

Camp Lejeune Commanding General Maj. Gen. Patrick G. Howard noted that the base possesses a superior environment for both training Marines and conserving habitat for rare, protected species. "The restrictions on timber cutting and the prescribed burning that is conducted to suppress wildfires are examples of activities that both protect the red-cockaded woodpecker's habitat and help to maintain this superior training environment for the Marines," Howard said.

Camp Lejeune, which covers 150,000 acres, is the largest Marine Corps installation on the East Coast and is the host base for the II Marine Expeditionary Force. Its primary mission is to provide support facilities required to maintain the Force's combat readiness.

(MORE)

More than 75 percent of the base remains forested and is home to 42 red-cockaded woodpecker groups. In 1985, when yearly woodpecker population monitoring began at Camp Lejeune, only 31 groups were found here.

The red-cockaded woodpecker was placed on the Federal list of endangered species in October 1970, when it was discovered that timber harvesting had destroyed much of its natural habitat in the Southeast. Red-cockaded woodpeckers live in family groups, and all members of the group participate in caring for and rearing the young. The groups are non-migratory and highly territorial, roosting and nesting in live, old-growth pine trees. The red-cockaded woodpecker is the only North American bird species that excavates cavities in living pine trees. Today, nationwide, approximately 4,500 groups -- also referred to as clusters -- survive in 13 southeastern states from Virginia to Texas, and more than 70 percent of these can be found on Federal lands such as Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune.

A memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and three government agencies in North Carolina to cooperatively develop and sustain a viable RCW population in North Carolina's coastal plain, is nearing completion. Under this proposed MOU, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, the Croatan National Forest and the State of North Carolina's Holly Shelter Game Lands will cooperate in the recovery of the woodpecker. Their recovery objective is 299 clusters for all three properties. Based upon the desired woodpecker population density of 200 acres per cluster, Camp Lejeune's woodpecker recovery goal is 149 clusters.

Military training at Camp Lejeune is a continuing process and often involves large numbers of troops, vehicles and aircraft. There are more than 50 live fire ranges, three major impact areas that are used for practice bombing and strafing, 56 designated training areas for tactical exercises and field training, and 4 miles of beaches that are used for amphibious training.

Under Camp Lejeune's proposed Long Range Habitat Management Plan for the red-cockaded woodpecker, military activities are closely managed in areas where woodpeckers live and breed. Each cluster site containing woodpecker cavity trees is surrounded by a buffer zone that is 200 feet wide. Within these zones, vehicular and foot traffic are permitted along designated roads and trails and blank small arms firing is allowed. Activities prohibited from these areas include firing artillery within 600 feet, digging foxholes or burying cable, climbing, cutting or damaging any size pine tree, or using trees to install antennas.

Existing cluster sites average 38.5 acres, so presently less than 2 percent of the installation's total available land is affected. Even when recovery goals are met, it is estimated that only 5.2 percent of the Base's total land area will be designated woodpecker habitat.

-DOI-

Media representatives who wish to attend the ceremony should contact 1st Lt. Quimby or Gunnery Sgt. Gethicker at (910) 451-5655 by 4 p.m., Dec 13. Following the ceremony, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives will provide B-roll video footage of the red-cockaded woodpecker in Beta format for television news crews.



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

For Immediate Release
October 26, 1995

Contact: Paul Bledsoe (202) 208-3171
Mary Helen Thompson (202) 208-6416

BABBITT JOINS MARINES AT CAMP PENDLETON;

WILL SIGN AGREEMENT WITH MARINE CORPS TO PROTECT SPECIES HABITAT

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt will join the Marines Monday, visiting Camp Pendleton to sign an environmental management agreement between the Marine Corps and the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service to preserve crucial wildlife habitat in the region.

The agreement involves a plan in which the Marines will manage the 125,000 acres of Camp Pendleton in environmentally sensitive ways that are less disruptive to at least six imperiled species that live on the San Diego County Marine base.

"Few people realize the tremendous work the Marine Corps has already done, and will be able to do in the future, on environmental restoration and management," Babbitt said. "The efforts of the Corps at Camp Pendleton will help all land owners in the area, creating more flexibility in ways to integrate habitat management with other private land uses. And because Pendleton is located at the center of an important habitat area, conservation here will be especially effective. This is a classic example of partnerships benefitting both the environment, the economy and our national defense."

Babbitt will meet Corps officials and get a first hand look at how the Marines will manage conservation on the base. The plan focuses on beach, dune estuary and streamside habitat on Camp Pendleton inhabited by three endangered species of birds -- the least Bell's vireo, the southwestern willow flycatcher, and the California least tern--and a number of other threatened species. Camp Pendleton is home to the largest breeding population of the least Bell's vireo in the world.

The crux of the agreement will involve efforts by the Marines to minimize the impact of various training activities on species habitat, particularly in aquatic areas.

Secretary Babbitt, and Marine Corps and Fish and Wildlife officials will be available to meet with media after signing the agreement and a tour of the base. Interested media should arrive at the Main Gate of Camp Pendleton (Camp Pendleton exit off I-5 in Oceanside) no later than 12:30 to be escorted to the tour and press conference site.

-DOI-

HUNTING AND CONSERVATION: A LEGACY AT RISK?
REMARKS BY DEPUTY DIRECTOR JOHN ROGERS
GOVERNORS' SYMPOSIUM ON AMERICA'S HUNTING HERITAGE
GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN
AUGUST 28, 1995

Thank you.

Before I begin, let me pass on the regrets of Mollie Beattie that she could not be with you today. Mollie had a medical emergency this summer that has greatly limited her travel schedule. She fully expects to be back in the saddle shortly, and I know we all wish her well.

My topic today is "Hunting and Conservation: A Legacy at Risk?" The topic is posed as a question because I want to raise a concern rather than make a statement. There is legitimate concern about the future of America's twin legacy of hunting and conservation. Indeed, this great legacy may be at risk. I believe everyone in this room should be paying close attention to what is happening.

But, at the same time, I didn't come here to offer up an apocalyptic vision of what is happening to either conservation or hunting. The 1990s have seen apocalyptic visions thrown about like popcorn in a movie theater. It seems like no one can make a point anymore without making it seem like the end of world is at hand. Pick a topic, pick a side -- and proponents will argue that unless they get their way, it will be the end of the world.

Maybe an excess of hyperbole is the way you score political points in the 1990s. I don't intend add fuel to that fire. But I will speak to you from my long experience as both career wildlife biologist and an avid outdoorsman.

And I will start with a simple observation: over the decades, what has been good for conservation of wildlife generally has been good for hunting. Likewise, what has been good for hunting generally has been good for conservation of wildlife.

Let me repeat: what has been good for wildlife conservation has been good for hunting; what has been good for hunting has been good for wildlife conservation.

The reason for this connection comes down to one word: habitat. For both hunters and wildlife conservation alike, habitat is everything.

Without habitat, there is no wildlife. Without habitat, there is no hunting.

It is no accident, of course, that the hunting community gave birth to the movement to set aside and restore wildlife habitat and has been its biggest supporter over the years. The National Wildlife Refuge System, founded by Teddy Roosevelt, stands as a shining example of this movement with 504 refuges spanning 92 million acres.

That habitat would not exist today if it were not for hunters. Much of it would probably be plowed under, paved over, bulldozed, drained, or otherwise destroyed. And the ducks, the deer, the elk, the antelope, the turkey as well as the thousands of non-game species that live on these 504 refuges would be gone as well.

The importance of habitat to both hunting and conservation has been graphically shown by waterfowl populations in the past

decade. The combination of a drought and intensive agricultural expansion in the prairies sharply reduced the amount of wetland habitat.

As a result, the breeding duck population fell from 38 million ducks in 1979 to 25 million ducks in 1985, more than a 33 percent decline. The estimated fall flight fell from 85 million ducks to 55 million ducks. Waterfowl hunting regulations, of course, became more restrictive to conserve the resource.

Since then, hunters and other conservationists have been busy restoring and conserving millions of acres of waterfowl habitat on the prairie through both partnerships such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and private groups such as Ducks Unlimited.

This year, we saw the results of this habitat conservation. Breeding populations rebounded to nearly 36 million ducks and the fall flight estimate is 80 million ducks. As you know, the Service has proposed to significantly increase bag limits and season lengths for the fall.

I want to emphasize that this recovery did not happen by accident. It took the habitat conservation and restoration efforts, led by the hunting community, to bring the ducks back.

It's true we had exceptional rain and snow on the prairie this year, and that helped trigger the rebound. But water that falls on fallow fields or on pavement doesn't do ducks a bit of good.

The habitat must be in place because for hunters and

wildlife conservation alike, habitat is everything.

So you might be asking: If there is so much good news to report about waterfowl, why does the topic of my speech question the future of America's hunting and conservation legacy?

The answer is found in Washington, where efforts to reform and downsize the government are in many places threatening the conservation of our nation's wildlife habitat.

There is no question that voters sent a message in the 1994 elections they were fed up with business as usual in Washington. They wanted a leaner, more efficient federal government.

At the same time, however, it is clear that the American people did not send a mandate to abandon or weaken the many laws and programs that protect wildlife habitat.

In fact, there was no mention of conservation issues in the Contract with America. The word "environment" never appears. And poll after poll consistently has shown that Americans overwhelmingly support strong conservation and environmental protection laws. Overwhelmingly.

In a poll conducted by the League of Conservation Voters, for example, 83 percent who voted in November described themselves as "environmentalists." Almost 40 percent called themselves strong or very strong environmentalists. In a later poll conducted by the National Wildlife Federation found that more than 60 percent of Americans supported current environmental protections or wanted even stronger protections.

In light of this broad public support for environmental

protection and conservation of wildlife habitat, it is shocking to witness what is happening.

The threats to wildlife habitat conservation, and by extension, the future of our hunting legacy are two-fold. First, there are proposals to slash the budgets of programs that protect and manage our natural resources, including fish and wildlife; second, landmark conservation laws are being threatened, in particular the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

On the budget front, both the House and Senate are proposing deep cuts in habitat conservation programs. These cuts will have an immediate, detrimental effect on our ability to conserve and manage wildlife habitat. Quite simply, they will lead to fewer waterfowl, less upland game, fewer fish, and fewer wild places to enjoy them.

For example, under appropriations bills passed by both the House and the Senate, programs that benefit waterfowl and other migratory bird were reduced significantly, with funding for wetland surveys, habitat restoration, land acquisition, and partnership programs sliced well below current levels.

The Service's habitat conservation and land acquisition budgets also were cut sharply, making it harder to conserve wildlife habitat and purchase lands for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The House also voted to phase out appropriated funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund over the next two years. The Service estimates this will mean that 109,000 acres of

wetland habitat for wildlife will not be conserved each year. It will also have a serious impact on the ability of the Canadian government to conserve waterfowl habitat in the duck production areas north of the border.

In addition, both the House and Senate voted to eliminate 20 percent of the funding for the Harvest Information Program. This would essentially stall the expansion of this program to monitor waterfowl and upland game harvests by making it impossible for the Service to assist states in joining the program.

And both the House and Senate voted to sharply cut funding for endangered species conservation. Among other things, this will severely limit preventative conservation of wildlife habitat to keep species from ever declining to the point where they have to be listed as threatened or endangered. This reduction in habitat conservation will have a direct bearing on the well-being of both game and non-game species alike.

Taken together, it is no overstatement to say these cuts will have real and immediate impacts on both the quantity and quality of hunting opportunities in America.

The second area where the future of hunting and our conservation legacy is at risk are the proposals to substantially weaken our landmark habitat conservation laws.

Take the Clean Water Act. We currently are faced with legislation passed by the House that would drastically weaken this law. The Act has been one of the most successful conservation laws ever, restoring dead and dying waterways across

America. For example, just this past weekend I had the pleasure of going salmon fishing on Lake Michigan, a body of water that has come back to life largely because of the Clean Water Act.

In addition, rivers like the Fox River here in Green Bay have been transformed from open sewers to vibrant sport fisheries by the Clean Water Act.

Under the proposed law, which the President has called "the Dirty Water Act," our rivers and lakes would be allowed to revert to their former, polluted state.

Hunters have an enormous stake in what happens to this law. The House bill would eliminate protection for millions of acres of wetlands that are essential to waterfowl and other game species. Here in Wisconsin, for instance, already half of the wetlands have been lost, which is about the national average. The legislation before Congress would eliminate protection for many of the nation's remaining wetlands.

For example, a survey conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers, the EPA, and the Service found that using the new definition of wetlands under the House bill, almost 98 percent of wetlands in South Carolina would be removed from federal protection. In addition 90 percent would be removed in Georgia; 94 percent in Alabama; 88 percent in North Carolina, 75 percent in Nebraska, 65 percent in South Dakota, 71 percent in Wyoming -- the list goes on. The estimate for Wisconsin is 60 percent to 80 percent.

According to the Wildlife Management Institute, loss of

protection of prairie potholes and other wetlands under the proposed bill would reduce hunting opportunities by a minimum of 629,000 hunter days each year. Hunters have just spent many years restoring wetlands for waterfowl habitat, for 35 million breeding ducks -- now all that is threatened by the stroke of a Congressional pen.

The Endangered Species Act is also under assault. No doubt there are hunters out there who think it is good news Congress is slashing the Service's endangered species budget and considering weakening the law. If you think that, let me bend your ear for a moment, because I am convinced that the effort to gut the Endangered Species Act is not just bad news for hunters, it is very bad news for hunters.

And the reason comes back to that simple word: habitat.

The Endangered Species Act has been unfortunately misrepresented as a law that primarily protects obscure species that no one cares about. The truth is that the Act primarily protects wildlife habitat, not just for obscure species but for all species, game and non-game alike.

Let me repeat my earlier axiom: what has been good for wildlife conservation has been good for hunting; what has been good for hunting has been good for wildlife conservation.

The obscure endangered species that are often caricatured in editorial cartoons are really early warning systems -- smoke alarms telling us where wildlife habitat is degraded and destroyed. Likewise, habitat conservation efforts that are taken

on behalf of threatened and endangered species almost always have direct benefits to game species and to hunters.

In fact, an airtight case could be made that there is better hunting today because of the Endangered Species Act .

The 272 national wildlife refuges with hunting programs are an excellent example. On every one of these refuges, biologists have identified at least one endangered species. And on 71 of these refuges, there is actually an active wildlife management program to conserve endangered species. In each of these cases, the conservation of endangered species habitat is not only compatible with good hunting opportunities, it is often contributes to good hunting.

Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia, for instance, was established to protect the endangered bald eagle. The refuge also has an active deer hunting program. If it weren't for the refuge, there is little doubt the area would have been turned into a subdivision. There would be no hunting opportunity and no habitat for big game.

San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge was established to protect numerous endangered species, including the California clapper rail, least tern, and salt marsh harvest mouse. Yet the refuge has an active waterfowl hunting program on its salt ponds and marshes, right there in the middle of a major metropolitan area.

It is simply foolishness to think you can separate wildlife habitat into two classes: game habitat and endangered species

habitat. Nature does not work that way.

Yet the major proposal in the Senate to change the Endangered Species Act targets endangered species habitat, as though it is separate from the habitat of other species. This bill would continue to prohibit killing of an endangered species but it would not stop anyone from destroying the habitat of the species. In short, you could drain the wetland, pollute the river, cut down all the trees, and do whatever you want as long as you don't directly kill an endangered animal.

Let me flip my axiom around: what is bad for wildlife conservation is generally bad for hunting; what is bad for hunting is generally bad for wildlife conservation.

The effort to gut the Endangered Species Act is bad for habitat conservation. It is bad for hunting.

As I noted at the beginning of my remarks, my topic "Hunting and Conservation: A Legacy at Risk?" has a question mark at the end of it:

But as much as anything, the question mark is whether the sportsmen of America are going to speak up during this critical time. Our hunting and conservation legacy is at risk. Are we going to stand idly back while special interests, who don't care a wit whether there's any wildlife habitat left for future generations to enjoy, roll back a century of progress.

Hunters have made America the world's foremost nation in conservation of fish and wildlife. Now is the time to be heard. Next year may be too late.

Purchase preserves a paradise in Pacific

Nature Conservancy buys unspoiled atoll

By Traci Watson
USA TODAY

Palmyra Atoll, a privately owned island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, boasts clouds of birds, giant coconut crabs and beaches where rare sea turtles nest. In developers' eyes, it's the perfect place for a resort-casino complex including 2,000 hotel rooms — or perhaps for a toxic-waste dump.

Now, those visions of development are about to vanish. A land-preservation group will announce today that it has struck an agreement to buy Palmyra from the three Hawaiian brothers whose family has owned the island since 1922.

The new landlord — the Arlington, Va.-based Nature Conservancy — plans to open the island to a small number of tourists who want to watch birds, scuba dive or cast a line into the schools of bonefish swimming in the transparent water around the island.

Palmyra is the only privately owned U.S. territory. Its purchase offers "the last remaining opportunity to protect an undeveloped, uninhabited, pristine tropical marine ecosystem" in the USA, says John Sawhill, Nature Conservancy president.

Potential buyers have dreamed up "all kinds of schemes" for the island, says Peter Savio, the real-estate broker for the sellers, the Fullard-Leo family. The casino and the dump were among them, but he says, "No question, this is the best."

Palmyra lies 1,052 miles south of Hawaii and about 350 miles north of the equator. The 680-acre territory is technically an atoll, a ring of islets surrounding a central lagoon. It has been largely uninhabited except during World War II, when the Navy stationed men there and built an airstrip.

Palmyra is washed by frequent showers and dried by soft breezes. The rain has nurtured lush vegetation, including groves of palm trees. "It was classic paradise images," Nancy MacKinnon, the conservancy staffer who brokered the deal, recalls of her first visit. "I was expecting someone to be singing *Bali Ha'i* in the background."

Its wildlife includes more than 1 million seabirds that build their nests in the trees and on the ground, and the giant coconut crab, which can crack the hard nuts in its claws. A succulent meal, the crab has been nearly wiped out from the rest of the Pacific

by human consumption. On Palmyra, the crabs are unmolested. They can live 40-50 years and grow to 2½ feet across.

The atoll is surrounded by nearly pristine reefs, including more than 130 species of hard coral and at least 200 species of fish. A government biologist has said the reefs are among the most spectacular in the Pacific. As soon as the deal goes through, the government is likely to establish a national wildlife refuge to include the waters and much of the land itself. There is no protection for the corals now.

"Until (the waters are made a refuge), it's

pretty wide open," admits Bill Brown, science adviser to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. The conservancy also plans an eco-tourism operation, which would host, at most, 50-75 people at a time. That would probably require jet service to the atoll and facilities for waste disposal and other services. Other reef-protection groups approve of the plans.

"If you're really talking low-impact tourism, you can have a positive economic benefit with minimal environmental damage," says Stephen Colwell of the Coral Reef Alliance, which is based in Berkeley, Calif.

PERSPECTIVE

THE CLARION-LEDGER ■ JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

SUNDAY, JULY 15

Interior chief plants new flood 'control' ideas

■ Babbitt seeks new paradigm to endless flood debate

By Bruce Reid
Clarion-Ledger Staff Writer

HOLLANDALE — Bruce Babbitt planted a three-foot cypress tree at Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge the other day.

The act could be brushed off as an image bite, except there were no television cameras there. And, except that Babbitt, U.S. interior secretary, can be considered the nation's highest-ranking environmental official. And the fact that he sunk the tree next to a field of soybeans in a place, the lower Mississippi River region, where 80 percent of the once-immense flood-plain forests have been cut and drained mainly for farms.

Much of that drainage — by official accounts about 3.5 million acres since the 1930s — has been fostered by another federal agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. But the other day at the 13,000-acre Yazoo refuge, Joseph West-

phal, who oversees the corps, planted a green ash a few feet from Babbitt's cypress. As he planted his tree, Westphal, assistant secretary of the Army for civil works, quipped: "This is the greening of the corps."

Could it be, that after a three-day tour of water-project sites from southeastern Missouri to New Orleans, Babbitt and Westphal would engineer a new paradigm from what seems like an endless, bloody debate about how much government plumbing work is enough? And could it be that the greening of the corps, as Westphal put it, would not only help reverse the most dramatic loss of forested wetlands in the United States but also sow seeds of economic and cultural renewal?

Could new enterprises grow in a more diverse landscape that has more trees, cleaner waterways, more fish and more migratory birds? Would farmers plowing fewer flooded acres be more productive? Would jobs eventually sprout from careful harvesting of new



Bruce Reid/The Clarion-Ledger
U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt (center) plants a cypress tree last week at Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge. Officials Tim Wilkins (right) and Lamar Dorris (left) look on.

trees? Would more hunters, anglers and bird watchers flock to the reborn wilderness, leaving behind greenery from their billfolds?

One of the most immediate — and perhaps, pivotal — fights in the region is over whether to build a pumping plant in Leake County that would

lessen seasonal flooding of farms south of Rolling Fork. The pump, which would be funded entirely by the federal government, would cost about \$150 million to build and millions more to operate. A large dredging project in the nearby Sunflower River basin also is being debated.

But rather than just build a huge pump to allow more cotton to be grown on flood-prone land, one of the agencies Babbitt oversees, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wants the project to include the permanent restoration of up to 300,000 acres of the lowest land, a third of which is now private farmland.

Traveling from where Steele Bayou meets the Yazoo River north of Vicksburg, where the corps would build the world's largest flood-control pumping plant, Babbitt, too, spoke of something far bigger than planting a few trees. He spoke of restoring some of the landscape that has been slashed and burned and ditched and drained.

"Restoration is a word with a lot of power," Babbitt said. "It is the most important land management concept of the next century."

If anything, Babbitt's visit helped increase the pressure on the corps to be a full partner in the notion that putting water back on the land can be just as valuable as taking it off, and

that permanently moving houses and farms away from floodwaters can be just as effective as trying to make the water go away.

The National Research Council, in a recent report still percolating through the corps, said federal engineers must take a broader view of their projects, or see how all their pumps, ditches and levees change entire, interconnected watersheds like the lower Mississippi River.

Other things must change, too, the council said, like the fact that the corps' procedures generally do not allow the removal of a house from a flood plain to be counted as a "benefit" of a flood-control project.

Meanwhile, after planting two trees in the Delta mud last week, Babbitt and Westphal are back in Washington or elsewhere.

Whatever else they sowed may take a while to grow.

Druce Reid is the environment writer for *The Clarion Ledger*. Call him at 881-7003.

Interior chief says he'll hunt for Balcones habitat money

By Ralph K. M. Haurwitz
American-Statesman Staff

Published: Jan. 15, 1999

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt pledged Thursday to "look in all the cupboards" for additional federal money to buy endangered-species habitat in the Austin area.

Babbitt, who was in town to present a conservation award to Lady Bird Johnson, stopped short of promising more money for the limestone canyons and oak-cedar hillsides that are the focus of two separate but related land-conservation initiatives. Acquisition money has fallen short for both projects.

The Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan seeks to set aside about 30,000 acres in western Travis County for the golden-cheeked warbler, the black-capped vireo and several species of reclusive cave bugs. The Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge is intended to encompass 46,000 acres of habitat for the warbler and vireo in northwestern Travis, southwestern Williamson and eastern Burnet counties.

The conservation plan is 6,000 to 7,000 acres short of its goal, and 16,000 acres have been assembled for the wildlife refuge.

Babbitt met with Mayor Kirk Watson, Travis County Commissioner Karen Sonleitner, U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett and other officials Thursday morning, primarily to hear their concerns about the conservation plan.



Lady Bird Johnson shows off the conservation award presented to her by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt on Thursday. Photo by David Kennedy/AA-S.

"They pressed me awfully hard," the interior secretary said in an interview Thursday afternoon at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

"And I said I would go back and sort of look in all the cupboards for this year. It's not going to be easy, but I said I'm not saying no. I don't know what's available, but I'll certainly go back and look."

Babbitt also said that two proposals by the Clinton administration this week for the fiscal year beginning in October could also funnel

additional money into the Balcones projects. Both proposals are subject to congressional approval. One would earmark \$1 billion for land acquisition, and the other would provide \$700 million in tax credits to finance a \$10 billion bond program aimed at preserving open space in cities and suburbs.

Babbitt, a Democrat and former governor of Arizona, said he would try to bridge a political divide on behalf of the Balcones projects.

He said he would request a meeting with Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, "to see if we can try to find some common ground on this issue." Babbitt said he has spoken with Republican Gov. George W. Bush "from time to time and I hopefully can strengthen that relationship."

Conservationists have charged that Hutchison, a longtime critic of the Endangered Species Act, is responsible for the refuge's getting nearly \$3.8 million less this year for land acquisition than had been anticipated. A spokeswoman for Hutchison has denied the allegation but said local groups did not urge the senator to seek money for the refuge.

Babbitt and Bush have disagreed on what sort of land-use protections are needed for endangered species, with the governor seeking a lighter regulatory touch.

"It may be that this is perceived as an Austin problem rather than a Texas opportunity," Babbitt said. "I think we need to cast this a little larger. I am not a no-growth advocate."

Watson said he was encouraged by Babbitt's remarks. The city and Travis County, which are partners in the Balcones conservation plan, have not raised enough money to acquire several key parcels.

"He has always had a special interest in the Balcones plan," the mayor said of Babbitt. "He didn't write a check. But his commitment . . . was to work to help us."

Doggett, a Democrat from Austin, said landowners who own prime habitat need relief that only the federal government can provide in a timely fashion.

"Some landowners are out there in a very unfair situation," Doggett said. "They feel they can't do anything with their property because of the habitat, and they need it acquired."

Babbitt's interest in open-space preservation in the Austin area is partly professional and partly personal. He met his wife here and hiked in the Hill Country when he was a young lawyer in the 1960s.

**Babbitt: Preserving open space is above
partisan politics**

Published: Jan. 15, 1999

The following are excerpts from a conversation Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt had with two American-Statesman writers Thursday at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:

Q: Why is this movement to preserve open space so visible right now and why are bond issues to support land acquisition passing?

A: It's being driven in a sort of paradoxical but entirely understandable way. The strength of the economy and the enormous amount of development going on in the landscape. As communities prosper and development begins to accelerate, people are saying, "Wait a minute. There's a 5,000-home subdivision that's going to obliterate the fields that surrounded the area where I grew up," and pretty soon it all kind of accumulates, and it's driving it.

Q: Do you see it as nonpartisan?

A: Oh, yeah. This is kind of Teddy Roosevelt conservation. I would say the people who've done the most on this are (Gov.) Christine Whitman in New Jersey and Gov. (Pete) Wilson in California. Both states are being really pressed by development. Los Angeles and San Diego are like magnets pointed at each other; Austin and San Antonio are like two magnets pointed at each other -- both of them in danger of obliterating unique regional ecosystems that don't exist anywhere else.

Q: Do you see anyplace else in this country that is successfully combatting sprawl without making it unaffordable for people to live in the place that they love?

A: The answer is yes. You've got to do two things. One is look at open space around cities and second is development policies which encourage the efficient use of land, by density transfers, brownfields development, transportation policies. . . . The point the vice president makes is awfully important: We subsidize sprawl. We do it with federal transportation monies; we do it with city infrastructure, all kinds of things which actually give cities incentives to go outward rather than do a nice organic job with what they've got.

Q: What's your personal feeling about Austin these days? You've been coming here quite often. . . and you've seen it grow dramatically.

A: I really like this town, and I think the growth is bringing a lot of really good things. This has always been a special place. When I was here in the '60s the reason this place was so vibrant was because it had the state Capitol and the state university. There are only a couple of places in the United States where that is true. It made a really special kind of mix -- lots of different people, different viewpoints, a lot of energy, and a lot of involvement in politics. And what's changed, of course, since I left Austin is you now have the high-tech crowd. I can't think of a better base for an economy, because . . . it meshes so nicely with the university and provides a kind of energy that's compatible with the university.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 13, 1999

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR BRUCE BABBITT ON DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT NOT TO REVIEW WOLF KILL CASE

I am encouraged by the decision of the Supreme Court Monday, January 11, not to review the federal court of appeals's decision in the McKittrick case, involving the illegal killing of a gray wolf near Yellowstone National Park.

The lower courts in this litigation made clear that the Fish & Wildlife Service's reintroduction of the gray wolf in the Yellowstone region was lawful, and that the killing of one of these wolves was illegal and warranted punishment of the perpetrator. The Supreme Court's denial of a writ of certiorari in this case leaves that judgment intact.

The outcome of this litigation sends a clear signal that our legal system will protect reintroduced wild wolves, that those who violate these laws will be punished, and that, at long last, the howl of healthy populations of wild wolves will once again be heard in their historic natural habitat in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Arizona and New Mexico.

-DOI-



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Contact: Paul Bledsoe (408) 649-2490 or (202) 208-3280
Stephanie Hanna (202) 208-6416

For Immediate Release: May 5, 1998

**BABBITT TO DEDICATE 4,000 ACRE WILDLIFE REFUGE ADDITION;
WILL TOUR NEW BEAR CREEK UNIT OF SAN LUIS NWR
INTERIOR SECRETARY TO CITE PROGRESS ON WATER FOR CENTRAL
VALLEY REFUGES AS MODEL FOR BAY-DELTA SUCCESS**

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt will be at San Luis National Wildlife Refuge near Mercer Friday to dedicate a massive 4,000 acre expansion of the Refuge, to discuss recent Interior Department actions which have provided more certain water supply to the Central Valley National Wildlife Refuges, and to talk about how consensus-building efforts to help the refuges can serve as a model to ensure the success of the CALFED Bay-Delta effort.

"Californians from all walks of life have worked together in recent years to help provide adequate water for these refuges," Babbitt said. "Not surprisingly, since 1993 we've seen a 20 percent increase in waterfowl here. That's called success. But it is success which only comes about through compromise. It is a model which I believe will help resolve other water issues, including Bay-Delta."

Joined by irrigators, environmentalists, hunters, public officials and numerous other individuals and groups dedicated to good stewardship of California's environment and water, Babbitt will take an hour long tour of the refuge. Afterward, Babbitt will formally dedicate the new 4,000 West Bear acre unit, one of the largest land parcels contiguous to an existing refuge that the Fish and Wildlife Service has ever acquired and restored in the West.

"Restoration of these large and vital wetlands and grasslands proves that we can improve habitat for species while still providing adequate water for urban, agricultural and other needs," Babbitt said. "The proof is here to see on the landscape. It is a place we should all keep in mind because it shows that compromise and effort will lead to solutions which can benefit us all."

--MORE--

SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT

Babbitt touts Valley wildlife efforts

By STEVE SPICHLER
The Brownsville Herald

BROWNSVILLE — After a few minutes staring through a spotting scope, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt raised his head, turned to the side and nodded a thumbs-up.

"Summa," he announced to his colleagues.

He had just seen the rare spotted falcon during a Thursday morning visit of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.

The 43,000-acre refuge is in line to get \$1.3 million for land acquisition added to a bill pending before Congress. The interior secretary is optimistic the bill will pass. "I'm very hopeful we will get it from Congress," he said.

Babbitt came to Laguna Atascosa to see the spotted falcon, a brown-winged bird that had been sighted in the wild in the United States. The bird has been successfully reintroduced to the refuge, which has 407 documented different species of birds, the most of any refuge in the nation.

Using sophisticated birds from Mexico, the reintroduction of the spotted falcon into the refuge is one of the newest steps for animals on the brink of extinction. The first sign of success came locally in 1995, when a hatchling was observed on a 65-foot tall shrub just on the island by the

"... I'm here because something really important is going on in the Valley. It's the story of the falcon and the way it brought private landowners, the nonprofit sector, agriculture, industry and environmentalists together. It's really important, not just the falcon, but a way of looking at the landscape and a way of finding how to balance our daily lives and our presence on the land."

— Bruce Babbitt,
secretary of the interior

Point of Brownsville. It was the first known hatching in the United States in 45 years.

The Rev. Tom Skidell, Babbitt's top pick and an authority on Rio Grande Valley birds, was quick to point out other refuges and shorelines on the Atlantic coast. At one point Babbitt left his visit to other conservation-minded birds at a nearby point, including three raven species in their flight just moments away. Nearby, an alligator curled back at everyone watching him.

"You may be used to this, but this is not something I see every day," he told the rest of the group.

Babbitt also attended a roundtable discussion at the Rio Grande Valley Shooting Center with conservationists, scientists, landowners and wildlife managers prior to departing for San Diego, Calif., the next stop on his tour of refuges.

"I'm here because of the (reintroduced) falcon in such large numbers," Babbitt said. "But in a broader sense, I'm here because something really important is going on in the Valley."

"It's the story of the falcon and the way it brought private landowners, the nonprofit sector, agriculture, industry and environmentalists together. It's really important, not just the falcon, but a way of looking at the landscape and a way of finding how to balance our daily lives and our presence on the land," he said.

Babbitt called the reintroduction of the falcon a "north-south Valley issue" he hopes will spread to other parts of

the country.

The Valley, he said, is proof that the "Safe Harbor" concept works. Safe Harbor is a series of incentives designed to protect endangered and threatened species. It also rewards landowners who undertake actions benefiting the animals. It offers them protection from future regulatory actions under the Endangered Species Act.

With about 97 percent of the land in South Texas under private ownership, Babbitt emphasized the importance of Safe Harbor, which he started in 1995.

Safe Harbor is an amendment to the Endangered Species Act, which has been criticized by some landowners as handcuffing land development. Safe Harbor has also been criticized by some as chipping away at the act.

The roundtable discussion brought up concerns regarding the tax burden of large landowners forced to sell off parcels to pay inheritance taxes, or who must turn to farming to make the land more profitable. Both are obstacles to wildlife conservation.

"This issue has started to be discussed by Congress. I think it is important," Babbitt said. He hopes new laws will address the problem.

As for the land acquisition funds, Babbitt said money will be used to purchase land along the Laguna Madre shoreline and South Padre Island.

"What the priorities will be has yet to be determined," the secretary said.

Babbitt makes new feathered friend in the Valley

Interior secretary backs federal effort to expand Laguna Atascosa, home of the Aplomado falcon

IN MONTEZUMA
Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE - With the Aplomado falcon safe for now, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt asked Tuesday efforts under way to expand the Rio Grande Valley refuge. It will serve as a home for the bird and other wildlife.

Federal officials hope to buy and assemble land tracts into a 132,000-acre Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuge, a combination of connecting tracts along the banks of the Rio Grande through the four southernmost Texas counties.

"You can't do it overnight," Babbitt said of the painstaking process.

In February, the fish and wildlife service paid \$5.6 million for a 12,000-acre swath of South Texas coast known as Playa del Rio. In the land and water conservation fund budget released several months ago, \$3.5 million was appropriated for land acquisition near Laguna Atascosa, said Paul Bedone, U.S. Department of the Interior spokesman.

Tuesday's visit to Laguna Atascosa also gave Babbitt his first look at the Aplomado falcon as he discussed efforts to save the bird and other endangered species.

"I've been out tramping around here that bird unsuccessfully for a long time," he said. "All of a sudden, there it is in the morning light. You can see the bird's profile and the long tail and beak and extraordinary color. It's a message of hope about our ability to live in harmony with the land scape."



Montezuma Secretary Bruce Babbitt watches an Aplomado falcon at the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge on Tuesday.

The Aplomado falcon was extinct in the wild in the United States until the early 1980s. Since then, with captive-bred birds from Mexico, the predatory raptor has been reintroduced to ranches and refuges under a "safe harbors" partnership between the government and landowners.

Conservation groups purchase landowners' public utility com-

pany stock. Landowners voluntarily agree to take actions that would protect vulnerable species. In exchange, the landowners are freed from some state regulatory mandates dictating how they can use their land.

Babbitt who said he was in South Texas to listen, did not offer any real solutions at the discussion but seemed supportive of the ideas brought up by participants. John Martin, vice president of the Valley Land Fund, a conservation group, mentioned that estate taxes were detrimental to the preservation of habitats for wildlife in South Texas where about 98 percent of the land is privately owned.

When a landowner dies, Martin explained, the heirs are stuck paying out the land or finishing it in order to pay the taxes.

"The effect of the estate tax law on the private landowner in South Texas is horrendous," he said. "It is not changing the tax laws in this country dealing with the very people who have the habitat we're not going to save any more."

Babbitt said he first became aware of the problem three years ago and landowners know about it, as well.

"This issue is starting to be discussed in the Congress," he said. "I think the issue is in play. I'm hopeful that before too long we may have a chance of getting some type of provisions in estate tax laws."



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Contact: Tim Ahern 202/208-6291

For Release: November 20, 1997

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT RELEASES POLICY TO MANAGE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT WATER FOR FISH, WILDLIFE

The Department of the Interior today issued its final administrative policy to implement the section of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act dedicating CVP water for fish, wildlife and habitat restoration.

"This policy will help both the fish and wildlife in the Central Valley, along with people who use the water, both on farms and in the cities and suburbs," said Deputy Interior Secretary John Garamendi, who announced the new policy.

"This policy meets the requirements for protecting our environment and our wildlife, and also insures that we will provide the water required for farmers and cities so the California economy can continue to grow," said Garamendi. "It is based on good science and sound economics."

The policy released today is part of the implementation of the CVPIA, which was signed into law in 1992. That law mandated changes in the way water was distributed from the Central Valley Project, a 60-year-old system of nearly twenty dams and reservoirs and hundreds of miles of canals and other water conveyance facilities located in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The CVP delivers about 5.8 million acre-feet of water a year, which irrigates more than 2.6 million acres of farmland and provides drinking water for nearly one million people.

Last Saturday, at the Yolo Wetlands dedication near Sacramento, President Clinton said choosing between economic growth and environmental protection is "a false choice." The President said, "we understand that over the long run if we want to preserve our ability to increase the standard of living, we have to preserve our national environmental and all the things that go with it."

Garamendi noted the new Interior policy meets both goals. "We don't have to make that choice. We can do both. We can provide economic growth and environmental protection through this policy in a sound and reasonable way," he said at a news conference.

(MORE)



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Contact: Mary Helen Thompson
Michael Gauldin
202/208-6416

For Immediate Release: September 17, 1996

Outdoor Gear Surcharge Not a Clinton Administration Initiative

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said today that a proposal by state and international fish and wildlife agencies to raise funds for wildlife conservation through a surcharge on outdoor recreation equipment is not a Clinton Administration proposal.

The outdoor gear surcharge is proposed by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, a consortium that includes wildlife officials from the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The Association backs the idea because the revenue raised would be used for wildlife education, recreation and conservation projects. The Association's proposal has also been endorsed by more than 1,200 wildlife-related businesses and organizations.

Secretary Babbitt addressed the annual meeting of the Association yesterday and during his remarks said he personally favored the concept of funding state wildlife programs through a surcharge on the gear used by people who benefit from state outdoor recreation services.

"My statement led people to believe that the Administration supports the wildlife agencies' proposal for an outdoor gear surcharge. That is not true," said Babbitt. "I want to clearly state that the President does not support and has not ever seen, this proposal."

-DOI-

TO: Associated Press (Attn. Joe Ruff)

From: Naomi Edelson, International Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Lion Hotel in Omaha at telephone number (402) 636-4973. Tomorrow can be reached at (202)624-7890 or at home lands at (703)527-1052.

Re: Correction to Sec. of Interior Babbitt's remarks regarding Teaming with Wildlife

Date: 17 September 1996

While we very much appreciate the coverage provided by AP on the Teaming with Wildlife funding proposal, we would like to request that an important correction be made to the story.

Yesterday at IAFWA's annual meeting in Omaha, Sec Babbitt indicated his personal support for the Teaming with Wildlife funding proposal. He was responding to witnessing an award just given to Bass Pro Shops for their leadership role in the TWW proposal.

This was incorrectly reported by AP as a proposal of Sec. Babbitt's (and thus the Clinton Administration) and further that Babbitt plan's to present this proposal to Congress next year. The AP story already has resulted in coverage in USA today, CNN and many state newspapers, radio's, and tv stations.

This is not a Clinton Administration initiative. While we will indeed appreciate the support of which ever Administration is in place next year, this is not a Clinton Admin. proposal.

The story referred to the coalition of 1200 organizations as also endorsing the proposal. It's actually The reverse. This proposal was initiated 5 years ago by the IAFWA and is being supported by a coalition of over 1260 organizations and business who use and enjoy the outdoors (estimated to include 50 million people). It is being spearheaded by such organizations as the National Wildlife Federation, Wildlife Management Institute, National Aud. Soc, National Wild Turkey Federation, and over 200 businesses such as Bass Pro Shops, American AGCO (bird seed and feeders), and four optics companies (Swift, Zeiss, Swarovski, Kowa) among many others. This coalition is the largest ever in history to support any wildlife conservation proposal. It represents the consumers of outdoor gear and supplies Sec Babbitt was reacting the coalition's proposal.

This proposal has strong bi-partisan support including 10 governors and many members of Congress. Expect to see introduced next year as a bi-partisan bill vs. an Administration proposal. Strong support as its a user fee, funds returned to states, and prevents spp. from becoming endangered.

Additional point which was already made in AP story.

This is not a new tax. It is an expansion of *an* program started in 1937 where sportsmen instigated a user fee in the form of an excise tax on gun and ammunition for the restoration of wildlife (Pittman-Robertson Act). Then in 1950's expanded to fishing gear. Tremendous success is restoration of wild turkey, white-tailed deer, striped bass, antelope, etc. THIS IS SIMPLY AN EXPANSION OF THESE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS in other outdoor enthusiasts allowing them to also give something back to the outdoors.

We would really appreciate your releasing a correction as this has serious political ramifications during an election year. This is currently a bi-partisan issue and it being portrayed as otherwise could seriously undermine 5 years of effort by many of the leading conservation and recreation organizations and businesses in our nation. During an election year, many members of Congress that might consider supporting this will be likely to not go an record supporting any increase in fees. It could also be picked up by the Dole campaign as a way to attack Clinton, when in fact Clinton is likely not even aware of the issue (but may be now!!)

Thanks for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with AP as this story progresses.

TO: Associated Press (Attn. Joe Ruff)

From: Naomi Edelson, International Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Rad Lion Hotel in Omaha at telephone number (402) 636-4973. Tomorrow can be reached at (202) 624-7890
or at home tone at (703) 527-1052

Re: Correction to Sec. of Interior Babbitt's remarks regarding Teaming with Wildlife

Date: 17 September 1996

While we very much appreciate the coverage provided by AP on the Teaming with Wildlife funding proposal, we would like to request that an important correction be made to the story.

Yesterday at IAFWA's annual meeting in Omaha, Sec. Babbitt indicated his personal support for the Teaming with Wildlife funding proposal. He was responding to witnessing an award just given to Bass Pro Shops for their leadership role in the TWW proposal.

This was incorrectly reported by AP as a proposal of Sec. Babbitt's (and thus the Clinton Administration) and further that Babbitt plan's to present this proposal to Congress next year. The AP story already has resulted in coverage in USA today, CNN and many state newspapers, radios, and tv stations.

This is not a Clinton Administration Initiative. While we will indeed appreciate the support of which ever Administration is in place next year, this is not a Clinton Admin. proposal.

The story referred to the coalition of 1200 organizations as also endorsing the proposal. It's actually the reverse. This proposal was initiated 5 years ago by the IAFWA and is being supported by a coalition of over 1260 organizations and businesses who use and enjoy the outdoors (estimated to include 50 million people). It is being spearheaded by such organizations as the National Wildlife Federation, Wildlife Management Institute, National Aud. Soc., National Wild Turkey Federation, and over 200 businesses such as Bass Pro Shops, American AGCO (bird seed and feeders), and four optics companies (Swift, Zeiss, Swarovski, Kowa) among many others. This coalition is the largest ever in history to support any wildlife conservation proposal. It represents the consumers of outdoor gear and supplies. Sec. Babbitt was reacting the coalition's proposal.

This proposal has strong bi-partisan support including 10 governors and many members of Congress. Expect to see introduced next year as a bi-partisan bill vs. an Administration proposal. Strong support as its a user fee, funds returned to states, and prevents spp. from becoming endangered.

Additional point which was already made in AP story.

This is not a new tax. It is an expansion of an a program started in 1937 where sportsmen instigated a user fee in the form of an excise tax on guns and ammunition for the restoration of wildlife (Pitman-Robertson Act). Then in 1950's expanded to fishing gear. Tremendous success is restoration of wild turkey, white-tailed deer, striped bass, antelope, etc. THIS IS SIMPLY AN EXPANSION OF THESE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS to other outdoor enthusiasts allowing them to also give something back to the outdoors.

We would really appreciate your releasing a correction as this has serious political ramifications during an election year. This is currently a bi-partisan issue and it being portrayed as otherwise could seriously undermine 5 years of effort by many of the leading conservation and recreation organizations and businesses in our nation. During an election year, many members of Congress that might consider supporting this will be likely to not go on record supporting any increase in fees. It could also be picked up by the Dole campaign as a way to attack Clinton, when in fact Clinton is likely not even aware of the issue (but may be now!!).

Thanks for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with AP as this story progresses.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 5, 1996

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

SECRETARY BABBITT TO ANNOUNCE TRANSFER OF LAND PARCEL NEAR BOSTON FROM ARMY TO WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt will travel to Massachusetts today to announce the addition of a parcel of about 2,300 acres of U.S. Army land to the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. The land, formerly known as the Fort Devens Sudbury Training Annex, is located near Boston.

"This is a great and lasting gift by the U.S. Army to America's National Wildlife Refuge System and to the people of Massachusetts," Babbitt said. "The remaining open spaces around Boston are under enormous pressure and this large parcel, linked with others in the Great Meadows Refuge, will provide wildlife with first-class habitat and a corridor that will ensure their ability to thrive in an increasingly urban environment."

Babbitt credited the Army with "completing its mission in this area with a high degree of environmental stewardship. There are numerous examples of truly pristine wetlands, the habitat most necessary for wildlife. This place will provide a living snapshot of the way this countryside once looked in the days before suburban sprawl."

According to surveys by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other conservation groups, the Sudbury Annex provides habitat for a large number of resident bird species, including waterfowl, songbirds, raptors, shore birds and wading birds, as well as migratory birds and waterfowl. In addition, a number of reptile and amphibian species have been observed, some rare or in peril.

The proposal to transfer the Sudbury Annex began as a result of recommendations of the Base Closure Commission. The Fish & Wildlife Service requested a no-cost transfer of the Annex in November, 1995, and this request received support from four local towns and several local conservation associations, as well as key members of Massachusetts' Congressional delegation, including Senators Kerry and Kennedy and Congressman Meehan. Senator Kerry and Congressman Meehan will join Secretary Babbitt at Monday's official announcement of the transfer.

"Senator Kerry and Congressman Meehan are also introducing legislation in Congress to add a 29-mile stretch of the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord Rivers watershed to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Their leadership underscores the enormous value of the national resource we are protecting today for present and future generations in Massachusetts."

(more)



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 31, 1996

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

Clinton Administration Announces Proposed Additions to San Diego National Wildlife Refuge and Otay Mountains to support San Diego County's Natural Communities Conservation Program

The Clinton Administration has requested \$2 million in additional funding to acquire sensitive lands at Otay Mountain to support the San Diego County Natural Communities Conservation Plan, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced today. The money would come from an appropriation from the Interior Department's Land and Water Conservation Fund for Fiscal Year 1997. Congress is expected to take up Interior Appropriations funding in the near future.

In addition, Secretary Babbitt has requested \$3.5 million to create a South Bay unit of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose is to secure estuarian habitat around South San Diego Bay, protecting prime habitat for a number of threatened and sensitive wildlife, fish and plant species.

"I am hopeful that Congress will allow us to continue our partnership with San Diego County in implementing their Natural Communities Conservation Program within the Otay Mountains, to protect this area from further development," Babbitt said. "Preserving California's natural heritage protects the past by saving an important piece of America's history. It also protects the future by making sure our children have the chance to enjoy this property for generations."

Babbitt said Congress appropriated \$100 million less than President Clinton requested from the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Fiscal Year 1996, the smallest amount in 20 years.

California's habitat conservation planning is an innovative multi-species protection approach that is part of this Administration's efforts to make the Endangered Species Act work better," Babbitt said. "At the same time, it preserves substantial areas from development and helps to guarantee future generations of residents that they will be attracted to the same values that has drawn so many to settle in San Diego County."

"Unfortunately, Congress drastically cut the President's 1996 request for funding from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, derived from proceeds of offshore oil and gas production in federal waters. We are working to see that our 1997 funding dollars will be spent where they will provide the greatest benefit."

-DOI-



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary

Contact: Mary Helen Thompson
(202) 208-6416

For Immediate Release
May 31, 1996

Clinton Administration Announces Addition to West Virginia's Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

The Clinton Administration has requested \$2 million for the purchase of 1,335 acres of privately owned land parcels within the southern area of the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced today. The money would come from an appropriation from the Interior Department's Land and Water Conservation Fund in Fiscal Year 1997.

"This purchase will help to consolidate and protect fragile wildlife areas," Babbitt stated. "It a key element in the protection and management of the most threatened area of the Valley. It also protects the future by making sure our children have the chance to enjoy this refuge for generations. I am hopeful that Congress will allow us to continue the process of acquiring private lands that are important to preserving the our natural resources."

The imminent development of these privately owned properties within Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge would not only diminish the wildlife in the area but would further degrade the water quality.

Babbitt said Congress appropriated \$100 million less than President Clinton requested from the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Fiscal Year 1996, the smallest amount in 20 years.

"The curtain is rapidly coming down on our opportunity to make this purchase," Babbitt said. "Congress drastically cut the President's 1996 request for the Land and Water Conservation Fund derived from proceeds of offshore oil and gas production. We are working to see that our 1997 funding dollars are spent where they will provide the greatest benefit."

Each summer, in order to provide pasture irrigation, a gravel dam is constructed to impound the waters of Lagunitas Creek. The dam construction and use is not compatible with wetland preservation. If the associated water rights were sold, it would affect appropriate restoration of the ecosystem.

- DOI -



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 31, 1996

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

Clinton Administration Announces Proposed Additions to San Diego National Wildlife Refuge and Otay Mountains to support San Diego County's Natural Communities Conservation Program

The Clinton Administration has requested \$2 million in additional funding to support the San Diego County Habitat Conservation Plan, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced today. The money would come from an appropriation from the Interior Department's Land and Water Conservation Fund for Fiscal Year 1997. Congress is expected to take up Interior Appropriations funding in the near future.

In addition, Secretary Babbitt has requested \$3.5 million for to create a South Bay unit of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose is to secure estuarian habitat around South San Diego Bay, protecting prime habitat for a number of threatened and sensitive wildlife, fish and plant species.

"I am hopeful that Congress will allow us to continue our partnership with San Diego County in implementing their Natural Communities Conservation Program within the Otay Mountains, to protect this area from further development," Babbitt said. "Preserving California's natural heritage protects the past by saving an important piece of America's history. It also protects the future by making-sure our children have the chance to enjoy this property for generations."

Babbitt said Congress appropriated \$100 million less than President Clinton requested from the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Fiscal Year 1996, the smallest amount in 20 years.

California's habitat conservation planning is an innovative multi-species protection approach that is part of this Administration's efforts to make the Endangered Species Act work better," Babbitt said. "At the same time, it preserves substantial areas from development and helps to guarantee future generations of residents that they will be attracted to the same values that has drawn so many to settle in San Diego County."

"Unfortunately, Congress drastically cut the President's 1996 request for funding from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, derived from proceeds of offshore oil and gas production in federal waters. We are working to see that our 1997 funding dollars will be spent where they will provide the greatest benefit."

-DOI-



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office Of The Secretary
For Immediate Release: May 31, 1996

Contact: John Wright
(202) 208-6416

Clinton Administration Request Funds To Establish Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge In Alabama

The Clinton Administration has requested \$700,000 in funding for the acquisitions of tracts of land to establish the Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced today. The money to acquire the tracts would come from an appropriation under the Interior Department's Land and Water Conservation Fund in Fiscal Year 1997.

The \$700,000 L&WCF grant request would acquire claims to tracts of land that will help to ensure the biological integrity of Key Cave, which has been designated as critical habitat for the endangered Alabama cavefish and the endangered gray bat.

"I am hopeful that Congress will allow us to continue the process of acquiring tracts of land that are critical to wildlife and the rich diversity of our environment," said Babbitt. "This grant will help to protect its exceptionally rich history, natural beauty, and the splendor of its wildlife for all Americans to experience."

Babbitt noted that Congress appropriated \$100 million less than President Clinton requested from the L&WCF in Fiscal Year 1996, the smallest amount in over 20 years. "Congress drastically cut the President's 1996 request for funding from the L&WCF, so we are working to see that our 1997 funding dollars are spent where they will provide the greatest benefits," Babbitt said.

Key Cave is located along the northern shore of Pickwick Lake in a limestone karst area that contains numerous sinkholes and several underground cave systems. The area's sinkholes are an integral component of groundwater recharge to the caves. Key Cave is also one of only a few caves inhabited by the gray bat. They roosts almost exclusively in caves and few than five percent of available caves are suitable for gray bat occupation.

The L&WCF was set up in 1964 as a fund derived primarily from offshore oil and gas receipts to set aside fragile lands for all Americans.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release: November 15, 1995

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

(H) 703/751-8671

**SECRETARY BABBITT, ALASKA NATIVE CORPORATION SIGN AGREEMENT
TO PROTECT BEAR, SALMON HABITAT ON KODIAK ISLAND**

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today announced the signing of an agreement with Mr. Frank Pagano, the President of Koniag, Inc., an Alaska Native corporation, to protect nearly 60,000 acres of prime fish and wildlife habitat for bear, salmon, bald eagles and other species on Kodiak Island in perpetuity.

"This agreement will protect important fish and wildlife habitat and increase opportunities for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities in the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge," Secretary Babbitt said. "This agreement marks another major step forward to preserve the salmon resources found on the Island and to help promote the restoration of important fish and wildlife populations, following the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989."

Mr. Frank Pagano, President of Koniag, Inc., signed on behalf of the board of directors and shareholders of Koniag, Inc., one of thirteen Alaska Native regional corporations, which were established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Secretary Babbitt, Assistant Secretary George T. Frampton, Jr. and Mollie Beattie, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, represented the Department at today's announcement ceremony.

Together, the agreements protect nearly 60,000 acres of land in perpetuity and an additional 60,000 acres under a six-year conservation easement for a total cost of \$28.5 million, to be paid from Exxon-Valdez oil spill settlement funds.

The agreement will help implement the Final Restoration Plan of November 1994, which is designed to help guide efforts to restore natural resources injured by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound and the northern Gulf of Alaska. The agreement complements agreements reached with two other Alaskan Native corporations signed earlier this year. Together, the three agreements would protect approximately 210,000 acres within the refuge boundary.

The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, consisting of three federal and three state representatives, administers the \$900 million civil settlement reached in 1991 with the Exxon Corporation. The 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill injured populations of sea birds, salmon and marine mammals. The agreement announced today is designed to protect important habitat for species injured by spill, including pink salmon, sockeye salmon, pacific herring, bald eagles, river otter, sea otters, marbled murrelets, harlequin ducks, pigeon guillemots and harbor seals.

The agreements are the result of a strong partnership involving the Interior Department, State of Alaska and the corporate leadership of Koniag, Inc.

The agreements also complement the State of Alaska's recent acquisition of lands on Afognak Island, which is north of Kodiak Island in the Kodiak archipelago, and within the boundary of Kachemak Bay State Park on the Kenai Peninsula, near the town of Homer.

Upon final closing of the sales, the lands, which are within the boundaries of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, will be added to that refuge, as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. National Wildlife Refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

-DOI-

Fact Sheet
KODIAK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge by executive order, following the recommendation of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. President Roosevelt established the refuge "for the purpose of protecting the natural feeding and breeding range of the brown bears and other wildlife on Uganik and Kodiak Islands, Alaska."

Sport hunting groups, lead by the Boone and Crockett Club, lobbied to establish the refuge in order to protect the local population of brown bear. The Boone and Crockett Club was created by Theodore Roosevelt.

In 1958, the Eisenhower administration expanded the refuge boundary to further protect the fish and wildlife habitat on the island.

In 1971, Congress passed the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) which created Native Alaskan village corporations. ANCSA also authorized village corporations to select nearby lands to extinguish aboriginal land claims. On Kodiak, Native corporations were entitled to select 310,000 acres within the boundary of the refuge.

In 1980 the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) added additional lands to the refuge and further expanded on the mission of the refuge to:

- Conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, Kodiak brown bears, salmonids, sea otters, sea lions and other marine mammals and migratory birds
- Fulfill international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife
- Provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents consistent with the primary purposes of the refuge
- Ensure the maintenance of water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge to conserve populations and habitats in their natural diversity.

(more)

In addition to the protection of habitat for the species injured by the 1989 oil spill, the wildlife resources on the refuge include:

Brown Bear - Subspecies *Ursus arctos middendorffi* found only on Kodiak archipelago. Kodiak Island population, estimated at 2,500 to 3,000 animals, includes some of the highest known densities of brown bear in the world.

Salmon - All five Pacific salmon, including king(chinook), red(sockeye), pink(humpback), chum(dog) and silver(coho) are important sportfish species. Up to 70% of salmon taken commercially in the Kodiak area come from refuge-based stocks.

Bald Eagle - More than 400 nesting pairs.

Marine Mammals - gray, sei, fin, minke, and humpback whales, harbor seal, Steller's sea lion, sea otter, killer whale, Dall and harbor porpoise.

Seabirds and Waterfowl - 1.5 million seabirds in over 140 colonies and 150,000 ducks & geese overwinter on Kodiak bays, inlets and shores.

Native Land Mammals (6 species) - brown bear, short-tailed weasel, river otter, tundra vole, little brown bat, red fox.

Introduced Land Mammals - include Sitka black-tailed deer (1920's), beaver, mountain goat, snowshoe hare, Roosevelt elk (Afognak Island).

All Birds - Over 225 sighted species (including seabirds and waterfowl).

Other Sportfish - Arctic char, Dolly Varden, rainbow trout and steelhead. The Ayakulik River is one of the state's top king salmon, silver salmon and steelhead sportfishing rivers.