History of the U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993-2000

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Credits

This **History of the U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993-2000** is in three parts: a narrative history, a collection of archival documents, and an oral history consisting of tapes and transcripts. The project is the work of many hands:

Sedelta Verble, USDA Communications Director, took overall responsibility for the project. Executive oversight was provided by the Office of the Secretary including Deputy Chief of Staff Bart Chilton, the Secretary's Counsel Janet Potts, Chief of Staff Eric Olsen, and the Secretary's Special Assistant John Gibson. Deborah Smith, Office of Communications, was the project manager. Christine Hagstrom, former speechwriter for Secretary Dan Glickman, was the text editor for the narrative history. Larry Quinn, Office of Communications, was the interviewer for the oral history videotapes and audiotape. From this team, special thanks to Secretary Dan Glickman, whose passion for excellence is always an inspiration.

In addition, dozens of people--in the Offices of the Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretary, and in the USDA Agencies--had a hand in preparing the material for the narrative volume and in collecting documents for the archival collection. They include:

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Deputy Under Secretaries Anne Keys and Glenda Humiston, Jeremy Anderson, and Fred Jacobs, *Natural Resources and Environment*;

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Larry Quinn, *interviewer, oral histories*.

The Legacy of Hope at USDA
Foreword by Secretary Dan Glickman

I was honored to have the opportunity to serve this Nation for 6 years as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. I am proud to have worked for two very special leaders, President Clinton and Vice President Gore. From my first day on this job to my last, their commitment to U.S. agriculture, to the Nation's family farmers and ranchers, to our rural communities, to the Nation's war on hunger, to food safety, to conservation, and to healthy, sustainable national forests was readily apparent and profound. Their support of the work of USDA never wavered, and their leadership and vision helped us make a deep and positive difference in the lives of all Americans and millions of people around the world.

I am indebted to a devoted and talented USDA staff. I was fortunate to have, at my right hand, Deputy Secretary Rich Rominger, whose commitment to family farmers, to conservation, to a leaner and more effective Department will forever be reflected in some of the most important legacies of this Administration. I could not be more proud of the achievements of the entire USDA leadership, and of all the benefits and improved service that we delivered to this Nation thanks to their hard work. I also leave this job in awe of the commitment and expertise of USDA's career employees. This Department is blessed with countless unsung heroes who devote their lives to some of the most important issues facing our Nation. Every day, they reminded me anew of the meaning of "public service."

But most of all, I am proud of the legacy that we have built together. Abraham Lincoln called USDA the "People's Department." No Administration in modern history has done more to see this Department live up to the full promise of that name than President Clinton's.

Over the past 8 years, President Clinton's USDA :

- Carried out a massive effort to shore up the farm safety net as the U.S. farm economy was buffeted by an unprecedented string of natural disasters and bumper global crop yields that drove prices down and threatened to drive many farmers and ranchers out of business. This Administration also placed a particular emphasis on assisting America's small farmers and ranchers--working not only to help them survive, but to create opportunities for their success and growth in the 21st century.

- Carried out the first major overhaul of U.S. meat and poultry inspections in nearly a century. We harnessed all the advances of science and technology to take food safety in this country to a new level, focusing industry on preventing contamination rather than simply catching it after the fact. USDA also worked closely with all food safety agencies in this country to fulfill the Administration's vision of a seamless system that can better ensure that food travels safely from the farm to the table.

- Created a geography of hope across America by transforming the Conservation Reserve Program to a true environmental program that protects the most fragile acres of our landscape. By protecting the last pristine acres of our Nation's forests, the Clinton Administration also made a strong stand to protect some of the last great open spaces left in our country--protecting them for all generations of Americans yet to come. By channeling unprecedented resources into these and a whole range of other new environmental programs, this Administration will leave as its legacy not just a strong economy and a healthy, sustainable environment--but indisputable proof that this Nation can and should have both.

- Launched a civil rights initiative at USDA to address discrimination against minority farmers and employees--a devastating problem that had not been given the proverbial "time of day" by previous Administrations. Pressed on by modern-day civil rights heroes, the Clinton Administration made historic steps to right past wrongs, paving the way for a settlement of a nationwide class action with African American farmers--a settlement with significance on a par with the World War II internment camp reparations to Japanese Americans. The progress made throughout USDA in the civil rights arena under this Administration provides powerful proof that this Nation can overcome the most painful chapters of its history and build "one America."

- Advanced the war on hunger in America and took unprecedented steps to improve public health through greater public awareness of the powerful ties between nutrition and health. From new efforts to teach school children healthy eating habits and physical activity to seeing the Federal government do more to encourage community-based food recovery and other antihunger activities, to a strong defense of food stamps for working poor, this Administration defended and expanded the Federal nutrition safety net. We also recognized that our responsibility did not stop at the water's edge. From a global school meals initiative to swift and massive efforts to avert a famine in the Horn of Africa, this Administration has left a powerful legacy in the world war on hunger and malnutrition.

- Worked to create a rebirth of the rural American dream. Not only did this Administration launch a massive campaign to deliver basic services, such as running water and electricity, to millions of rural Americans who had never had them before, it also worked to bring more 21st century opportunities to our Nation's rural communities, particularly by empowering local leaders to develop strategies to build their own financial future. In community after community, we proved that local challenges are best addressed with local solutions, backed by unprecedented resources from this Administration.

- Expanded opportunities for U.S. agriculture around the world by pursuing an unprecedented number of trade agreements and championing the principles of free and fair trade around the world. The more level playing field our farmers and ranchers enjoy

today will help ensure that more of the farm economy in the future is driven by the market opportunities for U.S. producers around the world.

- Enhanced the role of science and technology in all aspects of the Department's work. From boosting small farm profitability, to improving health, to providing new ways to sustainably feed a growing world, this Administration's advocacy of a strong agricultural research agenda will leave a lasting legacy to the world. The additional support for expanded use of new technologies also has improved everything from our food safety efforts to the integrity and efficiency of USDA programs.

- Reorganized USDA. All of these advances occurred during or after a massive effort to reduce the size of the Department, and to reorganize USDA's work around concrete missions that could better deliver the results that all Americans enjoy today.

I am leaving my job as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture with a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in all that this Administration was able to achieve. More than any other Department in the Federal government, USDA offers the leadership of this Nation the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of every American every day. This is an opportunity that President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Secretary Espy, myself, Rich Rominger and countless others seized every day. You can read about our legacy in the pages to come. But I trust that in future years this legacy will be best appreciated when you purchase safe, abundant, affordable food in the grocery store; savor a peaceful walk through a silent forest; enjoy clean air and healthy waterways that are the result of a more sustainable agriculture; and, see the Nation and the world reap the benefits of reduced hunger, improved health, and expanded opportunities here in this country and around the globe.

Eight Years of Progress
Executive Summary

Introduction
From guiding the U.S. farm economy through an unprecedented period of volatility, to expanding opportunities in rural communities, to saving lives and preventing serious illness by overhauling the Nation's meat and poultry inspections, to reinvigorating agricultural conservation programs and protecting more of our Nation's last remaining pristine forests, to escalating the Nation's war on hunger and malnutrition and launching massive efforts to educate the public about the powerful connections between nutrition and health, to supporting a strong future for small farms in America and expanding opportunities for U.S. agriculture around the world, the legacy of the Clinton Administration is exceedingly varied and of priceless value to the American people and to the world.

A New Era of Volatility in the U.S. Farm Economy
When President Clinton took office, the U.S. farm economy was humming along. Prices were high. Exports were strong. But it wasn't long before the cycle turned, and American agriculture faced one of the worst farm economy slumps in our lifetimes. Fortunately for U.S. farmers and ranchers, two sons of rural America were in the White House at the time. The Clinton Administration did everything in its power to see producers through these difficult times. With the help of Congress, USDA pumped billions of dollars into the farm economy, helping maintain cash flow to keep thousands of farmers from losing their land due to circumstances far beyond their control--from record low commodity prices to a string of devastating natural disasters and severe weather.

At the close of the 20th century, USDA had delivered a record $28 billion in direct payments to farmers. This money was sorely needed by the men and women of American agriculture. But the Administration made it clear that heavy reliance on Treasury checks is not the ideal for American farmers. So President Clinton's USDA focused additional energy and resources in pursuing innovative ways to see farmers thrive largely on their own, with government acting as a true safety net.

Immediately preceding the sharp decline in the U.S. farm economy, Congress passed a new Farm Bill that erased a policy dating back to the New Deal. While the Administration made clear that the bill was inadequate in ensuring that Government remained a strong partner to farmers and ranchers and offered adequate protection to them in difficult times, President Clinton ultimately signed the legislation in recognition that U.S. agriculture needed greater market orientation and because the bill included his Administration's proposals to dramatically overhaul the Nation's conservation programs, to provide a massive influx of resources to farmers to pursue a more sustainable agriculture, and to protect some of the most fragile acres of the American landscape.

For its remaining time, the Administration would devote a tremendous amount of its time and energy to stitching a 21st century farm safety net. The Clinton Administration's vision for the new safety net was far more holistic than any yet seen in this country--embracing big and small producers, farmers and ranchers, as well as all the different kinds of producers that reflect the myriad diversity of modern U.S. agriculture. Throughout its time, the Administration maintained a strong commitment to providing real assistance to farmers when they are victimized by circumstances beyond their control --from powerful storms to weak markets. One strategy included championing income assistance that is countercyclical--so payments rise when the farm economy falters. The Administration also advocated that payments be targeted to those who actually grow the crops (rather than the landowners) and to farmers who need the government's help most. Secretary Glickman also strongly advocated a 50-State farm policy that embraces the diversity of U.S. agriculture, rather than the existing regional policy that disproportionately emphasized row crops.

Early in 2000, the Clinton Administration sent a safety net proposal up to Capitol Hill, which included many of these ideas. But Congress chose not to make any large-scale farm policy changes, opting for yet another ad hoc stop-gap measure, the third multi-billion dollar emergency assistance package in 3 years. The Clinton Administration, however, did work successfully with Congress to pass the Agricultural Risk Protection Act in 2000. This crop insurance reform increased the risk management options available--making premiums more affordable; helped protect against multiyear losses; and allowed more producers, raising different kinds of crops and livestock, to obtain coverage.

Building a World of Opportunity for U.S. Agriculture

With about 96 percent of the world's consumers living outside the United States, the Clinton Administration understood that international trade is a critical driver of a strong farm economy, just as it is for the U.S. economy as a whole. In forging nearly 300 trade agreements, President Clinton's USDA was very aggressive in promoting American exports, particularly farm exports, especially after the global financial crisis drastically shrunk demand in so many key agricultural markets.

From the early, successful drive to ratify the North American Free Trade Agreement to the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to securing Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China, the Administration successfully rallied a bipartisan majority in Congress to proceed with key agreements that dramatically expanded U.S. agriculture's economic opportunities around the world. Perhaps the most important step taken to increase trade opportunities for farmers was the approval by Congress in 2000 of Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China. China represented the last untapped frontier, the one major market that had remained largely closed to the United States. By allowing American farmers to seize the benefits of China's accession to the World Trade Organization, agricultural exports are expected to expand by $2 billion a year beginning in 2005.

The Clinton Administration also consistently was a champion of free and fair trade--actively resisting the attempts of other countries to use phony science trade barriers as competitive weapons. This effort, which helped protect and expand U.S. agriculture's opportunities in key export markets, was an essential piece of the Administration's farm economy strategy that aimed to expand U.S. producers' market opportunities, so that future farmers and ranchers are less dependent on billions of dollars in emergency aid year after year.

Emerging Challenges and Opportunities

The debate over the safety and potential of biotechnology reached a fever pitch around the world during the Clinton-Gore years. The Administration not only recognized that these advances could enhance farm productivity and profitability. They also understood that biotech could help feed a growing and hungry world without exploiting natural resources.

However, the Administration also understood that Government's most important responsibility with respect to biotechnology is maintaining a strict, transparent, science-based approval process, which keeps unsafe products from coming to market. The Administration took strong actions to ensure a reliable process for addressing genetic engineering of crops--from establishing a USDA advisory committee on biotechnology to asking the National Academy of Sciences to conduct an independent assessment of the current regulatory framework and suggest ways it can be improved.

The Administration also worked to bring integrity and consistency to products being marketed across the country as "organic." When President Clinton came into office, the organic market--once considered a fringe movement--was growing by leaps and bounds, yet there was no Federal standard in place governing who could use that term and what it meant. Through a vast and open process that included record-setting amounts of public comment and input, Clinton's USDA developed the first national organic standards. The final rule was strict, precise, understandable, and it increased opportunities for the growing community of American organic farmers, and others who would pursue this growing market.

Reviving the Rural American Dream

A strong farm economy, of course, goes hand in hand with a strong rural economy. So strengthening historically underserved rural communities also was a cornerstone of the Clinton Administration's work at USDA. President Clinton's USDA invested $62 billion in rural areas. Much of these resources were dispersed according to the Administration's philosophy of community empowerment. Under this approach, local leaders had far more control over how the resources were used to address the specific needs of their community, and the Federal Government played a supporting role as a catalyst for locally driven economic growth.

The strategy worked. During its time in Washington, the Clinton Administration helped create or retain 1.6 million rural jobs, and in 2000 rural homeownership stood at a record 75 percent, higher than the overall national homeownership rate. The Administration also focused tremendous resources on persistent-poverty communities and areas of the country that had been

historically underserved. One hallmark program was Water 2000, which brought safe running water into the homes of more than 3 million rural Americans who had never had it before. The Administration also increased efforts to bring the tools of the modern information economy to the countryside--Internet access, fiber optics, satellite technology--to help ensure that rural America had the basic infrastructure necessary to participate in the economic opportunities of the Nation's largely technology-driven economic expansion.

Fighting Hunger and Promoting Nutrition

In selecting his two Secretaries of Agriculture, President Clinton selected men who were deeply committed not only to a strong future for U.S. agriculture, but also to reinvigorating the Nation's efforts to fight hunger in America and around the world and to improving public health by expanding both scientific knowledge and the general public's understanding of the powerful ties between nutrition and health.

The Clinton Administration took several important steps to strengthen the Federal nutrition safety net. It restored food stamp benefits to many legal immigrants who had them stripped away by Republican provisions in the welfare reform bill of 1996. In response to a sharp drop in the food stamp rolls, Clinton's USDA launched an aggressive public information campaign to reach out to the working poor and let them know that this program existed to help them. USDA also launched a school breakfast pilot program in six sites around the country to help ensure that fewer children have to try to learn on an empty stomach.

The Administration recognized that it takes more than Federal programs to eliminate hunger in America. So Secretary Glickman began a Community Food Security Initiative, which builds partnerships with the private sector, food banks, soup kitchens, and faith-based groups who are attacking the hunger problem at the grass roots. When he became Secretary of Agriculture, Glickman shared his personal passion for the issue of gleaning and food recovery with the Nation, bringing about a string of campaigns to work with farmers, restaurants, grocery stores, other Federal agencies, and to make the extra effort to get excess food to families who need it far more than a dumpster does.

The Administration also understood that having enough food is only half the battle. Eating the right foods also is critical. One hallmark effort of the Administration to improve America's eating habits was Team Nutrition, which worked in schools across the country to ingrain healthy eating habits in children at an early age. USDA also raised the visibility of the Nation's "quiet epidemic"--childhood obesity--and expanded its child nutrition efforts to include messages about the importance of physical activity.

The Administration focused considerable attention and research on expanding scientific understanding of all the different powerful links between nutrition and health. To bring a singular focus to the importance of sharing nutrition research with the public, the Clinton Administration created at USDA the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. Among its many activities, the Center created a special Food Guide Pyramid, tailored to the nutritional

needs of young children. It also worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to release revised Dietary Guidelines for Americans to promote healthy eating, and it developed an interactive Healthy Eating Index, so individuals can go on-line, enter their eating habits, and get guidance on how they can improve their health through nutrition.

The Clinton Administration also dramatically escalated the United States effort to reduce hunger around the world, both in response to a series of humanitarian crises and as part of a broader strategy that supported the goal the United States agreed to at the 1996 World Food Summit to lead a broad international effort to reduce world hunger by 2015. Under President Clinton's direction, USDA dramatically increased its humanitarian food assistance around the world--from aiding Kosovar refugees to averting a mass famine in the Horn of Africa. The Department also led the President's $300-million Global Food for Education initiative to establish school feeding programs in developing countries.

Harnessing Modern Science to Improve Food Safety

Beyond ensuring a food supply that is plentiful and nutritious, the Clinton Administration also did more than any Administration since that of Theodore Roosevelt to improve food safety in this country. The new Administration received a strong public mandate to pursue fundamental reforms due to a tragic outbreak of a virulent strand of *E. coli* that took the lives of four young children in the Pacific Northwest who ate hamburgers at a fast food restaurant. In the wake of that tragedy, USDA created the Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety, the highest ranking food safety official in the U.S. Government. And the Department revolutionized American meat and poultry inspection, reforming an antiquated system that had not kept up with nearly a century's worth of scientific and technological progress. The new system integrated state-of-the-art science into the process, allowing for the detection of deadly pathogens that cannot be caught with the naked eye. Based on information released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the overhaul has undoubtedly saved lives and prevented countless illnesses.

The Administration, however, also was quick to recognize that food safety does not begin and end at the slaughterhouse door. In addition to regulation of meat and poultry plants, President Clinton's USDA--in partnership with other Federal food safety agencies--pursued a "farm-to-table" food safety approach, which recognizes the shared responsibility of agricultural producers, industry, and Government. From increased investments in food safety research, risk assessments, and surveillance; to repeated attempts to give more teeth to Federal food safety enforcement efforts, this Administration made a truly historic and comprehensive effort to ensure one high standard for food safety in this country--for both domestic and imported food--and to give all Americans the peace of mind that the food they feed their families is safe. USDA also expanded its consumer safety education efforts with new campaigns to promote safe handling and proper cooking temperatures.

Ensuring a Geography of Hope

The Clinton Administration also came into office vowing to bridge the historic divide between agriculture and the environment. This Administration understood that farmers are the original conservationists. They are the primary stewards of the American landscape, which is as valuable a commodity as any bushel of wheat or bale of cotton. The Administration strongly believed that Government should "put its money where its mouth is" and provide strong financial incentives to help farmers protect the Nation's air, waterways, and soil; protect open spaces; and preserve wildlife habitat. These beliefs were reflected in the 1996 Farm Bill, which included a pack of new programs to provide more resources to agriculture to pursue more sustainable practices. The Clinton Administration vigorously fought for these provisions, and they represent a key reason the President signed that legislation. The centerpiece of this key Clinton legacy was a fundamental overhaul of the Conservation Reserve Program, which the Administration successfully converted from a supply management mechanism into a genuine conservation effort that idles only the most erodible farmland.

The Administration also saw to it that the 1996 Farm Bill included a new Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which allows USDA to work with local communities on a cost-share basis, helping them solve conservation problems, with an emphasis on those related to livestock production. The 1996 Farm Bill also continued a voluntary Wetlands Reserve Program, which has proven exceedingly popular. Demand for the program was very strong, helping us make major progress toward our goal of no net loss of wetlands.

The Clinton Administration also took seriously its responsibilities, through USDA's Forest Service, as the guardians of the more than 190 million acres of national forests and grasslands. The Administration pursued a policy that encourages multiple uses of national forests and balances ecosystem protection with commercial and recreational interests. Among its proudest achievements is a "roadless" proposal that is the product of exhaustive scientific analysis and extensive public input. The proposal would prohibit new road-building and timber harvest except for stewardship purposes on 58.5 million acres of the most pristine national forest land, protecting it from erosion and other environmental problems.

A New Era of Civil Rights at USDA

One of the Clinton Administration's most enduring and meaningful legacies is one most Americans probably would not even associate with the Department of Agriculture--civil rights. Prior to the Clinton Administration, USDA had a deeply discouraging record when it came to providing equal opportunity and treating all employees and customers with dignity and respect.

The Clinton Administration committed to a process that would not stop until USDA eventually emerged as a civil rights leader in the Federal Government. Secretary Glickman commissioned a ground-breaking report, generated by a team of USDA employees, to assess the problem and recommend fundamental changes. From overhauling farm loans to stepping up minority recruitment to ensuring greater accountability to entering into an historic class-action settlement with Black farmers, every recommendation that did not require action by the Congress was

implemented. While the progress has been significant, the process is not complete and it must be continued by future administrations.

Reorganization

The Clinton Administration also was the first in decades to successfully complete a major reorganization of the notoriously large and byzantine USDA. The reorganization consolidated offices across the country into convenient "one-stop shops" that could better serve the Department's customers. The efforts also merged USDA programs into seven concrete mission areas to give greater focus to the key priorities of the Department's work. These innovations allowed the Department to reduce its wowrkforce by some 30,000 full-time positions. They also saved $6 billion over 5 years, freeing more resources to serve USDA customers. By the end of the process, USDA was lean, focused, and more capable of delivering 21st century service to its array of customers.

With responsibilities that span ensuring food safety, practicing forestry, fighting hunger, fostering conservation, and expanding opportunities for farmers, ranchers and all rural Americans, the U.S. Department of Agriculture offers this Nation's leaders a significant opportunity to improve the health, economic opportunities, and quality of life for all Americans and countless people around the world. More than any other modern presidency, the Clinton Administration made the most of these opportunities, leaving an enduring legacy that strengthened the power of the "people's department" to improve people's lives.

1. BUILDING A 21ST CENTURY FARM POLICY

Defining Government's Role as Farmers' Risks Rise

"There's another part of our American community in trouble tonight -- our family farmers. When I signed the Farm Bill in 1996, I said there was great danger it would work well in good times, but not in bad. Well, droughts, floods, and historically low prices have made these times very bad for the farmers. We must work together to strengthen the farm safety net, invest in land conservation, and create some new markets."

President Bill Clinton
2000 State of the Union
January 27, 2000

"A new farm policy must continue to celebrate farmers, their contribution and their unique role in society. And it must do that by embracing a more complete vision of the American farmer: farmer as effective risk manager, farmer as conscientious land steward, farmer as bold innovator, farmer as resourceful, multi-faceted, flexible businessperson ... (This) new farm policy must be as fair and inclusive as possible. It must go beyond commodity-based programs. It must be national in scope, encompassing more regions, more farmers and more crops. It's time for a farm policy that is focused less on historic crop prices and bureaucratic formulas and more on people and their dreams."

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman
2000 Agricultural Outlook Forum
February 24, 2000

Shortly after settling into his new job as the 26th U.S. Agriculture Secretary in March of 1995, Dan Glickman received a call in his office. It was the White House on the line, specifically the President of the United States. After a few congratulatory words, President Clinton got down to business: "How are corn prices today? What are we going to do to keep young people on the family farm?" He then launched into a series of ideas he had for how specific USDA programs could be better used to assist farmers and ranchers. He ended the call with a final request, "don't forget rural America."

Glickman was impressed with the President's depth of knowledge and touched by his obvious enthusiasm. He also was flattered by what he considered primarily a warm welcome to his new job.

Then, the following week the phone rang again.

As the conversations continued, the former veteran member of the House Agriculture Committee quickly concluded several things: (1) that President Clinton was the most well-versed of any President in modern times when it came to the complexities of U.S. farm policy and the needs and challenges of America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities; (2) that Glickman's own job had grown exponentially more challenging by the hands-on interest and expertise of his boss, and (3) that no matter how detached the country grew from America's farm communities, Glickman would never have to remind the President of the United States of the importance of the men and women who feed our Nation and much of the world.

Little did Glickman know at the time just how valuable this support "from the top" would become.

While the Clinton era is looked on generally as a time of glittering economic prosperity for the Nation, it was a time of deep economic trials for U.S. farmers and ranchers. After setting record high farm incomes in 1996, an abrupt reversal of fortune – fueled by flagging commodity prices, bumper global crop production and a series of devastating natural disasters – sent the U.S. farm economy into a tailspin.

Complicating the U.S. government's response to this downward spiral was a new farm policy – the first major overhaul in 60 years – which moved government away from its traditional role of rigidly managing supply and demand by dictating what and how much farmers could plant. Instead, the new policy replaced farm subsidies with fixed and declining "market transition" payments that would phase out over seven years. In other words, in exchange for freeing farmers to make their own planting decisions, farmers would largely be out on their own facing the various risks associated with agriculture.

While few contested that it was time for U.S. farm policy to move in a more free-market direction, a bitter dispute erupted--between the Republican leadership in Congress and the White House and its largely Democratic allies in Congress--over the proper role of government in 21st century U.S. farm policy. Republicans largely argued "survival of the fittest" – that farmers and ranchers who made sound business decisions would prosper and succeed in free markets. The Clinton Administration and its allies in the Congress warned that farmers and ranchers were uniquely vulnerable to circumstances beyond their control–from powerful storms to weak markets–circumstances that could drive even the best farmers and ranchers out of business, in the absence of a strong government safety net.

Ultimately, President Clinton did sign a new Farm Bill in 1996. It included historic conservation provisions developed and fought for by his Administration (See Chapter 2). Clinton also hailed the fact that the bill "at long last, farmers will be free to plant for the market, not for government programs." However, the President was quick to point out that he signed the legislation "with reservation because I believe the bill fails to provide an adequate safety net for family farmers. The fixed payments in the bill do not adjust to changes in market conditions, which would leave

farmers, and the rural communities in which they live, vulnerable to reductions in crop prices and yields."

While this vulnerability concerned Clinton and Secretary Glickman, these reservations were largely drowned out by the farm economy's current good times and the inevitable popularity of generous government payments on top of record high prices. Yet, the Administration persisted with its warning: should the farm economy reverse course before the Republican-led Congress responded to the Administration's call for a stronger safety net, the celebrated "freedom to farm" legislation would take on a whole new meaning – "freedom to foreclose."

Within a matter of months, the Administration's worries became a grim reality for many farmers and ranchers as the Asian financial crisis, bumper global crops and a series of natural disasters formed dark clouds over the U.S. farm economy – clouds that would never fully dissipate during the Clinton-Gore years. From those days on, building a modern farm safety net would be the top priority of President Clinton's USDA.

What follows is an account of a three-pronged strategy that the Clinton Administration used to both respond to the immediate needs of farm communities facing one of their hardest times since the Great Depression as well as broader efforts to stitch a new farm safety net for the long-haul, one that embraces the whole diversity of American agriculture--farmers and ranchers, small and large producers, traditional row crops as well as niche crops. This three-pronged effort involved: (1) effective and innovative use of traditional farm programs, (2) an increasing emphasis on a range of risk management efforts; and (3) a strong focus on expanding global opportunities. Through these efforts, the Clinton Administration took key steps toward a true 21st century farm policy – one that promptly and effectively delivers emergency aid to those who need it, but that also moves USDA away from its role as farm country's "ATM machine" by creating more opportunities for the U.S. farm economy to thrive primarily as the result of strong and growing market opportunities here in America and around the world.

The 1990s: A Stormy Sea

In 1993, farm incomes were climbing steadily, riding a crest of strong commodity prices and robust exports. But the good economic news was marred by weather calamities that tested the mettle of the heartiest farmer, and in retrospect were harbingers of things to come.

A 500-year flood in the Midwest, a devastating drought in the Southeast, coupled with widely scattered hail, fires, and tornadoes left many producers reeling. USDA in the early years of the Clinton Administration got high marks, under Secretary Espy's leadership, for improving the Federal responsiveness to natural disasters. States quickly noticed a difference under the new Administration, as USDA cut through piles of red tape to ensure immediate assistance to people in need, from temporary housing and low-interest farm loans to nutrition assistance.

But for most producers, Mother Nature's blows were softened by the otherwise buoyant farm economy. By 1996, prices and exports were at or near record levels, and the future looked bright.

For USDA's Farm Service Agency, the task was manageable: identify those who suffered losses and administer emergency assistance quickly. The new agency did its job well. In 1993, USDA paid 254,628 producers almost $964 million in disaster payments...within a 2-week period, as farm program assistance rose from under $10 billion the previous year to over $16 billion.

At the time, few could imagine what the future held.

A lone voice of caution came on April 4, 1996 when, at the signing of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (the 1996 Act), President Clinton expressed deep reservations that this Bill would fail to adequately protect farmers and ranchers when prices were low. His concerns were well founded. The imminent collapse of key export economies coupled with bumper-crop production around the globe precipitated a free fall in prices that affected nearly every commodity group. In many cases prices fell to their lowest levels in decades. Farm incomes dropped dramatically--nearly 20 percent in 1998 from the 1996 peak. This was just the beginning of an ongoing "price crisis" that threatened thousands of family farms.

Unfortunately, the 1996 Act left USDA with few tools to help farmers through this crisis. The few provisions of the 1996 Act that actually provided assistance, market transition and loan deficiency payments, took on unforeseen importance in shoring up farm incomes and offsetting low prices. But, for the most part, the 1996 Act proved woefully inadequate during this difficult period.

Undaunted, the Administration took the challenge head-on, attacking on two fronts: providing adequate emergency assistance, while working creatively to address the root causes of the ongoing crisis.

The first task was to secure emergency Congressional appropriations sufficient to stop the bleeding. Congress eventually responded to the Administration's hard work by appropriating nearly $4 billion, significantly less than was hoped for. President Clinton, recognizing that the amount was insufficient, vetoed the appropriation. Thanks to the Administration's firm stand, farmers in the end received an emergency appropriation totaling $5.9 billion, the first in an annual series of emergency aid packages that by the end of 2000, the President's final term, would total nearly $25 billion.

Though this assistance would make the difference for thousands of farm families, for many farmers, their problems were just beginning. While a tide of low prices swept over commodity after commodity, the summers of 1998,1999, and 2000 brought more bad weather that caused billions of dollars in losses in 45 States. Until the 1999 drought, the plight of farmers had gone largely unnoticed by the general public, overshadowed by a Nation in the midst of an historic economic expansion. That all changed when Secretary Glickman, Under Secretary August Schumacher, and Farm Service Agency Administrator Keith Kelly toured a series of drought-stricken farms in West Virginia and Maryland. In one afternoon, the USDA officials drew the Nation's attention to the plight of farmers and ranchers. The resulting news frenzy effectively

jump-started a stalled $1.6 billion emergency appropriation in Congress, one that ensured the survival of thousands of family farms.

While this aid was clearly necessary, this tourniquet approach--ad-hoc emergency farm legislation--became a recurring and controversial means of helping farmers through this period. While the aid was important, the Administration worried that Congress was intent to rely almost solely on this form of assistance, rather than admitting to the flaws of the new Farm Bill and crafting a real farm safety net. The Administration also believed that much of the aid was poorly targeted. During the three years from 1997 through 2000, Congress passed no fewer than eight pieces of emergency farm legislation in excess of $20 billion, and authorized a whopping 70 new programs, many of which USDA had to implement with little guidance.

A New Set of Guiding Principles

By applying the tools and resources available--farm credit, farm price and income support programs, risk management, food aid, export credit, conservation incentives and more--USDA used virtually every tool left in the wake of the 1996 Act to help farmers through the growing crisis. Slowly a new approach took shape. It was this new approach that, in the Spring of 1999 Secretary Glickman established as a core set of "guiding principles," that the Administration felt should drive farm policy well into the future.

- *Farm programs should support farmers, not commodities.* The Administration argued that Government payments should be based on farm income rather than crop prices, because it is overall farm income that ensures U.S. producers can continue working the land and enjoy a decent standard of living. The old commodity-driven system, the Administration maintained, allowed too many producers to slip through the cracks. The Administration also believed that traditional U.S. farm policy encouraged the massive consolidation that had swept through agriculture in recent decades because when farm support is issued on a per-bushel or per-pound basis, the larger farm operations receive the bigger payments.

- *U.S. farm policy should be more comprehensive and national in scope.* While the 1996 Act professed to encourage planting flexibility, four years after its enactment, the Nation continued to have a narrow, seven-crop, regional system that doesn't support or reward farmers for branching out into new and specialty crops that offer strong market opportunities. This broader scope also must reflect the true geographic diversity of American agriculture. As Secretary Glickman explained it in his 2000 Agricultural Outlook speech, "It wasn't until last summer's drought, which was centered in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions, that certain people ... began to realize that there are actually farmers in these parts of the country. In fact, from Maine to Virginia, there are 200,000 farmers. They too deserve support and protection."

- *USDA risk management programs must become more affordable and inclusive.* The most glaring example of the exclusivity of U.S. farm policy was the fact that Congress barred

USDA from providing, through the Federal crop insurance program, affordable protection for livestock--even though ranchers account for about half of the U.S. farm economy. The Administration repeatedly pressed for such coverage. They also advocated lifting the area-wide trigger on USDA's Non-Insured Assistance Program, making it easier for farmers of uninsurable crops to receive help after a major loss.

- *Conservation must be a centerpiece of farm policy, not an afterthought.* By creating incentives for all farmers to be environmentally responsible, the Clinton Administration firmly believed that Government could boost farm income at the same time it encouraged farmers and ranchers to protect the Nation's natural resources. As Secretary Glickman explained in his 2000 Agricultural Outlook remarks, "the land is not something that can be replaced like a piece of machinery. We need to respect it above and beyond its crop-producing capability; we must recognize it for what it is: our most valuable commodity of all. Long after this year's crop is grown, harvested and sold--and the next year's and the next year's--what still will remain is the land. We must hand it to the next generation in as good a shape as we found it. And we can do that while still having an agriculture sector that is productive and profitable."

- *Rural development policy is an integral part of U.S. farm policy.* The Clinton Administration was quick to recognize that most people in modern-day America could no longer make a decent living in production agriculture alone. A disappointing truth for many, yet the fact remained that more and more farmers needed to supplement their income with off-farm opportunities. Quite often, this dual-income approach was the only way for family farmers to stay on the land. These changing realities made it all the more important that rural farm communities diversify their economies and create an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish. It also made clear the importance of strong Federal programs to ensure these communities have a sound physical and information infrastructure that can attract economic opportunities and discourage the out-migration of young people from rural areas.[1]

This philosophy for a more inclusive and responsive U.S. farm safety net was first shared with the country in the Spring of 1999 by Secretary Glickman. It is a strong vision that can help ensure a bright, secure future for U.S. agriculture. It is a vision developed after years of effort on behalf of struggling farmers and ranchers across the country. What follows is a detailed account of those efforts.

Farm Credit: Helping Farmers Help Themselves

Providing credit is a critical function of USDA, especially during difficult economic periods. As the farm crisis deepened in the late 1990s farmers and ranchers found commercial credit more difficult to obtain, making USDA credit even more important.

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[1] For a detailed discussion of the rural development legacy of the Clinton Administration, please see Chapter 6.

By 1999 USDA farm lending had increased 70 percent from 1992, providing nearly $4 billion in credit—a 14-year high. In responding to the myriad of weather-related disasters, USDA's emergency lending program emerged as a critically important tool. In fact, during the drought-plagued summer of 1999, USDA approved $330 million in emergency, low-interest loans to nearly 4,000 farmers.

Recognizing that USDA receives more than 30,000 requests for new loans each year, the Clinton Administration focused on making it easier for farmers and ranchers to get much needed financial assistance. Several times the President went to Congress to request additional funds to expand the loan program and help more farmers and ranchers. For example, in 1999, widespread natural disasters and the weak farm economy placed unprecedented demands on USDA's farm loan programs. The use of USDA direct and guaranteed loans increased more than 75 percent over the previous year. So the President asked Congress for $110 million in emergency funding to meet the increased demand for farm credit.

Recognizing, as well, that accessibility of Government loan programs is vital, the Clinton Administration–primarily under the auspices of Vice President Gore's "reinventing government" initiative–streamlined its farm loan procedures by: reducing the time required to approve applications for loan guarantees, making the loan approval process more consistent, and reducing paperwork. As a result, USDA during the Clinton years processed a record number of loans for farmers and ranchers quickly and efficiently–reducing the loan approval process from six weeks to two weeks. As examples, USDA's guaranteed loan program application was streamlined to one page for loans of less than $50,000. The Department slashed 1,200 pages of farm loan regulations from its books and cut in half the number of required forms. It also created a Preferred Lender Program to encourage more lenders to help smaller producers.

Other changes as part of USDA's overhaul of its farm loan programs included: expanding the Certified Lender Program; consolidating forms to reduce paperwork; reducing requirements for historical documentation; reducing appraisal requirements; and expanding purposes for which lines of credit may be used. Other regulatory changes were made to ease the financial burden on farmers who had debts forgiven under past USDA farm loan programs.

President Clinton and his two agriculture secretaries shared a firm commitment to ensuring USDA farm programs were available to all producers. Toward this end in 1997, USDA extended its maximum loan guarantees to beginning farmers to 95percent of the purchase. This action was part of an ongoing effort to help folks starting out in agriculture. It also provided a means for retiring farmers to transfer their land to a new generation. USDA also increased direct farm ownership and operating loans made to minority and women farmers by 74 percent from 1995 to 1999. Between 1995 and 1998, USDA increased its farm lending to Native Americans from $2 million in 1995 to more than $29 million in 1999. Overall lending to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers rose by 44 percent, from 1998 to 1999 alone.

Making a Stand for Small Farms

When the Clinton Administration took office, U.S. agriculture was continuing a trend toward fewer and larger operations. While many saw this trend toward more efficient and globally competitive corporate farms as inevitable – even beneficial in terms of consumer prices – President Clinton was determined to also ensure a bright future for small family farmers and ranchers.

On July 16, 1997, Secretary Glickman appointed a National Commission on Small Farms. Their report, *A Time to Act*, provided a series of recommendations based on testimony gathered at national meetings. President Clinton declared that he would match – dollar for dollar – the report's call for a substantial increase in direct farm loans. This helped 1,000 beginning farmers get on the land and 12,000 more to stay there.

Through these and other positive actions, the Administration made a substantive down payment on the future of the small family farm. In 1999, President Clinton's USDA made protecting and promoting America's small farms an explicit part of the Department's mission. Secretary Glickman also established an external Advisory Committee on Small Farms and an internal Council on Small Farms. These entities recommend and coordinate USDA actions to enhance the viability and economic opportunities of small farms and ranches.

A sustained Clinton Administration commitment to family farmers and ranchers also helped deliver:

- Intensified outreach to small, limited-resource, and minority farmers. For example, several agencies sponsored a conference for limited resource farmers in Tennessee and California to help them earn more by planting alternative crops, and by using new production and marketing methods.

- New rules to make livestock and poultry market transaction information available to the public and to make production contracts less complicated.

- Improved access to fair and open markets for family farmers through increased efforts to monitor unfair market practices.

- A $25-million initiative to increase risk management education and crop insurance products available to farmers in 15 under-served States.

These are just a few examples of the many efforts to protect and promote America's small farms carried out by the Clinton Administration. Perhaps the strongest indicator of their success, was the answer given to the question posed by Secretary Glickman when he first created the National Commission on Small Farms: "What role – if any – should the Federal Government play given the very determined trend toward larger and fewer farms? Can Government help or would we be paddling hopelessly upstream." Secretary Glickman went on to share his opinion: "The question

is not big versus little," he said, "but can we find a meaningful way for the two to coexist? I 'd like to think that the answer is yes."

Secretary Glickman got his answer in February of 2000 when USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service released new numbers on the makeup of the U.S. farm economy. It found that while the total amount of farm acreage declined slightly in the United States in 1999, the number of small farms in America actually increased for the first time in years.

Farm Programs: Supporting Farmers and Ranchers

Though the 1996 Act eliminated some of the support programs that made up the traditional farm safety net, the role of USDA farm programs could not have become more central to the Administration's efforts to assist struggling farmers and ranchers. By the latter part of the decade, USDA's Farm Service Agency was saddled with an enormous task: administering a myriad of new emergency programs. While most were authorized through Congressional legislation, several were the product of the Administration's creative and innovative application of decades-old authorities.

As prices collapsed for commodity after commodity, the list of commodities needing assistance grew: dairy, pork, oilseeds, sheep, lamb, apples, tobacco, onions, peanut, potatoes, cotton seed, citrus, cranberries, livestock, wool, mohair. Few were spared from the price depression.

A record $20.6 billion in Federal direct payments, the highest in history, was delivered to America's farmers and ranchers in 1999, including more than $5 billion in market transition payments, $5.9 billion in loan deficiency payments, more than $5.5 billion in market loss assistance payments, more than $400 million in livestock and dairy assistance, more than $1.8 billion in conservation payments, and almost $2 billion for crop losses. This staggering amount easily eclipsed the previous high of $16.7 billion in 1987.

USDA employees worked tirelessly, often distributing payments to producers in days. This required extra effort or creative thinking. The collapse of pork prices in the winter of 1998 is an excellent example. Consolidation in the hog market inflicted devastatingly low prices on hog farmers–the lowest since the 1940s, and far below those needed to recover costs. Using an authority not used in decades, USDA created a $50-million Small Hog Operation Payment Program employees set up a toll-free hotline to get information on this new resource out to farmers quickly. Ultimately, nearly 60,000 mostly smaller hog producers received payments under this program.

The Flood Compensation Program disbursed $42 million to producers whose agricultural land was subject to long-term flooding and could not be used for crop production or grazing. This assistance went to producers in five States, including those in the Devil's Lake region of eastern North Dakota and the Prairie Pothole region of South Dakota. Flooding in these areas began as early as 1993 and continued through 1999.

Virtually an afterthought when crafting the 1996 Act, USDA loan deficiency payments took on tremendous significance as prices tumbled. By mid-1999, it was delivering $3.7 billion in assistance, a 20-fold increase from 1997.

Realizing that farmers needed better marketing flexibility and relief from storage shortages, USDA began making seven-year, low-cost loans to farmers in 2000 to help build or upgrade commodity storage and handling facilities. As of September, 27, 2000, FSA had approved 1,585 loans totaling $46.9 million in 29 States. By this date, 244 new facilities had been completed – increasing on-farm storage capacity by 31.2 million bushels, so fewer farmers are forced to market during periods of low prices.

Between 1998 and 2000, the USDA Farm Service Agency developed and administered approximately 70 programs supporting farmers and ranchers. All told, in the three years between 1998 and 2000 USDA administered a staggering $60 billion in direct payments and crop insurance indemnities to producers.

Disaster Assistance

Many times through the 1990s, Secretary Glickman authorized emergency grazing and haying on all but the most environmentally sensitive conservation reserve acres, in an effort to assist struggling cattle producers. Disaster relief for livestock producers was offered through various livestock indemnity and assistance programs. During the worst period of drought, parts of 44 States were declared agricultural disaster areas, making emergency low-interest loans available to tens of thousands of hard-hit farmers.

Responding to the severity of the drought, a policy commission was established to develop a new national drought policy. The commission studied current drought preparedness and reviewed laws and programs. It made recommendations on ways to integrate Federal and non-Federal drought relief programs to improve services without infringing on State control of water resources. It also recommended measures for public education on drought prevention and mitigation.

Another unusually severe natural disaster – an ice storm--struck New England in 1998. USDA responded quickly to requests for emergency food assistance and helped dairy farmers in the worst-hit areas. Farm Service Agency personnel were there to assess damage and match scarce resources to critical needs, such as getting electrical generators to dairy farms suffering power outages. USDA also made emergency loans for production and property losses caused by the storms.

Being hit with so many disaster programs to administer, USDA streamlined its procedures to reduce the burden on farmers and ranchers to receive aid. In many cases, producers came to a local office to find a completed application for disaster aid ready for their verification and signature.

Risk Management

Federally backed crop insurance first surfaced in the 1930s when the hardships of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression underscored the need to provide some form of insurance protection for farmers. But it was not until the Federal Crop Insurance Act of 1980 that the program expanded beyond major crops in major agricultural areas. However, this legislation was not sufficient to prevent what has been a continuing phenomenon for the agricultural economy in hard times--*ad hoc* disaster programs. As part of the Clinton Administration's efforts to develop more effective and proactive tools to help farmers better manage all of the risks inherent in agriculture, it supported two major crop insurance reforms.

Federal Crop Insurance Reform Act of 1994

At the beginning of the Clinton administration, disastrous floods in the Midwest and a drought in the Southeast showed the limitations of existing agricultural disaster assistance programs. Traveling extensively in the affected areas, President Clinton and Secretary Espy spoke directly with, and listened to, farmers facing financial ruin to determine what was working and what needed work. These conversations resulted in an ambitious reform initiative announced by Secretary Espy on March 2, 1994. The Act was both a vital budget reform as well as a major agricultural policy reform.

For many farmers, the expectation of "free" *ad hoc* relief deterred their participation in the crop insurance program. The result? A vicious cycle. Only one-third of eligible acres were covered by crop insurance, so when disaster struck, the cry was loud for costly ad hoc assistance. The availability of *ad hoc* assistance was inherently uncertain, inequitable and costly--averaging about $1.5 billion per year on top of the $900 million per year paid out under crop insurance. The Clinton Administration set its sights on eliminating the need for two costly programs to solve one problem--while still maintaining a sturdy farm safety net.

The Administration resolved this situation by proposing to fuse crop insurance and disaster aid into a single program that provided farmers with a predictable level of protection. The Act enjoyed wide bipartisan support in the Congress, and was signed into law on October 13, 1994.

Once the reforms were in place, crop insurance participation jumped from 33 percent of eligible acres to 80 percent. For the first time in U.S. history, the vast majority of eligible farmers had the security of knowing in advance the amount of their protection, and American taxpayers had a tool to rein in unbudgeted disaster assistance spending.

Getting Crop Insurance on a Sound Financial Footing
Prior to 1993, the crop insurance program was bleeding red ink. From 1981 to 1993, the overall loss ratio averaged 1.47. This means that USDA paid out about $1.47 in claims for every $1.00 collected in premiums. President Clinton's 1993 economic package, which set the country on its historic course toward a balanced budget, required the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation to achieve an overall projected loss ratio of 1.1 by October 1, 1995, and 1.075 by October 1, 1998. Without reducing the average 1.47 loss ratio, U.S. taxpayers would have paid out an extra $5.1 billion in excess underwriting expenses.

Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000
The Federal Crop Insurance Reform Act of 1994 produced phenomenal growth in the amount of protection farmers carried, and farmers enjoyed rising prices and expanding markets for several years. But when the Asian economic crisis hit in 1997 and global overproduction of many commodities caused prices to plunge, President Clinton's warning about an inadequate safety net became an all too real threat, as it became painfully apparent that more measures were needed to keep U.S. farmers afloat.

For example, while many more producers now carried some protection, the coverage level selected was often too low to provide much assistance in the event of a crop loss. To make matters worse, many farmers in parts of the country which suffered a series of natural disasters, saw the amount of their protection dwindle to dangerously low levels. USDA also was specifically prohibited by law from offering insurance protection for livestock, which accounts for nearly half of the U.S. agricultural economy.

To address these weaknesses, the Administration actively sought producer opinions and solutions through a series of listening sessions and conferences. These grassroots efforts resulted in an $11.5 billion initiative to strengthen the farm safety net, an 80 percent increase over past funding. Secretary Glickman made clear that this new endeavor reflected a new philosophy for the future:

> "As you know, many in the farm sector have not shared in the overall national prosperity. That's why the USDA budget includes a new safety net proposal worth $11.5 billion over the next two years.... It includes targeted, counter-cyclical income assistance, as well as increased conservation assistance, improved risk management tools and new market opportunities for farmers. I believe that this plan represents a shift in farm policy philosophy, one that I hope will guide lawmakers (for years to come)."[2]

[2]Dan Glickman, Feb. 7, 2000, Announcement of USDA FY 2001 Budget

Key elements of the initiative included making higher levels of coverage affordable, increasing coverage for producers suffering multiple years of losses, developing a livestock pilot program, expanding research and education efforts, encouraging the development of new risk management products, improving the noninsured crop disaster assistance program, and increasing oversight to improve the integrity of the crop insurance program.

The Administration's proposal was substantially reflected in the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, which President Clinton signed into law on June 20, 2000. The bill had broad-based, bipartisan support. Within days of enactment, USDA made 60 percent of the 5-year, $8.2 billion package available to farmers. But at the bill signing ceremony, President Clinton made clear that this legislation was merely a first step in righting the wrongs of the 1996 Act and building a true farm safety net for the future. "While this bill is important, it still fails to fix what is plainly an unsuccessful farm policy," President Clinton said. "We should be targeting assistance where it's truly needed, instead of making payments to farmers who haven't planted a crop and who don't need our help. That's why we need to revise, revamp, and improve the 1996 Freedom To Farm Bill--to build a safety net that adequately protects our Nation's farmers."

Meeting the Demand for Risk Management Tools

By eliminating New Deal farm programs, the 1996 Farm Bill shifted more of the burden of agricultural risk from the Government to farmers. In the absence of a sturdy farm safety net, increased risk, coupled with sustained low commodity prices, pushed many farmers to the financial edge. To help farmers manage their increased risks, USDA aggressively enhanced and expanded the quality, types, and availability of crop insurance protection. By 2000, USDA's Risk Management Agency provided protection to farmers through 36,262 county crop insurance programs. The Agency also created new programs for commodities like aquaculture and dairy products. It also developed new specialty and whole-farm risk management products.

As evidenced by two major crop insurance reform initiatives, the Clinton Administration worked successfully to provide farmers more coverage at a lower cost. Innovative programs like the whole-farm income product described above mean more coverage for more producers. Participation in the crop insurance program means protection in the event of a natural disaster. But this coverage also helps farmers secure operating loans, aggressively market a portion of their crop, and plan for the future.

AIDING AGRICULTURE'S DIVERSE FUTURE

David and Lorraine Tuttle live on the family farm that has been producing crops since 1743. Though David had been active with his local Farm Service Agency office for many years, it wasn't until 1997 that he became interested in crop insurance– when USDA launched its Adjusted Gross Revenue pilot program, which bases coverage on historic Schedule F tax forms, rather than crop data.

By offering coverage for a wide range of the Tuttle's crops that were ineligible for traditional crop insurance, the new program sounded attractive. To buy the most coverage, a producer must grow at least eight different commodities. On the Tuttle farm, crops can range from asparagus to zucchini, and a variety of fruit and berries, with some acreage devoted to corn and potatoes. The Tuttles also have 115 acres in the Maine Certified Tree Farm program, and some land set aside for pasture.

Originally, the Tuttle family sold to wholesalers. But in 1993 they began retailing their produce in a farm stand. Today 85 percent of their produce is sold there, allowing the family to keep more of the retail price of the food they produce on the farm. By 2000, the Tuttle farm had added greenhouses that produce a third of the farm's income through the sale of nursery products.

As this diverse farm thrives, thanks in part to the Clinton Administration's efforts to extend Federal crop insurance beyond traditional row crops, Tuttle's oldest son plans to join the family business upon his graduation from college.

As a result of the Clinton Administration's persistence, participation in Federal crop insurance programs has increased dramatically. In 1999, nearly $30.9 billion in protection was provided on 196 million acres through more than 1.8 million policies. This level of protection is almost 2 1/2 times the $13.6 billion protection on the 100 million acres insured in 1994.

Embracing a World of Opportunity

American agriculture is the leading positive contributor to the U.S. trade balance. As commodity prices fell and global competition for key agricultural markets heated up, the Administration understood that a world marketplace free of trade barriers were key to ensuring the United States would remain a major exporter of agricultural products. It also understood that nowhere was there more opportunity to decrease farmers and ranchers reliance on Government payments than to increase the market opportunities that existed among the 6 billion consumers who live outside the United States.

Not only did the Clinton Administration understand how important expanded global market opportunities were to America's farmers and ranchers, so – by and large – did U.S. agriculture. As President Clinton eked out significant victory after significant victory in the U.S. Congress on the often divisive issue of trade, time after time U.S. agriculture delivered critical support that

tipped the balance in favor of some of the Administration's greatest trade achievements – from the North American Free Trade Agreement in the early Clinton-Gore years to Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China in 2000.

As a result of this strong alliance between U.S. agriculture and the Clinton Administration on trade, Secretary Glickman and Secretary Espy used USDA's foreign agricultural programs vigorously--not only to promote a strong U.S. farm economy by expanding U.S. export opportunities, but also to build a foundation of free and fair trade in food and fiber around the world, a foundation that would ensure a strong U.S. farm economy, a principled global economy and a more food secure world.

Expanding Global Markets

As a result of the Administration's myriad efforts to open new markets, combat unfair trade barriers, and expand U.S. agriculture's opportunities around the world, U.S. agricultural exports reached $50.9 billion for 2000, an $8.3 billion gain from 1993. Exports passed $50 billion in 1995, and climbed to a record $60 billion in 1996. But as commodity prices dropped and a global financial crisis drove down demand, exports–like the rest of the farm economy–took a hit. Nevertheless the 2000 level was higher than any annual export level achieved before the record-setting mid-1990s.

Foreign markets are vital to U.S. farmers and ranchers. These consumers buy about one-third of U.S. crops. These exports markets also are critical to a continued strong U.S. economy. Agricultural exports support about 750,000 American jobs. Only one-third of these jobs are in rural areas.

The Birth of the World Trade Organization

For U.S. agriculture, no event was as significant as the negotiation of the Uruguay Round Agreement under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was concluded in 1994. As a result of this round of negotiations, agriculture– for the first time--was brought under this broad agreement for free and fair trade around the world. The agreement established the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a new dispute settlement process. In the agriculture arena, trade-distorting internal support and export subsidies were capped and reduced. The dispute settlement process was improved and a new appeals process was instituted to ensure that the new rules are applied fairly. Thanks to these new rules, the United States filed 15 successful complaints, which ultimately led to the opening of a wide variety of markets, from U.S. apples being sold in Japan to U.S. beef being sold in Korea, to U.S. grains having fair access to markets in the European Union. Disciplines were also imposed on Canadian dairy export subsidies. When all was said and done, the Clinton Administration successfully raised more than 80 compliance issues involving approximately $2.5 billion in U.S. agricultural exports.

From the original 128 members, the WTO grew to 139 members during the Clinton-Gore Administration. China and Taiwan are working toward accession. The accession of additional countries to the WTO further ensures that principles of free and fair trade are the true foundation

of the modern global economy–ensuring better market access, lower tariffs, and predictable standards for trade in food and agricultural products. Taiwan's WTO accession agreement with the United States was completed in February 1998. Under this agreement, which is in preparation for its hoped-for accession to the WTO, Taiwan immediately cut tariffs on 15 key U.S. commodities and began to phase in imports of previously-banned chicken meat, pork bellies, pork offals, and beef offals. The United States dominated these new imports–exporting 23,940 metric tons of the 33,042 tons allocated for these products in 1999.

In 1999, the U.S.-China Agricultural Cooperation Agreement opened China's market for the first time in more than 20 years to U.S. citrus, meat and wheat. China's accession to the WTO was conditional on signing a market access agreement with the United States. This occurred in November of 1999, and the United States granted Permanent Normal Trade Relations to China in October 2000.

Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China

Throughout its tenure, the Clinton Administration made several attempts to get Congress to normalize trade relations with China. A study done by USDA economists that projected an increase of $2 billion in global U.S. agricultural exports should China gain entrance into the World Trade Organization. In other words, if Congress stood with President Clinton, U.S. farmers and ranchers would stand among the biggest winners due to sharply greater access to the immense Chinese market. Speaking at the 2000 Agricultural Outlook Conference, Secretary Glickman said:

> "When it's all said and done, based on conservative estimates, Chinese membership in the WTO will mean an additional $2 billion a year in U.S. farm exports to China by 2005. A no vote ... is a vote to cede this lucrative market to the EU, Canada, Australia, Argentina and others. It would be a kind of unilateral economic disarmament. This may be the biggest test yet of our Nation's commitment to a global economy based on fair trade principles. We all know how vocal and intense the opposition can be on trade issues. We saw it in 1997 with fast track. We saw it just a few months ago in Seattle. The President will devote considerable time, energy and political capital to the NTR fight. And, I hope the agriculture community will as well."

In the end, President Clinton secured this significant trade victory, and analysts agree that it was largely the support of U.S. agriculture that made the difference. This victory was an important foreign policy achievement for the President, but it was also critical to the Administration's

efforts to expand market global opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers in order to fuel a strong 21st century U.S. farm economy. The North American Free Trade Agreement
The victory in expanding U.S. agriculture's opportunities in China topped off eight years of cliffhanger triumphs on trade policy that the Clinton-Gore Administration eked out by rallying a slim bipartisan majority in Congress. This majority understood that the future of both a strong U.S. economy and global economic and political stability hinged on fostering free and fair trade around the world. In 1992, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which addresses barriers to agricultural trade between the three nations. When President Clinton came into office, he was left with the difficult job of getting the U.S. Congress to ratify the agreement. This was the first test of his ability to pull together a bipartisan majority on trade issues. From the start the "leg work" of Secretary Espy and other leaders of U.S. agriculture was critical. But that hard work paid off. The agricultural sectors of the all three countries--the United States, Canada and Mexico--all have benefitted greatly from the liberalized environment created by NAFTA. Exports and imports of agricultural products have reached record levels between all parties. U.S. exports to our two neighboring countries steadily expanded during the Clinton-Gore years as tariffs and other barriers were reduced or eliminated. Between 1995 and 1999, U.S. agricultural exports to Mexico increased by $2.1 billion or 60 percent, and exports to Canada rose by nearly $1.3 billion or 22 percent. In 1998, U.S. exports to Canada topped $7 billion for the first time. In 2000, Canada and Mexico ranked as the No.2 and No. 3 largest U.S. agricultural export markets, behind Japan.

To further enhance trade and reduce complex non-tariff barriers, a Consultative Committee on Agriculture was established with Canada in 1998. As part of the process, a Provincial-State Advisory Group was created to give State and local officials and producers a forum for raising regional trade concerns with the two nations' Governments. The U.S. went on to establish similar consultative committees with Chile (in 1997), Argentina (in 1998) and Brazil (in 2000). The committees provide a vital government-to-government framework to address issues such as agricultural market access; agricultural marketing, regulation, and safety of food products; development of positions before international standard-setting bodies; and agricultural research and technical exchanges.

The Clinton Administration also laid the groundwork for the expansion of NAFTA to all of Central and South America. Negotiations to achieve a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas were initiated in 1994, with the aim of creating the world's largest free trade zone. The governments of the 34 countries of the Western Hemisphere agreed to conclude these negotiations by the end of 2005. This breakthrough will ensure that U.S. producers gain liberalized access to a market of 675 million people, with a combined consumer buying power of $1.5 trillion. Countries have agreed to specific measures to make it easier for companies to do business throughout the hemisphere. In addition, they agreed to pursue the elimination of agricultural export subsidies as a common objective in WTO trade negotiations.

Sanctions Reform Sets Aside Trade in Food
In April of 1999, President Clinton announced sweeping sanctions reforms to open new foreign markets to U.S. agricultural exports. Despite continuing sanctions on most other products, American farmers and ranchers–thanks to President Clinton's decision–were able to sell their commodities to Iran, Libya, and Sudan. By the fall of 2000, sales made under the new mandate, included 29,000 tons of hard red winter wheat to Sudan, 20,000 tons of durum to Libya, and more than 600,000 tons of corn to Iran. In general, the Clinton Administration felt that commercial exports of food and other human necessities should not be used as tools of foreign policy. The President's actions on sanctions policy paved the way for Congress to pass sanctions reform legislation as part of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2001, opening the way for future U.S. exports of food and medicine to Cuba.

Exploring New Markets and Sharpening U.S. Agriculture's Competitive Edge
On July 13, 2000, President Clinton signed the U.S.- Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement. This agreement will significantly open the Vietnamese market to U.S. agricultural exports by cutting tariffs as much as 30 percent on a wide range of U.S. farm products. These cuts will be fully implemented three years after the agreement is approved by the U.S. Congress and Vietnam's National Assembly.

During the Clinton-Gore Administration, USDA used a variety of export market development programs aggressively to maintain U.S. agriculture's competitive edge in a hotly contested global marketplace. For example, from 1993 to 2000, USDA's export credit guarantee programs supported sales of about $26 billion in U.S. agricultural products. These programs encourage exports of U.S. agricultural products to countries where private-sector financing for these exports may not be available. In 1998, during the height of the Asian economic crisis, USDA made $1.5 billion in credit guarantees available to exporters for the sale of U.S. agricultural products, mostly to South Korea.

President Clinton's USDA also developed a Supplier Credit Guarantee Program to address foreign buyers' desires for more consumer-ready products and more attractive payment terms. In addition, a Facility Guarantee Program was launched in 1998 to provide guarantees for the sale of capital goods and services to improve or establish agriculture-related infrastructure in emerging markets, where demand for U.S. products may be constricted due to a lack of storage, processing or handling facilities.

USDA also reinvented the planning and application process for its major export market development programs. This dramatically reduced paperwork requirements and improved the efficiency of the programs. It encouraged exporters to develop market-specific strategies for expanding their economic opportunities, ensuring a more effective use of USDA's full arsenal of market development programs.

Expanding the Definition of the Farm Safety Net

Trade efforts, rural development efforts and conservation efforts all were integral to the Clinton-Gore Administration's vision of a strong farm safety net for the 21st century. Throughout the Administration's tenure, Secretary Espy and Secretary Glickman took every opportunity they could to minimize economic hardships facing America's farmers and ranchers and to exploit new opportunities that showed the promise of real growth – from supporting the growing market for organic agriculture to reforming one of the most politically charged programs at USDA to eradicating animal health issues to supporting a strong agricultural research agenda.

The First National Standards for Organic Food

In 1989, a television report was broadcast alerting the public to the use of a carcinogenic pesticide, Alar, in apple production. This focused attention on the fact that there was an alternative to food grown with the aid of chemicals–organically produced food.

Members of the organic food industry came to Congress and asked for legislation that would mandate the creation of national standards for the production of organic food. The Organic Food Production Act was passed as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. Work on the standards was slow. The first Congressional appropriation paid one-half of one person's salary.

The priority placed on this effort changed with the arrival of the Clinton Administration. By 1994, the staff was expanded to eight persons and work began in earnest. In 1997, USDA issued the first proposed national standards for the production and processing of organic food. The Department received an unprecedented 275,603 comments (most urging that the standards be even more strict).

President Clinton's USDA listened. On March 7, 2000, Secretary Glickman announced revised standards. The final standards, the most comprehensive and strict organic rules in the world, were put in place at the end of 2000.

USDA's goal for national organic standards was to ensure that they are:

- Strict in what is acceptable as organic;
- Precise in their definition of organic;
- Easy for consumers to understand; and
- Through their uniformity, create more economic potential for the Nation's 12,000 organic farmers–a number that is growing and will continue to grow as a result of these standards.

Thanks to the Administration's diligent efforts, and the strong participation of U.S. consumers and organic farmers in the process, consumers will know what they are buying, and farmers will know what is expected of them. By establishing uniform national organic standards, President Clinton's USDA smoothed the way for even more growth in organic agriculture and the further development of a promising and growing new market for U.S. farmers.

Federal Milk Marketing Order Reform

When the Clinton Administration took office, one of the most divisive issues facing agriculture was the need to reform the 60-year-old Federal Milk Marketing Order program. The process of having the Federal Government set forth the terms of trade between buyers and sellers of milk based on an archaic system that divided the country into 33 milk marketing areas, had led to bitter disputes about regional price inequities among dairy farmers.

While there was broad agreement that milk marketing orders need to move toward greater market orientation. If one started talked specifics, that consensus promptly broke down. Yet in 1996, Congress "punted" on the issue – ordering President Clinton's USDA to take on the divisive, politically explosive, but certainly necessary challenge of reform.

In wading into the divisive issue by putting out an initial proposal, Secretary Glickman invited everyone into the debate. "Our proposal gives America a more reasonable, contemporary dairy policy," Glickman said. "Some folks will say it doesn't go far enough. Others will say it's too radical. That tells me that I'm in the right vicinity. But I invite everyone into this debate ... We have a real chance to avert a crisis and create a real opportunity here. But it will require all of us to wade through what has been a highly emotional issue and achieve some national consensus. We owe that to America's dairy farmers." When the process was done, USDA had received 8,000 comments on its proposal.

USDA analyzed all aspects of the program as well as the public input. The Department was committed to ensuring that the changes would not unduly harm small dairy farmers and processing plants. USDA issued a final decision on March 12, 1999, consolidating the milk marketing orders from 33 to 11, establishing a national Class I price surface, modernizing the formula used for pricing milk, and making other revisions to improve the program. Congress also overturned the Administration's reform of the Class I price surface.

Completion of this project was a significant accomplishment for President Clinton's USDA, especially in light of the complexity of the program and divisiveness that existed in the dairy industry. USDA demonstrated unprecedented initiative and leadership that resulted in a more streamlined, efficient and market-oriented program.

Eradicating Animal Health Problems

Animal diseases and pests cost producers millions of dollars each year in direct losses and costs associated with eliminating them. But livestock producers are not the only ones burdened by animal diseases and pests; the resulting higher food prices affect all Americans. As the Clinton Administration sought out every opportunity to improve the outlook for the U.S. farm economy, it made a priority of working to eradicate animal diseases and pests that posed significant risks to U.S. agricultural resources. By accelerating programs to eradicate bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and pseudorabies, President Clinton's USDA successfully reduced the risks and costs associated with these diseases.

The success of the brucellosis eradication program is a good example of the results USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service achieved under the leadership of the Clinton Administration. Brucellosis causes abortions, infertility, and lowered milk production in cattle and bison. Brucellosis also impacts human health–causing potentially fatal undulant fever. It is a particularly stubborn disease to eliminate because the bacteria that cause it can survive in the environment for long periods of time. Additionally, the incubation period for exposed animals is long and variable.

In 1997, USDA established the Brucellosis Emergency Action Plan. Thanks to an enhanced cooperative Federal-State-industry effort, only two cattle herds and one bison herd in the entire country carried the disease in 2000. The last reservoir for the disease is free-roaming bison and elk herds in the Greater Yellowstone Area. USDA has taken an active role with other Federal and State agencies in efforts to reduce the potential for transmission of brucellosis from infected bison to livestock and disease-free bison and elk populations in the Greater Yellowstone Area. The end result? Greater economic opportunities for U.S. ranchers and safer food for all who enjoy their products.

Supporting a Strong Agricultural Research Agenda

In 1998, Secretary Glickman released a USDA report that backed up the Clinton Administration's belief in a strong investment in agricultural research. The report – "U.S. Agricultural Growth and Productivity: An Economywide Perspective" – found that from World War II through the 1990s, public investment in agricultural research was responsible for three quarters of all growth in U.S. farm productivity. The report also found that consumers got a big return on their investment, as well, in the form of lower food costs. The Clinton Administration understood that agricultural research was a major driver of farm productivity and profitability. It also recognized that investments in agricultural research were a good part of the reason that U.S. consumers spend less of their dollar on food than any other country in the world. For this reason, USDA invested in a wide range of research aimed at improving the long-term economic prospects and opportunities for farmers and ranchers in the United States. Here are a few of the major efforts that this support helped finance:

- **Methyl Bromide Alternatives.** Methyl bromide had been a tremendously valuable chemical for American agriculture. Yet scientists discovered that methyl bromide contributes to the depletion of the earth's ozone layer, thus causing potentially significant environmental consequences worldwide. The U.S. is scheduled to ban methyl bromide in 2005 in accordance with an international treaty. As a result, the development of alternatives to methyl bromide became a major priority at USDA. USDA scientists worked to develop and test new fumigants and/or strategies to reduce methyl bromide use, and to develop technology and equipment to reduce methyl bromide emissions into the atmosphere. USDA also worked to develop acceptable alternatives to methyl bromide for post-harvest quality maintenance of fresh fruits and vegetables.

- **Alternative Crops to Enhance Small Farm Profitability**. Three USDA laboratories dealt specifically with research to support small farms. Many other laboratories had relevant programs. For example, research findings and technology transfer activities by USDA's Small Fruit Station at Poplarville, Mississippi, were instrumental in the growth of the blueberry industry of the Gulf Coast region. This industry increased from about 500 acres in 1980 to more than 10,000 acres in 1998. New early-ripening blueberry cultivars developed by scientists at USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) allow Southern growers to economically produce fruit that fits a market window that does not compete with the blueberry growers to the North. USDA also had major programs directed toward small farms at the Dale Bumpers Small Farm Research Center in Booneville, Arkansas, and at the Appalachian Soil and Water Conservation Laboratory in Beaver, West Virginia. New economically efficient and sustainable forage and livestock production systems for small family farms in hill-lands were developed at both of these facilities. In addition, both facilities conducted agro-forestry research, incorporating tree production into livestock and high-value specialty crop production. Such farming systems benefit small farmers in landscapes naturally dominated by trees. ARS scientists from six research units in Georgia established the Small Farm Survival Project for the Southern Coastal Plain. They developed a whole-farm approach that provided small farmers with choices to aid their survival.

- **Technology Transfer.** Many small businesses have built new industries based on ARS research and products. One of the most commercially successful inventions was Super Slurper. Bandz, Inc., of Smelterville, Idaho, built an entire market based on the ARS-patented cornstarch absorbent that can hold 2,000 times its weight in water. Another example was a start-up company, located in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, which made its mark on the egg industry thanks to an ARS-patented method to immunize poultry by injecting vaccines directly into the fertile egg. In 2000, more than 85 percent of North American broilers were immunized by this process and the technology was rapidly spreading to Europe and Asia.

- **Bioenergy.** ARS continues to conduct research on lowering the cost of producing ethanol from biomass. Between 1995 and 2000, USDA's Office of Energy Policy and New Uses conducted many research studies on biomass supply and bio-energy topics, including two studies indicating a positive net energy balance for corn ethanol. In addition, USDA and the Department of Energy jointly published two studies indicating strongly lower life cycle costs for bio-diesel and corn ethanol than for their fossil fuel alternatives. USDA reported U.S. biomass resource availability of 188 million tons per year. Finally, USDA estimated the effects of minimum average renewable fuel standards for gasoline and ethanol on corn prices (an average annual increase of 15 cents per bushel from 2000 to 2010) and farm income (up an average of $1.2 billion per year over the same period).

- **Rice Genome Project**. ARS scientists at multiple locations contributed to rice genome-mapping efforts. The Clinton Administration recognized the commercial and world food implications of mapping and sequencing the rice genome. ARS research focused on genetic improvement with a large biotechnology effort. ARS pioneered efforts on nutritional genomics in which rice will be a major focus. Genes and markers for important nutritional and end-use quality traits were being identified. Additionally, ARS scientists identified new sources of disease resistance for rice, particularly for leaf blast and sheaf blight. ARS research also made major contributions to maintaining and improving end-use quality of rice grain. ARS was an essential part of the ongoing Federal-State-industry partnership that has resulted in the release of nearly 30 improved rice varieties.

While agricultural research rarely grabs the spotlight to the extent of human health research, its implications for people around the world can be equally as profound. As Secretary Glickman stood at President Clinton's side at the White House for the signing of the 1998 agricultural research bill, he summed it up well: "cutting-edge research is critical to U.S. agriculture's success," Glickman said. "And, as we've become a more urban society, agricultural research is a good part of the reason that we are able to produce affordable and safe food for ourselves and the world."

The Census of Agriculture Moves to USDA

The transfer of the Census of Agriculture from the Department of Commerce to USDA in 1997 was an historic event that made Government work better by finally consolidating, within one Federal agency, the agricultural statistics program for the United States. For more than 150 years, the Nation's farmers and ranchers were asked to report to two separate Government agencies, and both agencies were responsible for issuing reports about U.S. agriculture to the public.

Every five years, the Census of Agriculture provides the most comprehensive information about America's agriculture. One of the greatest benefits of the census is demographic data. This is one area, in particular, where USDA leadership brought much-needed improvement. In 1997, the census showed a 14 percent increase in the number of female farm operators, and a slight rise in minority operations. This was due to USDA's efforts to do a more thorough job of counting minority- and women-owned farms and ranches through cooperative work with minority organizations, and through a pre-census survey to uncover operations that were not on the census mailing list. The 1997 census also marked the first attempt to count individual American Indian farm operations on reservations. (In the past, reservations were counted as one farm.) USDA achieved a higher response rate (nearly 2 percent) and released the final results 10 months earlier than the previous census–offering a more complete picture of the true nature and diversity of U.S. agriculture at the turn of a new century.

Conclusion

From dramatically expanding the opportunities of U.S. farmers and ranchers around the world to fighting hard to build a sturdy farm safety net for the future, the Clinton Administration helped take the U.S. farm economy to new heights in its early years. It also, when world conditions darkened, made the critical difference for many farmers to ensure their survival. While effectively administering many emergency programs, the Administration also worked to build long-term economic security for U.S. agriculture–security that was built more around 21st century market opportunities, than around big Government bailouts. It also recognized the inextricable ties between U.S. farm policy, rural development programs, conservation programs and a strong agricultural research agenda.

As the failure of key aspects of the 1996 Farm Bill became more and more apparent, backing up President Clinton's concerns about the adequacy of the safety net, few policy debates in Washington more clearly delineated the philosophical differences between the two major political parties in this country. President Clinton and his Administration stood with family farmers and ranchers, with extending U.S. farm policy to embrace the wide diversity of American agriculture, with maintaining and modernizing the Nation's historic commitment to stand by the men and women who produce its food when hard times hit. In many ways the Administration advanced this vital compact. In other instances, deep divisions between the two parties stood in the path of real progress. Under President Clinton's leadership, much was done to ensure a decent standard of living for the men and women who feed this Nation and much of the world.

2. Building a Geography of Hope
Protecting Resources Across Public, Private Lands

USDA's conservation and forestry achievements during the Clinton-Gore Administration's eight years in office have been substantial–from the landmark effort in 1996 to begin channeling billions of dollars in resources to farmers and other private landowners to support their efforts to protect the Nation's air, water, wildlife to taking bold steps to better protect the long-term health of the Nation's forests and America's last pristine acres of untouched wilderness.

By pioneering efforts to improve the scientific basis for natural resource policies, by promoting new concepts of land stewardship and the use of ecosystem management strategies, and by emphasizing the connections between a region's health and the health of its watersheds--from their headwaters to the ocean's edge–the Clinton Administration laid the groundwork for a future in which our Nation reaps the benefits of both economic and environmental wealth – a future in which a strong American economy and a healthy environment advance hand in hand.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore understood that USDA was uniquely positioned to carry out this vision across America's patchwork of public and private lands. The USDA Forest Service manages 192 million acres of public land and, through its State and private forestry programs, affects the stewardship of other public and private forests. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, through the technical and financial assistance it provides, affects the long-term health of millions of acres of private lands–and all the life these lands support with their contribution to abundant food, clean air and water, and abundant wildlife. Using these agencies, and developing new tools to help them carry out the challenge of a strong, sustainable future, President Clinton and Vice President Gore left as one of their most significant legacies not just a strong U.S. economy, but a healthier American landscape.

This chapter is divided into two sections: Part I describes the legacy of the Administration in the Nation's forests, and Part II describes the legacy of President Clinton and Vice President Gore across America's agricultural and other private lands. Both are substantial accomplishments in their own right. But both are connected at their core to one over-arching goal: to leave to future generations productive farmland, healthy air and water, and abundant wildlife. This is the Clinton-Gore environmental legacy. It represents a powerful rebuttal to all who would believe that economic and environmental interests are destined to conflict. From a quiet, pristine forest to strong, sustainable agriculture, this Clinton-Gore legacy proves otherwise. It's gift to future generations? A geography of hope.

Part I. Bridging the Agriculture-Environment Divide

An Historic Investment in Conservation

"My earliest lessons about the environment were about the prevention of soil erosion on our family farm. What I learned then I believe now: we should not have an either-or, us-versus-them mentality when it comes to agriculture and the environment. We need both. And we need sustainable natural resource policies, incentive-based conservation efforts, and cutting-edge research to make sustainability a real possibility on the farm."

Vice President Al Gore
To the Third Annual Farm Journal Conference
December 1, 1998

"All our human progress has its natural limits: there is only so much land we can farm on, and without proper stewardship, there is only so much farming that land can take ... Plenty has been said about the schism between agriculture and the environment. But we accomplish very little for either by locking horns over conservation. It is time to set aside past differences and work together toward a policy of natural balance: one where we meet the needs of our people today without sacrificing those of future generations."

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman
To the National Association of Agricultural Journalists
April 22, 1996

In the wake of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (the 1996 Act), most of American agriculture was aflutter about the changing direction of U.S. farm policy. With its generous Government farm payments on top of a record strong farm economy, the new policy was enjoying quite a honeymoon in farm country. So when Secretary Glickman stood before an annual gathering of agricultural journalists on April 22, 1996–Earth Day–he raised more than a few eyebrows when he largely eschewed the topic of the moment. Instead, Secretary Glickman made an argument that was to many at the time unthinkable. The true history made in 1996 was not the shifts in traditional U.S. farm programs, he argued. The change that would matter most to future generations, Glickman said, was the fact that the 1996 Act was at its heart a conservation bill of epic proportions.

Secretary Glickman's remarks that day did not make headlines, but the efforts behind them did make history. During the 1996 Farm Bill debate, the Clinton Administration held firm in its demand for a raft of new and newly overhauled conservation programs. Its goal: to bring conservation policy and farm policy together–to cross the historic divide between agriculture and

the environment by channeling billions of dollars into voluntary, incentive-based programs to support farmer, ranchers and other private land owners in their efforts to protect America's farmland, ensure clean air and water and nurture wildlife habitat.

With roots in rural America, President Clinton and Vice President Gore both knew that farmers were the original conservationists. They understood that no one takes the health of the land more seriously than those who pull their living from it. As a result, they believed that the true nature of the historic division between agriculture and the environment was not one of prioirities, but one of resources. In short, they believed that if Government conservation programs offered a helping hand, rather than a slap on the hand, that they could make sustainable agriculture a mainstay on U.S. farms and ranches and make a lasting contribution to the health of the Nation's natural wealth.

The 1996 "Conservation Bill"

A 1994 Gallup poll surveyed America's attitudes toward conserving natural resources. Not surprisingly it revealed a strong public mandate for stepped-up conservation efforts. In fact, more than half of all Americans wanted to see more of their tax dollars going to these efforts. The survey also revealed that most Americans understood that farmers and ranchers had perhaps the most important role in taking care of the environment.

From the earliest days of the Clinton Administration, it was clear that there would be a major initiative to put the Federal Government's–and by extension the American people's–"money where its mouth is." In 1994 and 1995, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service held 351 public forums across the country, discussing with some 18,000 people how best to go about enhancing the Nation's conservation efforts. Overwhelmingly, the agency heard back from stakeholders that farmers and landowners wanted to do right by the land. What they needed to do so were voluntary, incentive-driven programs, not more regulatory efforts.

It was against this backdrop of renewed and rededicated commitment to natural resources conservation that the Clinton Administration made its move in 1996 to establish one of the most important environmental legacies of the Clinton-Gore Administration.

An Emphasis on Local Leadership

To make this vision of conservation a reality across America, the Administration settled on two key tenets: (1) the efforts should be locally led–with on-the-ground guidance in establishing priority efforts and allocating resources, and (2) all participation would be voluntary–USDA would be a true partner to farmers in conservation.

This approach reaffirmed USDA's 60-year commitment to locally led conservation as one of the most effective ways to help landowners and communities achieve their conservation goals through a voluntary approach to environmental stewardship. Those who participate in locally led conservation efforts often include people who value the land for different reasons – from hunters who want to increase wildlife populations to more traditional environmentalists, for example. As

they come together to understand the land in a particular area, they often focus far more clearly on shared visions of their community. Where natural resource conditions and needs can be assessed, goals defined, opportunities and constraints identified, and responsibilities clarified, plans of action can emerge that have a good chance to succeed because they are rooted in this shared vision.

The Centerpiece: A True Conservation Reserve Program

Thanks to the strong efforts of the Clinton Administration, the 1996 Farm Bill included a whole universe of new and newly overhauled conservation programs. Clearly, the centerpiece of the conservation aspects of the bill was a revitalized Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that, for the first time, truly lived up to its name.

In size, the program was the largest conservation endeavor in the country–paying farmers to idle millions of acres of agricultural land, ostensibly to protect the land. The CRP had been created in the wake of the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s, when billions of pounds of rich U.S. soil were swept across the country and into the sea–lost forever. As the crops dried up, the ground shriveled up and U.S. agriculture went belly up, the devastation provided a somber reminder that man certainly can push the land beyond the boundaries of its natural generosity.

Unfortunately, for many years, the reality of the CRP prior to the Clinton Administration was as a primary lever by which Government kept a firm hand on agricultural supply and demand. For decades, the programs had been used as a means of manipulating the farm economy, rather than protecting the Nation's natural resources. When commodity prices were low, more land went into the CRP and supply came back down, boosting prices. When commodity prices rose, more land would be released from the reserve, and prices would come back down.

This approach defied the central, unifying premise of the 1996 Act–a greater market orientation for U.S. agriculture–and it robbed taxpayers of many of the benefits of what their conservation dollars should return to them in healther air and water, and abundant fertile soil and wildlife. The Clinton Administration's strong stand in 1996 Farm Bill debate established the program as a true conservation program. From that day forward, the program would only be used to idle the most sensitive land–from fragile farm acres whose agricultural capacity was threatened to strips of land along streams that could help reduce farm runoff if planted with grass buffers. The new program paid farmers per acre to idle their land. It also helped finance the conservation practices, such as grass buffers, that would help the land return the most environmental dividends to the country.

While most acres entered into the CRP were competitively bid, giving USDA conservation staff the opportunity to select land that would give taxpayers the "biggest bang for their conservation buck," a continuous signup program also was established that allowed landowners to automatically enroll at any time certain categories of the most environmentally sensitive land. This revitalization of the CRP is widely considered to have prevented the annual loss of 1 billion tons of America's soil to erosion.

As the farm economy worsened in the years to come (fulfilling President Clinton's prediction that the 1996 Act's popularity would be short-lived), immense pressure was put on the Administration to revert the CRP to its historic role of controlling agricultural supply and demand. While Secretary Glickman permitted some grazing on heartier acres to help ranchers stricken by drought, the Administration held firm–if Congress wanted to aid the farm economy, then they should address the Administration's demand that they stitch a real farm safety net; they should not seek to abuse a conservation program to tinker with the marketplace. There was tremendous pressure to give in. But the Administration recognized its long-term responsibility to ensure a strong, productive agriculture and a healthy environment for generations to come.

A Galaxy of New Programs

Another vital creation of the 1996 effort was the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program consolidated four existing programs into one effort to provide cost-share assistance to farmers and ranchers who need help in protecting soil, water, and other vital natural resources. EQIP also was the first USDA conservation program to offer assistance to ranchers who wanted to do their part for a healthy environment. As such, the program became a major tool in the Administration's clean water efforts by giving ranchers the resources they needed to protect local waterways from agricultural runoff. With funding authorized at $200 million annually, EQIP is the Department's largest conservation program targeted to those who want to conserve and improve land while it *remains* in agricultural production. A full 50 percent of the program's funds are dedicated to conservation efforts carried out by livestock operations.

The Farmland Protection Program also fulfilled the Administration's commitment to protecting farmland from development. In the 1990s, it was estimated that the Nation lost 50 acres of farmland to development every hour. The Farmland Protection Program was the first Federal effort to address the growing encroachment on America's agricultural land of suburbs, strip malls and other development. The program provided up to $35 million annually to establish long-term easements--essentially a generous payment to farmers in exchange for a guarantee that their land will be used only for agricultural or conservation purposes.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program also was created in 1996. This was the first USDA program devoted solely to aiding private landowners in their efforts to provide critical habitat to wildlife on their property. This voluntary program provides both technical assistance and cost-share payments to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. The program provided more than $50 million to landowners during the Clinton-Gore years, growing to encompass 86,000 agreements to create habitat on 1.3 million acres of private land. Approximately 15 percent of the agreements benefit threatened and endangered species. In order to reach as many critical acres as possible for this vital purpose, the program is not limited to agricultural producers. Instead, it is available to a wider range of landowners than other Department conservation programs.

Other initiatives also were introduced: the National Natural Resources Conservation Foundation was established as a nonprofit corporation to fund research, education, and demonstration

projects related to conservation; membership in USDA State committees that provide guidance on technical standards for Department conservation programs also was broadened to include agricultural producers and others knowledgeable about conservation.

The Administration also dramatically expanded the Nation's Wetlands Reserve Program, which offers landowners financial resources and technical help in protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetlands on their property. Under the Clinton-Gore Administration, the program grew from a small pilot effort with only 50,000 acres enrolled to a nationwide program protecting nearly 1 million acres of wetlands. While the original pilot effort was a half-hearted "walk-away" process where drainage ditches were simply filled in and left alone, the current program supports extensive wetland restoration to enhance the quality of these vital habitats. The Administration also broadened the definition of wetlands to include not only cropland and pastureland, but also rangeland, native pastureland, other land used to support livestock production, and tree farms, making more sensitive acres eligible for assistance. Under the program, landowners have the choice of either permanent or 30-year easements, or restoration-only cost-share agreements.

While the CRP helped reduce soil erosion, protect air and water quality, and nurture wildlife habitat across public lands, the Administration also wanted the ability to enhance the program in order to develop a concerted effort to address some of the Nation's most significant environmental challenges. From this desire came the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CREP boosts the financial incentives of the regular program, providing even stronger encouragement for landowners to participate in locally led conservation efforts in priority areas with significant clean water and other challenges where farmers' conservation efforts could have a major impact.

One notable CREP effort involved farmers in upstate New York working together to reduce farm runoff that threatened the downstream drinking water supply of millions of residents in New York City. Thanks to these efforts, the city was able to avoid the necessity of purchasing a $60-million water filtration plant. Another CREP effort brought together the States of Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania in an effort to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its connected waterways. As a result of these efforts, nearly 60 percent of the bay's shoreline is now buffered, reducing runoff and improving water quality and wildlife habitat. Thirteen States enrolled in the CREP during the Clinton-Gore years, receiving strong Federal assistance for their conservation efforts.

National Conservation Buffer Initiative

The evolution of the Nation's conservation programs in 1996 paved the way for an ambitious new Clinton-Gore effort–a national conservation buffer initiative. The Clinton Administration understood that grass and other vegetative buffers, when planted along the Nation's waterways, could prevent as much as 80 percent of farm runoff from ever reaching the Nation's rivers and streams. To take advantage of this simple but effective approach to protect water quality, the Administration launched a massive campaign to encourage the installation of conservation buffers across the country to transform the health of America's waterways. The campaign

involved nearly 100 partners, including State conservation agencies, conservation districts, agribusiness, and agricultural and environmental organizations. By 2000, landowners had installed nearly 1 million miles of conservation buffers, thanks in no small part to USDA technical assistance, cost-share programs, and other conservation programs that were reinvigorated by the Clinton Administration.

For example, buffers installed along Mill Creek, in Pennsylvania, are good for the local trout population, but they also improve the health and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay, since Mill Creek flows to the Susquehanna River which connects to the bay.

Carbon Sequestration

The Clinton Administration's efforts to increase enrollment of land into conservation practices, over the long term, will be a major contributor in helping reduce the threat of global warming. Vice President Gore's book *Earth In The Balance* drew attention to the role "greenhouse" gases play in global climate change and called for action on a world scale to reverse its effects.

As a natural part of the Earth's atmosphere, greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, trap heat in the same way that glass does in a greenhouse. Without them, the Earth would be too cold for agriculture and for human life. Unfortunately, these gases are increasing in the atmosphere due to the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities, such as manufacturing chemicals, raising cattle, and clearing land. The accumulation of these gases in the atmosphere is likely to cause changes in temperature, rain, snowfall, and other aspects of the climate. In 1995, a group of 2,000 of the world's leading scientists concluded that "the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate." Computer models indicate that future warming will be faster and greater in the decades to come.

USDA soil scientists have been global leaders in understanding the role of soils in taking carbon out of the atmosphere and sequestering it in the soil. Agriculture produces substantial amounts of two greenhouse gases, methane and nitrous oxide, and minor amounts of carbon dioxide. Many conservation practices can produce a variety of benefits to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Clean Water Action Plan

While proud of the progress of the Clean Water Act in the 1970s, President Clinton and Vice President Gore understood that it was time in the 1990s to build on this landmark environmental legislation with new efforts to address new challenges. As a result, it created The Clean Water Action Plan. Announced by President Clinton and Vice President Gore on February 19, 1998, the plan worked to protect and restore the health of the Nation's waterways by providing States, communities, farmers, and landowners with the tools and resources they need to achieve their clean water goals. The plan emphasized collaborative strategies built around watersheds and the local communities they sustain. USDA's role in this effort was prominent because farmers and ranchers control so much of the Nation's private lands and can have a major impact on water quality. Sound environmental practices on the farm were pivotal to the success of this endeavor.

As a part of his Clean Water Action Plan, President Clinton proposed funding levels that would ensure that every farmer and rancher had access to the financial and technical help they needed to do their part for clean water. President Clinton's USDA also placed a strong emphasis on cutting-edge research that could make it easier for farmers to produce the Nation's food in an environmentally sensitive manner. One especially significant breakthrough involved scientists at USDA's Agricultural Research Service who discovered a new corn variety that protects water quality and farm income. As Secretary Glickman colorfully described the advance in Maryland in 1998, "when this corn is fed to chickens and pigs, about 50 percent less phosphorous comes out the other end." For farmers, the benefit of this new corn was more than simply environmental. Since the phosphorous in this corn is readily absorbed by animals, it reduces the need for costly dietary supplements–helping farmers do their part for clean water and benefit financially for their effort, as well.

Specific components of USDA's leadership in the President's Clean Water Action Plan include:

Animal Feeding Operations

Animal feeding operations figured prominently in the President's Clean Water Action Plan. As agriculture continued its determined trend toward fewer and larger operations, economies of scale led to great concentration in the livestock sector, as well. As a result, today there are fewer livestock farms, but these operations include massive numbers of animals. In 1988, hog farms with more than 50,000 heads made up about 7 percent of the market. A decade later, large hog farms took up 35 percent of the market and oftentimes produces as much waste as an entire city. Further complicating the matter was the concentration of these large farms in regions of the country where local environmental regulations were most lenient. As the Administration prepared to enact strong national standards to protect nearby waterways, it made an equally strong commitment–through its raft of conservation programs–to give producers the resources they needed to run more environmentally responsible operations.

Minimizing threats to water quality and public health caused by animal feeding operations, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of livestock production, was a major priority for the Clinton Administration. In partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency and various stakeholders, USDA developed a Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations that included a national expectation that all animal feeding operations would put in place comprehensive nutrient management plans by the year 2008. These plans address manure handling and storage, application of manure to the land, record keeping, feed management, land management, and other strategies. While the focus of this strategy is voluntary and will affect 95 percent of the Nation's 450,000 animal feeding operations, it also will contain proposals to improve existing regulations in order to more adequately protect the Nation's waterways.

Stream Corridor Restoration

With more than 3.5 million miles of rivers and streams, communities across the Nation are becoming more aware of the need to address clean water issues. Stream corridors are complex ecosystems that provide a variety of benefits, from removing harmful materials from water to providing habitat for plants and animals. As part of the President's Clean Water Action Plan, USDA helped develop "Stream Corridor Restoration: Principles, Processes, and Practices," a

guide that pools the expertise and resources of 15 Federal agencies with clean water responsibilities. This resource provides a solid foundation for local communities to restore streams in their own backyard.

Unified Watershed Assessments

In partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency, President Clinton's USDA worked closely with State and local entities to help them assess the health of their watersheds and identify those in need of attention. The Administration also made a particular effort to reach out to Tribal authorities to include Tribal lands in this critical effort, as well. The critical watersheds identified in turn received priority for funding under the Clean Water Action Plan, realizing a central tenet of the plan's strategy–targeting resources to the most critical efforts.

Conservation Beyond the Farm

In addition to the Urban Resources Partnership, described in the forestry portion of this chapter, Secretary Glickman also promoted urban gardening and backyard conservation initiatives to enhance urban and suburban America's understanding that everyone has a role to play in helping protect the environment and nurture the Nation's natural resources. Through USDA's backyard conservation campaign, the Department worked to educate homeowners about ways they can promote a healthy environment at home–from planting native grasses, to reducing their use of chemicals and pesticides, to installing bird baths and other habitat-friendly environs.

Expanding conservation assistance to landowners in urban and suburban settings offers a tremendous return on investment to the Nation's environment. Educating people about their actions, from washing the car with the right type of soap to applying fertilizer responsibly, can make a huge difference in reversing the dangerous trend of nonpoint source pollution. Educating city planners about how to build a more "green" city, from more tree plantings to strategies to reduce storm water runoff also are critical to improved air and water quality.

National Conservation Summit to Focus on Private Land

One of the major challenges of the 21st Century will be to help farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners conserve and protect our Nation's valuable private land. The loss of prime agricultural land to development, the health of our watersheds, and the future of private forestlands are some of the critical issues facing the Nation. Seventy percent of the land in the United States is private land, and what happens to that land is crucial to our Nation's economic and environmental well being. To meet this challenge, Secretary Glickman held a day-long National Summit on Private Land Conservation on December 7, 1999, at the Iowa State University Memorial Union in Ames, Iowa, to take a new look at conservation and forestry issues facing the Nation's private lands and to help spur a public-private dialogue to identify the key conservation issues we face in the new millennium and to begin the search for solutions to these challenges.

The summit activities included a panel of elected officials, conservation leaders, and others who identified the critical conservation issues on private land, as well as individuals representing a

cross-section of interests, including private foundations, major corporations, and agricultural and environmental groups addressing potential solutions to the critical conservation issues.

In recent years, USDA has expanded its conservation efforts beyond curbing soil erosion to include farmland protection, improving water quality, restoring wetlands, protecting soil productivity, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, and promoting conservation in the nation's cities and communities.

Promoting Sustainable Development[1]

Without a doubt, the Clinton Administration's historic commitment to sustainable agriculture was central to a larger goal–promoting sustainable development and a sustainable future–for Americans and people around the world. In 1992, the United States joined more than 100 nations for an Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. There, the United States signed a number of sweeping international agreements to promote more sustainable development in the 21st century. To follow through on these commitments, President Clinton established the President's Council on Sustainable Development. This 25-member Council included representatives from Government, business and industry, environmental and other groups. USDA Deputy Secretary Rominger was an active leader on the Council, serving as cochair of the Council's Task Force on Sustainable Agriculture.

One key change Rominger helped bring about was the creation of a USDA Director of Sustainable Development in 1995. With this move, the Department became the first Federal agency to create a position with a sole responsibility for promoting the principles of sustainable development in all aspects of USDA's work. Rather than creating a new Government bureaucracy, this USDA strategy focused on coordination among all Department agencies to see the principles of sustainability reflected throughout the Department. One example of a tangible outcome was the Sustainable Agriculture Learning Initiative, which helped promote understanding of sustainable agriculture practices among both farm lenders and producers. This effort took aim at what many consider the biggest barrier to the adoption of new, more environmentally friendly agricultural practices–the frequent lack of availability of adequate credit and crop insurance for farmers who adopt "nontraditional" farming practices that promote environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

By entering into a historic new partnership with farmers, ranchers, and other landowners across the country, the Clinton Administration laid the groundwork for improved quality of life, environmental health and livability in the Nation's 21st century communities. From the mountain tops to the cities, this Administration took tremendous strides in protecting America's resources and improving the way Government works to encourage conservation and environmental health–by promoting a partnership approach that delivered billions of dollars in resources to help farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners to perform the stewardship tasks asked of them. With these strong investments, the Nation made clear that clean water and air, abundant wildlife

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[1]For a detailed discussion of this effort, please see the paper in the appendix to this chapter entitled "Promoting Sustainable Development," that was prepared by USDA's Director of Sustainable Development during the Clinton-Gore years, Adela Backiel.

habitat and productive soil are "commodities" every bit as critical as corn, wheat, and cattle. As a result, the Clinton Administration helped close the gap between the interests of a strong, competitive U.S. agriculture and a healthy, sustainable environment, instilling in Government programs the country's belief that a strong Nation needs and deserves both.

Part II. A Nation Reclaims Its Forests

Valuing Environmental Protection

"As a boy, I learned by walking the Ozark and Quachita National Forests of my home State that national forests are more than a source of timber, they are places of renewal of the human spirit and our natural environment . . . . Even as we strengthen protections, the majority of our forests will continue to be responsibly managed for sustainable timber production and other activities. We are, once again, determined to prove that environmental protection and economic growth can, and must, go hand in hand."

President Clinton
Speaking in the George Washington National Forest
October 13, 1999

"This Administration understands that we are reaching a point in the growth of our Nation where we are pressing up against our final ecological frontiers. As we do, I think most Americans are coming to a shared realization that we need to protect our remaining open spaces because they are a treasure unique in the world. In short, we are concluding that some frontiers are not meant to be conquered."

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman
Announcing an Interim Ban on New Forest Road Construction
February 11, 1999

During the Clinton years, no story is quite as compelling as that of the efforts that were undertaken to return the U.S. Forest Service to its conservation roots. Upon entering office in 1993, the Clinton Administration faced a difficult challenge. Timber harvests from Federal forests had risen sharply during the preceding Reagan and Bush administrations, and conflicts between timber production and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation use, and other noncommodity values of the forests had grown. It was in this environment that a systematic effort was made to refocus the agency on its land stewardship role, to fundamentally change its management focus from the production of commodities to the restoration and maintenance of forests for a broader array of multiple uses.

The challenge was substantial. There is no question that reforming the Forest Service came at a very high cost personally and professionally to many of the dedicated people involved. In Washington DC, real change rarely comes easy, especially where Western public land issues and agencies are involved. The agency's culture and recent history also acted as strong impediments to efforts to reform its management and focus. However, President Clinton's USDA did succeed in achieving this fundamental shift in the agency, brought about by changes in leadership, philosophy, legislation and regulations, programs and policies, all geared toward the protection of unique natural resources, the restoration of damaged landscapes, greater public involvement in management and decisionmaking, and the stewardship of watersheds and natural resources.

The Early Years: Taking the Reins

Since the 1970s, the management of Federal forests in the Pacific Northwest was controversial. During the Reagan-Bush years, the decades of heavy logging in the Pacific Northwest started taking its toll on the old growth environment and people blamed the Forest Service. By 1990, environmental groups had won in court claims regarding the Forest Service's protection of sensitive old growth wildlife, such as the northern spotted owl in its design and sale of timber. The courts ordered the forests shut down to timber harvesting in three separate injunctions until the Forest Service met its legal requirements. By 1992, there were more than a dozen lawsuits and three court injunctions involving the northern spotted owl, the marbled murrelet, and timber harvest in old-growth forest. As a result, the forests were essentially in court receivership.

The reaction by the Bush administration was to call on Congress to change the environmental laws to allow the Forest Service to continue harvesting 12 billion board feet a year. By 1992, the Pacific Northwest, after 2 years of litigation and injunction, was ready for leadership and resolution of the gridlock that had taken hold in the region. In walked Governor Clinton. As a candidate for the presidency, he announced his intentions, if elected, to bring the parties together and work out a solution that balanced economic and environmental interests for the long run. President Clinton kept his promise by convening a forest conference in Portland, Oregon. Afterwards, the President directed his cabinet to craft, within 60 days, a long-term policy for the management of more than 24 million acres of public land administered by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

To get the job done, the President relied on a few people, including Jim Lyons–soon to be USDA's Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. Lyons came from Capitol Hill, where he had worked on environmental and forestry issues for the House Agriculture Committee. Another person whom the President trusted was Katie McGinty, a former aide to Vice President Gore when he was a Senator. Katie was quickly nominated to be the White House's Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. The other prominent participant was Tom Tuchmann, who worked on the Senate Agriculture Committee. Tuchmann later moved to Portland to oversee the plan.

In directing his fledgling administration to prepare this plan, President Clinton outlined five principles: (1) adhering to the Nation's environmental laws, (2) protecting and enhancing the environment using sound science, (3) providing a sustainable timber economy, (4) supporting people and communities in economic transition, and (5) ensuring that Federal agencies work together.

A team was assembled, under the leadership of Jack Ward Thomas, then a senior researcher in the Forest Service, to take on this herculian task. Under Thomas's leadership, with remarkable speed and dedication, a team of scientists constructed a strategy which ultimately satisfied the Ninth Circuit Court and created the framework for future strategies across the Western United States. A new way of doing business had been invented, and the concept of ecosystem management was firmly established in policy and law, as the model for managing forested ecosystems.

Leadership Changes

After years of controversy surrounding national forest management, the Forest Service was demoralized due to the deep public suspicion of agency motives. The Clinton Administration wanted new leadership to take the agency back to its conservation roots. Under Secretary Jim Lyons convinced Jack Ward Thomas, who had been a Forest Service wildlife researcher for his entire career, to lead the agency. Thomas' contributions to the President's Northwest Forest Plan, made him a logical choice.

But efforts to make Thomas chief were stymied by traditional agency forces that resisted his promotion. Being thwarted by personnel policies and politics, Lyons went to the White House to secure their support for conversion of the Chief's position to a political appointment, in order to allow Thomas to become chief. The effort was successful, and the move was extraordinarily controversial within the Forest Service. The thinking of some in the agency was that as long as they produced enough board feet of timber for the mills, no one would bother them. But the Forest Service was in for a change.

Chief Thomas moved quickly to implement an ecosystem-based approach to managing all national forests. Unfortunately, Thomas' efforts were severely undermined by those within the agency who were loyal to the old system of managing by forest rather than by ecosystem. Each forest supervisor wanted to act independently. Most fought the idea of basing management choices on a broad set of standards that were based on protecting ecosystems, a concept supported by the science community. Each wanted his or her own "feifdom" to rule. To communicate this message, more than 50 supervisors signed a letter opposing Thomas' appointment. Instead of replacing these agency leaders, Thomas attempted to work with them. Nevertheless, his efforts were continually thwarted. As tensions grew between the agency opponents of change and Administration proponents, Thomas elected to step down.

In the 1995 salvage rider debate, the Forest Service responded effectively to an agenda set by Congress. But the debate showed that the agency needed to set its own agenda for natural

resource conservation. In 1997, Secretary Glickman called on Mike Dombeck, then-Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management, to serve as Forest Service Chief. Dombeck created a long-term vision for improving the health of the land through a natural resource agenda focusing on healthy watersheds; sustainable forest ecosystems; dispersed recreation opportunities for all Americans; and a sound system of forest roads, including special protections for roadless areas. By carrying through with these promises, Dombeck helped restore confidence in the Forest Service as a conservation leader.

The Natural Resource Agenda

Not long after his appointment, Chief Dombeck received a letter from Republican leaders in Congress threatening to fund the Forest Service at a diminished, "custodial" level because the agency was allegedly not producing commodities commensurate with its level of funding at the time. In short, it wasn't cutting enough trees. The letter reflected widespread concern in Congress, the public, and even the agency itself that the Forest Service had lost sight of its mission.

During a hearing held by the House Agriculture Committee over the future of the Forest Service, Secretary Dan Glickman told the Committee that the agency had been diverted by previous administrations to focusing on harvesting timber as its primary purpose. After all of the resulting legal and public relations catastrophes, the Forest Service and its mission were adrift. President Clinton's new Chief vowed a change. Dombeck said, "We have two very basic choices, we can sit back on our heels and react to the newest litigation, the latest court order, or the most recent legislative proposal that would ensure that we continue to be buffeted by social, political, and budgetary changes. Or we can lead by example. We can lead by using the best available scientific information based on principles of ecosystem management...to advance a new agenda – an agenda with a most basic and essential focus—caring for the land and serving people."

Formulated in 1997 by Chief Dombeck and Jim Lyons, with major input from Brooks Preston, special assistant to Lyons; Anne Keys, special assistant to Secretary Glickman; Chris Wood, special assistant to Chief Dombeck; and the Council on Environmental Quality, the Forest Service's Natural Resource Agenda was born. The agenda included four focal areas. Each was chosen as a basis for consensus among the contending parties. Each also reflected the Clinton-Gore vision of a broader valuation of the Nation's forests that extended far beyond the dollar value of their board feet of timber:

- **Watershed Health:** The National Forest System was founded in part "for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows."[2] By 2000, watersheds in the national forests supplied about 60 million Americans with their drinking water. Moreover, Forest Service research had shown that healthy watersheds were the foundation for sustainable forest and grassland ecosystems.

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[2]Organic Act of 1987.

- **Sustainability:** The Administration considered managing natural resources for the long run as key to conserving the health of the land.
- **Recreation:** Long before the 1990s, recreation had become the dominant use of the national forests, vastly eclipsing timber harvests and mining. Furnishing all Americans with a variety of recreation opportunities while protecting the wildland values that support a bustling tourism trade was a key priority of the Clinton administration.
- **Forest Roads Repair:** Sustainable forest management and recreation both depended on a sound system of forest roads. But the forest road system was in growing disrepair, vastly underfunded for proper maintenance. As a result, the Clinton Administration pursued sound roads management, which included protections for remaining roadless areas.

The Natural Resource Agenda became the basis for a series of Forest Service initiatives, some involving partnerships across ownership boundaries, others entailing the most extensive public consultations in Forest Service history. Initiatives included large-scale watershed restoration projects and new rules for roads management and roadless area conservation.

By 2000, there were signs of growing public confidence in the agency. Favorable reports again outweighed negative stories in the media. Contentious debates had all but ceased in Congress over levels of timber harvest and appropriations for forest roads. In 2000, in a striking vote of confidence, Congress raised the Forest Service's annual budget from $2.9 billion to $4.4 billion, a 47-percent increase and the largest in agency history. Thanks in good measure to the Natural Resource Agenda, the Forest Service was back in control of its own destiny.

Ecosystem Management: A More Holistic Approach to Forestry

In drafting the Northwest Forest Plan, the Administration created the prototype of a region-wide management plan that came to be known as ecosystem management. Ecosystem management acknowledges that forests are complex networks of biological systems and that people and water are integral parts of those systems. The Plan was the first-ever attempt to apply the concept on a region-wide basis. In releasing the Plan from litigation in 1994, Judge William Dwyer acknowledged the wisdom of this approach in his decision, which read, "Given the current condition of the forests, there is no way the agencies could comply with the environmental laws without planning on an ecosystem basis."

Using cutting-edge science and strong interagency cooperation, the Plan brought balanced, long-term management to public forests in western Washington, western Oregon, and northern California. The Plan protected old-growth trees across the region. The strategy included environmental protection and restoration activities, as well as commercial timber harvest. Ongoing monitoring helped determine the plan's effectiveness in promoting habitat for northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets, protecting and restoring watersheds, and promoting a sustainable level of goods and services from Federal forests.

The Northwest Forest Plan, signed in 1994, ended the litigation that had gripped the region for nearly four years. The Plan represented the first time that all the Federal agencies with a stake in

these issues developed a common management approach for an entire ecological region.

Another critical component of the plan was its economic transition assistance to help timber-dependent communities diversify into other commercial activities. More than $1.2 billion was invested to help Pacific Northwest communities become less dependent on Federal timber sales.

Protecting the Interior Columbia Basin

After completing the Northwest Forest Plan, the Clinton Administration focused on Federal lands in the eastern portion of the Pacific Northwest. In July 1993, President Clinton directed the Forest Service to "develop a scientifically sound and ecosystem-based strategy for management of eastside forests." In response, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management initiated the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. Other major partners included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Environmental Protection Agency. The Project provided a long-term strategy for managing public lands on a landscape level, addressing forest and grassland health, fish and wildlife habitat, and regional social and economic issues. The management strategy will apply to 64 million acres of Federal lands in eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and western Montana.

The final strategy promotes the restoration and protection of Federal lands in the Interior Columbia River Basin. The strategy will involve activities such as reintroducing fire to the ecosystem, reducing the spread of noxious weeds, restoring and eliminating roads, and thinning unhealthy and diseased forests. The strategy will also protect environmentally sensitive areas such as old forests, streams, and watersheds to improve the health of these public lands, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and provide the public with a sustainable level of goods and services.

The project marked the first comprehensive, landscape-level scientific assessment of its size in the United States. It was the first major Federal resource management planning process to include, from the beginning, a multi-State coalition of counties. It prepared a sub-basin review guide to help users consistently apply the project's broad scientific findings and decisions to smaller areas. The project partners learned to collaborate at the regional level by developing management tools helpful to field personnel. In many ways, the project paved the way for similar initiatives nationwide.

Building a Healthy Future for Sierra Nevada

Soon after the Clinton Administration arrived in 1993, the Forest Service listed the California Spotted Owl as a species of concern and started to prepare a strategy to help protect it. Upon his arrival at USDA, Secretary Glickman created an advisory council to advise him on ways that the owl strategy could be enhanced. The recommendation? The owl strategy missed the forest for the trees–failing to address other species' needs, or the health of the ecosystem that supported all life in the area. Soon after, the Sierra Neveda Framework strategy for Conservation and Collaboration was created.

Even before the framework process began, the Forest Service invited the public to participate in

formulating the proposal. In all, the Forest Service held over 120 public meetings and gathered comments from some 12,000 individuals. Another 38,000 signatures arrived on petitions and postcards.

The draft environmental impact statement addressed five problem areas: old forest ecosystems; aquatic, riparian, and meadow ecosystems; fire and fuels management; noxious weeds; and lower westside hardwood ecosystems. The statement also considered access and recreation opportunities, subregional differences, and socioeconomic impacts on communities.

The most difficult task was developing an effective conservation strategy for old forests and associated wildlife species while at the same time reducing risks of wildfires. Ultimately, the regional forester's decision–due in December 2000–will involve balancing risks and managing uncertainties.

Preserving the Unique Landscape of the Southwest

The Southwestern States of Arizona and New Mexico have unique cultures and ecosystems, partly due to the region's special climate. In the 1990s, Federal agencies in the region recognized the need for amore holistic--landscape-level, ecosystem-based--approach to protect this unique landscape.

In November 1997, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, together with the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Environmental Security), directed their respective land management agencies to develop an interagency strategy for conserving the values unique to the Southwest. The Southwest Strategy was designed to maintain and restore the region's cultural, economic, and environmental quality of life in a manner that was collaborative, scientifically based, legally defensible, and do-able.

A regional executive committee, with representatives from Federal agencies and the States and Tribes, was formed to implement the Southwest Strategy. The committee chartered issue-based work groups to help resolve issues of concern. For example, a priority for the Scientific Information Work Group was to list research and monitoring needs for the Southwest that were not being addressed. So far, the strategy seems to be working; however, the region may need a more comprehensive approach similar to that of strategies noted above. Litigation against the Forest Service seems to be crippling its efforts to conduct the type of work–such as monitoring, research, and restoration--needed to meet environmental laws.

Tongass Timber Mills Close

Established in 1917, the Tongass National Forest covers some 17 million acres, making it the largest unit in the National Forest System. Its borders include about 85 percent of southeastern Alaska, a region 500 miles long and 100 miles wide. After World War II, the Government vigorously promoted wood-pulping facilities in southeastern Alaska to utilize the vast wood supply and to provide stable, year-round employment. In 1951, the Forest Service awarded a 50-year contract for some 8.5 billion board feet of Tongass timber to a company operating a pulp

mill in Ketchikan, AK. In 1957, the Alaska Lumber and Pulp Company signed a similar deal for operating a pulp mill in Sitka, AK. In 1980, Congress bolstered the timber supply through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), directing the Secretary of Agriculture to offer 4.5 billion board feet of Tongass timber per decade.

But Alaskan pulp companies steadily lost market share in the Pacific Rim. From 1980 to 1987, the Forest Service prepared and offered an annual average of 467 million board feet of Tongass timber, whereas the volume sold and harvested averaged only 280 million board feet. The disparity precipitated the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990, repealing the ANILCA provision. In 1993, the Alaska Pulp Corporation permanently closed its mill in Sitka. On October 31, 2000, the Ketchikan mill followed suit, terminating its long-term contract, as well. Although the Forest Service continued to support a stable timber program, the agency could now manage the Tongass National Forest just like the rest of the National Forest System for the long-term health of the land.

By the 1990s, a new forest plan for the Tongass National Forest was long overdue. The existing plan dated from 1979 and called for an annual timber sale level of 520 million board feet to feed the two large pulp mills in Sitka and Ketchikan, AK. Moreover, it contained only minimal protections for wildlife habitat.

In 1991, scientists warned that unless the pace of logging was slowed, at least nine wildlife species, including the brown bear, the Queen Charlotte goshawk, and the Alexander Archipelago wolf, could disappear from the Tongass National Forest. The scientists recommended establishing large old-growth reserves to maintain habitat blocks for wildlife.

With the Sitka and Ketchikan mills closed, Forest Service planning in the region was no longer driven by meeting the volume requirements of long-term contracts with timber companies. In 1997, after repeated revisions to strengthen its scientific foundations, the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan was signed. After the Forest Service made modifications, primarily to reduce the annual timber sales and to protect old growth trees, Under Secretary Lyons finalized the plan in 1999.

In the final plan, the annual allowable sale of 187 million board feet provided a sound commercial basis for Alaska's timber-dependent communities. In 42 separate wildlife areas scattered throughout the forest, the plan established timber harvest rotations of 200 years, with 234,000 acres of old growth permanently shielded from harvest. The plan ensured the long-term health of the land by protecting old growth, headwater areas, stream and beach buffers, caves and karst, and habitat for species viability.

These actions have been extremely controversial. In 1995, one of the reasons for the infamous Government shut down by Congress was a heated dispute over the Tongass Land Management Plan. Senators Stevens and Murkowski insisted that the President enact a level of timber harvesting that the Administration believed would do catastrophic damage. This was a key

reason President Clinton vetoed the bill. As noted previously, Jim Lyons suffered major attacks from the Alaska delegation. In addition, the Tongass issue almost cost Secretary Glickman his job. His confirmation was temporarily hung up because, as a congressman, Glickman had supported the Tongass Timber Reform Act as well as attempts to cancel the long-term timber contracts. Out of all of the issues, Tongass issues were the most controversial. In the end, the Administration put the Tongass on a sustainable road to recovery, but it wasn't easy.

Planning a Sustainable Future for America's Forests

In another dramatic departure from the past, the Administration unveiled new regulations that will guide management of the national forests and grasslands well into the 21st century. These regulations reflect the Clinton Administration's broader vision of all the values of the Nation's forests.

In hearings on the proposal, Dr. Art Cooper, who led a team of scientists that drafted the original regulations in 1982, endorsed the new approach. "Sustainability is not a new idea for forestry," he said. "However, in the past sustainability for forestry was almost always interpreted in terms of a sustained flow of commodities, primarily timber. The new view of sustainability ... expands the concept to include all the benefits and values of the forest, including wildlife and fish, biotic diversity, recreation, landscape protection, and aesthetics. Under the new sustainability all of these properties of the forest are of value, and it becomes essential that all continue to be available for the benefit of future generations."

The Forest Service is required by law to maintain sound regulations for national forest management planning. The existing planning rule was adopted in 1982. By the 1990s, the public was demanding more involvement in policy planning, and new ecological insights were revolutionizing natural resource management. In other words, a planning rule revision was long overdue.

For more than 10 years, the Forest Service worked on revising the rule. Secretary Glickman appointed a group of eminent specialists to evaluate the existing rule. Based on the committee's report, the Forest Service released a proposed rule in October 1999. The final rule affirmed ecological, social, and economic sustainability as the overall goal for managing the national forests. Maintaining and restoring ecological sustainability was confirmed as the highest priority. In the spirit of Gifford Pinchot, the first Forest Service Chief, the rule also facilitated greater public collaboration. "National Forests are made for and owned by the people," wrote Pinchot in the first Forest Service manual in 1907. "They should also be managed by the people." The Clinton Administration returned the Forest Service to its roots.

The final rule also placed greater emphasis on the use of science in planning. The rule emphasized monitoring of resource conditions and trends over time so management can adapt to changing conditions. It also called for the creation of scientific advisory boards to update planners on the latest information and analyses. The rule also affirmed the Forest Service's commitment to the viability of all species.

Through its commitment to planning on an ecosystem basis, the new rule represented a fundamental change in philosophy. It broke with past bureaucratic models to help public land managers work more closely with the American people to sustain the health, biological diversity, and productivity of the Nation's lands and waters. Completion of the new rule was a major milestone for the Clinton Administration. This rule received little public attention, but it will affect national forests for decades.

Protecting America's Special Places

A More Rational Approach to Roads

The 1995 salvage rider controversy highlighted a lingering problem: the lack of special protections for roadless areas on national forest lands. Following passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, the Forest Service began inventorying pristine forest areas for possible designation by Congress as protected wilderness. Many of these areas were protected. By 1998, remaining inventoried roadless areas covered some 58.5 million acres, or about 31 percent of the National Forest System.

Roadless areas provide values unique to a tiny and dwindling portion of our increasingly developed American landscape. They are a biological refuge for native plant and animal species and a bulwark against the spread of non-native invasive species. As a baseline for natural habitats and ecosystems, roadless areas offer rare opportunities for study, research, and education. In addition, they provide unique opportunities for dispersed recreation, clean drinking water, and large undisturbed landscapes that offer privacy and seclusion.

Congress annually debated the Forest Service's roads budget. With every year, there was a growing recognition within Congress that the agency's roadbuilding force was literally out of control. Over the last 50 years, it had allowed 386,000 miles of roads in our national forests. One could go around the world 15 or 16 times with this number of miles. Worse yet, the existing roads were in complete disrepair, causing widespread water quality, wildlife habitat, and human safety problems. Yet the Forest Service kept building into pristine areas to access virgin timber.

In early 1999, Secretary Glickman announced an 18-month temporary halt to road building into roadless areas until a roads management strategy was created. In making the announcement, Secretary Glickman explained the stakes and the Administration's viewpoint this way, "it is fairly easy to fell a 100-year-old tree or carve a road into the side of a mountain. The harder, more disciplined approach is to refrain." But in keeping with the Administration's commitment to allow greater public involvement in the management of the Nation's forests, the temporary ban was a move to "test the waters" with the public. As expected, the public overwhelmingly wanted more long-term protection of the last pristine acres of national forest and a strategy to deal responsibly with existing roads in disrepair.

On October 13, 1999, President Clinton formally unveiled his vision for the long-term protection of America's last untouched forests while visiting Virginia's George Washington National Forest. There, he directed the Forest Service to undertake an open, public process to provide long-term protection for these special places. In making the announcement, Clinton said, "these pristine areas are some of the last wild places in America. I am firmly committed to preserving them for future generations."

Six days later, the Forest Service proposed to immediately restrict certain activities in roadless areas, such as road construction, and to develop procedures to guide roadless area management. The initial rulemaking process included 187 public meetings attended by about 16,000 people and an interactive Website that scored more than 11 million hits in its first 6 months. In all, the Forest Service's plan elicited more than 517,000 responses, an unprecedented number for any Federal rulemaking.

On May 10, 2000, the Forest Service released a proposed rule, which included a prohibition on road construction and reconstruction in all roadless areas except in the Tongass National Forest, where a decision would be made by local forest officials. The proposal also required the forests' managers to analyze roadless areas for their special characteristics.

By November, the USDA Forest Service had received 1.6 million comments from Americans interested in the proposal. At that time, the Forest Service presented Secretary Glickman with a plan to protect nearly 60 million acres of roadless areas – barring most road construction in these areas, as well as prohibiting timber harvesting except for defined stewardship purposes. "As we lose more and more open space to sprawl and development, Americans increasingly turn to our national forests to experience and enjoy our shared natural landscape," Glickman said. "Preventing road building in these areas is an essential step toward preserving and protecting these wildlands for the future."

Protecting Yellowstone National Park

In 1996, with the scenic view of Lamar Valley of Yellowstone National Park as a backdrop, President Clinton presided over the signing of an historic agreement among the Forest Service, Crown Butte Mining Company, and a coalition of environmental organizations. This agreement effectively prevented any future mining outside the northeast boundary of Yellowstone National Park. This agreement also halted years of bitter opposition to the proposed gold mining project known as the New World Mine due to the potential effects on the waters, wilderness, recreation, and wildlife in the Yellowstone area.

The President took earlier action to protect Yellowstone by withdrawing, in 1995, all National Forest Lands in the area from mining operations. This withdrawal was made permanent by Congress in 1999.

The purpose of the August 1996 Agreement was to preserve and restore the area's natural resources, resolve the bitter controversy over the environmental safety of mining in the area, and

protect Yellowstone. The President also wanted to ensure that the mining company and other private interests would receive fair compensation for these actions. Specifically, the United States agreed to pay the company $65 million. In return the mining company agreed to pay $22.5 million to correct historic mining damage to the area. The Forest Service also negotiated a conservation agreement to prevent mining on another contiguous block of highly mineralized lands that also were privately owned.

The final steps to conclude the agreements were completed in August 1998, exactly 2 years after the President's announcement. Since then the Forest Service, in cooperation with the Park Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of Montana, has led efforts to restore the area's ecosystems, clean up mines, and improve water quality, while preserving the area's rich mining history.

Protecting the "Lake in the Sky"

Lake Tahoe is one of America's most special places, a vast lake high in the Sierra Nevada mountains that is more than 1,600 feet deep and blessed with some of the clearest water on Earth. Lake Tahoe is also one of America's most beloved places. That popularity in recent decades has created special challenges to the basin's environment, including an alarming drop in the lake's legendary visibility. These environmental challenges, in turn, have significant implications for the Tahoe economy, which is forever linked to the health of the fabled "lake in the sky."

On Saturday, July 26, 1997, President Clinton and Vice President Gore traveled to Incline Village, Nevada, to host the Lake Tahoe Presidential Forum. The forum yielded many significant commitments to restore and protect the Lake Tahoe Basin for future generations. These efforts culminated in the signing of an executive order to strengthen the Federal Government's work preserving the health of the lake and its surrounding forests through a stronger partnership with the States of Nevada and California, the Washoe Tribe, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and local governments.

In the wake of the summit, President Clinton asked Secretary Glickman to lead Federal efforts to synthesize those recommendations into a long-term action plan to restore and protect the Lake Tahoe Basin. Through the end of the Administration, Federal agencies committed an average of $12 million a year to these efforts.

Together, this unique partnership took meaningful actions on a wide range of fronts, including water quality, transportation, forest management, and recreation and tourism. The people who live around Lake Tahoe have responded to these challenges with innovative solutions based on collaboration with local, State, and Federal partners. Their work provides an example for collaborative stewardship of unique natural treasures in communities across the country.

Purchase of Baca Ranch

The purchase seemed doomed to failure when Senator Domenici of New Mexico voiced concerns about the acquisition of the famous Baca Ranch in New Mexico. After a meeting in

New Mexico with Senators Domenici and Bingaman, President Clinton invited the two men to join him on Air Force One for his return flight to Washington, DC. During their flight, the President and the Senators outlined a new approach for the purchase and management of the ranch. They decided that the ranch, even though in public ownership, would be managed as a "working ranch" under a Board of Trustees. Administration Officials and the New Mexico Congressional Delegation crafted legislation from this framework and then the proposed "Valles Caldera Preservation Act."

With support from the White House and New Mexico's Congressional Members, purchase seemed assured. To the surprise and disappointment of many involved with the acquisition, the owners then withdrew their offer to sell. After approximately six months, the owners renewed the negotiations.

A unique agreement was reached between Administration officials, the Santa Clara Pueblo Indians, and the ranch owners. The Santa Clara Pueblo Tribe purchased approximately 5,000 acres of the Ranch, which adjoined their reservation and contain the headwaters of Santa Clara Creek.

On July 25, 2000, President Clinton signed into law the Valles Caldera Preservation Act, creating the Valles Caldera National Preserve. With a purchase cost of $101,000,000, this 95,000-acre property is the largest and most expensive purchase ever made by the Forest Service

Resisting Mines in the Rocky Mountains

In 1805, when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark made their historic journey of discovery, they found vast western plains teeming with bison and elk, with wolves and grizzlies roaming the edges of huge ungulate herds. Some semblance of that pristine western landscape survives at the foot of the Rocky Mountains in Montana, an area known as the Rocky Mountain Front. Much of it is protected by the Helena National Forest and the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

Mining laws dating to 1872 allowed anyone to enter a national forest or grassland and stake a 20-acre claim. The prospector was entitled to use the land's surface resources, with limitations only to prevent the worst abuses. A discovery of hardrock minerals could justify a patent for full mineral rights.

Since 1909, the Government acted to constrain free access to minerals on public lands if it conflicted with the public interest. In 1998, to protect the Rocky Mountain Front, the Clinton Administration prohibited leasing in the area for oil and gas. While completing the analysis necessary to enact this ban, 104 mining claims were staked in the area, eliciting a Forest Service decision to request a formal withdrawal from mining for hardrock minerals. The authority to grant such a request resided with Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. In 1999, Babbitt formally protected the Rocky Mountain Front from hardrock mining for 20 years, with the option of subsequent 20-year protections.

This move was necessary to preserve the area for traditional and cultural activities by American Indians, to protect threatened species, and to conserve outstanding scenic areas. The Front was home to nationally important wildlife populations, including the only remaining population of prairie-ranging grizzlies in the United States. Preservation of the area was intended to keep the ecosystem intact across the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and Glacier National Park, in accordance with the Forest Service's commitment to landscape-level, ecosystem-based natural resource management.

Salvaging Protection of the Nation's Forests

In 1994, the majority in Congress had just gone Republican and it was eager to move the Forest Service back to a timber cutting agency. By and large, leading conservatives did not support the concept of ecosystem management or the environmental laws and regulations that allowed citizens to appeal and even sue the Government to stop controversial timber sales. In their view, these approaches thwarted timber harvesting and caused economic problems in timber-dependent communities. So the new Republican-led Congress created what became commonly known as the timber salvage rider.

Equally onerous to the intent of the legislation--to force the Forest Service to permit mass timber harvests--was the method adopted to push this unsavory legislation through. Its proponents attached the rider to the most popular legislation moving through Congress, in the hopes that Members of Congress who deeply opposed the salvage rider would be forced to vote for the overall bill, regardless of the inclusion of this objectionable provision. Perhaps the most egregious example of this strategy was the Republican leaders' decision to attach the rider to a bill that provided money to Oklahoma City to recover from the disastrous bombing. It was a provision that the entire environmental movement fought hard against. But feeling the need to obtain funding for other priority concerns, the President signed legislation that included the salvage rider.

Knowing that the salvage rider threatened to undo everything he had accomplished in the Nation's forests in his first 2 years, President Clinton was particularly concerned with a provision in the salvage rider that gave it primacy over Federal environmental protection laws. President Clinton strongly believed that Federal agencies should follow the environmental laws. In fact, as the rider was being negotiated with House and Senate conferees, a special effort was made by the Administration to give the President the discretion to ultimately decide how this provision was carried out.

As a result, an interagency memorandum was negotiated that directed the agencies to follow procedures as if the environmental laws were still largely in place. The memorandum reaffirmed the agencies' commitment to comply with existing environmental laws while conducting the salvage-related activities Congress had authorized.

The salvage rider provoked a divisive national controversy. Environmental groups branded it an attempt to allow "logging without laws." The Act contained provisions prohibiting appeals by

the public and providing for sales of old-growth trees delayed by lawsuits and by new listings of threatened and endangered species. Many suspected that the real purpose of the rider was to cut old-growth timber.

Salvage sales in roadless areas also became a contentious issue. Secretary Glickman severely narrowed the scope of the legislation by directeing the Forest Service to allow salvage sales in roadless areas only where the risk of fire was high in the vicinity of homes and communities or where trees were susceptible to insect attack within 3 years. Harvest of green trees during timber salvage raised further concerns. The Forest Service directed managers to subordinate the harvest of green trees to the salvage of dead and dying trees, limiting green-tree harvest during timber salvage to areas where it was necessary for safety and to improve the health of the forest.

In testimony before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on August 1, 1996, Secretary Glickman went straight to the heart of the matter. Excluding the public from its right to consultation on managing public lands "has created an atmosphere of misinformation and even mistrust between the Government and the people." Noting that litigation had risen to unprecedented levels, the Secretary invoked the words of Gifford Pinchot, first Chief of the Forest Service, who argued that the American people must know all about their national forests and take an active part in their management. "After guiding Forest Service policy and implementing this emergency program," added the Secretary, "I wholeheartedly agree."

Secretary Glickman proposed offering 4.5 billion board feet of salvage timber, plus or minus 25 percent. The Forest Service was able to meet the requirements of the new law while observing the letter and spirit of environmental laws designed to protect our Nation's natural resources for future generations.

Recognizing the New Primacy of Recreation

After World War II, recreational visits to the national forest lands soared–from just 18 million visitor-days in 1946 to almost 1 billion in 1999. By the 1990s, recreation dwarfed all other uses of the national forests and grasslands, contributing billions of dollars to local economies.

In 1997, the Forest Service acknowledged the central role of recreation by making it a major focal area in the Natural Resource Agenda. While offering compelling evidence of the declining importance of timber, a growing number of visitors placed potential strains on the land, as well. Three-quarters of the Nation's outdoor recreation occurred within half a mile of a stream or water body. The Forest Service faced daunting challenges in meeting visitor expectations for enjoyable access to recreational activities while conserving the high quality of the wildland experience—the very thing visitors came for. The agency's first priority remained conserving and restoring watershed health.

To meet the challenge, the Forest Service crafted a Recreation Agenda to protect the essential wildland character of the national forests and grasslands. Like the Natural Resource Agenda, the Recreation Agenda abandoned old ways of doing business. The agency adopted a customer-

driven approach, relying on sound marketing to deliver the right services in the right way. Partnership was key; projects would be prioritized based on feedback from partners and local communities, in accordance with sound science.

The agenda included a new commitment to reaching youth and underserved populations, thereby building future constituencies and extending the benefits of outdoor recreation to all Americans. Another focal area was increasing the quantity and quality of conservation education and interpretive programming, thereby expanding the agency's support base while reducing the adverse effects of recreation on ecosystems. Finally, the agenda included national design standards for facilities to create a strong sense of place. The Recreation Agenda was designed to guide Forest Service recreation programs into the 21st century, helping us live within the limits of the land while increasing visitor satisfaction.

Leaving America's Wilderness Untamed

America's love affair with its wilderness has always been troubled. By the 1990s, only 5 percent of the original American wilderness remained protected. Yet the Clinton Administration understood that wilderness provides our cleanest water and air, critical habitat, quiet venues of unmatched scenic splendor, and economic benefits to communities through tourism and recreation. Responsible wildland stewardship is predicated on conserving our remaining wilderness for the benefit of future generations.

In 1994, the Forest Service rededicated itself to effective wilderness management. The agency's Wilderness Agenda committed the Forest Service to outreach, education, and training to increase public support for wilderness, including designation of new wilderness areas in underrepresented ecosystems, such as old-growth and bottomland forest. To help the agency better understand the threats to wilderness, the agenda called for a comprehensive program of wilderness inventory and monitoring and a common wilderness information delivery system shared across agencies.

Theodore Roosevelt once stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon and said, "Leave it as it is. The ages have been at work on it and man can only mar it." The same can be said about every remaining acre of American wilderness. The Wilderness Agenda was designed to address the challenges to America's remaining wilderness by working in the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt to help inspire in all Americans an awe and reverence, a love for the land—feelings that alone can ensure the conservation of our wilderness heritage.

Protecting America's Last Acres of Pristine Forest

The National Forest Transportation System mushroomed in the postwar period to meet the rising demand for timber harvests. The system grew to some 380,000 miles of forest roads. Yet only about a fifth of those roads were suitable for passenger cars. In the 1990s, with the Forest Service's shift in emphasis to sustainable forest management, timber harvest declined to a fraction of its former level. The agency was left with a road system that was designed primarily for a vastly diminished use.

As a result, the Forest Service was no longer able to afford its vast road system. Congressional funding for forest roads declined from $600 million in 1980 to less than $200 million in 2000. The agency received only about 20 percent of the funding needed to maintain existing roads, and its funding backlog for roads reached $8.4 billion--more than twice its entire 2000 budget. Deteriorating forest roads were causing landslides, soil erosion, and stream siltation, destroying habitat for sensitive species and reducing safe public access.

In 1997, the Natural Resource Agenda made a sound system of forest roads a top Forest Service priority. The agency began the process of revising its road management rule and policy. The final rule required roads to meet standards designed to ensure their efficient management within the capabilities of the land. Standards included compliance with resource objectives and sustainability at likely funding levels. All adverse environmental effects associated with road construction and maintenance were to be minimized. Unneeded roads were to be identified for decommissioning, starting with those that posed the greatest risk to public safety or environmental health. Public involvement in forest road management was ensured through coordination with State, county, local, Tribal, and other Federal authorities. Additionally, the final rule included interim limitations for new road construction in sensitive areas until a comprehensive analysis is conducted.

Watershed and Rural Community Initiatives

An Intense Focus on Large-Scale Watershed Restoration

In the 1990s, the Forest Service increasingly embraced a fundamental truth formulated by Aldo Leopold, a one-time Forest Service employee who founded the science of wildlife management and pioneered the field of ecology in the 1930s. "Instead of learning more and more about less and less," Leopold noted, "we must learn more and more about the whole biotic landscape." Leopold understood that land health is impossible without a comprehensive, landscape-level approach to managing the land.

Beginning in 1997, the Forest Service emphasized a watershed approach to landscape-level land management. "Given the fundamental importance of water to all life," said Chief Dombeck, "healthy watersheds are the basic measure of our mission at the Forest Service to care for the land and serve people." In 1999, the Forest Service broke new ground by launching a series of collaborative large-scale watershed restoration projects. Around the country, 15 large watersheds, providing water for millions of people and habitat for numerous threatened species, were chosen to become national prototypes for a more visionary management of ailing watersheds and ecosystems.

The Forest Service's large-scale watershed restoration projects covered parts of 23 States. In 2000, the Forest Service invested $24 million in 12 watershed restoration projects across the country. Our Federal, State, Tribal, and private partners put up about $22 million in matching funds. The projects ranged from the 3-million-acre Blue Mountain Demonstration Area in Oregon to the multi-State Chesapeake Bay Watershed Partnership in the mid-Atlantic region.

Short-term gains were immediately apparent. For example, project teams established more than 70 miles of riparian forest and 1,500 acres of native grass in critical watersheds. Partnerships were of every type, public and private, large and small; almost 13,000 individuals were involved. From the hardwood forests of the Mississippi Delta to the Green Mountains of Vermont, community development happened on many levels, attesting to the connection between ecological and economic health. From Pacific Northwest forests to New York's watershed, project partners pioneered new technologies, such as electronic ear tags to manage cattle grazing near streams and modified wood fibers that absorb pollutants from surface runoff.

Through the projects, the Forest Service leveraged scarce resources — people, dollars, and facilities — to accomplish shared objectives across the landscape. The watershed partnership approach is based on a few key principles: a shared long-term vision for the land; cooperative decisionmaking across land ownerships; shared costs and workloads; and a commitment to new approaches. Aside from specific project benefits, the initiatives communicated to the public the importance of private and public forests for water quality. By weaving together urban, rural, and wildland landscapes, these efforts connected the forest to the faucet. Through an unprecedented partnership and its results, the projects helped strengthen the fabric, natural and social, of the lands and communities that together comprise America.

A Shared Federal Vision for Watershed Management

More than 800 million acres of the Nation's land are managed by Federal agencies for multiple uses, such as drinking water, irrigation, transportation, recreation, and wildlife habitat. At the President's direction, USDA worked with other Federal agencies and other stakeholders to develop the Unified Federal Policy for a Watershed Approach to Land and Resource Management to protect water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems on Federal lands.

The primary goals of this effort are to prevent and reduce pollution of surface and ground waters caused by Federal land and resource management activities. The policy calls on Federal agencies to:

- Use a common science-based approach to watershed assessments of Federal lands,
- Take a more holistic approach to protecting and restoring watersheds,
- Identify critical watersheds for priority allocation of resources,
- Improve compliance with water quality requirements under the Clean Water Act, and
- Enhance collaboration with Tribes, States, and interested stakeholders.

This policy enables the Federal Government serve as a model for water quality stewardship.

American Heritage Rivers

In his 1997 State of the Union Address, President Clinton announced the American Heritage Rivers initiative to provide special recognition to outstanding stretches of America's rivers. This initiative is an innovative response to communities seeking Federal assistance in revitalizing their economies, protecting natural resources, and preserving the history and culture of their rivers.

Communities across America answered the President's call by nominating 126 rivers for designation as American Heritage Rivers. An advisory committee reviewed the nominations and recommended 10 rivers to the President. He chose to designate 14.

Without imposing new Federal regulatory requirements, the American Heritage Rivers initiative used Federal resources to lend a helping hand. For example, the Government provided small business grants and loans; information to help communities identify and evaluate historic, environmental, and economic resources; training in the use of soil and water quality information as a basis for decisionmaking and program monitoring; research and interpretive assistance in compiling and communicating a river history; technical and financial assistance for river restoration and pollution prevention; and economic modeling to help communities assess benefits and costs of proposed projects.

The American Heritage Rivers initiative was founded upon the belief that what is good for the environment is also good for the economy. The initiative brought citizens, businesses, and Government together to clean up rivers, rejuvenate surrounding areas, and stimulate economic growth.

Return of an Old Enemy: Fire

Three factors changed the face of wildland fire management in the 1990s: the massive 1994 South Canyon Fire, the rising number of large conflagrations of 1,000 acres or more, and the growing number of homes built in fire-prone rural areas--the so-called wildland-urban interface.

The South Canyon Fire will long be remembered, next to such firefighting calamities as the 1910 Big Blowup and the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire, as a pivotal event in the annals of wildland firefighting. On July 6, 1994, on the outskirts of Glenwood Springs, CO, what was supposed to be a routine fire suppression effort on Storm King Mountain resulted in 14 firefighter fatalities. The tragedy riveted the Nation. Memorials to the fallen still serve as a focal point for wildland firefighters, much as the Vietnam Memorial serves as an emotional center for military veterans.

The subsequent South Canyon Fire investigation report set in motion a series of reviews and an interagency effort to effect fundamental change, culminating in the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review. The new interagency policy confirmed that firefighter and public safety is a universal responsibility and the first priority of the Forest Service. The policy also focused renewed attention on fire use for wildland health, on effective preparedness and suppression programs, on wildland-urban interface protection, and on coordinated efforts.

The 1994 fire season was pivotal in another way. In that year, more than 1.4 million acres burned on the national forests and grasslands. It was only the third time since 1919 that the National Forest System had seen more than a million acres burn in a single fire season. The two previous severe fire seasons had come just a few years earlier, in 1987 and 1988. More than a million acres burned again in 1996, and then again in 2000. The trend was clear: Large fires were returning to the interior West.

As Chief Dombeck put it, "sooner or later, rivers will fill their flood plains and fire-adapted ecosystems will burn." For thousands of years, severe fires in higher elevation forests had etched patchwork patterns into the landscape every few decades or centuries. In a sense, Mother Nature was reclaiming her turf. But our worst fire problems had little to do with Mother Nature.

Ironically, the rising effectiveness of fire suppression efforts had exacerbated the risk of major conflagrations. At lower elevations, western forest types historically had frequent low-intensity fires that kept the number of trees per acre low. Large, severe fires were rare in these open western forests. Beginning in the 1930s, growing firefighting effectiveness excluded virtually all fire from the forests, even small fires. As a result, small trees and brush, no longer purged by fire, now built up in lower elevation western forests. Dense thickets commonly added 200 to 2,000 small trees per acre in old-growth stands and 2,000 to 10,000 small trees per acre where the forest canopy had been removed through timber harvest. When fires now occurred, the dense trees became dense fuels with the potential to generate fires so severe that they destroyed entire forest stands. In 2000, some 56 million acres of national forests in the interior West were at high or moderate risk of major wildland fires.

The heightened fire risk was exacerbated by the growing wildland-urban interface. A rising population density in many rural areas placed people and communities in forest ecosystems naturally prone to fire, increasing the threat to life and property. Wildland-urban interface fires, such as the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire, graphically illustrated the destructive power of wildland fire in an urban environment. Drought conditions in Florida in 1998 produced wildland fires affecting much of the State's population; entire counties were evacuated, and firefighting resources had to be brought in from across the country. In 2000, the Cerro Grande Fire burned parts of Los Alamos, NM; and the Buffalo Creek, Hi Meadow, and Bobcat Fires threatened communities in Colorado. Wildland and rural fire managers were in a quandary: How could they meet traditional expectations for fire protection by a public that chose to live in a fire-prone environment?

Such challenges, coupled with changing public attitudes toward natural resource use, contributed to a revolution in Federal wildland fire policy. A new fire management paradigm, inaugurated in the 1970s, adopted controlled burns that fight fire with fire. The concept gained strength in the 1990s in tandem with the Forest Service's more holistic approach to natural resource management. The need for greater stakeholder involvement, the rising cost of fire protection, the growing number of large fires, and the increasing emphasis on safety all came together to produce a series of new policy initiatives culminating in the 2000 National Fire Plan.

On September 8, 2000, Secretary Glickman and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt delivered a national plan to the President outlining steps to better manage fire for the health of America's communities and environment. Congress appropriated $2 billion for the National Fire Plan. The plan called for increasing our national firefighting capabilities; rehabilitating and restoring lands and communities affected by fire; using techniques such as prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuels; and working with and through local communities to carry out rehabilitation, restoration,

and fuels reduction projects. The National Fire Plan offered unprecedented opportunities for investing in the long-term health of the land while making our rural communities safer places to live and work.

Severing State Payments from Timber Sales

Since 1908, States have received 25 percent of Forest Service revenues to help fund schools and roads. The original thinking was that since the land was owned by the public, a portion of the proceeds derived from selling commodities on that land should be returned to the public. Yet the payments were tied to fluctuating timber sales. By 2000, with timber sales in decline, payments to States and counties had dropped by 36 percent.

In 1999, after several previous attempts, the Clinton Administration successfully proposed increasing and stabilizing payments to States by decoupling them from the amount of timber harvested from national forests. Two bills were introduced in Congress, but both were blocked by a Republican leadership well aware that severing the connection to county payments would erect yet another barrier to their goal of mass timber harvests. Two more bills with Republican backing were opposed by the Administration for continuing to link payments to timber sales. One of them passed the House in November 1999. Backed by the timber industry, many county commissioners and superintendents, and the National Education Association, it linked timber sales to payments for county schools and roads.

The Clinton Administration responded by stating its willingness to work with Congress if five core principles were adhered to: (1) providing a permanent, stable source of funding to counties, (2) allowing flexibility at the local level, (3) promoting non-controversial projects to build trust and collaboration, (4) promoting strong collaboration, and (5) establishing clear lines of authorities. After nearly 11 months of negotiation, a compromise was reached. The bill signed into law gave counties the option of continuing to receive 25 percent of timber receipts or basing payments on the average of the State's three highest payments from 1986 to 1999. It also would require counties opting to receive the latter payments and receiving more than $100,000 to invest 15 to 20 percent in forest restoration, maintenance, or stewardship. Finally, it would require the Secretary of Agriculture to create citizen advisory committees representing environmental, commercial, and local interests.

On October 30, 2000, the President signed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, increasing payments to rural counties by about $1.1 billion over 5 years. As a result, a key Clinton-Gore goal was achieved: Counties no longer have to depend on controversial timber sales to provide the funding for their local schools and roads.

Cleaning Up Abandoned Mines

In the 20th century, thousands of abandoned mines accumulated on national forests, threatening public health, degrading water quality, destroying wildlife habitat, and diminishing recreational opportunities. Under the Clinton Administration, the Forest Service worked with other Federal

agencies, State enforcement agencies, Indian Tribes and interested parties to clean up sites and restore natural conditions.

A 1998 inventory identified about 39,000 abandoned or inactive mines on national forest lands. Some 5,000 mine sites required cleanup. In addition, national forests harbored numerous landfills, dumps, and illegal drug laboratories, adding to the cleanup burden. Another 100 cleanup actions were required on lands used by the Department of Defense to deal with hazardous substances and unexploded ordnance.

President Clinton's Forest Service encouraged the private parties responsible to clean up the sites they had contaminated. Since 1995, Forest Service actions resulted in more than $200 million worth of cleanup work. The Forest Service incorporated its cleanup and restoration projects into its natural resource management programs, such as watershed restoration and minerals management. Sites were prioritized for cleanup based on the risk to human health and the threat to the environment.

Timber Contracting Becomes Stewardship Contracting

In the 1990s, the Forest Service took steps to end the divisive debates surrounding timber harvest on the national forests by making watershed health and sustainable forest ecosystems agency priorities. Timber harvest continued, but at a fraction of the peak levels reached in the 1980s, down from more than 12 billion board feet per year to about 3 to 4 billion board feet per year. The primary purpose of timber harvest on the national forests became healthy forest management, not furnishing wood for the Nation.

Traditionally, the Forest Service has relied not only on timber harvest, but also on service contracts as vegetation management tools to reduce risks to forest health from disease, insects, and wildland fire. However, the early 1990s revealed the limitations of both tools. Public uproar continued to surround timber sales. Furthermore, the declining commercial value of the vegetation the Forest Service needed to remove rendered commercial timber harvest increasingly infeasible, and timber sale contracts do not permit the Forest Service to require purchasers to perform land management activities unrelated to the timber harvest activities under the contract. Service contracts are a powerful and flexible tool, but they cannot be used to dispose of commercially valuable material. Moreover, limited appropriations always constrain the amount of work that can be accomplished in this manner.

In 1996, the Forest Service began to consider the alternative of stewardship contracting. Stewardship contracts combine timber sale contracts with multifunction procurements over multiple years. They are results-oriented and promote local collaboration. By 1998, the Forest Service had identified 22 stewardship contracting pilot projects. In 1999, Congress authorized the Forest Service to enter into up to 28 "stewardship end-results demonstration contracts." The legislation included expanded authorities, such as retention of receipts, exchange of goods for services, and best value award of contracts. These pilot projects are widely distributed

geographically, test all supplemental authorities, and address a broad array of ecological as well as social and economic objectives.

Initial reactions to stewardship contracts were favorable. New coalitions emerged around the pilot projects, sometimes including groups typically opposed to Forest Service activities. Attention often focused on the desired condition of the land, not on resource-specific advocacy. The contentious concept of a commercial sale was eclipsed by a focus on meeting the total needs of a given watershed in a comprehensive manner. As a result of the initial success of these efforts, Congress in 2001 authorized the creation of an additional 28 stewardship contracts.

Bridging the Divide: The Quincy Library Group

Since the 1970s, a divisive debate between logging and environmental interests has debilitated national efforts to restore our public forest lands to health. By the 1990s, the contending extremes had somewhat exhausted their energy and public appeal. Hopeful signs emerged of a new approach as former adversaries began to sit down together, putting aside what divided them to discuss what they had in common.

The Quincy Library Group in California's Sierra Nevada region was one such initiative. The group emerged in 1992 from a meeting between representatives of Friends of Plumas Wilderness, an environmental group, and Sierra Pacific Industries, a member of the timber industry. The meeting was mediated by the supervisor of Plumas County, who chose Quincy Library as the venue to help keep the meeting civil.

That first meeting was followed by years of efforts to change management of California's Lassen and Plumas National Forests and the Sierraville District of the Tahoe National Forest to promote forest health and ecological integrity while ensuring an adequate timber supply and local economic stability. The Quincy Library Group proposed three strategies: (1) selecting trees, singly and in groups, for harvest immediately throughout the forest to maintain a relatively continuous forest cover, (2) carrying out various fire management objectives, and (3) establishing a riparian management program, including wide protection zones and active restoration efforts.

The group's goal was an all-age, multi-storied, fire-resistant forest approximating presettlement conditions.

From 1995 through 1997, the Forest Service implemented a forest health pilot project based on the activities advocated by the group. The group's efforts paid off when the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act was signed into law on October 21, 1998. The Act directed USDA to conduct a pilot project along the lines advocated by the group. Unfortunately, the Act did not appropriate specific funding for the project, and the Forest Service estimated a cost of $31 million per year for full implementation of the pilot project up to 70,000 acres. In 2000, with a project budget limited to $12.2 million, the Forest Service carried out a pilot project on about 20,500 acres.

President Clinton's Lands Legacy Initiative
Under pressure from development, many acres of private forestland are being converted and fragmented every day. Outright purchase to protect our remaining forests is not always a viable option; a voluntary approach is often preferable. Perpetual conservation easements can be a powerful tool for private forestland protection.

Through the Forest Legacy Program, the Forest Service works with State Foresters, local governments, land trusts, and interested landowners to conserve forest lands of regional and national significance. Through conservation easements or fee simple purchase, the partners cooperate with willing landowners to ensure that traditional uses and public values are protected on private forestland for future generations.

President Clinton's Lands Legacy Initiative propelled the Forest Legacy Program from a small, underfunded effort to an important national program to protect private forests from development. Previously an underfunded program – bottoming out at $2 million in 1997–inclusion in the Lands Legacy Initiative brought full White House backing–and vital funding. From about $7 million in 1999, funding jumped to almost $30 million in 2000 and then doubled to $60 million in 2001.

By August 2000, the program had protected 118,655 acres in 12 States. For example, a large land value donation was made a short distance from rapidly developing areas of Salt Lake City, UT. The land ranges from snow-covered peaks and alpine lakes to rich downstream meadows and pastureland; it remained in family ownership, but is now protected for generations to come.

Beyond Forest Communities

The Urban Resources Partnership
In 1993, the Clinton Administration launched the Urban Resources Partnership. For 7 years, Federal agencies and partners collaborated with underserved communities to address environmental problems, based on a shared realization that a greener urban infrastructure will produce neighborhoods that are cleaner, healthier, more energy-efficient, and ultimately more prosperous.

The partnership put Government resources at the service of community-led projects, which included included restoring streambanks, establishing public trails, conducting anti-littering/beautification campaigns, and enhancing water quality and urban wildlife habitat.

Each participating city established a steering committee that might include various government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses. The steering committee established the local partnership's mission, investigated natural resource conditions and community needs, set priorities, and agreed to a grant application process. It then assembled a technical team to work on projects with community leaders.

The partnerships were were partially funded through $300,000 USDA grants to each of the 13 designated cities. Communities matched each Federal dollar with labor, in-kind donations, and local funding. These partnerships tapped the enormous power of community-based action to empower urban communities to enhance their quality of life and build a stronger social fabric.

Millennium Green

In the 1990s, urban areas were rapidly expanding, often at the expense of neighboring farm- and forestland. Decades of development had left many of our urban areas with a tree canopy of less than 20 percent, adversely affecting streams and wetland buffer systems, water quality, stormwater runoff, air quality, and a host of other factors related to human and environmental health.

To help address the problem, the Clinton Administration established a White House Millennium Council to encourage the creation of healthier, more livable community environments in the 21st century. In 1999, the council asked that USDA lead a Millennium Green Initiative.
One of the campaign's first efforts was to establish Millennium Groves across the country. Millennium Green was officially launched in December 1999 with the dedication of a white oak in front of the USDA headquarters building by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Secretary Glickman. Numerous Millennium Green celebrations followed, along with a number of related State initiatives and events in cities and communities across the country during the spring planting season.

Overarching Service Initiatives

Forest Service Reinvention

In 1993, the Clinton Administration launched an initiative to "reinvent" Government through more efficient, cost-effective, responsive ways of working on behalf of Americans. Among dozens of Forest Service reinvention actions, three achievements stand out:

- The Forest Service's Enterprise Initiative encouraged the agency to operate more like a business and less like a Federal bureacracy. Employees created their own "small businesses" serving customers, operating in a self-determined, self-motivated way. The Initiative applied the best ideas of the business world to motivate and reward Forest Service employees for high-quality work. "The Forest Service is growing its own small businesses," noted *Government Executive Magazine* (November 1999), "and possibly building the Government of the future."

- Service First is a partnership of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to enable the Nation's two largest Federal land managers to deliver one-stop customer service to users of public lands while improving their collective capability to care for the land. By pooling resources, the agencies avoid duplication of effort, co-locate offices, share personnel, combine operations, harmonize processes and permits, and standardize

public information. Through Service First, the American people get a single, unified, common-sense approach to customer service on nearly a third of the Nation's lands.

- The Forest Service and six other Federal agencies designed *recreation.gov* to provide recreation information on all Federal lands in the United States over the Internet. In the past, recreational users had to seek information through myriad sources. Now, they have a one-stop, 24-hour source of information on all Federal lands.

Reinvesting Visitor Fees in the Region

Before the Clinton Administration, all receipts on Federal lands were returned to general Government funds and could not be invested in the projects, facilities, and services that generated them. As a result, by the 1990s, many underfunded Federal facilities were deteriorating–even though they often generated significant money for the Federal Government. The Forest Service joined other Federal agencies in working with Congress to address the problem. In 1996, Congress authorized a test: Fees collected from recreational users at pilot sites would be retained for investment at those sites. The Recreational Fee Demonstration Program was born.

From 1995 to 2001, the Forest Service retained most project revenues at 100 specially chosen recreation sites. In 1999, the Forest Service collected $26.5 million. The fees were used to maintain thousands of miles of trails, retrofit hundreds of facilities and sites for accessibility, refurbish hundreds of campsites, upgrade signs and information for visitors, expand office hours for visitor centers, and more. The Forest Service reinvested at least 90 percent of revenues at the project or site where these fees were collected. The remainder was distributed to projects within the region. Unfortunately, this innovative approach to financing needed improvements in America's national forests was de-funded by Congress in 2001.

Olympics on the National Forests

The Cherokee National Forest served as a venue for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, GA. The Forest Service collaborated with the Tennessee Valley Authority, the State of Tennessee, and local communities to promote economic development in the Ocoee watershed, including promotion for the world's greatest whitewater facility. The result: the first Olympic Games whitewater slalom event on a natural river.

After the 1996 success, the national forests were again invited to serve as an Olympic venue, this time for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Utah. The Forest Service began planning responsible development of the Snowbasin Ski Area on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. The agency regarded the games as a unique opportunity to showcase recreation in national forests while linking healthy ecosystems to quality of life.

The Forest Service's main goal was to help ensure that Olympic activities on the national forests were safe and environmentally sound. That included consultation on facilities development, avalanche forecasting, and educating the public about avalanche dangers. Other goals included

working with local communities to help visitors to the games feel safe and welcome. In addition, the Forest Service worked to leave a legacy for future generations by upgrading and restoring out-of-date recreation areas and by helping to plant groves of Olympic trees at 1,600 schools and communities throughout Utah.

Showcasing the Nation's Lakes

The Federal Lakes Recreation Demonstration Program was founded as a laboratory for Vice President Gore's reinventing Government efforts. An eight-agency group formed in 1999, the program was designed to showcase improvements to recreation opportunities on Federal lakes. Projects chosen for the program had a high level of community and interagency support, but faced regulatory challenges to their lake management plans. Demonstration projects were designed to show how the regulatory or contracting authority could be improved or how partnership funding could be obtained. Six nominated projects were accepted and added to the pilot list of 30 lakes.

Promoting Sustainable Forestry[3]

Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, USDA has been a leader in the international movement for sustainable development. In November 1993, the President issued a directive ordering Federal agencies to work toward "achieving sustainable management of U.S. forests." From 1993 to 1995, the Forest Service participated in the Montreal Process, an international initiative to develop criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management for temperate and boreal forests. This work led to the Santiago Declaration by the United States and 11 other countries, in which signatories endorsed the agreed upon criteria and indicators as a tool for monitoring and guiding progress toward sustainable forest management. Since its inception in 1999, USDA also was an active participant in the Roundtable on Sustainable Forests, which included representatives from the forest products industry, nongovernmental organizations, and various government agencies from across the country. Under the Clinton Administration's leadership, the principle of sustainable resource management became an intrinsic part of all of the Forest Service's work. This approach was endorsed by the Committee of Scientists that Secretary Glickman appointed to review the Forest Service's long-term goals. They, too, identified sustainability as the fundamental principle for managing the Nation's forests.

Conclusion

In his 1998 State of the Union address, President Clinton told the American people, "every time we have acted to heal our environment, pessimists have told us it would hurt the economy. Well, today our economy is the strongest in a generation, and our environment is the cleanest in a generation. We have always found a way to clean the environment and grow the economy at the same time." This notion of the economy and the environment advancing hand-in-hand was a central theme of the Clinton-Gore Administration. By the 1990s, it also had grown into a central

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[3]For a detailed discussion of these efforts, please see the paper in the appendix to this chapter entitled "Promoting Sustainable Development," prepared by USDA's Director of Sustainable Development during the Clinton-Gore years, Adela Backiel.

American value. Yet no arena had managed so successfully to remain behind the times and out of step with the American people as the management of the Nation's forests.

The Clinton-Gore Administration developed a proactive vision of a sustainable future for the Nation's forests and grasslands; they brought the American people more fully into the process of managing their forests; they established a strong precedent for valuing all the "commodities" of our national forests–from timber, to recreation to environmental protection; and they connected policies and programs with modern science's understanding of the need to protect an entire ecosystem to safeguard all that it supports–from clean air and water, to wildlife, to forests that produce them. In taking these bold and visionary steps, the Administration returned the management of the Nation's forests to its original mission: to care for these special places "for the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the long run." In doing so, the Clinton-Gore Administration returned the Nation's forests to their rightful owners–all generations of Americans yet to come.