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PREPARED REMARKS OF INTERIOR SECRETARY DON HODEL FOR THE
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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Thank you for this chance to be with you. You are a key group of people in America today, more than ever. Together, we have a special opportunity to take action that will help make a better life for our children and future generations. As outdoor writers, you are uniquely able to communicate directly with the American people about the need to take pride in America's natural and cultural resources.

In February 1985, shortly after I took office as the 45th Secretary of the Interior, I was asked at a Congressional hearing about what I planned to do to prevent the theft of petrified logs from public lands in New Mexico. I answered at some length but the essence was that, basically, there was nothing the federal government could do to prevent such abuses on 700 million acres of federal lands (one-third of the Nation) if 240 million Americans did not care. There are not enough soldiers in the Army, or money in the U.S. Treasury, to protect such vast ownership.

Dissatisfied with that response, I discussed the problem with many land managers and users. It became clear that when people feel a real sense of ownership for and are involved in the care of these lands, there are fewer abuses. So, we decided to pursue a national campaign to heighten awareness on the part of all Americans that these lands are their lands to be protected for them, not from them.

In President Reagan's 1986 State of the Union Message, he launched the Take Pride in America campaign and called upon all of us to get out the message that America's parks, forests, wildlife refuges, historic sites, waterways, campgrounds, playgrounds and other public resources are the responsibility of every American.

I believe that the majority of our citizens cherish these lands and are careful visitors. But others act as though the lands belong to "everyone," and, therefore, no one has responsibility to take care of them. Well, that is just plain wrong. But, all around the country, in urban and rural areas, public lands and resources have suffered from misuse.

- o Shores, roadsides, trails, and campgrounds have been littered.
- o Signs and structures have been defaced and fences destroyed.
- o Playgrounds and buildings have been covered with graffiti.
- o Archeological sites have even been bulldozed so that their "loot" can be stolen more easily.
- o Game hogs continue to defy hunting and fishing bag limits.

Either these people do not realize, or do not care, that their thoughtlessness is damaging the resources and could foreclose opportunities not only for them, but also for their children and fellow citizens.

We must discourage and deter thoughtless behavior by a few that reduces enjoyment for many. "Take Pride in America" seeks to reduce destructive behavior through public awareness and citizen involvement.

The campaign has several elements:

- o Officials at all levels from the Departments of Agriculture, Army (Corps of Engineers), Commerce (Travel and Tourism), Education, Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency are communicating the Take Pride in America message. At the grassroots level, our field managers are enhancing or developing programs that involve individuals and communities on behalf of public lands.
- o The Advertising Council, Inc., will produce national broadcast and print ads for the fall that focus on abuses of public resources using well-known personalities to discourage improper behavior.
- o A Take Pride in America Awards Program has been developed, in cooperation with the Governors of almost 40 States, to recognize and encourage outstanding stewardship action and awareness efforts.

Many individuals and groups have developed outdoor stewardship and self-policing programs; archeological resource protection awareness efforts; and, "watch" programs or hotlines to report vandalism, wildlife poaching, theft, and other destructive activity.

Others help care for parks, trails, shorelines, campsites, and playgrounds through clean-up, maintenance and general assistance when needed.

- o This summer along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, thousands of boy and girl scouts, 4-H-ers, and other volunteers from all over the Eastern Seaboard are coming together for the C&O Canal Cleanup Camporee. The Canal, part of a national historical park, was severely damaged last year by floodwaters from the Potomac River. These young people are personally involved in restoring the Canal. They will "own" it when they are through. I pity any future Interior Secretary who fails to pay adequate attention to "their Canal." They will carry with them an attitude that assuredly will affect their reactions to similar areas wherever their futures take them.
- o The American Camping Association (ACA) has organized a Take Pride in America Committee to develop a camping code for its 2500 member camps. Over the summer, several ACA camp directors will pilot outdoor education projects with their young campers. Nine million young people go to camp each year. If this effort was the only one to result from the campaign, it will all have been worth it.
- o "Take Pride in Jackson Hole" (Teton County), Wyoming, is a comprehensive campaign to improve the community's resources. Cleanups, landscaping and refurbishing projects have been organized to involve the entire county in what they are calling "the best valley 'spruce up' of all time."

- o New York and other inner-city youths participate in environmental education programs because of an excellent public-private partnership between the New York City Board of Education and Gateway National Recreation Area. This year, the environmental education center celebrated its 10th anniversary with a beach cleanup effort.
- o At the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge near Bloomington, Take Pride in Minnesota Valley and "Valley Watch" programs have been organized to involve the local community to help care for the refuge and prevent abusive activity. An incredible network of citizens have joined together under the "Take Pride" umbrella to conserve and enhance this refuge near Minneapolis.
- o "Page, Arizona Has Pride in America" was the slogan and theme for this year's annual community cleanup event which literally involves the entire town. As a city with Glen Canyon National Recreation Area as its neighbor, Page residents feel a special sense of responsibility for their public lands.
- o For several years, the Du Pont Company of Delaware has shown a strong commitment to the natural environment and its wild inhabitants. In particular, they have contributed to the reestablishment around the country of our magnificent national symbol, the American bald eagle. Since 1983, Du Pont has provided \$200,000 for eagle breeding and research activities at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland.

Stewardship activities need not be as extensive as these to make a difference. Individual Americans also contribute:

- o A family of four has volunteered over 500 hours toward the preservation and communication of American heritage at the Fort Scott National Historic Site, Kansas. In period costume, the family describes the daily life of the fort's former inhabitants. Their contribution has helped thousands of visitors understand and appreciate frontier military life of the 1840's and 1850's.

There are opportunities for everyone -- individuals, groups, schools, church and synagogue youth groups, businesses, and entire communities -- to make a difference. There also are numerous ways you in the outdoor media can help.

Not far from here, the Wellsboro Gazette ran an article on the Take Pride in America effort and discussed specific areas where volunteers could help their public resources. Since then, area citizens have given hundreds of hours of their time to help.

I ask you to help us by continuing and expanding your already outstanding efforts to encourage all Americans to:

- o Leave their public lands in better condition than they find them.
- o Observe rules and report destructive activity. (I know that many States have Turn-in-a-Poacher (TIP) programs. Efforts like those need continued editorial support.)

- o Remember that historic artifacts are irreplaceable and should be left intact so that others may study them.
- o Get friends, families, companies, clubs and communities to take pride in their public lands and choose a favorite area to help care for.
- o Look for opportunities to communicate the stewardship message through speeches, articles, slide shows, field trips and similar awareness efforts.

One thing I must point out is that this effort is not intended to be a massive federal program or to supplement our budgets. We are trying to create an atmosphere for citizen and private sector action.

There is an issue, however, that requires federal action -- and requires it now! As you may know, we have proposed a selective increase in national park entrance fees as an equitable means of financing a small portion of the national park budget. This proposal is particularly critical now as we face increased visitation to the parks due to lower fuel prices and concerns about travelling abroad.

Our proposal would not only make 80 percent of collected fees available to help the parks this year, but it also would allow volunteers to take on additional responsibilities. We can provide better service if Congress will act! Otherwise, millions of Americans may be disappointed as they flock to the parks this year because we lacked the flexibility to accommodate such a great increase in visitation. But, they need not be disappointed. Our entrance fee proposal is the solution.

While I would never put a dollar figure on the value of a visit to a national park, our parks nonetheless require the expenditure of tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars for construction, operation, maintenance, water and sewer systems, campgrounds, visitor centers and salaries for park employees.

A family of four in an automobile is currently admitted to Grand Canyon National Park for two weeks for \$2.00. Just for comparison purposes, it costs more than that for each member of that family to see a 90-minute movie, or, in some places, for a two-scoop ice cream cone!

I suspect that some movies may be worth their admission charges and some ice cream cones may be worth more than their price, but, I know for sure that admission to Grand Canyon or Yellowstone is worth more than the \$2-per-carload now charged. Only 60 of our more than 300 national park units charge any entrance fee. I believe it is entirely fair that those who use a public resource should pay some share of its operation and maintenance costs where it is feasible to do so. Our approach would still leave more than 80 percent of the cost of park operations to be paid by taxpayers. But, we believe that visitor or not, most Americans support the concept of maintaining the crown jewels of our natural and historic heritage for generations yet to come.

Park entrance fees were frozen by the Congress in the late 1970s. In fact, they have not been changed significantly since 1972. This means that the inflationary cycle of recent memory sharply reduced the real dollar value of the existing fee collections.

Historically, park fees were much higher than they are now. In 1918, when the dollar bought several times more than it does today, it cost \$7.50 for an "automobile ticket of passage" to Yellowstone National Park. I will let you speculate what \$7.50 in 1918 dollars would be worth in 1986; but, my staff suggested to me it would be around \$50.00 (based on the Consumer Price Index).

Any increase in entrance fees would be implemented on a park-by-park basis. No entrance fee should ever be charged for many parks either because of their unique nature -- the Lincoln Memorial comes to mind -- or because it would be impossible to collect fees in an efficient manner. Urban recreation areas and parkways would be exempted.

In 1984, entrance and user fees amounted to \$21 million, but this represented about 3 1/2 percent of the National Park Service's total operating budget for that year. I think we should do better than that. As a Nation, we must face the reality of the need to balance the federal budget within this decade. Raising park entrance fees would be a very small, but measurable, contribution to that effort. And, this summer in particular, it could make a world of difference.

We believe this proposal is practical, prudent, and in the public's best interest. The times call for more realistic entrance fees to serve and safeguard our park resources.

I would like to suggest a parallel here. Back in the 1930's, America's hunters knew it would be in the long-term interest of the Nation's wildlife resources if they could devise an equitable and effective source of funding for conservation. From their commitment came a model of user-pay programs -- the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. This program, funded by sportsmen for a half-century, has yielded great benefits not only to hunters, but also to the public at large.

In a similar way, more realistic park entrance fees would not only increase returns to park users but also would help maintain the parks for all Americans. Raising these fees would put all of us on record in favor of a reasonable payment for a very special experience and in support of the places and activities that provide personal enrichment -- recreation.

We all enjoy different kinds of recreation and we should feel fortunate to have such an array of opportunities from which to choose. While "recreation" has come to mean "fun" in our society, the root of the word is re-creation. Our daily routines often result in stress and tension. We need to be able to enjoy outdoor activities to regenerate our bodies, minds and spirits. When we return from our weekend trips, whether we have hiked 30 miles or have simply enjoyed a sunset, we are refreshed and better able to take on our responsibilities once again. We are more productive citizens.

I appreciate the chance today to discuss two important issues -- one, our park entrance fee proposal which requires immediate action, and the other, Take Pride in America, which I hope is just beginning and will have an impact over decades to come in the way Americans view the great resources with which God has blessed us.

It has been a great privilege for me to be able to talk with you because of the key role that you can play in both of these efforts. I am confident that if we join together, we can make a difference. We can ensure that our recreational and cultural lands will be everlasting. Working together, there is no limit to what we can do.

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