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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Dear God, this is one of those days when we really need two alarm clocks: One to wake us up and the other to remind us of why we are up. Give us a two-alarm wake-up call every hour of today—an alarm to go off inside us to wake us up to the wonderful privilege of being alive, and the other to claim the wondrous power You offer us to do Your will in all the responsibilities and challenges You have given us.

Keep us sensitive to see You at work in the world around us, active in the lives of people and abundant in Your blessings. Astonish us with evidences of Your intervening love. When we least expect You, You are there. May we never lose the capacity to be constantly amazed by what You are up to in our lives and the lives of people around us. You have taught us that a bored, bland, unsurprisable, unamazed person is a contradiction in terms.

So, Lord, give us courage to attempt what only You could help us achieve. Renew our enthusiasm; invigorate our vision; replenish our strength. With eyes, minds, and hearts wide open, we press on to the day. In the name of Him who gives us abundant life. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able majority leader, Senator LOTT, is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until the hour of 1 p.m. to accommodate a number of Senators who

have requested time to speak. That is 3 hours, but we have those requests that have been made, and we have a Senator waiting to begin speaking now. So we will accommodate those requests.

It is my hope that an agreement will be reached this morning to begin consideration of H.R. 1003, the so-called assisted suicide bill. If an agreement is reached, Senators can expect to begin consideration of the bill at 1 p.m. with a 3-hour time limitation. Therefore, Senators can expect rollcall votes this afternoon. I would expect at least one and possibly two. As always, I will notify Senators of the voting schedule as soon as possible.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. CAMPBELL pertaining to the introduction of S. 587, S. 588, S. 589, S. 590, and S. 591 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. CAMPBELL. I thank the Chair and yield the floor. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. AL-LARD). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. I would also like to ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak in morning business for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SYSTEM: A PLAN FOR LEADERSHIP

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to talk about a subject that is very im-

portant and close to my heart, and that is national parks, for at least two reasons. One is I grew up right outside of Yellowstone Park in Wyoming. We have Teton Park in Wyoming as well.

I am also chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks. We have had a series of two hearings on the future of the National Park System, and, as chairman, I am committed to the formulation of a proparks agenda which will allow us to enrich parks well into the next century.

Before speaking on the issue of the future, however, let me briefly discuss the current status of the system and some of the real problems that do confront us. Today's National Park System is comprised of 375 park units and is visited each year by millions of visitors. The parks are immensely popular destinations, of course, intended to protect and commemorate this country's most significant natural, historical, and culture resources.

According to recent testimony from our hearings, this diverse collection of units stimulates over \$10 billion annually in revenue to local economies and supports 230,000 tourism-related jobs. Each year, 12 million foreign visitors are drawn to our parks, contributing significantly to a \$22 billion international travel trade surplus. So, in addition to protecting our most precious resources, they are also an economic stimulus, of course.

The Park Service is currently authorized to employ 20,342 full-time workers. This system includes approximately 80.2 million acres. The 1997 budget is authorized at roughly \$1.4 billion.

This relatively small agency, managing a large land base enjoying unparalleled popularity and generating significant tax and business revenues, faces a pressing dilemma. At a time when the American taxpayers are serious about smaller Government and lower taxes, Americans have also demonstrated an equally serious interest in their parks.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Unfortunately, their interest has not, as yet, been translated into a serious and long-range plan nor commitment for the care of parks. The result is a legacy of critical problems plaguing the National Park Service.

Today, we face an overwhelming inventory of unfunded National Park Service programs. Over the years, the National Park Service has been pulled in a wide variety of directions. Each change, each new direction, each new responsibility has caused an adverse effect in the system.

The Park Service has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that you can do more with less. But, in adding new areas and new responsibilities, the agency is forced into a scenario of doing less with less in terms of service and protection. As a result of decisions made by the Congress and the administration, we face an unbelievable backlog of unfunded Park Service programs. The budget shortfall is staggering. Let me touch briefly on some of the problems.

Within the 375 units of the Park Service we have approximately \$1.4 billion of authorized land acquisitions. These are private lands that are authorized within authorized park boundaries, but these lands have never been acquired. There are 823 billion dollars worth of national resource management projects which have gone unfunded. It is almost impossible to make a sound management decision based on scientific evidence if we are lacking the basic information on the extent and the condition and the inventory of these valuable natural resources.

It is more than difficult to protect something if you do not have a clue as to what you are protecting.

In the area of cultural resource management projects, the unfunded backlog is \$331 million. Again, these valuable cultural resources are not protected or stabilized.

There are 1.5 billion dollars worth of building-related projects for which there is no budget provision. For the benefit of my colleagues, I would like to point out that if Congress decided to fully fund this item, we would only provide needed repairs to existing deteriorating facilities. No new facilities would be constructed under this scenario.

There are \$304 million of utility systems that are in advance states of disrepair throughout the system. Potable water and sewage systems that meet specifications are an absolute necessity if we want visitors to continue to come to our parks.

In the identified resource protection work that needs to be accomplished, \$1.8 billion would begin to arrest the digression of natural resources of our parks before we lose those resources that we are committed to protect.

Mr. President, \$2.2 billion is required for road and bridge repair and transportation systems. In my own State of Wyoming, the cost of road repair in Yellowstone Park exceeds \$300 million.

This cost will automatically increase if the road repairs are ignored.

I might add, in the last few years, something like \$8 million has been committed to this \$300 million deficit.

In many cases, employee housing is substandard. There are parks where the occupants of the National Park Service need not look outside to see if it is snowing. They only have to check the snow level in their living room. The pricetag to get employee housing to an acceptable standard is \$442 million. If we cannot afford to take care of the caretakers, then there is something radically wrong.

The total unfunded backlog in maintenance, resource stabilization, infrastructure repair and employee housing is \$8.7 billion. This price tag does not include the concessions which also need, of course, to keep pace.

Mr. President, \$8.7 billion is a major problem. We need to take positive steps to correct this deficiency. Forward-thinking, new, innovative approaches will be required. It is a problem that cannot be resolved in the short term.

I am happy to report, however, that there is, I think, reason for optimism and a favorable prognosis. It is going to be difficult, but I think we can do it.

As a result of our hearings on the future of the parks, there are many ideas to be discussed and evaluated, but now is the time to address the long-term solutions and to reinvigorate the National Park Service so that our park system will stand as an example to the world well into the next century.

Most importantly, we need to ensure that we are conserving and protecting the resources, protecting the natural and historic objects and the wildlife, while at the same time ensuring that the parks will be visited and will be an enjoyable experience.

Within the next few weeks, we plan to circulate a strategic plan to our colleagues and to the administration which will chart a course to deal with this serious dilemma, a plan to serve as a foundation for a program to reinvigorate the parks by the year 2010.

The Thomas plan—we have not thought of a better name—will contain some proposals for legislative initiatives, as well as some concepts that the administration can implement. As a result of our hearings on the future, it became very apparent that we need to incorporate some of the best ideas.

Several financial concepts will, out of necessity, be discussed. As a start, the plan will include a bonding initiative. Many of our parks are essentially small villages or towns. In essence, they are towns that are required to have roads and utility systems and infrastructure. It seems to me we cannot expect to bring those up to operating condition out of annual operating funds. So the municipalities can show us the way. They have over the years bonded to do that. We do not have the money.

The process is relatively simple. We can establish a Federal corporate en-

tity within the Department to administer the bonds. We need to establish a dependable system to pay off the bonds, and we can do that. There are additional options that ought to be considered.

I anticipate our plan would be built on the fine work of Senator GORTON in the last session making the fee demonstration permit and extending it to all units of the national parks, a proposal where the revenues collected in those parks stay where they are collected.

A number of our witnesses spoke about establishing a strict criteria for the establishment of new additions. When we are \$8.7 billion behind, we need to be careful about the additional authorizations we make. This is not suggesting we should delete any of the units, but we ought to be careful about the new ones and, frankly, not make a political decision that a State park or local park be converted to a Federal park so the Feds will take over. The Park Service was never intended to be a redevelopment agency.

There are other programs, of course, that need help. Our plan will include a concession reform which turns away from the failed practice of trying to repair and refurbish the existing and inadequate law. We will take an innovative approach and, hopefully, there will be some higher fees paid to maintain the parks.

We should turn to the private sector for expertise in the management and operations of concessions. These are multimillion-dollar programs.

As a result, we ought to have an asset manager in the Park Service—it is a huge financial operation—someone who is experienced and who has a background and training in assets. We can do that.

On a different issue, our hearings revealed the need for better employee training. We can do that, largely with the use of universities and schools that are there.

We need to continue progress made in more cost-effective management, insisting on efficiency-oriented management goals, linked with the reduction of the size of the Washington office and put the folks in the parks where they really need to be. I am not suggesting a personnel reduction, but I am suggesting a reallocation.

Many of our parks are funding maintenance departments that would be the envy of small towns. There are ways to streamline this. There is no reason why the private sector cannot be contracted to do many of these things and do them more efficiently and save money.

Mr. President, the Park Service identifies backlogs and other problems. It is fine to do park planning, but the process and the content needs to be timely and realistic. Park general management plans have been sitting on the shelves for years. It is time to update, implement and really go forward.

This is an ambitious agenda, but, in my opinion, there are concepts that

can be enacted. We can collectively achieve a great victory in the preservation of something that we all support.

My home State of Wyoming is now famous for its parks—Yellowstone, Teton, Devils Tower. Like most Americans, I take great pride in those. So we want to set a standard for national parks for the 21st century. We have invited, of course, the administration to join with us. Among other things, I have sent a letter to the President asking that he appoint a park director. There is not one now. In order to have some plans and work together, we do need some leadership there.

I am suggesting and want my colleagues to know I am prepared to undertake this issue, and together we can cause something constructive to happen. We have a great opportunity. The time is now, the time is right, and I am willing to work any time with anyone to bring the National Park Service into the 21st century alive, vibrant, efficient, effective, and lasting, more importantly, an agency that would provide excellent service to visitors and provide excellent service to the resource. We can do that.

Mr. President, I thank you, and I yield the floor.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague from Wyoming for his statement and his sincere commitment to our National Park System. As chairman of the Parks Subcommittee of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, he offers this country tremendous leadership in the area of parks and park management. I am sure his statement this morning is well received and clearly demonstrates some of the difficulties our Park Service now experiences that this Congress ought to be actively and responsibly dealing with.

(The remarks of Mr. CRAIG pertaining to the introduction of legislation are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

MINNESOTA FLOODS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss my visit to Minnesota last week to see firsthand the floods that have ravaged my State, as well as North and South Dakota, and the damage left behind in the water's wake. For the many Minnesotans who live and work in counties devastated by these floods, this continues to be a very difficult and emotional time.

Let me say first that President Clinton has approved the request of Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson to declare an additional 25 counties a major disaster area. That would help to bring to 46 the total number of counties eligible to receive Federal disaster assistance.

As Governor Carlson said in making his request to the President, this assistance will help to get people back into their homes.

The worst may not be over for many Minnesotans, however, especially those in the Red River Valley. Upstream on the Red River at Breckenridge, over 400 people were evacuated yesterday from the southern section of the community. It appears that the river may have stopped rising, and efforts will continue today to try and save the rest of the city.

There is still the danger that the river might crest all at once from Wahpeton south of Fargo to Grand Forks on the north because of water created by melting snow.

Last Thursday, I traveled with Senators CONRAD and DORGAN of North Dakota, Senator WELLSTONE of Minnesota, and other members of the congressional delegation, along with James Lee Witt, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Administration, to the cities of Ada, Moorhead, and many others. I traveled the next day with Vice President AL GORE to survey the damage in Breckenridge and elsewhere in western Minnesota.

On Saturday, I visited Red Cross and emergency service centers with Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Joanne Benson. At each stop over those 3 days, we witnessed widespread devastation and the strength of Minnesota's community spirit, as we spoke with many citizens whose lives have been turned upside down by the floods.

The disastrous flooding has severely disrupted the lives of many Minnesotans. Dreams of enjoying warm spring weather after a brutally long Minnesota winter has been replaced with efforts to ensure families and communities are safe and that adequate food, water, and shelter is available.

I am pleased that both State and Federal tax filing deadlines have been extended for those taxpayers living within the disaster areas.

Later this week, I will introduce legislation modeled after a bill I signed into law during the Midwest floods of 1993 to help ease lending regulations in those disaster-declared areas as well. This will make it easier for the restructuring of loans and prevent unnecessary foreclosures on farmers and other small businesses. The flooding—and the snow, the ice, and the cold that made relief efforts extremely difficult—has been an exhausting nightmare for those who are in it, and it has been agonizing for the rest of the Nation to watch. The Minnesotans I met with at the flood sites we traveled to have been tested time and time again.

The floods of 1997 are creating an agricultural disaster as well. While hard numbers do not exist yet, more than 2 million acres of Minnesota cropland are now under water, affecting thousands of farms, and all of Wilkin County's 400,000 acres of cropland are flooded. In Clay County, it is 200,000 acres under water.

It has been estimated that farmers who already lost more than \$100 million due to the blizzards that caused the floods could now have flood losses totaling over \$1 billion.

Dairy farmers have been hit especially hard, forcing them to dump hundreds of thousands of pounds of milk because milk trucks could not reach them. The biggest problem has been getting out to the farms that are surrounded by water.

Spring planting, which is normally just 2 weeks away, will be a problem in parts of southern Minnesota. Along the Red River Valley, more than 40 percent of the sugar beet crop is normally planted by the end of April. No one will be planting by then this year.

According to the National Weather Service, flood warnings remain in effect until April 20 along the Mississippi from St. Paul to Red Wing, as well as for portions of the St. Croix and the Minnesota rivers.

Red Cross volunteers have begun to close emergency shelters and are now distributing flood cleanup kits. By the end of last week, the Red Cross had served more than 55,000 meals to sandbaggers and those people in shelters.

While tough times are still ahead, I was moved by Minnesotans coming together for the common goal of protecting and cleaning up their communities.

In Ada, people are tense, weary from days of flood relief work, and still shaken by their losses. For those lucky enough to remain in their homes, the loss of heat and electricity were devastating in the harsh, winter-like conditions.

You may have read the story of Ada residents Warren and Colleen Goltz. Although the Goltzes lost electricity as water in a nearby drainage ditch began to rise, they decided to stay in their house. Four feet of water seeped into the basement, ruining many of their possessions.

They burned old newspapers in the fireplace to keep warm, but the temperature fell to 38 degrees. Finally, a friend arrived with a generator, another dropped off firewood, and another opened his house so they could use the phone.

As Rev. Earl Schmidt of the Zion Lutheran Church of Ada said, "It's going to make us much more caring for each other. I hope it makes us look to God more, obviously. And it's given us a quick lesson in survival."

We have been inspired once again by people of Minnesota, who have rallied together for their communities as they always do when tragedy strikes. It is during critical times such as these that we finally understand the importance of neighbor helping neighbor.

At a time when we rarely make the effort to get to know and appreciate our neighbors, Minnesotans in a great many of our communities have formed lasting bonds over this past week and found their civic spirit had been restored.

Mr. President, I was equally impressed with the efforts of Minnesota's