

the public is not getting the benefits of multiple-use fiscal responsibility, or good resource stewardship.

A number of ecologists have also questioned the ability to fulfill its mission of resource protection. Biologist Charles Kay of Utah State University has documented the destruction of the Crown Jewel of national parks, Yellowstone. Overpopulation of elk and buffalo has taken its toll. The result is starvation of thousands of elk, and overgrazed range, the destruction of plant communities, the elimination of critical habitat, and a serious decline in biodiversity. Karl Hess reported the same in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Some 39 million acres of Federal forest land are, as we speak, at risk of catastrophic wildfire and disease according to a GAO report of last year.

BETTER TOOLS—BETTER RESULTS—SATISFIED CONSERVATIONISTS

It is clear that merely dipping into the Federal Treasury does not ensure land conservation for the future. Under the current system of command and control, politics plays a major role in Federal land management. Some pragmatic changes in our Federal land agencies, however, could help us get the incentives right.

RECREATIONAL LAND

Lands historically used for recreation, should pay or attempt to pay their own way and not rely entirely upon congressional appropriations.

There is no doubt that park managers can better care for the land that Federal overseers in Congress who fail to allocate funds for necessary maintenance. The Fee Demonstration Program is a step in the right direction.

As land managers generate revenues and decide how the money will be spent, they are allowed to be more responsive to visitors, more expedient with maintenance, and more protective of natural resources.

COMMODITY LANDS

Not all Federal lands are equally deserving of preservation. In a world of limited resources, it makes sense to sell lands with lesser conservation values to ensure adequate protection for those worthy of conservation.

HABITAT SET-ASIDES

There are some lands under Federal management that are not likely to ever pay their own way, but have ecological or cultural value. The land might be critical wildlife habitat, watershed for large, diversified users, or the site of some historical event. These should be placed under a trust or endowment board. A portion of revenues derived from user fees at more popular sites or the sale of other lands could be used as endowment funds to manage these valuable areas. I am very supportive of this idea.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Current Federal land management permits land acquisitions without re-

gard to operating and maintenance costs. Before adding more land to the Federal estate and obligating the American taxpayer, a detailed accounting of annual operating and maintenance costs should be prepared and, like private conservators, laws should require that funding for proper management be part of the appropriation. No O&M money, no deal. I will insist on it.

LAND EXCHANGES

There is no doubt in my mind that land exchanges are necessary. Small units of range should be either traded or sold to block up large units for management purposes. The funds derived from the sales should be placed in the trust or endowment for management of other public holdings.

PRIVATE SOLUTIONS

As an alternative to Federal land conservation, private conservation by individuals and groups is a viable option with a long history in the United States. The growing demand to protect land resources has created a new impetus for private conservation through ownership and other legal mechanisms. Whether the land is managed for profit or to fulfill a mission, these private conservators have the right incentives. They face the opportunity costs for alternative uses of the resources. The result is often better land management than that provided by our Federal land managers.

FEE SIMPLE

Private landownership is the oldest and simplest form of land conservation. It will continue to exist as long as property rights are well-defined and owners can profit from their investment in conservation or achieve their conservation goals.

LAND TRUSTS, CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Tax benefits.
Perpetual easements.
Restructuring easements.

CONCLUSION

Changes that would improve land conservation and mitigate environmental damage without adding more land to the Federal estate include:

Lands for recreational use should pay their own way or generate some revenue to cover costs;

Land use rights on commodity producing lands should be sold for the highest value use. The winning bid could be commercial timber harvest, selective harvest to enhance wildlife habitat, wilderness, recreation, or some combination of uses;

Income from the sale of land and land use rights should be put into endowment funds to buy or manage lands with higher conservation values, such as those with critical wildlife habitat, scenic value, or historical significance; and

Barriers should be lowered to encourage private conservation and good stewardship.

At present our Federal land agencies are poor land stewards. Many times through no fault of their own, their budgets reach into the billions, yet damage to roads, sewers, buildings, forest, and rangelands remain and continue to worsen.

Only the lands that are under long-term lease arrangements with individuals or groups continue to improve.

Given the right incentives, we can protect areas like Yellowstone and Yosemite, preserve the Bob Marshall Wilderness of Montana, and the east front. But forests such as Clinch Valley, VA, are better left in private hands.

Again, I must iterate that the Conservation Reinvestment Act as written and presented this day, is ill-conceived and ill-advised. We can and must invest those dollars where the environmental objectives are clearly achievable.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 3 o'clock with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the following exceptions: The Senator from West Virginia, Mr. BYRD, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.; and the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee from 2 p.m. until 3 p.m.

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, Alexander Hamilton spoke 6 hours at the Constitutional Convention. So I think I am in rather good company.

THE PLIGHT OF OUR NATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the great English novelist, Charles Dickens, began his epic novel, "A Tale of Two Cities," with these words, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. . . ."

Well over a century later, and a continent away from the writing of Dickens' story, those words could well describe the plight of our Nation in the last year of the 20th century.

That is this century—the last year of the 20th century.

The United States has never been more affluent, in terms of material wealth and creature comforts, or more impoverished in terms of spiritual well-being. It is the best of times materially. It is the worst of times spiritually. Millions are made daily on