

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 27, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

It is a measure of our progress as a Nation that today, in the 200th year of American Independence, we are in the midst of a dynamic movement to restore, protect and preserve our environment and, at the same time, make the most effective use of our natural resources -- with the objective of providing a better life for ourselves and for our children and grandchildren.

This society has come a long way since the time when the daily struggle with climate and wilderness dominated our ancestors lives, challenged their spirit and energies, and shaped attitudes that served so well to forge a new Nation. We have learned that our past progress was often achieved without adequate regard for the longer term consequences to our air, water and land. Some have concluded from our past experiences that certain national objectives -- such as a strong economy, an adequate supply of energy, and an improved environment -- are in conflict and we must choose among them. Others are concluding -- and I share their view -- that we can make good progress toward all these objectives if our goals are realistic, our resolve is firm, and our steps are deliberate.

The Sixth Annual Report of the Council on Environmental Quality which I am forwarding to the Congress surveys our environmental accomplishments and indicates that we have made much progress indeed.

The Council's summary of environmental conditions and trends describes the encouraging results of our efforts to clean up the air and water. We are beginning to bring our most chronic sources of water pollution under control, and we are improving the quality of some of our most heavily polluted waterways. We have improved air quality significantly in the United States during the past five years.

The progress we have made so far is in large measure a reflection of the investment the Nation has made in cleaning up the environment. In 1975 government and industry spent more than \$15 billion in capital and operating expenditures to meet the requirements of Federal pollution control legislation. The Federal Government alone has increased its pollution control outlays from \$751 million in 1970 to an estimated \$4.5 billion in the current fiscal year. Over the next ten years the Nation will spend more than \$22 billion per year to meet Federal pollution control requirements.

We can be proud of the progress we have made in improving the Nation's environmental quality. Yet, we must meet additional challenges over the next few years. We must improve our understanding of the effects of pollutants and of the

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means and costs of reducing pollution. As we develop new energy sources and technologies we must assure that they meet environmental standards. We also must continue the job of cleaning up pollution from existing sources.

The Council has reviewed the environmental conditions of our coastal zone and on Federal public lands and describes the diverse purposes they serve and the variety of ways in which our people can use and enjoy them. Because of the competing demands upon these areas, we will face a continuing challenge in assuring their best uses and in providing protection of their environmental values.

International activities over the past year have provided a helpful perspective for understanding the global scope of many environmental issues. Our community of nations is beginning to come to grips with this reality and, through the United Nations Earthwatch Program, is making a major attempt to monitor environmental conditions and trends throughout the world.

Our experience and our growing knowledge about the scientific, technical and economic aspects of environmental effects and controls has given us a basis for considering "mid-course corrections" in existing environmental laws. The attention now being given in the Congress and the Administration to a review of the requirements of the Clean Air Act and the Water Pollution Control Act are important examples of this new level of awareness.

In these and other efforts, we must set our goals carefully, pursue them vigorously, and maintain the balance among our national objectives. This is essential if we are to enjoy the continued public support for our environmental objectives that is necessary to future progress.

We have made an excellent start. I am confident we shall continue in this vital area.

GERALD R. FORD

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