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Office of the White House Press Secretary  
(Vail, Colorado)

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

BICENTENNIAL LAND HERITAGE PROGRAM

The President is proposing to establish a 10-year program to double America's heritage of national parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, urban parks, and historic sites. This new commitment will be a Bicentennial gift that the American people will give to this and future generations of Americans.

BACKGROUND

Because of the vision of our forefathers, today's citizens have inherited vast and irreplaceable gifts of parks, historic sites, wildlife sanctuaries, and recreation areas. The National Park Service's 287 units comprise 31.0 million acres. The Wildlife Refuge System's 378 units comprise 32.2 million acres. Yet, with our Nation's growth, these resources are often overcrowded and overused. At the same time, many areas which would make superb parks, sanctuaries, or recreation areas are being lost forever because land values often make other uses more attractive in the short term.

The proposed initial commitment of \$1.5 billion over 10 years would be a sound investment in America's priceless natural resources and avoid loss forever of an American heritage that cannot be replaced. It would mark again this Nation's commitment to preserve the best of our vast and beautiful continent. It would expand permanently the natural treasures future generations of Americans will inherit before these resources are priced out of the public domain.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

An appropriation request will be submitted to establish a \$1.5 billion, 10-year program to:

- provide \$141 million to be used to acquire new parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas and historic sites through the Land and Water Conservation.
- provide \$700 million to develop new and existing parklands and refuges into recreation and conservation resources ready to serve the public.
- provide \$459 million for upgrading and increased staffing of current system of national parks and wildlife refuges.
- provide \$200 million of additional funds to the Community Development Bloc Grand Fund to be available to upgrade existing parks, particularly in urban areas.

A. PROGRAMS INCLUDED AND FUNDING

1. Acquisition of new parks, wildlife refuges, recreation areas, and historic sites. (\$141 million immediate appropriation from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to remain available for 10 years.) Additions to the National Park System--\$110 million for parks, national rivers, recreation areas, and historic sites. Additions to the National Wildlife Refuge System--\$31 million for the preservation of natural areas and habitat for wildlife, including endangered species.

(MORE)

(OVER)

The National Park Service currently purchases approximately 60,000 acres annually, utilizing approximately \$77 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. At this time, 559,608 additional acres and \$449,631,713 are required to acquire lands in congressionally authorized park and recreation areas and historic sites of the National Park System. Such purchases would be made in future years to the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Fish and Wildlife Service currently acquires approximately 85,000 acres annually, utilizing funds available from the Migratory Birds Conservation Account (\$19.5 million in 1976) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (\$9.4 million in 1976). The President's Bicentennial Land Heritage Program will initially more than double the nation's total acreage of parks, recreation areas, and wildlife refuges. Over the 10-year period, it will continue to add acreage by building upon a growing Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Bicentennial Land Heritage Program will over these 10 years be annually coordinated with the increases in the Fund so as to best supplement, support and develop acreage added by expansions in the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

2. Development of these new and existing parklands and refuges into recreation and conservation resources ready to serve the public. (\$700 million immediate appropriation to remain available for 10 years over and above existing development programs and funding for units already in the National Park and Wildlife Refuge Systems.)

Such funds are generally to be used to implement park and refuge master plans, which include visitor facilities, roads and trails, resource management tools, and such additional improvements as may be necessary for effective park and refuge management.

National park units -- \$500 million  
National wildlife refuges -- \$200 million

3. Upgrading and increased staffing of current systems and national parks and wildlife refuges. (\$459 million, of which \$259 million immediate appropriation to remain available for ten years for upgrading, and \$200 million over ten years to be appropriated approximately \$20 million annually for increased staffing.)

Upgrading--\$259 million for rehabilitation of deteriorated facilities, with \$194.3 million for national parks and \$64.7 million for wildlife refuges, with emphasis to be given to those areas where public use opportunities are greatest.

Increased staffing--\$200 million and approximately 1,500 permanent positions, with 1,000 for national parks and 500 for wildlife refuges to bring the present field employment up to a level that will insure the protection of the natural resources and meet the increasing public demand. (\$20 million annually for ten years--\$13 million for the National Park Service and \$7 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service.)

4. Increased funding of cities and states to be available for parks and recreation areas.

The Community Development Bloc Grant Program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development makes available funds--on both a formula and discretionary basis to communities and states for community development purposes, including the development of parks and recreation areas. \$200 million will be added to the FY 1977 level of \$3.2 billion. Recipients will be urged to give high priority to upgrading existing parks, particularly in urban areas.

B. SPENDING REQUIREMENTS

While most of the program (all but \$180 million) would be appropriated in FY 1977, spending in terms of outlays in FY 1977 would be about \$185 million.