

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 31, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am today submitting to the Congress the Bicentennial Land Heritage Act. This proposal establishes a 10-year national commitment to double America's heritage of national parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, urban parks, and historic sites. The Bicentennial Land Heritage Act would authorize and appropriate funds for the acquisition, improvement, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the National Parks System and National Wildlife Refuge System and increase grants to communities to improve park and recreation facilities.

Enactment of my proposal would establish a \$1.5 billion program to:

- ... provide \$141 million to be used to acquire lands for parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas, and historic sites.
- ... 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 for the national parks and wildlife refuges systems.
- ... provide \$200 million for grants to cities to upgrade present park areas in disrepair.

This bill also contains a supplemental budget request for appropriations totalling \$1.32 billion for fiscal year 1977, \$1.30 billion to remain available for obligation until 1986.

The Bicentennial Land Heritage Program will significantly influence the future of the 31-million acre National Park System. The System, with its 287 areas, contains outstanding natural features and historical sites. These areas often suffer from overuse or deficient maintenance, and areas with high recreation potential often lack adequate access roads and visitor facilities. Many of the nationally significant historical and archeological sites are deteriorating from lack of proper protection and suitable resource management planning and execution. The addition of lands to the System, coupled with effective resource management, will increase opportunities for outdoor recreation, as well as insure the protection and perpetuation of these resources for future generations. Their inclusion would also help to alleviate overcrowding problems at areas currently in the System, where sharply accelerated visitation during recent years has seriously impacted park resources.

The Bicentennial Land Heritage Program will also be important to the National Wildlife Refuge System. The 378 National Wildlife Refuges, which encompass 32 million acres, provide habitat for a wide variety of the Nation's fish and

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wildlife. The Refuge System, like the National Park System, has deteriorated seriously. In the last two decades, the System has doubled in size, and public visitation has quadrupled to 30 million visitors a year. Yet, staffing has not been increased in the last ten years. Many facilities such as roads, buildings, and water management structures have deteriorated for lack of maintenance. Of even more concern is the daily destruction of the Nation's essential wildlife habitat which is being bought, developed, polluted, or otherwise altered.

To assist in improving community parks and recreation facilities the Program would also authorize funds, pursuant to the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, in the amount of \$200 million to be available for communities to use in their recreation programs.

As part of the Bicentennial Land Heritage Program, I again urge the Congress to act expeditiously and to enact the proposed Alaska Conservation Act which was first proposed in December 1973 and resubmitted in March 1975. I am disappointed that the 94th Congress has failed to take action on this initiative. My hope is that the Congress will take positive action on this important conservation measure, which would add more than 64 million acres of land to the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System and thus double the size of both of these systems.

The program I now present to the Congress will reaffirm our Nation's commitment to preserve the best of our vast and beautiful country and the wildlife inhabiting it. It will be a sound investment in America which will pay off handsomely by permanently insuring and enriching the natural treasures to be inherited by future generations. All Americans must stand committed to conserve and cherish our incomparable natural heritage -- our wildlife, our air, our water resources and our land itself. As our nation begins its third century, we must renew our commitment to save this great natural heritage for the enjoyment of future generations of Americans.

Accordingly, I strongly urge the Congress to enact the proposed "Bicentennial Land Heritage Act of 1976", which establishes a program designed to insure the fulfillment of this national commitment.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,

August 31, 1975.

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## A BILL

To authorize and appropriate funds for the acquisition, improvement, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System areas and to increase grants to communities to improve park and recreation facilities.

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the Bicentennial Land Heritage Act of 1976.

SEC. 2. The Congress hereby finds that:

(a) the unparalleled natural beauty of America, its natural areas, open spaces and valuable wildlife habitat must be further preserved and protected;

(b) the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System are the repository of much of this natural beauty;

(c) many community park and recreation facilities need improvement and rehabilitation in order to provide expanded recreation opportunities; and

(d) America's Bicentennial is an appropriate opportunity to protect and expand our heritage of natural resources. The Congress therefore declares that the Nation should embark upon a Bicentennial Land Heritage Program for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations of Americans through acquisition, improvement, rehabilitation, and maintenance of units of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System, and to enable our communities to improve their park and recreation facilities.

TITLE I - BICENTENNIAL LAND HERITAGE PROGRAM

SEC. 101. (a). There is hereby established the "Bicentennial Land Heritage Program" for the acquisition, improvement, rehabilitation, and maintenance of units of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System, and for the improvement of community recreation facilities.

(b) In order to fund the "Bicentennial Land Heritage Program",

(1) there are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior, to remain available until expended but not later than September 30, 1986, the following sums:

(A) from the unappropriated balance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, \$110,000,000, to be used for acquisition of lands, waters and interests therein for the National Park System, and \$30,743,000 to be used for acquisition of lands, waters and interests therein for the National Wildlife Refuge System;

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- (B) \$500,000,000 for the development of units of the National Park System, and \$200,000,000 for the development of units of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- (C) \$259,257,000 for deferred facility maintenance on units of both the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System, and \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 1977 and each of the next nine fiscal years for operation, maintenance and personnel within both Systems; and
- (2) the authority of the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under Section 103 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-383) is amended
- (A) by inserting the following language after subsection (b):
- "(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, and in addition to the amounts made available under subsections (a) and (b), there is authorized to be appropriated not to exceed \$200,000,000 for fiscal year 1977 for grants under this title to units of general local government and States pursuant to the allocation provisions of Section 106, except that such amount shall be allocated without regard to or limitation by the hold harmless provisions of Section 106(a) and provisions of Section 106(c).", and
- (B) by redesignating subsections (c) and (d) of Section 103 of such Act as (d) and (e) respectively.

## TITLE II - APPROPRIATIONS

### DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

#### COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

##### Community Development Grants

For an additional amount for contracts with and payments to units of general local government and States as authorized by section 103(c) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, \$200,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 1979.

### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

#### BUREAU OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

##### Land and Water Conservation Fund

For an additional amount to be derived from the "Land and Water Conservation Fund" for land acquisition, to remain available until September 30,

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1986, not to exceed \$140,743,000, of which (1) not to exceed \$110,000,000 shall be available to the National Park Service and (2) not to exceed \$30,743,000 shall be available to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Resource Management

For an additional amount for "Resource management", \$7,000,000.

Construction and Anadromous Fish

For an additional amount for "Construction and anadromous fish", \$264,957,000, to remain available until September 30, 1986.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Operation of the National Park System

For an additional amount for "Operation of the National Park System", \$13,000,000.

Planning and Construction

For an additional amount for "Planning and construction" for rehabilitation, reconstruction, maintenance, and new construction, including roads and parkways, \$694,300,000 to remain available until September 30, 1986.

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