

Earlier this year, the Western Governors Association, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, met and produced a western fire policy that dealt with these fire-prone acres. They proposed a collaborative process that targeted those critical areas in all of the States involved and that would allow us to move forward in a relatively unrestricted but environmentally sound way to do so. There has been a lot of work going on to try to solve this problem.

Late this month, the President was out in Oregon, looked at those fire scenarios, and reported that he, too, agreed that active management was necessary, that our forests were at a critical state, that we were in a state of emergency, and that failure to respond was negligence on our part. The President also said we shouldn't block from the courthouse doors people who would want to appeal or object.

While I agree with you, Mr. President, and TOM DASCHLE, your colleague, chose a slightly different course that would have denied appeals and court actions under certain circumstances, we are working right now to try to see if we can craft that collaborative process that would limit but still allow some degree of protest and/or objection, or appeal based on law and based on the reality of the environment, and at the same time not allow those thousands who would choose to obstruct entirely—to simply use that as a tool to bring any action on our public land.

I hope by tomorrow we can bring to the floor that kind of an amendment which will have bipartisan support. We are going to try mightily to achieve that.

Let me close with this thought, because to me this is the most frightening of the thoughts about which I have talked.

Six point three million acres have burned to date, 2,500 homes have been wiped out, and 25 people have died trying to fight those fires. If this had been Hurricane Andrew, which devastated less, we, with the full force of the Government, would be out there today helping those people rebuild those homes and trying to solve the problem. But some have said: Oh, no, this is just Mother Nature, and this is natural. Well, hurricanes are Mother Nature, and they are very natural. But still we have reacted differently. A hurricane is going on in the forests of public lands—wiping out millions of acres of trees, 2,500 homes, killing 25 people to date, and it is clearly something we have to speak to, and speak loudly.

Even if we are able to gain public support to get optimum public activity on our public land, if we are able to thin and clean and fireproof tens of millions of acres a year—even if we do that—our scientists are telling us that the forested lands—the Great Basin West primarily, but all of the public forests of our country—today are in

such unhealthy condition that over the next 15 years we could still average anywhere from 5 million to 8 million acres a year being wiped out by wild-fire, depending on climate conditions—drought or lack of moisture.

Shame on us for having waited so long to attempt to do so little. But we must attempt now to do something. I hope we can bring all of the communities of interest together in a kind of collaborative process to look at these acres, to deal with what we call the class 3 sick, dead, and/or dying bug-infested acres, to look at our urban wildland interface, to talk about and help shape the environment that protects homes while at the same time protecting wildlife habitat and watershed and what can once again be the beautiful forests of this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed as if in morning business for up to 12 minutes.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. President.

CONSERVATION FUNDING IN THE INTERIOR BILL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today the Senate begins consideration of the fiscal year 2003 Interior appropriations bill. Land conservation funding is the critical component of this legislation—funding for land conservation preserves, wetlands, open fields, barrens, and woodlands that are threatened by ever-increasing pressures from development.

I would like to highlight three land conservation projects funded in this bill that are of particular significance to the State of Maine.

First, let me congratulate the distinguished chairman and ranking member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, Senators BYRD and BURNS, for producing a bill that includes a generous amount for land conservation effort in the face of severe fiscal constraints.

The Forest Legacy Program, in particular, is funded at \$80 million in this bill, which represents a nearly 25-percent increase from last year's level. This is a remarkable achievement considering that when I first joined the Senate in 1997, the Forest Legacy Program was funded at only \$2 million.

I am a very strong supporter of the Forest Legacy Program because it recognizes that our forests are both the source of good jobs and of boundless recreational opportunities for our sportsmen, our hunters, our hikers, and everyone who enjoys the great outdoors.

I am very pleased, therefore, that the bill before us today includes \$2.9 million in Forest Legacy funding for an important project in Maine. It is

known as the West Branch Project. The funding that is in this legislation will help us complete this important land conservation effort. This historic project has been more than 3 years in the making, and it is a testament to what can be accomplished when the Federal Government teams up with private landowners, private nonprofit groups, and State and local governments to preserve special lands. I have worked hard with my senior colleague from Maine to help this project reach fruition.

This significant project will protect 330,000 acres of lakefront and forest lands in some of the most pristine areas of the State of Maine. Much of the West Branch lands make up the viewshed from Mt. Katahdin, Maine's largest peak and the northernmost point of the Appalachian Trail. Their protection through the Forest Legacy Program is critical for the well-being of Maine's recreational and natural resources. Moreover, protection of this land through the Forest Legacy Program will enable the landowners to continue to supply area mills and support the local economy while allowing the public continued access to the beautiful lakes, streams, and back country wildlands that are characteristic of this area.

That is why the Forest Legacy Program is such a good one. It recognizes that our forests have multiple purposes, that they can provide good jobs for those in the forest products industry as well as being a source of beautiful recreational opportunities for all of us who enjoy walking through the woods or fishing or hunting or enjoying the lakes and streams that abound in those forests.

Regrettably, the House Interior appropriations bill does not contain any funding for completing the West Branch Project; therefore, I hope the Senate position will prevail in conference.

Another land conservation project that is important to my State is the protection of the 8,600-acre Leavitt Plantation Forest. I, again, thank the managers of this bill for including \$600,000 for this project in their legislation.

Leavitt is the largest contiguous forest in southern Maine. The forest was targeted for development 2 years ago, when it was scheduled for auction in as many as 13 separate parcels.

Fortunately, Renewable Resources, a timber management company, approached the Maine Department of Conservation and the Nature Conservancy with a plan to protect Leavitt Plantation. Working together with the owner of the property, the company agreed to purchase the tract up to the New Hampshire border and to sell a conservation easement that will protect wildlife habitat, while allowing the property to continue to be managed for forestry and recreation.

Finally, the bill includes \$3 million to purchase critical shorebird nesting

areas within the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. It is easy to see why so many are committed to protecting the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge's 5,000 acres are home to rich and diverse wildlife habitats, including coastal salt marshes, barrier beaches, forested wetlands, coastal meadows, and upland forests.

During the course of the year, more than 250 species of birds, 47 species of mammals, and 35 species of reptiles and amphibians can be found at the refuge. What is most remarkable about the refuge is that all of this wildlife and habitat diversity is located in Maine's most populated region. So this makes this wildlife refuge a particularly special place to the people of southern Maine.

The funding in this bill for Rachel Carson will help protect the habitat found on these lands. In addition, it will preserve open space in a region of Maine that faces tremendous development pressure. This project serves as yet another example of how nonprofit and community organizations can work together with the Federal Government to identify and acquire critical lands from willing private sellers that otherwise might be lost forever to sprawl and other development.

It takes considerable resources for the Federal Government to be an effective partner in the effort to protect habitat and preserve open space, particularly in high-growth areas such as southern Maine where the cost of land is increasingly high. That is why I have worked so hard in Washington to secure the resources needed to support these community-based conservation efforts in my home State.

Rachel Carson, the patron of the Wildlife Refuge, once said of her substantial accomplishments:

The beauty of the living world I was trying to save has always been uppermost in my mind. . . . Now I can believe I have at least helped a little.

I think Rachel Carson would agree that the land conservation funding in the Interior bill we are considering today is helping, piece by piece, to preserve "the beauty of the living world" and to "help a little." I am very pleased to support the land conservation efforts in the bill. Again, I thank the managers for their leadership in this area.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CARNAHAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STATE FAIR FOCUS GROUP

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, I say to my colleagues, Senators LIEBERMAN and THOMPSON and others who

will be here, I have been known to speak for several hours, but I will not. I will just take a few minutes. When Members come to the floor to start debate of the homeland defense bill, I will be pleased to finish.

As a matter of fact, I will have an amendment, which will be the "no Federal contracts for expatriates" amendment, which is very similar to what I did on the Department of Defense bill. The House of Representatives actually took action on this with a pretty strong vote. What this says is, if you have companies that have moved to Bermuda and renounced their citizenship, they will not be getting any Federal contracts. It is a pretty simple proposition. I look forward to introducing the amendment and hope to do it shortly, this afternoon. I am ready to get going.

We have so much to do in such a short period of time that I hope Senators will come to the floor with amendments on both sides. I will be ready to do so.

As long as I am on the topic, I wanted to talk about my experience back home. I don't know about you, but we all have our own focus groups. The greatest focus group in Minnesota is the State fair. It is really quite a happening. In about 12 days, almost half the State's population comes to the State fair—2.5 million. That might be a slight exaggeration but not by much.

There are a couple of things I really like about the fair. One is, it is sort of the essence of political equality. Nobody has a lobbyist. Everybody counts as one and no more than one. Everybody comes up and talks with you.

I also like what we call the greater Minnesota focus. We have a very thriving metropolitan community, but we are also an agricultural State. It is great to see the very strong emphasis on agriculture at the fair.

It is a focus group because you can be at your own booth, and lots of people come up, and I guess that is self-selection, where maybe it is a lot of supporters and whatnot. But even there, certainly walking around, you will run into everybody and anybody, and people are going to tell you what is on their mind.

I heard a lot—a lot, a lot—about corporate responsibility. I don't know if people used those words, but there is really a lot of concern about this flat economy. And look at the news yesterday and today. That is what we have. People really are worried that they will not have any pension, and they are worried they might not have a job. In Minnesota, Mr. Joseph Nacchio, CEO of QWEST, Minnesotans, starting with the QWEST employees who worked so hard to build that company, they are not one bit pleased that while Mr. Nacchio was cheerleading them to invest a big part of their 401(k) in QWEST stock, he was dumping his own and walked away with around \$230 million. There is a lot of that.

People are looking for those of us here to be watchdogs for them. They

are looking for us to not be too influenced by all the big economic interests with all their money and lobbyists and their connections and clout. People are saying to all of us, we want you to be for us. I guess sometimes they are not so sure the Senate always is for them. In that respect, the Sarbanes bill was a very positive step forward.

We had a stalemate here in 1994 on health care when we were talking about universal health care coverage. Really between 1994 and now, it is as if this never was an issue. But the issue of health security, of affordable health care coverage for people, for their loved ones and families, has walked into people's living rooms. I heard more discussion of the cost of it—the premiums, the copays, the deductibles, the inadequate coverage—just unbelievable—and, of course, prescription drug coverage by the elderly and also by others. Health care has emerged. I don't have my own poll on all these issues, but I think it is a top issue for families.

In Minnesota, children have just started school, as in other States, and education is right up there. I am not without my bias. Two of our children are teachers. I will just tell you that Minnesota and a lot of States around the country are still counting on us to provide the resources that we committed to providing to them for education. There is a lot of discussion about education.

There were questions about Iraq, what is going to happen, concern. I don't think people feel they have much information. They want more information. They want to know about the different options and consequences of those different options.

Over and over again, if you want to say politics is very concrete and doesn't have much to do with labels, whether it was suburbs, inner city or greater Minnesota small towns, so much of the discussion was about the economy, so much of the discussion was: Senator, what is going to happen to our schools? We had to cut all these teachers. We don't have enough resources. Senator, my wife or my husband has \$800 a month or \$500 for prescription drugs. Senator, why do the pharmaceutical companies have so much power? Senator, what is going to happen to my pension? Senator, how did those big companies get away with what they have done to us?

That is really what I heard about again and again: I have no coverage; I don't have enough insurance.

I could go into a whole separate discussion. I see my colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN. I said when he came to the floor I would finish. I will.

I could have a separate discussion about agricultural policy and about small business and about veterans who are coming up, facing long waiting lines for health care in Minnesota. I just want to remind everybody: We have a lot of work to do in a short period of time. We ought to have amendments out here on the floor. We better