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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 17, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR EDWIN L. HARPER

FROM: MARTIN L. SMITH

SUBJECT: SOTU/Environmental Initiative

Historically, support for environmental legislation has been bipartisan. President Richard Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970. Today, America has the finest environmental protection program of any nation in the world. We spend approximately \$219 dollars per capita on environmental protection. This is more than the gross domestic product of 141 out of 156 countries which compile such information.

A growing rift exists between this Administration and the environmental community. Environmentalists have expanded their constituents to include conservation groups such as the predominantly republican National Wildlife Federation and the Izaak Walton League. Conservationists are joining forces with environmentalists because they perceive that this Administration is anti-environment. The media reinforces this negative perception.

Four issues dominate the public's negative perception. These include:

- (1) a negative attitude toward Secretary James Watt's stewardship of public lands;
- (2) concern that EPA is not enforcing environmental laws;
- (3) a fear that hazardous wastes have not been disposed of properly; and,
- (4) inaction by the Administration on Acid Rain.

Other than the Coastal Barrier Bill, this Administration has not offered any positive environmental initiatives. The President has not made a single environmental speech or publicly met with environmental leaders. I would strongly urge that the State Of The Union message contain both new initiatives and gestures toward environmentalists. Specific new initiatives include:

- (1) Rebuilding our national parks: more jobs can be developed with a civilian conservation corps program at a lower cost than in construction of highways and bridges. Interior Secretary Watt has stated that the parks have deteriorated and are in need of basic maintenance. A conservation corps type program is an inexpensive method for employing youth;
- (2) A pilot project to lime acid rain sensitive lakes as an interim mitigation strategy. This program would help alleviate Congressional pressure for a costly acid rain control program; and,
- (3) A demonstration program to address soil erosion. Soil erosion is an international problem in which the U.S. could exercise leadership.

In addition to new initiatives the President should include a number of positive gestures in the speech. These would include use of environmental rhetoric, recognition of an environmental group's action as displaying the voluntary spirit of America, praise for the conservation of energy which the American public has displayed, etc.