

about the elementary schoolers who grow vegetables and donate much of their harvest to the D.C. Central Kitchen. I heard about the AmeriCorps members and hundreds of other dedicated volunteers who work here to make sure that we'll always have this beautiful sanctuary in the middle of our Capital City.

I'd like to mention one of them who is here, Mary Morose, over here. Thank you for being here. She is a retired Government geologist who recently donated more than \$1 million of her life's savings to help ensure that the Arboretum will always be here, for the children to see. Thank you, and God bless you.

We're just here trying to follow Mary's lead. We think every child in every community ought to have a chance to grow up around tall trees as well as tall buildings, to know what vegetables look like when they're growing in the ground, not just when they're in the grocery store, to know what it feels like to walk on a carpet of pine needles as well as one of asphalt.

At the dawn of the century, many Americans saw nature only as a resource to be exploited or an obstacle to be overcome. We can all take pride, each of us, in the work that we have done and will do. But it really is truly astonishing that at the dawning of the industrial age in America, Theodore Roosevelt even then knew nature was a divine gift, that old-growth forests were more than trees to be cut down, that a pristine peak was more than a repository of ore. He set aside millions of acres of forests and mountains and valleys and canyons, land shaped by the hand of God over hundreds of millions of years. He defined his great central task as leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us. In the last 100 years, I think only his kinsman, Franklin Roosevelt, approached his devotion to setting aside land and preserving resources.

We have tried over these last 6 years to fulfill that vision. We have set aside more than 1½ million acres in the spectacular red rock canyons in Utah. And I might say, I think more and more folks out there have decided it's not such a bad idea. [Laughter] We have protected vast acres of the Mojave Desert of California, designating three new national parks; saved more than 400,000 pristine acres of land in Alaska. We're about to complete an historic agreement to save vast tracts of ancient redwoods in California. We have worked hard to preserve the Florida Everglades and to restore much of them;

and put a stop to a massive mining operation planned for right next to Yellowstone, America's very first national park.

But we have a lot to do. All of you know that. Our population is growing; our cities are growing; our commitment to conservation must grow as well. We'll never have a better time to act because of the unprecedented prosperity, because we had our first surplus this year—or last year—in nearly 30 years. And we ought to remember what Theodore Roosevelt said, "We are not building this country of ours for a day. We have to make sure it lasts through the ages."

So today I am proud to announce a lands legacy initiative: \$1 billion to meet the conservation challenges of a new century, fully paid for in my new balanced budget, more than doubling our already considerable commitment to protect America's land. It represents the single largest annual investment in protecting our green and open spaces since Theodore Roosevelt set our Nation on the path of conservation nearly a century ago. And to keep on that path, we will be working with Congress to create a permanent funding stream for this purpose, beginning in 2001.

The first part of the plan builds directly on Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy by adding new crown jewels to our endowment of natural resources. Next year alone, we will dedicate \$440 million, largely from the sale of oil from existing offshore oil leases, to acquiring and protecting precious lands and coastal waters. Secretary Babbitt and I were talking about it on the way in.

Among our many priorities, we intend to secure an additional 450,000 acres of private land in and around the new Mojave and Joshua Tree National Parks, to expand beautiful forest refuges in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York, to continue our massive restoration of Florida's Everglades, to extend America's marine sanctuaries and restore coastal reefs.

In addition, I will propose to add the highest level of wilderness protection to more than 5 million acres of back-country lands within Yellowstone, Glacier, Great Smoky Mountain, and other national parks. If Congress approves this request, then these places will never know the roar of bulldozers and chainsaws. They will never drown out the call of the wild. Families will still be free to enjoy the lands, but they