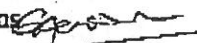


MEMORANDUM

1/19/96

TO: Don Baer, White House Director of Communications

FROM: Lisa Guide, deputy director of communications
Mike Gauldin, director of communications 
U.S. Department of the Interior

Re: Secretary Babbitt's recommendation on environmental element to the President's State of the Union speech.

This follows up on Secretary Babbitt's memo to the President last week concerning the State of the Union Address.

In order for the environment to become a positive issue in the next election, it needs to be a visible issue. For that to happen, the President needs to take aggressive steps to inject the topic into the public debate. The GOP now know they can't give us a Clean Water Act or Endangered Species Act to veto -- it would play into our hands. They know they should not do anything more to make this a major issue. They know, as we do, that if the environment is an issue, the only person who can benefit is the President.

Without a major initiative by our Administration, and by the President personally, the environment likely won't factor in decisions by voters. It won't hurt the President. But it won't help him, either. The topic must be made newsworthy, President Clinton can do that, while at the same time enhancing his themes of common ground and community.

Secretary Babbitt suggests this theme for the State of the Union Address:

* * *

"Part of building community requires protecting the land and water that we all use and depend on for eating, drinking and enjoying life.

"But for much of the last century, we allowed our once-great bodies of water to become polluted, many of them to the point where they could no longer support the life of a community. But that is no longer the case. This is one area where success is undeniable.

"For the past 30 years, Americans have used such environmental laws as the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act to improve the quality of the landscape around and within their home towns; to improve the quality of their lives. We have cleaned up mighty rivers and small ponds. We have restored our natural resources so that today we have cleaner air and purer water than at any time in this half century.

"As our waters have been renewed, many of our older industrial cities have seen an economic rebirth, spurred by the restorative powers of a cleaner, healthier waterfront. In Cleveland some 30 years ago, the Cuyahoga River burned and Lake Erie was pronounced dead. But today, a site that was once a symbol of national shame and embarrassment is a symbol of hope and restoration. And so it must be for the rest of this nation.

"When the Clean Water Act was written in 1972, its goal was to make every river, lake and stream in America swimmable and fishable.

"But now a small minority in this Congress wants to roll back the very laws that have resulted in this progress. Tonight, I say once again, that I will not allow laws which protects our communities, our health, and our spirit to be ripped apart.

"Rather than giving up a war we're winning, we must redouble our efforts. Despite the great improvement in water quality, many American still have reason to doubt the purity of their drinking water supply. There are places in this country where a child still can't enjoy the simple pleasure of walking down to the local stream, throwing in a line and catching a fish the family can eat for dinner. Places where farmers can't drink water from the well on their land. That is not right, and we can do better.

"We will not weaken the Clean Water Act. We shall strengthen it. We will find more ways to help communities restore their waterfronts and their drinking water. The American people will be given what they want and what they've been working toward for 30 years: A Nation in which, once again, every river and stream is safe and clear and pure. We will accept nothing less."