

Mrs. Metcalf, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure and a sense of privilege that I greet you on behalf of Secretary Andrus and the Department of the Interior. It is quite fitting that we meet here in this beautiful spot alongside the Bitterroot River to pay tribute to the great man for whom this National wildlife refuge is named--Lee Metcalf.

I say "fitting" because Lee Metcalf was born and grew up here in the Bitterroot Valley. It was here that he began forming the values which guided his life-- a dynamic life by any standards; a life that counted, that continues to make a difference in the quality of our lives. This place--the 2,700 acres of Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge--is part of the legacy he left to us and for future generations of Americans.

A part, I said. For a few minutes I'd like us to consider the Metcalf legacy and its meaning for our future as individuals and collectively as a Nation.

When you ask the man on the street in Montana what he remembers best about Lee Metcalf, he will likely tell you what a logger working out of Missoula said not too long ago:

"Metcalf," the logger said, "cared for the little man...the common man who works hard to make a living. I figure he had our best interests at heart."

The Metcalf record attests to the truth of this man's words. From the time he first was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1952 and the U.S. Senate in 1960 until his untimely death in January, more than a year ago now, Lee Metcalf served on Congressional committees and worked on legislation which fostered programs to benefit the working people of Montana and the Nation:

Among Metcalf bills were those to increase the minimum wage and extend its coverage; to increase unemployment compensation; and to improve job safety.

He chaired hearings by a special subcommittee on health and safety in underground mines which led finally to enactment of the Mine Safety Act of 1961.

He sponsored legislation to provide for efficient use of, and reduced costs for-- electrical energy.

He worked for years to add health care for our elderly to the social security program.

He was a leading Congressional advocate of measures designed to give consumers a more effective voice in Government. He joined in legislative efforts to require truth in advertising, packaging and lending rates.

He was a man of keen intelligence, great skill and ability and the courage to act on his strongest-held beliefs. The wellbeing of the public he served was his greatest concern, and he knew that wellbeing depends now and in the future on the wisest use of our natural resources.

Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin has said that Lee Metcalf was "one of only a few National leaders who foresaw this Nation's crises in natural resources, environmental protection, and energy. And, he was one of a handful of legislators who, early in the 1960's before it became fashionable or politically acceptable, spoke out strongly and repeatedly for conservation and environmental protection legislation."

It was in 1956, ladies and gentlemen, that Lee Metcalf instigated the comprehensive study of the effects of pesticides on fish and wildlife. A part of this funded some of Rachel Carson's work. Her book, SILENT SPRING, was one result; and what happened in this country after its publication--another part of the Metcalf legacy.

Take the time before you leave this refuge today to observe the osprey nesting here. The comeback of this magnificent bird is only recent; we rarely have opportunity to see one, much less the several here. The osprey was saved when pesticides like DDT were banned from general use. When the osprey goes fishing today, it is not likely to ingest poisoned run-off from fields into streams. As a consequence, it lays normal eggs from which young osprey hatch, rather than the thin-shelled eggs that broke or cracked before hatching during the years when DDT was widely used.

It was in 1956 too that Lee Metcalf sponsored wilderness preservation legislation which eventually was enacted in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Under provisions of this Act, special areas are protected from exploitation...preserved in their natural state.

For years he fought for the Montana Wilderness Study Act and was especially proud when it was passed in 1977. It provides for detailed study of nine parcels of wild land in Montana totalling 973,000 acres. This legislation, in his own words, is "designed to force Montanans...to step back and take a sober look at where we are going."

In defense of this Act in 1973, he said, "If...small western Montana communities are to have a stable future, some restraint will simply have to be implemented... Many communities in our State may wake up 15 or 20 years from now to find the timber gone, the mills closed, small trout streams barren and siltladen, tourists repelled by visually disturbing clearcuts, and erosion and flooding heightened by damage to the watershed."

I suggest that perhaps his greatest contribution to our times as well as to our Nation's future was his constant and strong insistence that we step back to look soberly at where we are going. Senator Metcalf fully realized that no man or creature lives unto himself or itself, but that we are all interdependent.

What Lee Metcalf knew all along is becoming very clear to many more of us today--we can survive only as we insist on the best use and conservation of our basic natural resources.

Nowhere was Lee Metcalf's dedication to the conservation ethic more apparent than in his work on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. Senator Metcalf served for 14 years on this Commission, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Made up of the Secretary of the Interior as the Chairman, the Secretaries of Agriculture and Transportation, four members of the U.S. Congress and a member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Commission oversees acquisition of land for the National wildlife refuge system.

The Commission was created by the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, passed at a time in our history when the future of migratory waterfowl seemed most uncertain. As you know, wetlands or marshy areas are crucial to waterfowl for breeding, resting during long migration flights, and surviving winters. Yet millions of these marshy acres have been drained, filled and planted to crops.

In the terrible drought of the thirties dried swamps and ponds throughout key waterfowl breeding regions, some farsighted Americans stepped back for that sober look at where we were headed. They took action before the combination of drainage and drought could end one of nature's repeat rituals in this country. I'm talking about that spectacle we thrill to each fall and spring when millions of ducks, geese and other birds wing south for the winter and return north for the summer.

For awhile the Commission's job was relatively simple. From the proceeds of sales of Duck Stamps which went into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, members of the Commission could approve purchase or lease of large land tracts needed by migrating waterfowl and other wildlife. Some of the Commission's early-approved purchases cost as little as one to ten dollars per acre. At that kind of cost, areas as large as 100,000 acres might be acquired.

But like everything else, it seems, acquisition of land for refuges has become a lengthy and complex business. During the time the Lee Metcalf was a member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, negotiations to buy one to 10,000 acres for a wildlife refuge might take as long as ten years. Moreover, at the greatly-increased costs per acre, the Commission had its work cut out for it to be sure that the public was getting its money's worth and that the land purchases made were in the best interests of the wildlife resources to be served.

We get some idea of how seriously Senator Metcalf viewed this responsibility when we consider that he never missed even one of the fifty meetings of the Commission during his 14 years of service on it, from 1961 to 1975. In that time, the Commission approved the purchase of 525,000 acres of land and the creation of 43 new refuges--including this one--as well as additions to many others. This refuge, certainly not one of the largest but just as certainly one of great quality and natural beauty, was renamed for Lee Metcalf last year.

That action seems particularly appropriate, considering his legacy of stewardship of all our natural resources. I'm told that Senator Metcalf was amazed by the changes to the Bitterroot Valley over the years, from the time when he relished living here as a boy and young man to those times when he came back to refresh mind and spirit as a man and one of our Country's most respected legislators.

None of us knows what further changes the future will bring to the Bitterroot Valley. What we do know is that here, on the 2,700 acres of Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, the Valley will remain a haven for wild creatures, pretty much as it was when the Lewis and Clark expedition traversed it and the Flathead Indians ritualistically picked its bitterroot for nourishment.

Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge is one of 390 located throughout our country which play vital roles in the preservation of our Nation's wildlife heritage. The National wildlife refuge system itself is part of Senator Metcalf's legacy to our future.

He had three more major conservation goals in mind at the time he left us--establishment of the Great Bear Wilderness in northwestern Montana; the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness just north of Wyoming, and protection of the vast public interest lands in Alaska. He had wanted to accomplish these during his last year in office.

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with the Absaroka-Beartooth and his Great Bear Wilderness now exist. President Carter paid special tribute to Senator Metcalf at the signing of the Great Bear Wilderness Bill. The President said:

"Establishment of the Great Bear Wilderness is the product of years of work by a tireless and dedicated conservationist, the late Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana. He introduced the legislation leading to the wilderness study of the area..."

Metcalf too was responsible for much of the groundwork laid for protection of Alaska's vast natural resources. This Administration is building on that groundwork, and any discussion of where we're going today must center on Alaska. It is the over-riding concern for those of us who share Lee Metcalf's love of the natural resources of our country and his concern that we consider well how we use them. Let me share with you some of the ways we mean to meet our responsibilities in Alaska.

You know how in the dying days of the last Congress the Alaska lands legislation was derailed.

Again in this Session, the House has passed legislation based on careful and time-consuming studies. The margin for passage amazed just about everybody because the bill had been labeled a cliff-hanger. Instead our side won big. Now the matter awaits Senate action.

The Administration's often-stated preference is for the Alaska drama to be acted out under the orderly processes of Government.

If, however, this is not to be, then our system of checks and balances provides our safeguards for protecting the public interest. President Carter and Secretary Andrus have made it plain they are willing to use the Executive authorities which exist, in order to protect that last untouched storehouse of natural and cultural treasures.

If there ever was any doubt about the President's determination he dispelled it last December 1, when he withdrew about 56 million acres of the public interest lands and declared them National Monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Thirteen of the areas were proposed National Parks, two were proposed Wildlife Refuges, and two were to be National Forest Wilderness areas. The Antiquities Act does not provide for such designations, so they must remain permanent monuments until Congress provides otherwise.

Now, at President Carter's direction, we are moving forward with the work necessary to make final withdrawals into the Wildlife Refuge System of the rest of the lands in our Four Systems proposals--roughly 50 million acres. These proposals would become permanent units of the System under Section 204(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act--also known as the BLM Organic Act.

Public hearings have been completed. By fall we should be ready to begin the final executive action on what we had hoped to achieve through legislation.

Unfortunately, by being forced to take this route means there can be no legal sport hunting in the National Monument areas this fall--unless Congress completes the action the House started. Had the legislation become law, many of these lands would have become "park preserves"--a category created to afford them Monument protection but still allow sport hunting.

has not been so many years since it would have been unthinkable to propose legislation with such vast environmental consequences as the Alaska bills.

It is only in relatively recent times that Congress has had its sensibilities sharpened to such a high degree. We can only be thankful that Lee Metcalf was there years before, that in his more than a quarter century of service to the American public's wellbeing, he taught us the meaning of the conservation ethic. As his good friend and colleague in the U.S. Senate, Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, put it:

"In evaluating Lee Metcalf, it is not difficult to project what rewards his... service in the Congress will bring to America in the years ahead. He was a tireless champion of preserving and protecting our Nation's natural heritage for succeeding generations to use and enjoy. This gentle man from Montana loved the Earth and all its living creatures."

And so, Mrs. Metcalf, ladies and gentlemen, as our young people, whom he called this Nation's greatest natural resource, visit this refuge and in turn send their children, the refuge will remain to educate them to the enduring legacy left us by Lee Metcalf. (unveils plaque, which reads: Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge dedicated to Senator Lee Metcalf 1911 - 1978, a native Montanan whose commitment to conservation is reflected here.) This plaque will be a permanent part of the refuge.

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Suggested Remarks for Assistant Secretary Robert L. Herbst for Ceremony Honoring Lee Metcalf, 7/29/79, Stevensville, Montana.

Submitted by Violette Solt, Public Affairs Office, USFWS Region 6, Denver, CO.