

source for conservation that I am working with the Congress to provide will guarantee that places like the Valles Caldera will not disappear, but will be protected for all to enjoy. The acquisition of this irreplaceable resource has been a top conservation priority for my Administration and many in the Congress. This Act protects a magnificent natural resource for New Mexicans and all Americans, and we can all be proud of this legacy that we leave for generations to come.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 25, 2000.

NOTE: S. 1892, approved July 25, was assigned Public Law No. 106-248.

Statement on Signing the Valles Caldera Preservation Act

July 25, 2000

I am very pleased today to sign bipartisan legislation authorizing protection of New Mexico's Baca Ranch as the new Valles Caldera National Preserve.

From time to time, we are presented with an opportunity to save a truly magnificent piece of America's rich natural endowment. Today we seize one such opportunity. At the heart of the scenic Jemez Mountains west of Santa Fe, the Baca Ranch contains the remarkable Valles Caldera—the collapsed crater of an ancient volcano—and sustains one of our Nation's largest wild elk herds. Thanks to the careful stewardship of the Dunigan family, this extraordinary landscape appears today much as it did when the first settlers arrived. And thanks to the bipartisan efforts of the New Mexico delegation, we will ensure that it remains healthy and whole for generations to come.

I commend the Dunigans, for offering us the chance to open this treasure to the American people; Senators Bingaman and Domenici, and Representatives Udall and Wilson, for helping to lead this historic conservation effort; and the leaders of the Santa Clara Pueblo, for sharing with us their reverence for this land.

Today's success should inspire us to work even harder to conserve America's natural

heritage. The acquisition of Baca Ranch was made possible with increased conservation funding I secured last year through my lands legacy initiative. I have proposed another significant increase in lands legacy funding for the coming fiscal year. Unfortunately, appropriations bills passed by both the House and the Senate would provide only a third of my request, cutting lands legacy funding considerably below this year's level. In addition, riders attached to several appropriations measures aim to cripple wildlife protections, surrender public lands to private interests, and hamper commonsense efforts to combat global warming. I urge Congress to drop these anti-environmental riders and to fully fund my Lands Legacy initiative.

Ultimately, our goal must be to establish permanent conservation funding so that each new generation will have the resources to protect other critical lands across America. I am very pleased that the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today approved a version of bipartisan legislation passed overwhelmingly by the House that moves us closer to that goal. I am fully committed to working with Congress to create a lasting endowment to support Federal, State, and local conservation efforts. Let us work together, in the spirit of today's historic conservation achievement, to strengthen, not weaken, environmental protections.

NOTE: S. 1892, approved July 25, was assigned Public Law No. 106-248.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on New Markets, Empowerment Zone, and Community Renewal Legislation

July 25, 2000

I commend the House of Representatives for passing today the bipartisan new markets, empowerment zone, and community renewal legislation. At a time of unprecedented prosperity, too many Americans in our cities and rural areas still do not have access to investment capital and economic opportunity. This legislation will spur more private sector investment in these new markets so that all