

Proclamation 7723—National Forest Products Week, 2003

October 17, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our forests are a source of pride for our Nation. They benefit many Americans who depend on healthy forests for their livelihoods and quality of life. As we celebrate National Forest Products Week, we recognize the importance of our forest resources. We remain committed to sound, commonsense, forest management.

Beyond their scenic beauty, our forests are vital to our economy and our way of life. Numerous jobs in the manufacturing and construction industries, as well as in the forest products industries, rely on the health and sustainability of our forests. Forests provide lumber for building our homes, they provide paper for publishing our books and newspapers, and forests are the source of many other wood and paper products that Americans use every day.

We have a responsibility to maintain the health and productivity of our forests. In the past, forests have been spoiled by overgrowth, decimated by insects and disease, and devastated by wildfires. My Administration's Healthy Forests Initiative will help prevent this kind of destruction. Aided by this Initiative, we treated nearly 2.6 million acres of forests during the last fiscal year to reduce dangerous overgrowth and restore forest health. This is more than double the number of acres that were treated 3 years ago. My Administration is also committed to fulfilling the promise of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan to protect our most sensitive forest areas, while supporting a viable forest products industry and jobs in rural America. By encouraging active forest management and sustainable timber harvesting, we strengthen our economy and ensure the lasting beauty of our woodlands.

Recognizing the importance of our forests in ensuring the long-term welfare of our Nation, the Congress, by Public Law 86-753 (36 U.S.C. 123), as amended, has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday in

October of each year as "National Forest Products Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 19 through October 25, 2003, as National Forest Products Week. I call upon all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:20 a.m., October 21, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 18, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on October 22.

The President's Radio Address

October 18, 2003

Good morning. During the decades of Saddam Hussein's oppression and misrule, all Iraqis suffered, including children. While Saddam built palaces and monuments to himself, Iraqi schools crumbled. While Saddam supported a massive war machine, Iraqi schoolchildren went without textbooks, and sometimes teachers went unpaid. Saddam used schools for his own purposes: to indoctrinate the youth of Iraq and to teach hatred.

Under Saddam, adult illiteracy was 61 percent, and for women it was a staggering 77 percent. Iraq is a nation with a proud tradition of learning, and that tradition was betrayed by Saddam Hussein.

As part of our coalition's efforts to build a stable and secure Iraq, we are working to rebuild Iraq's schools, to get the teachers back to work, and to make sure Iraqi children have the supplies they need.

Six months ago, nearly all of Iraq's schools were closed, and many primary schools lacked electrical wiring and plumbing and

windows. Today, all 22 universities and 43 technical institutes and colleges are open, as are nearly all primary and secondary schools in the country. Earlier this year, we said we would rehabilitate 1,000 schools by the time school started. This month, just days before the first day of class, our coalition and our Iraqi partners had refurbished over 1,500 schools.

Under Saddam, textbooks were so rare, six students had to share each one. So we're working with UNESCO to print 5 million revised and modern textbooks free of Ba'athist propaganda and to distribute them to Iraqi students. By the end of the school year, there will be enough textbooks for each Iraqi student. And for the first time in years, they will get to read the work of great Iraqi writers and poets—much of it banned by Saddam's regime.

We have assembled more than a million school supply kits, including pencils and calculators and note pads for Iraqi schoolchildren. We have distributed tens of thousands of student desks and teacher chairs and chalkboards. And to assure the health of students, we have delivered over 22 million vaccinations for Iraqi children.

In many cases, American soldiers have intervened personally to make sure Iraqi schools get the supplies they need. Army First Lieutenant Kyle Barden of Charlotte, North Carolina, wanted supplies for the 11 schools in Laylan, Iraq. In response to Kyle's request for help, North Carolina schoolchildren, doctors, businesses, and others have donated thousands of dollars to buy notebooks and pencils and colored pens.

Army Major Gregg Softy of the First Armored Division sent an e-mail to friends about Iraq schools. The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of packages were shipped, and a web site was established to encourage other Americans to contribute.

All of our efforts to improve Iraqi education ultimately serve the cause of security and peace. We want young Iraqis to learn skills and to grow and hope, instead of being fed a steady diet of propaganda and hatred. We're making progress, but there is still much work to do. The request I made to Congress for Iraqi reconstruction includes

funds for additional health and training projects. I urge Congress to pass my budget request soon, so this vital work can proceed.

Our efforts will help Iraq reclaim its proud heritage of learning and bring it into the family of nations. An elderly man in Umm Qasr recently tried an Internet connection for the first time. He was stunned by the speed with which he could read newspapers from across the world. He said, "Our society has been cut off from the world, and now we are re-connected." As Iraq rejoins the world, it will demonstrate the power of freedom and hope to overcome hatred and resentment. And this transformation will make our Nation more secure.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:25 a.m. on October 16 in Riverside, CA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 17 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines and an Exchange With Reporters in Manila, Philippines

October 18, 2003

President Macapagal-Arroyo. I'd like to thank President Bush for coming to the Philippines on this state visit. It affirms the warm and deep relations between our two countries. It's another building block in the revitalized and maturing alliance, rooted in shared histories and shared values, a common interest in global peace and prosperity, as well as a real commitment of combating terrorism and advancing freedom.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the United States for its support for the Philippines as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council for the term 2004 to 2005 and also for designating the Philippines as a major non-NATO ally.