

Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. *Spratt*) for an opportunity to speak this evening, and I appreciate the work the gentleman has done to provide a balanced approach to meet our requirements in a fiscally responsible manner. I particularly appreciate the work done by the Democrats on the committee to deal with the environmental priorities of America.

I am saddened by a party-line vote that these proposals were rejected to be a part of the proposal brought forward by the majority. This budget is stunningly out of sync with where the typical American is in terms of protecting our environment and our natural resources. From oceans to brownfields, we have found environmental quality to be victim of the obsession of misplaced budget priorities and an obsession with more tax cuts.

In areas of clean water, every independent outside organization, and most of them within government, have identified that we have a serious problem with the Nation's aging water systems required to ensure safe drinking water; yet the President's budget and what we have here today reduces almost \$700 million for water quality responsibilities.

In the land and water conservation fund, we are breaking the promise that was negotiated here in the year 2000 where the conservation trust fund was established that should by now by rights, as a result of this bipartisan, bicameral agreement be moving funds in the neighborhood of \$2 billion for this fiscal year. But, unfortunately, this budget would turn its back on that responsibility.

Another important element is the land and water conservation fund authorized at almost \$1 billion; yet this budget includes only \$147 million for actual programs to help preserve parks, forests, wildlife refuges and open space, things that touch people where they live at home, garnering broad bipartisan support. This year the President and the Republicans go even further by eliminating the land and water conservation State grants programs which have provided critical funding to States and local communities to preserve open space and develop recreation facilities.

And one of the most significant broken promises is in the area of conservation in the agriculture sector. One of the elements that was negotiated as part of the farm bill, there were going to be investments in farm conservation; and yet this budget takes something that is so critical to America's farmers, particularly small and medium-sized operations, and cuts more than a half billion dollars from these vital farm bill conservation programs that unite rural America, conservation interests, people who care about natural resources.

Environmental Priorities Need To Be Addressed

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There is currently over a \$4 billion backlog of producers waiting to participate in these critical farm conservation programs. It is a travesty as far as the environment is concerned; and it is a sad, sad story for America's farmers who deserve better. I strongly urge the rejection of the majority proposal.