

Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of an important national debate on environmental protection, particularly in light of over 300 Bush administration environmental rollbacks. Yesterday was perhaps the most important announcement from this administration as they have opened up 60 million acres in national forests that were previously protected after extensive rulemaking throughout the Clinton administration. They now propose to turn that on its head and to abrogate Federal responsibility for our Federal land. The forests will be opened unless every State moves to protect, without national standards or safeguards.

It is unrealistic to expect every State to withstand extreme pressures from the special interests. History shows us that. The reason that every major environmental law was enacted at the Federal level was because we needed uniform national standards, and State stewardship was not adequate. The public knows that environmental protection to avoid a sad patchwork in our national forests requires that the Federal Government and this administration exercise full partnership. Sadly, the administration does not understand or support that concept.