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and all interested parties, should have the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed regulations. In the final regulations, the nature and degree of protections afforded should reflect the best available science and a careful consideration of the full range of ecological, economic, and social values inherent in these lands.

I commend you, along with the Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Jim Lyons, the Chief of the Forest Service, Michael Dombeck, and the entire Forest

Service for your leadership in strengthening and modernizing the management of our Federal forests—lands held by us in trust for all Americans and for future generations. With the new effort we launch today, we can feel confident that we have helped to fulfill and extend the conservation legacy of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, and to ensure that the 21st century is indeed a new century for America's forests.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Statement on Floods and Mudslides in Mexico

October 13, 1999

On behalf of the American people, I want to express our deepest condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives and homes in the devastating floods and mudslides in Mexico, which have taken hundreds of lives and left tens of thousands of people homeless. It was less than a month ago that Hurricane Floyd brought flooding to the States along our own

east coast, reminding us of the pain such tragedies can bring and of the importance of neighbor helping neighbor in times of crisis. In the days ahead, our thoughts and prayers will be with our good friends, the people of Mexico, as they work to rebuild from these terrible tragedies. As a people and a Government, we stand ready to help in any way we can.

Statement on the Conclusion of the Independent Counsel's Investigation of Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt

October 13, 1999

I am very pleased by today's announcement concerning Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. As I said at the beginning of this inquiry, Bruce Babbitt is a man of the highest integrity, and I was convinced that he would be vindicated.

Secretary Babbitt's record of superb stewardship of our Nation's lands speaks for itself, and I look forward to his continuing service to our country, its people, and its extraordinary God-given resources.

Statement on Proposed Hate Crimes Legislation

October 13, 1999

It has been a year since the murder of Matthew Shepard, and 2 years since I first proposed to strengthen the Nation's hate crime laws. During this time, hundreds of Americans have been injured or killed, simply because of who they are. In response to this epidemic of violence,

people around the country have joined me in calling on Congress to pass this important legislation.

Earlier this year, the Senate passed my legislation, which, if enacted, would strengthen current law by making it easier to prosecute crimes