

The President. But we're excited to be here. This is a beautiful part of the world. I'm not only going to talk about how to make sure we maintain our parks in a smart, capable way, like you're doing, but I'm also going to talk about the need to teach our children good lessons of character.

And one way—and there's no better place to do this—I want to thank the Y for inviting me here to herald a program. All kinds of communities have character around the country, and this is a unique community of character.

When I was a kid growing up, a lot of my buddies used to come up to Estes Park from Houston, Texas. I guess you've had families coming since 1909.

Superintendent Jones. Yes. And Texas still has a large membership here with us; we get a lot of Texans. We love them.

The President. That's good.

Superintendent Jones. In fact, after Colorado, Texas—

The President. I've never been here.

Q. To Estes Park?

The President. Never have, no. I can see why a lot of people come, though; it's beautiful.

Q. We can come more often, sir.

The President. See, he's been in Crawford, Texas. [Laughter] I'm not saying he's the biggest griper about the choice of where I go to work in the summer. He'll like it—get used to it. [Laughter]

Director Mainella. Do you know that you're the first President in almost 70 years to be here at Rocky Mountain National Park?

The President. I did not know that, Fran, thank you.

Director Mainella. And we really appreciate that. And it's really a statement of your commitment to our national park system.

The President. I am a big believer in the park system. We've got a lot of maintenance backlog, and we've got to take care of it. I know Fran has been doing—Gale, we're going to make a strong commitment to our parks. It's a really important part of the American scene.

Director Mainella. Thank you.

The President. And again, I want to emphasize the fact that through good forest management we can do a better job of con-

taining fire. And I know there are some in our country that want to just, you know, let the forests fall apart. We're not going to let that happen in this administration. We're going to maintain them, and we're going to make sure that, if there is a fire, it does as little damage as possible.

You're going to see a part of the strategy right here. Gale was with the western Governors this past week, and we've come up with a very good strategy. It enforces—reinforces our commitment to working with the States and the local jurisdictions to make sure we've got sound, smart environmental policy. Not all the wisdom in the world is in Washington, DC. [Laughter] Some in Washington think that, but not this administration.

We trust the local folks, and our Federal Government is going to pledge to stand side by side with local folks. This is a collaborative effort here we're going to see between the private sector and the public park system to maintain these forests in a good, sensible way.

So, Jesse, let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jesse Duhnkrack, fire management officer, Rocky Mountain National Park. Park Superintendent A. Durand Jones and National Park Service Director Frances P. Mainella participated in the exchange. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters in the Lunch Line at a YMCA Picnic in Rocky Mountain National Park

August 14, 2001

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, I've got a Mideast question for you. The Israeli tanks moved into a Palestinian city, the furthest incursion yet. Any new reaction to that?

The President. I have no new reaction. My only point is—and I'm going to continue to make the point and so is my administration—that the cycle of violence has got to end in order for the peace process, or any peace process, to begin.

And therefore, Mr. Arafat must clamp down on the suicide bombers and on the violence. And the Israelis must show restraint. We've got to break the cycle. In order for there to be any discussions about world peace, it requires a willingness of both sides to come to the table. And my administration continues to talk to both sides, and we will continue to work to try to bring a sense of—a desire, a sense of purpose on the partners there in the Middle East to sit down and, one, reject the violence and start meaningful discussions about how to reach an accord. It's essential that the violence stops.

Q. Sounds like a strongly held feeling.

The President. Well, I feel very strongly about it because I'm worried about the cycle of violence continuing to escalate. And it's not good for our—it's not good for that part of the world, nor is it good for the rest of the world, that the Middle East be a place of violence.

We've been making good progress in Macedonia, it looks like, so that part of the world is beginning to calm down a little bit.

The Middle East is a cauldron of violence, and we've got to—and we will continue to be very much involved in insisting that both parties break the cycle.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a YMCA Picnic in Rocky Mountain National Park

August 14, 2001

Thank you all very much. Tessa, thanks—a pretty tough act to follow. [*Laughter*]

First, I want to thank the Marich family for their patience working me through the food line. I'd worked up quite an appetite up top of the mountain, and I'm glad I got a little of that barbecue.

Thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank the directors of the Y for welcoming me to this little slice of heaven. You know, when I was growing up in Texas, a lot of people say, "You know, I spent my summer

in Estes Park," and now I know why. It's a beautiful spot, and thanks for having me.

I'm traveling with some folks that you might want to at least say hello to. I picked somebody from—to head the Department of the Interior who would understand the thinking of the West, who would understand that we can have good, sound environmental policy, that conservation is important.

And so when I named Gale Norton from the State of Colorado to be the head of the Department of Interior, a lot of folks came to realize this is an administration that's going to be wise, full of common sense when it comes to preserving the natural beauty of our country. And I'm so thankful Gale Norton is here. Where are you, Gale? Thank you for coming.

I also needed to find somebody to run our National Park Service, somebody who was bright and wise, as well, somebody who shared our commitment to making sure that at the very minimum, the maintenance backlog in these parks ought to be taken care of; that the parks are for the people; that when we just talk about a national park system that is an incredibly important part of our Nation's heritage and tradition, that the parks be accessible for the people who pay the bills; that they be well maintained.

We've got \$5 billion in the budget, for the next 5 years, to end this maintenance backlog, and the person who is going to work with us to do so is the National Park Service Director, Fran Mainella. Thank you, Fran. And I want to thank all the Park Service employees who are here. You've got a tough job and an important job, and we probably don't thank you enough for the work you do. But I want to thank you.

It's great to travel up on the trail and see the wise public policy being deployed here: public policy to make sure that we reduce the hazards of forest fires; smart management of our lands; wise, commonsense approach to how we thin out our forests, prevent the hazards of forest fire; and the Park employees were up there working, along with the volunteers from the Y camp. I also loved meeting the folks making the trails so that the American people can access this beautiful part of the world. So on behalf of the taxpayers of our country and the administration,