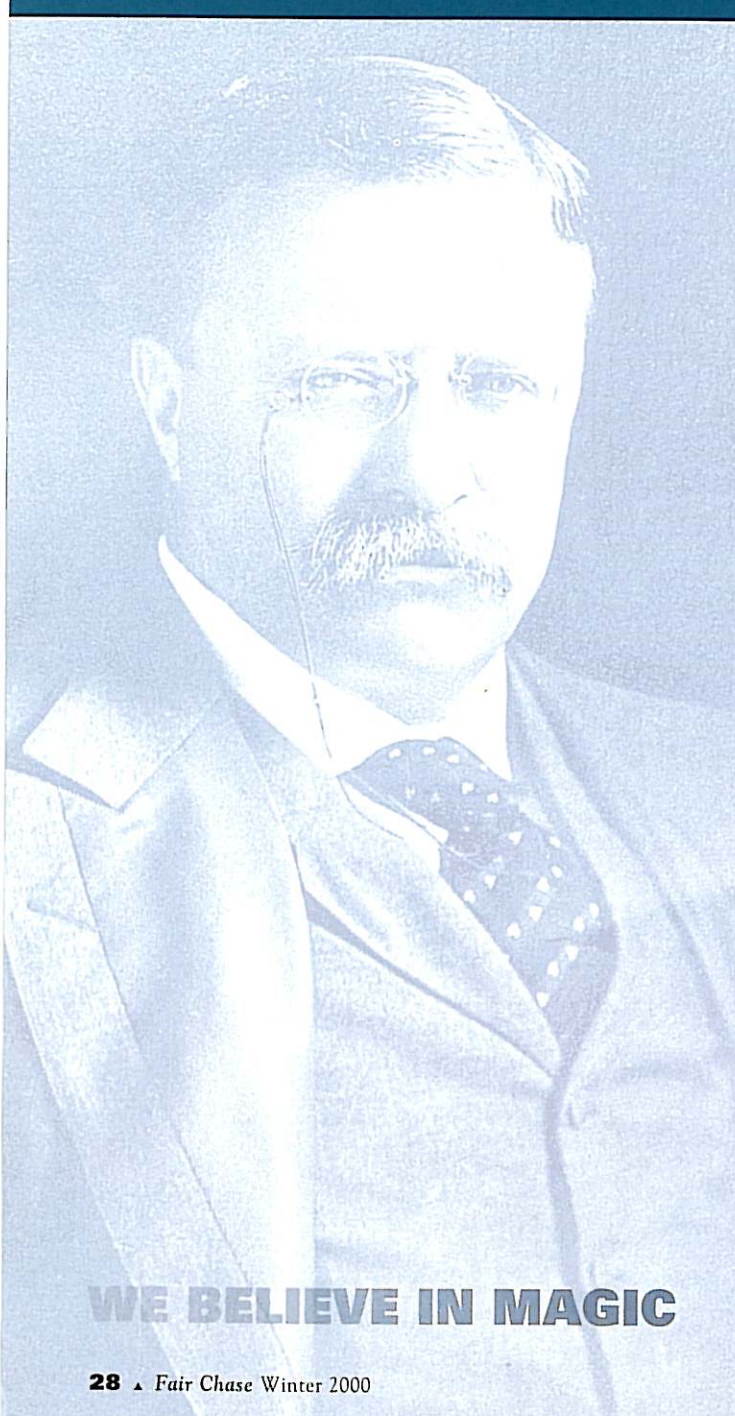


A MAGIC M

Building Unity of Purpose for Wildlife Conservation



WE BELIEVE IN MAGIC

IN THE HEAT AND SMOKE of a major fire season in August 2000, 35 wildlife organizations representing 4.3 million hunter/conservationists gathered in Missoula at the National Wildlife Conservation Partners Summit (NWCPS) as guests of the Boone and Crockett Club for a meeting about the future of wildlife in America. At Club headquarters over two days of meetings, representatives of this diverse group worked hard to answer four focus questions:

1. Should our organizations build unity and increase collective effectiveness; if so, what are some of the specific ways to do it?
2. Should our organizations develop a vision for wildlife; if so, what should it contain?
3. Should our organizations collectively address some key issues; if so, what is the "short list" of issues and how should resolution be accomplished?
4. Should our organizations develop a wildlife conservation agenda for the next Administration and Congress; if so, what should it contain?

During the meeting, the nearly 60 participants said yes to the four questions and made significant progress in putting together the who, what, why, and how.

WHY THE SUMMIT WAS HELD: CHANGE IS A DRIVING FORCE

Our hunting traditions are being pulled in multiple directions by diverse factors, including demographic change, urbanization, broad concepts like ecosystem management and biological diversity, mass turnover in professional staffs of state and federal wildlife agencies, the smaller segment of our population that hunts or fishes, anti-management philosophies and values, and the crowded, fast paced lives of everyday Americans. It should not come as a surprise to realize that, in spite of great successes in restoration of wildlife over the past 100 years, the changing structure of our society makes it necessary for wildlife managers and hunter/conservationists to work together more effectively to build on the successes achieved in the past. Further, the decade of 1995-2005 is recognized as critical for wildlife as the die is being cast for its future. Against this backdrop of challenge, hunter/conservationists are arrayed in literally hundreds of organizations poten-

tially diluting their effectiveness. The NWCPS was simply a gathering of wildlife leaders to unify their collective strength and apply it to common challenges and opportunities to protect wildlife, habitat, hunting, and the way of life it represents.

The early successes of Boone and Crockett Club members and the citizen-sportsmen of the turn-of-the-century offer insight into the value of unity. Back then, wildlife was visibly depleted and their habitats—like pine forests in the Northeast—had been cut and burned. There was a common need to protect wildlife and restore lost habitat. Again in the 1930s, drought and low waterfowl numbers presented a rallying point for hunters and other conservationists to take action. In each case, people interested in wildlife could see some uncomplicated, visible threats they could combat directly. Formation of the Forest Reserves and their evolution into the National Forests, development of treaties to conserve migratory birds, passage of the Pittman/Robertson Act, and other movements came to fruition because people of like-minds, with specific objectives, worked together. This history shows that unified efforts do produce gains for conservation of wildlife and their habitats. It also shows the imperative of the August Summit.

HOW TO WORK TOGETHER

A collaborative, facilitated approach was used to break NWCPS participants into groups and discuss each of the four focus questions, then reconvene to find areas of common resolve. Spread over more than two days, these interactions allowed the diverse participants to get to know each other, learn more about the organizations they represented, focus on how successful coalitions and alliances have functioned, and identify concrete ways in which collective action might raise effectiveness in working toward common goals. In addition, the partners began a dialogue about common issues facing the future of wildlife and wildlife habitat, the agency structure that supports them, and the wide array of issues facing America's hunter/conservationists. Big ticket items included loss of habitat, access to both public and private lands, needs of private landowners, effects of declining and threatened species on wildlife programs and public attitudes, the future of hunting, and the changing world in which we live.

COMMENT

By Rollin D. Sparrowe

PRESIDENT
Wildlife Management Institute

PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
Boone and Crockett Club



NATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERS SUMMIT

"SHOULD WE BUILD UNITY?" YES!

In general through these discussions, participants agreed to organize into a loose federation based on communication and analysis of issues, and to enhance collective effectiveness in advocating conservation, hunting, and land stewardship. We unanimously agreed there was value in finding ways to work together better, based on building trust and respect between organizations and individuals, focusing on common goals, but not by binding members into a new organization. We agreed we possess a lot of organized expertise—we just need to learn how to use it together, more effectively for wildlife and for people.

This historic meeting brought together organizations ranging from large membership-based entities to smaller regional organizations. Experience in matters of wildlife policy ranged from groups with frequent extensive interactions with government, legislation, and formal management structures to on-the-ground associations that work with private landowners on wildlife management. A "one-size-fits-all approach" clearly did not satisfy the needs of such a variety of groups. A follow-up step currently underway is to draft guiding principles that allow the NWCP to work effectively together on issues ranging from those easily agreed upon, to those upon which there may be fundamental disagreement.

Everyone acknowledged that working on consensus issues is easy. In the end, strength comes from being able to work together effectively on a new issue, following disagreement over the last one. Rather than adopting a formal process to take positions, participants unanimously viewed national networking as the best way to provide opportunity to engage diverse interests on an issue, acting together when individual organizations so desire, but not in the name of all the national partners.

Summit partners discussed proven models of recent unified efforts that work. Such activities appeared to have a common set of characteristics:

1. each participant retains its organizational autonomy;
2. a common objective (or more than one) is identified;

3. rules are agreed upon to channel activities and stick to the main objective(s);
4. agreement is not sought on side issues;
5. differences are respected, and no pressure is asserted to conform;
6. someone leads the effort, and holds people to the rules of engagement.

An example is the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), a group of 18 organizations that has successfully worked together for six years to direct more funds into the operation and maintenance of National Wildlife Refuges. Direct action by the CARE members, largely working together but with individual organizations taking their own path to contribute to the goal, have directed \$200 million in new funds into the refuge system. Visibility for the needs of refuges has increased, and CARE members have learned to work together on related issues. It has been particularly effective to have a wide array of very different organizations appear with a consistent message in person or in letters, or on independent reports before Congress, Administration, and agency decision makers. Rules of engagement for CARE, such as focusing only on funding for operations and maintenance of refuges, have kept this a focused activity. A side benefit has been developing personal relationships that have permitted cooperation on other policy matters, apart from CARE. This has worked to the benefit of all concerned—especially wildlife and habitat on refuges, but also people who use those resources.

Another example is the Wildlife Partners Network, a group of nine wildlife organizations (including the Boone and Crockett Club) working together to assure that all receive timely information on the actions of land management agencies and the Congress that may affect their interests in wildlife habitat, wildlife management, and hunting. Issue tracking has been done through the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). Information on the issues, analysis of their importance, and coordination and focus for actions the partners wish to take have been a cornerstone. As an example, a unified area of concern has been forest management, with a focus on achieving a balance in an active management approach to providing wildlife habitat and public use on these important public lands. Through the Network, the part-

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

ARCHERY MANUFACTURERS AND MERCHANTS ORGANIZATION

BEAR TRUST INTERNATIONAL

BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB

CAMP FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA

CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMAN'S FOUNDATION

CONSERVATION FORCE

DALLAS SAFARI CLUB

DUCKS UNLIMITED

FOUNDATION FOR NORTH AMERICAN WILD SHEEP

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

AGENCIES

INTERNATIONAL HUNTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

IZAACK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION, INC.

NATIONAL TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION, INC.

NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP

ORION - THE HUNTER'S INSTITUTE

PHEASANTS FOREVER, INC.

POPE AND YOUNG CLUB

QUAIL UNLIMITED, INC.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION

SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL

SHIKAR SAFARI CLUB

TEXAS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION

THEODORE ROOSEVELT CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

THE CONSERVATION FUND

THE MULE DEER FOUNDATION

THE RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

WHITETAILS UNLIMITED

WILDLIFE FOREVER

WILDLIFE HABITAT COUNCIL

THE WILDLIFE LEGISLATIVE FUND OF AMERICA

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

ners are able to track funding, staffing, and programs for managing wildlife on public lands. When issues have arisen, members of the groups have worked systematically with agencies, the Administration, and members of the Congress through letters, testimony and other independent actions. This filled one of the key objectives of the Network from the beginning—to provide knowledge and experience to enable each organization to act in its own best interest. A dividend was being able to act together when there was common interest, but not in the name of the Network. This key ground rule has kept the uniqueness and autonomy of the organizations that participate.



RELATED NEWS...

CARA – WHAT HAPPENED?

With unprecedented bipartisan support, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) needed only to come to the Senate for a vote to ensure permanent funding for state wildlife agencies and more Congressional control over land acquisition. Even though it had passed the House of Representatives by a 3 to 1 margin, congressional appropriators, the Council on Environmental Quality, and CARA opponents in the environmental and private property rights movements collaborated to ensure that the permanent funding for CARA was not voted on by the Senate. Appropriators, as expected, resisted giving up annual control of the funding and found it to their advantage to give President Clinton parts of his "land legacy." A week after the President made public statements supporting CARA, his staff engineered this sellout and a handful of environmental groups supported it because they value land acquisition money they think they can control, and don't share our long-term objectives for stable funding for management programs.

The result is astounding. Western conservatives and property rights advocates who opposed CARA as a "land grab" gave into this "compromise." What they got was lots of federal land acquisition without as much Congressional oversight as was in CARA. Thus, less protection for private landowners. The needs of long-term management of wildlife by state agencies, the principal goal of the Boone and Crockett Club in supporting CARA, got a small competitive grants program to be administered by the Secretary of Interior. No long-term stable funding for state wildlife agencies to help them avoid the growing control by the federal government over wildlife at the local level.

Increased funding will go into both land and wildlife programs for the federal land management agencies and other federal conservation programs. But the new funding is authorized for six years only, and is fully dependent upon annual appropriations. A 30-year history of existing programs demonstrates that Congress is not likely to meet all of these promises. The overriding importance of CARA was its long-term nature to allow the state agencies to build staff and management capability to take their rightful place in proactive programs to forestall additional listings of endangered species. CARA supporters continued to fight for an additional \$50 million in state wildlife program funding, distributed through the existing Pittman/Robertson funding mechanism, that would salvage some of the original CARA intent. This will still be short-term funding at a level that is far below the needs of the states, and they will have to use the limited funds to demonstrate what they will do with a larger, more stable program—which could be positive.

Also on the positive side, the Congress got a clear message of widespread support for stable, long-term funding for state wildlife agencies. If the new visibility of wildlife can become a foundation for renewed efforts for permanent funding, the goals of the Club and many other wildlife advocates can be achieved. This will take hard work and going back to the well to generate the enthusiasm that pushed CARA as far as it got.

Where hunter/conservationist organizations do not appear as an organized voice, or when they act on individual interests without full knowledge and perspective of the issues, we may lose to the better organized efforts of others. Examples include widespread public land protection actions, which lack input from hunter/conservationists, and ballot initiatives that remove management authority from state wildlife agencies.

NWCPS participants acknowledged that assuring that the receipt of critical information enabling each to take action in a timely matter yields important results. Such activity has a proven track record, especially when each controls the focus, works within agreed rules of engagement, and respects the individual needs of partner organizations. Some of the ways in which benefits accrue to the partners are:

1. better coordination in informing more organizations of issues that are important to wildlife conservation;
2. providing a feeling of strength and community to wildlife conservation—at a time when there is fragmentation;
3. displaying strength outwardly by more groups visibly working together to present a coordinated, if not a united, front on issues, based on solid understanding of needs;
4. stimulating organizations to get involved in important issues who have not usually done so;
5. positively affecting outcomes on particular issues that affect wildlife, their habitat, and public access to them;
6. learning things about issues and each other that help each partner and the future of wildlife, its habitat, and hunting.

"SHOULD WE DEVELOP A VISION FOR WILDLIFE?" YES!

While the final statement of a vision and other matters before the NWCP is still considered a work in progress, many ideas were exchanged at the Summit that provided a clear view of what the majority seems to want:

A future in which all wildlife and private and public habitats are abundant, maintained, and enhanced;

A future in which hunting, fishing, trapping, and other outdoor interests are supported by the public to maintain American's great wildlife conservation heritage and cultural traditions;

A future in which natural resource policies encourage, empower, and reward stewardship and responsible use;

And a future in which all people are committed to principles of scientific wildlife management, where wildlife is held in public trust, and where the use of resources is shared equitably and sustained for present and future generations.

This is the vision of a diverse array of traditional wildlife conservation organizations. They believe in both private and public ownership of land, maintenance and enhancement of habitats and wildlife through active management, protection of species and habitats where necessary, and recognition of the values and needs of people as well as of the wild resources for which they accept a stewardship role. This in itself created a unifying feeling among NWCP hunter/conservationists who see a divided environmental movement that seems to gravitate toward a philosophy of total protection and exclusion of humans as if we are an unnatural influence.

NWCP reaffirmed the uniquely American wildlife management history and tradition of public ownership and access to wildlife as key to the future of hunting for the everyday citizen. Public lands, publicly owned wildlife, and state and federal resource management agencies were seen as critically important parts of the whole conservation movement that should continue to receive extensive attention. The partners recognized, however, that more than 70 percent of America's land is privately owned, and holds a big part of the future for wildlife and hunting. Stewardship of land and wildlife by those private landowners was seen as a vital opportunity. The NWCP acknowledged that increased human pressure on the land and its wildlife present many challenges to the vision. By learning to work together in ways that are mutually beneficial, yet assure autonomy and respect for differences, the NWCP felt they can be much stronger in advocacy, and more effective in pursuing individual interests.

"SHOULD WE ADDRESS KEY ISSUES?" YES!

Many of the key issues facing wildlife are known to all of us without the need for a Summit, or by consideration by such a diverse array of brain power. Habitat loss, reduction in access, changing public values in wildlife management, the contribution of private land stewardship to wildlife conservation, the future of our natural resource agencies at the state and federal level, changing perceptions of hunting by a society easily lured by other pursuits, political manipulation of preservation and wildlife management programs, real loss of abundance and diversity of wildlife, animal rights influences, and the overwhelming impact of human population growth on wildlife and its habitat are among the many issues that surfaced in Missoula. Many of these are not new; all are changing and deserve attention for the future, as do other issues.

Whether in government programs, considering the appropriations for wildlife work on federal lands, or looking at the needs of pri-

vate landowners, wildlife interests have tended to be reactive rather than proactive. NWCP recognized that a major need in dealing with issues is clarifying which are short-term and demand immediate attention, and which are long-term and require a different strategy. Dealing with the immediate filling of an individual wetland is a different matter, though related, than dealing with the trend of wetland losses and the huge changes that it has wrought on river systems and coastlines in America. It was clear that many of the most important habitat issues—like forest management—function on time scales that exceed human longevity, and must be dealt with on that basis. Partners understand the need to learn how better to address both short and long-term issues, and that working together is one way to improve the long-term outlook for wildlife and their habitats.

"SHOULD WE DEVELOP A WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AGENDA FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS?" YES!

Fourteen issues were nominated for possible inclusion in a wildlife conservation agenda for the next Administration and Congress (see sidebar). Draft topics were presented as key issues and opportunities for wildlife and habitat with national significance. Drafts were placed on a partners discussion board section of the NWCP website for comments and prioritization. The final agenda will represent the "short-list" of key national wildlife conservation issues the NWCP would like the new Administration and Congress to understand, accept, and support. This effort raises the profile of NWCP collective concerns and puts them, for the first time, "on the screen" at the highest policy level.

ACTION: WHAT'S NEXT

Responses from participants in the Summit have been highly positive, such as "exceeded my expectations," "there was magic in the air," "our organization is ready to network." Of course, the question of "who will do the work?" has been asked as well. It is a good question. First, the Boone and Crockett Club will continue as convener and catalyst for bringing this diverse array of organizations together. The NWCP unanimously voted to meet face-to-face at least once a year, and Club leader Bob Model has again stepped up to offer to host the next meeting in July 2001 in Cody, Wyoming. The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) has offered to support the meeting as a co-host. On a regular basis a meeting of the NWCP will occur in conjunction with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, held each spring (this year in Washington, D.C.). A follow-up meeting, hosted by the Wildlife Legislative Fund

of America, to review draft procedures and proposed ways to work together, is scheduled for late January 2001 in Columbus, Ohio.

Most importantly, participants agreed that building trust and respect among partner groups, focusing on common issues, and recognizing the unique character of each organization is something they want to do. We have commitment in ways that didn't exist before the Summit. For example, a letter in support of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) was circulated, and new groups wrote in support of that important legislation. A letter requesting a seat at the table for hunter/conservationists, allowing them to have input on the development of new national monuments was developed by FNAWS and signed on by many Summit participants. Fire management and its implications for wildlife on federal lands evoked a similar response in a "sign-on" letter. The need for an effective organizational process is recognized, and it is under development by the original Steering Committee and other volunteers. A suggested process for conducting the business of the partnership, including letters and broad communications on big ticket issues, will be sent to participants in draft form early next year. Rules of engagement, such as "check your guns at the door" and "respect different views" are being developed for review as well. The refined conservation agenda for the next Administration and Congress will be part of a review package as well.

The Izaak Walton League of America has developed a web site called National Wildlife Partners (Conservation Forum) at www://conservationforum.org/nwcp. The results of the Summit are posted, as are notes, outlines, list of participants, and a basic record of the meeting. Most important is that the site has interactive capabilities being developed to allow members to discuss issues in a private, secure matter. Several kinds of needs are envisioned including: internal discussions, posting of legislation and important related issues, posting of letters and positions, and issue perspectives from participants. This website can be a powerful engine for the collaborative exchange of ideas and for stimulating action on important issues when necessary.

One vital comment on the NWCP is about relationships. Before we met, there were the usual cliches of "this will be like herding cats," or "hugging porcupines," but it wasn't. After all, the leaders of 35 very different wildlife organizations, with very different missions, don't always see issues the same way. Nor are they known to be shrinking violets. But through two days of discussion and getting acquainted, there were many positive comments, such as "a collegial atmosphere" and "hey-that guy isn't like I thought he would be." A true revelation from

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS

- CREATE REGULAR DIALOGUE BETWEEN TOP OFFICIALS OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND THE NWCP**
- MAINTAIN AND RESTORE FOREST AND RANGELAND HABITATS IN THE WEST THROUGH ACTIVE PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT**
- ACTIVELY MANAGE NATIONAL FORESTS IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE HABITAT**
- ESTABLISH A PUBLIC LAND LAW REVIEW COMMISSION TO RESOLVE LEGAL AND REGULATORY PROBLEMS CONTRIBUTING TO FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT "GRIDLOCK"**
- END EROSION OF STATE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**
- PRESERVE AND PROTECT PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF WILDLIFE**
- REMOVE DISINCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE LAND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**
- BALANCE PUBLIC BENEFITS WITH CONSERVATION INCENTIVES TO OWNERS OF PRIVATE LAND WILDLIFE HABITAT**
- ADVOCATE THE ROLE OF HUNTERS AS AMERICA'S TRUE WILDLIFE CONSERVATIONISTS**
- ESTABLISH AN APPROPRIATION TO PROVIDE FOR HUNTER RETENTION, RECRUITMENT, AND EDUCATION**
- DEVELOP A CONSERVATION EDUCATION INITIATIVE**
- ESTABLISH FEDERAL BUDGET PRIORITIES THAT WILL RESTORE WILDLIFE FUNDING TO THE 1980 LEVEL**
- SUPPORT CONSERVATION PROVISIONS IN THE 2002 FARM BILL**
- REESTABLISH EFFECTIVE FEDERAL NATURAL RESOURCES LEADERSHIP**

this meeting is that with willingness to listen and a little mutual respect we can, and will, work together effectively.

Boone and Crockett Club President Daniel Pedrotti, Consulting Administrator Steve Mealey, the staff and facilitators, the Club itself, and the Steering Committee for the Summit, all deserve thanks for making the NWCP happen. The Boone and Crockett Club role as catalyst and convener is clear. Now all the rest of us need to do is perform on the issues for wildlife and public access to it! The timing couldn't be better now with a new Administration and changes in the Congress. The time is right for wildlife management advocates to be a larger voice in how government and the Congress deal with wildlife and public access to it in America. And I submit that now after the Summit, we are ready as never before! ▲ ▲ ▲