

January 30, 1936

[Little Wishes - Message to Congress]

FDR Speech File

RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE
SECOND SENATE 15

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT
OF JANUARY 30, 1936
RELATING TO
LITTLE WATERS

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
GENERAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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The White House, Jan. 2, 1930

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I transmit herewith for the information of the Congress a letter from the Chairman of the National Resources Committee with the accompanying report entitled: "Little Waters: A Study of Headwater Streams and Other Little Waters: Their Use and Relations to the Land".

This report treats of a subject with which the physical well-being of our people is intimately bound up, yet to which, in the past, too little attention has been paid. We have grown accustomed to dealing with great rivers, with their large problems of navigation, of power and of flood control, and we have been tempted to forget the little rivers from which they come. The report points out that we can have no effective national policy in those matters, nor in the closely related matter of proper land uses, until we trace this running water back to its ultimate sources and find means of controlling it and of using it.

Our disastrous floods, our sometimes almost equally disastrous periods of low water, and our major problems of erosion, to which attention has been called by the reports of the National Resources Board, the Mississippi Valley Committee, the Soil Erosion Service, and other agencies, do not come full-grown into being. They originate in a small way, in a multitude of farms, ranches, and pastures.

It is not suggested that we neglect our main streams and give our whole attention to these little waters but we must have, literally, a plan which will envisage the problem as it is presented in every farm, every pasture, every wood lot, every acre of the public domain.

The Congress could not formulate, nor could the Executive carry out the details of such a plan, even though such a procedure were desirable and possible under our form of government. We can, however, lay

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down certain simple principles and devise means by which the Federal Government can cooperate in the common interest with the States and with such inter-state agencies as may be established. It is for the Congress to decide upon the proper means. Our objective must be so to manage the physical use of the land that we will not only maintain soil fertility but will hand on to the next generation a country with better productive power and a greater permanency of land use than the one we inherited from the previous generation. The opportunity is as vast as is the danger. I hope and believe that the Congress will take advantage of it, and in such a way as to command the enthusiastic support of the States and of the whole public.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

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The White House
 January 30 1936