

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

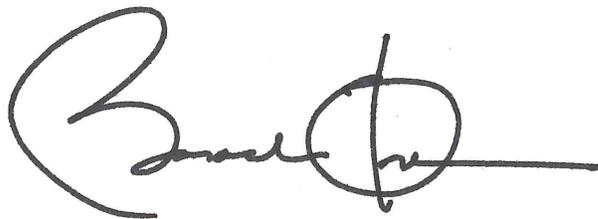
February 23, 2011

I send greetings to all those celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Weeks Act.

A century ago, President William Howard Taft signed into law the Weeks Act, establishing the authority of the Federal Government to work with States to protect our Nation's watersheds and forests. Since that time, the Weeks Act has enabled the creation of 52 national forests and the acquisition of 19.7 million acres of forests and grasslands across 41 States and Puerto Rico.

Today, our open spaces are more precious than ever, and it is critical we come together to protect them for the next generation. My Administration launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative last year to build a conservation agenda for the 21st century, and to reconnect Americans to our magnificent outdoor spaces. Over the past year, we have held listening sessions around the country and heard from thousands of citizens to shape this endeavor. Together, we have laid the foundation for a smarter, more community-driven environmental strategy which will uphold the enduring legacy of the Weeks Act and protect America's breathtaking and historic natural treasures for generations to come.

As you mark this important milestone, I wish you all the best.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned at the bottom of the page, below the text.