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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460**

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**OFFICE OF THE  
ADMINISTRATOR**

MEMORANDUM TO MR. JOHN WHITAKER

FROM: William D. Ruckelshaus  
Administrator

SUBJECT: The President and the Environment

Problem.

In recent months the President's reputation as a strong advocate for environmental improvement has suffered.

I have no survey information to prove this but the attitude of the press and various environmental groups ranging from the relatively conservative National Wildlife Federation to the more radical Friends of the Earth has oscillated from suspicion to downright hostility. This is reflected in what these individuals and groups write and say and through them impacts a broad spectrum of the general public. As of this date, the situation is continuing to worsen.

The cause of this problem is easy to discern. In the first place, by the nature of the issue the President is bound to take positions, which he deems in the public interest, that offend the environmentalists and in turn what they say to the public. (The SST and Amchitka explosion are prime examples of this issue -- inevitability.)

Secondly, speeches by Secretary Stans and the President's remarks at Detroit are taken as evidence of a disenchantment within the Administration with a firm position on environmental improvement. This external evidence reinforces a belief, widely held among the working press, that RMN's ties with industry

are too strong for him to ever effectively advocate the cause of the environment.

The first cause will recur in the nature of things. (The Trans Alaskan Pipeline and four corners power complex development are obvious examples of no win environmental decisions).

The second cause is an attitudinal problem and probably cannot be handled externally.

### Political Implications:

The environment is a negative political issue. No candidate will ever be publicly for "dirty air" or "unclean water" and running for environmental improvement is a "me too" proposition. However, if, say Muskie, could ever convince the American people he was significantly more concerned about the environment than the President it could seriously damage RMN. In my opinion you can't win with the environment, but they might beat you with it.

The very people RMN appeals to are also vitally interested in the environment. The white middle class suburbanite (particularly women) are very concerned over this issue. In my opinion a significant percentage of these voters would vote against a man they felt was insensitive to or unconcerned about the environment. I don't believe the situation has reached this pass as yet, but it could, and should be avoided.

### Remedy:

In light of the inevitability of some apparently adverse actions relating to the environment, I recommend we take the offensive. The President's environmental message and the initiatives spelled out therein are important.

The one area that stands for the environment and its degradation in the minds of the American people is the Great Lakes. I am asked what we are doing about it in every corner of the country.

The Great Lakes Basin is home for some 29 million people. It is the second largest megalopolis in the country. Its metropolitan areas include Milwaukee and Chicago, Gary-Hammond-East Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Erie and Buffalo. The population density is four times the national average and the industrial concentration of basin employees make up 25 percent of the nation's manufacturing work force.

States that it touches are Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York. These states have 180 electoral votes. RMN carried four of them in 1968: Wisconsin by 61,197; Ohio by 90,428; Illinois by 134,960 and Indiana by 261,226. Humphrey took the other four by majorities that ranged from 169,388 in Pennsylvania to 370,538 in New York.

Some of the things that are happening ecologically in the area: pollution is increasing in the lakes, their tributaries and near shore waters. Degradation of water quality is restricting use of beaches and endangering public drinking water supplies, damaging fisheries and recreation sites. All this while demand for such services are expanding.

We are suggesting in the attached document an accelerated Great Lakes program.

The most controversial and costly of these suggestions is combined sewers. The rationale and need for this element of the program is contained in attachment I.

I recommend that the President include a pledge for cleaning up the Great Lakes in his Environmental message.

This should be followed by detailed briefings of affected groups, relation of all grants in Great Lakes area to the initiative and strong follow-up public relations efforts in affected cities to lend the initiative credibility.

Attachments