TRIBUTE TO MOLLIE H. BEATTIE

Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior

Last night, we lost Mollie Beattie after her valiant one-year struggle against brain cancer.

She lived her life every moment, never losing her clarity or her sense of humor even as she said goodbye to those she loved most who were at her side. Mollie is truly one of the bravest, strongest people I have ever known.

Mollie's legacy at the Department of the Interior can never be taken from us. The first woman ever to head the agency, she walked into the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in 1993 determined to make it the strongest protector of America's wild creatures and the finest steward over America's National Wildlife Refuges and, in the process, to prove that the Endangered Species Act could work well for this country.

Even in the tragically-shortened time as Director, she accomplished all these things. She fought fiercely against the forces that sought to weaken the mission of our wildlife refuges, to gut the Endangered Species Act, or to turn the lights off on good science through funding cuts. She gave those working for the Service higher morale, greater professionalism and a clearer sense of purpose, because they knew she would battle for needed resources from Alaska to the Everglades.

She made the Endangered Species Act work better for the protection of species, and at the same time rekindled enthusiasm for conservation: from the toughest Marines at Camp LeJeune, to the hundreds of landowners working with us on habitat plans, to the millions of anglers and hunters who support her goal of abundant, sustainable fish and wildlife populations. As a result of her efforts, Americans everywhere have joined in support for conserving their own landscapes and open spaces and in support of the Act.

It is in these creatures she loved so much where I believe we will sense her spirit with us. In the fierce, proud eyes of the wolf packs at Yellowstone that she personally helped to return. In the distant plumes of grey whales migrating along their ancient routes from the equator to the Arctic. In the soaring flight of bald eagles returning from the brink of extinction to waters where they have not been seen in decades. In the sound of the grizzlies returning to forests they had long abandoned. In every place where wild creatures have a place to feed and raise their young.

My deepest sympathy today goes to her husband and family. I hope they have taken comfort in the outpouring of affection for Mollie that has been shown by so many in this Department, in the Congress, and indeed

throughout America during these final weeks. Let us resolve to honor her memory by reflecting in ourselves her integrity and courage. She will be greatly missed.