REMEMBERING MOLLIE H. BEATTIE

President William J. Clinton
The White House

I have today signed into law S. 1899, the "Mollie Beattie Wilderness Area Act." While not everyone had the pleasure of knowing and working with Mollie Beattie, her lifelong dedication to conservation has enriched every American. This legislation names one of Alaska's most imposing wilderness areas in her honor. It ensures that future generations will recall the lasting contributions Mollie made to conserving our Nation's priceless natural heritage.

Mollie stands out in my memory as the person releasing a bald eagle named Hope back into the wild to celebrate the improving condition of our national symbol. I also remember her as one of the people carrying the gray wolf back into the Yellowstone ecosystem in a vital effort to help restore nature's balance. Yet these two events, unforgettable as they are, represent only symbols of Mollie's many achievements as the first female Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Although her tenure as director was tragically cut short, Mollie left an enduring legacy to the American people. She was determined to conserve the world's wild creatures and their habitat, and to do so effectively. As a direct result of her efforts to make the Endangered Species Act work better, Americans everywhere have voluntarily joined in conserving and restoring the landscapes and open spaces that surround them.

Mollie strove throughout her life to help people understand the connections that linked the quality of their daily lives to the health and well-being of America's wildlife. Anyone who ever worked with Mollie recognized that her caring, compassion, and wisdom extended to all living creatures. She truly understood the need to actively engage people in wildlife conservation efforts.

Under this legislation, Mollie Beattie's name will be forever associated with one of the most wild and beautiful places on this planet: the Brooks Range of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is entirely appropriate that we honor Mollie in this way. She was a passionate defender of our 508 National Wildlife Refuges, the largest system of lands in the world dedicated to wildlife conservation. She saw them as places that must be appreciated and honored, as places where we could begin to fulfill our sacred trust as stewards of God's creation. Mollie worked tirelessly, even as her health was failing, to keep these places wild for the benefit of Americans today and for those who will follow us.

I am deeply grateful to the Alaska delegation for their leadership in introducing this legislation. I appreciate their willingness to commemorate this wild and beautiful place forever to the memory of Mollie Beattie.