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On November 23, 1971, President Richard M. Nixon announced proposed legislation to acquire over one-half million acres of this most unique of natural areas. The Big Cypress. But Big Cypress is more than beautiful ... it is essential. It is biologically one of the most unique ecosystems in the world and hydrologically the most important watershed in Florida.

For it is this great natural reservoir that quenches the thirst of the Everglades and provides South Florida with the universal natural resource ...water.

It is truly this abundance of water ... a crossroads of the fresh and the saline ...which makes this land the precious jewel that it is. But not only is the action of President Nixon in moving to save Big Cypress milestone in the conservation annals of Florida ... it is a lesson and a gift for the entire Nation. It is a gift because Big Cypress represents one of those areas of critical environmental importance which the President has promised to protect and has moved to set aside through his National Land Use Policy legislation. It is a lesson because we are moving to acquire it today rather than ten years from now when the cost would surely be prohibitive.

Significantly, the President has acted quickly ... and here in Big Cypress in such a way that the people who live and work in the swamp will be protected. There will-be no move by this Administration to oust or evict anyone. We will arrange for lifetime tenancy wherever possible.

Those who have hunted and fished in the Big Cypress may continue to do so for these forms of recreation are compatible with our concept of a national freshwater reserve.

The Miccosukee Indians who have long gained their livelihood from this area will be ensured the continuing right to harvest its bounty after all. They were he re first and they shall continue to live in this wonderland as long as they choose to do so.

I am today returning-_ to Washington and will immediately transmit, to the Congress the legislation which will create The Big Cypress National Freshwater Reserve. Acquisition will be financed under the Land and Water Conservation Fund over a ten-year period.

So, as you can see, the President, in what I consider to be a profound understanding of the deep ecological needs of this Nation has acted forthrightly to preserve this great component of our natural heritage.

I am proud of the President's compassion for the environment ... I am proud that he has taken positive action and I know that future generations will be eternally grateful for it to them we have bequeathed this marvelous legacy.