

## National Parks Conference Opening Remarks

April 22, 2012

- Vice-mayor of Zakopane Wojciech Solik
- Tatrzański Park Narodowy Director Paweł Skawinski (host)
- Polish Ministry of the Environment Chief Specialist for National Parks Jan Reklewski
- Tatras National Park (Slovakia) Director Paweł Majko
- Rocky Mountain National Park Superintendent Vaughn Baker
- United States Ambassador to Slovakia Theodore Sedgwick
- Polish Ambassador to Slovakia Zbigniew Krawczyk
- Slovakian Consul to Kraków Tomáš Kasaj
- Guests from the Polish and Slovakian National Parks
- International Guests, and especially our guests from Rocky Mountain National Park

Jestem zaszczycony (alternative: to zaszczyt dla mnie ), że mogę dziś razem z Państwem uczestniczyć w otwarciu corocznej Konferencji Parków Narodowych oraz być świadkiem odnowienia umowy o Parkach Siostrzanych pomiędzy Tatarzańskim Parkiem Narodowym Polski, Tatrzańskim Parkiem Narodowym Słowacji i Parkiem Narodowym Gór Skalistych. W czasie moich podróży po Polsce mogłem wielokrotnie podziwiać różne parki narodowe waszego pięknego kraju, jednak Tatry są w mojej ocenie wyjątkowe. To wspaniały park, który każdego roku przyciąga do siebie miliony turystów.

*{It is an honor to be here today with you all to open the Annual National Parks' Conference, to celebrate Earth day, and to witness the renewal of the Sister Parks agreement between the Tatra National Park of Poland, the Tatra National Park of Slovakia, and Rocky Mountain National Park. During my time in Poland, I have had the opportunity to visit a number of this country's outstanding national parks, but the Tatra stand out. It is a beautiful park, and it is busy, drawing millions of visitors each year.}*

These five years of the Sister Parks relationship, as well as the cooperation that existed beforehand, are a fine example of the close bonds between our countries. We have much in common, including these similar stretches of mountain peaks that we decided were special and deserved protection. To do so effectively requires ongoing work, and an essential part of this process is dialogue and the exchange of ideas with colleagues from other parts of the world. The United States have hosted park leaders through the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, there have been park-to-park exchanges, and of course we have conferences such as this one.

And this conference begins, fittingly, on Earth Day. Earth Day was created to raise awareness and appreciation for our natural environment. Respect and preservation of natural resources is a worldwide issue that requires worldwide cooperation, and it comforts me to see that today we see three nations from distant ends of the globe cooperating and learning from each other.

The global nature of environmental issues can be overwhelming, but creating and maintaining national parks has been one concrete way for nations to preserve their natural beauty.

National parks have been called America's best idea, and parks such as the Tatras here and Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, are some of the most stunning and unique locations on the globe. Their dramatic mountain peaks and rich biodiversity are breathtaking. By marking these off as public lands to be protected and enjoyed by all, our nations have ensured that we and our children will be able to enjoy these special places now and in the future.

Podziwiam wszystkich, którzy przez całe życie pracują z wielkim poświęceniem (alternative: oddaniem) na rzecz ochrony przyrody i mam nadzieję, że ta konferencja przyniesie Państwu wiele satysfakcji i korzyści.

*{I applaud all those who dedicate their life's work to the preservation of nature, and I hope that you enjoy a productive conference together.}*

Thank you