

us whose names will never be known, but whose efforts and energy contribute profoundly to the quality of our lives. Rural women are numbered among these many quiet heroes.

Today rural women comprise more than one-quarter of the world's population, and they form the basis of much of the world's agricultural economy. In the United States, working on farms and ranches, they play a vital part in ensuring a healthy, safe, and abundant supply of food and fiber for our people. In developing countries, as small farmers, laborers, and entrepreneurs, rural women help produce most of the food, create many of the jobs, and manage most of their countries' natural resources. While millions of rural women worldwide live below the poverty level, struggling to survive with scarce resources and little training and education, they still manage to feed their families and contribute to their communities.

When the international community came together in Beijing in 1995 for the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, rural women made their voices heard by world leaders, and their hard work and sacrifice were at last recognized by people across the globe. Next year, when the United States hosts the Second World Conference on Women in Agriculture, we will continue to focus on the status of rural women and their contributions to our world.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 15, 1997, as International Rural Women's Day in the United States. I call upon the American people to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities in recognition of the extraordinary contributions rural women make to the quality of our lives, both in America and around the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7042 of October 17, 1997

National Forest Products Week, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's forests are a precious resource, making numerous rich contributions not only to the natural splendor of our Nation, but also to the well-being of our people. Whether part of the vast acreages that make up our industrial, State, and National forests or rural woodlots and urban forests, they offer us clean water and air, priceless wildlife habitat and fisheries, welcome settings for recreation, and breathtaking beauty. Our forests also provide us with more tangible products essential to everyday living: wood and paper products for our homes, schools, and offices, and even medicines and food.

While the wood products we harvest from our forests can be so durable that they last for centuries, forest ecosystems themselves are very fragile. America's growing population and urban expansion are putting ever-increasing demands on forest lands and resources. We must work together to devise imaginative forest management approaches that will allow us to preserve and cultivate healthy forest ecosystems, meet the need for forest products, provide jobs for those who depend on forests for their livelihood, and continue to offer Americans enjoyable recreational opportunities.

Fortunately, forest research is equipping us with vital knowledge that can help us to balance the many and varied demands on our woodlands. Thanks to such research, we are now using new products and innovative technologies and employing new recycling methods that not only extend the available supply of raw materials, but also help us to process those materials more efficiently and with fewer harmful by-products. This use of science to balance the needs of our people both for forest products and a healthy environment will help us to achieve our goal of sustainable forest management.

All of us are indebted to past generations of Americans whose vision and generosity preserved so many of our Nation's great forests for our use and pleasure. Now it falls to us to continue their wise stewardship so that we may pass on to future generations this priceless natural legacy.

In recognition of the central role our forests play in the long-term welfare of our Nation, the Congress, by Public Law 86-753 (36 U.S.C. 163), has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday in October of each year as "National Forest Products Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 19 through October 25, 1997, as National Forest Products Week. I call upon all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7043 of October 17, 1997

National Character Counts Week, 1997

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

The roots of America's greatness are embedded in the character of its citizens. From our Founders' passion for justice and equality to the social consciousness and humanitarian spirit of today's citizens, the character of our people has inspired the world. Undeniably, character does count for our citizens, our communities, and our Nation, and this week we celebrate the