

EARTH DAY

April 22, 2000

Fellow Iowans,

This book is a gift for the people of Iowa. It is a portrait of our state's land and its resources, as we see them today and as they were originally. This remarkable view of our home state through time is meant to challenge you to think about what could be here in the future.

We all touch the earth, whether we're farmers who work the soil or other citizens whose spirits are enriched simply by living in Iowa's fertile land. That common thread, spun of a common heritage, has been woven into the tightly knit fabric of community. We pride ourselves on being Iowans, and we share more similarities than differences. Our identity and our citizenship come, in part, from running our fingers and our lives through that bountiful, beautiful land between two rivers.

Yet people are just part of this bounty – a few of the many strands in a web of plants, animals, earth, water, and air that make up the larger, diverse environment of Iowa. Enhancing the quality of life in Iowa depends upon our ability to maintain and improve those ageless connections. Iowans will become better stewards of the land by understanding its geological foundations, preserving its rich soil, recognizing its native habitats and species, safeguarding its waters, protecting its air resources, and conserving its ancient and historic cultural sites.

We hope *Iowa – Portrait of the Land* will connect Iowans with the land's history and with their responsibility to pass on this heritage in good condition to future generations. We also hope this book will be a first step in planning how we will use and protect our resources in the future. As we begin that planning process, we welcome your ideas, comments, and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
GOVERNOR OF IOWA

Sally J. Pederson
LT. GOVERNOR