

**Remarks by William Penn Mott, Jr.**  
**at the**  
**Fourteenth Annual Natural Areas Conference**

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**A**n act of Congress on August 25, 1916, created the National Park Service. The authors of this legislation *probably believed* that creating and managing national parks was all the agency would ever need to do to protect the country's natural heritage. They may have thought that future judiciously located national parks would safeguard most of the country's important natural landscapes, and their associated species, biotic communities and ecosystems.

Similarly, Yellowstone National Park was created by an act of Congress much earlier, on March 1, 1872, and it became the first national park in the world. The intent of the authors of this legislation was to safeguard the resources within the park in their natural condition. The founders *probably believed* that creating a boundary around its now approximately 2-million-acre area was all that would ever be necessary to conserve its biota for future generations.

However, time has demonstrated that what we "presume"

has been a serious mistake for both the National Park Service and

the sites recognized, strengthening public appreciation of natural history, and fostering a concern for conservation of the nation's natural heritage.

The NNL program remains the only natural areas program of national scope to identify and recognize best examples of both biological and geological features without regard to site ownership or management. The program therefore seeks to encourage the preservation of natural diversity, but it also deals with landforms, geological structures, fossil deposits, etc. As you know, the preservation of natural diversity, as well as these geological features, has important scientific, economic, educational, recreational, and aesthetic values, and is accomplished primarily through setting aside natural areas.

On May 18, 1987, the National Natural Landmarks program celebrated its 25th anniversary. I am pleased that the program all this time has been consistent with the goals of the National Park Service "12 point plan," which I instituted when I became Director. Let me state the parallels between the program and the NPS 12-point plan for you: it supports our ability to do long-range planning to protect natural resources by compiling an extensive nationwide natural area data base (point 1); it relies on not-for-fee land preservation techniques, i.e., federal recognition (point 2); it represents an extension of our public interpretation responsibilities for lands not in the National Park System (point 3); it is consistent with our goal of sharing our knowledge about resources, since NNL owners/administrators can request technical assistance from the Service (point 4); it increases the public's understanding of the role and function of the Service, since the NNL program relies extensively on news releases and communicates regularly with public officials, government agencies, and private organizations (point 5); and it recommends closer working relationships with the states and citizens groups through such endeavors as pilot inventory activities and the NNL patron program (point 6).

Let me elaborate on thoughts surrounding this last point. I believe the National Natural Landmarks program is a logical federal partner for state natural heritage programs and other state natural area preservation programs. Our tasks are complementary. I am encouraging closer working relationships between the NNL program and the states through the development of more memoranda of understanding; I have forwarded copies of an MOU we

instituted with the State of Maryland and asked each of the state natural area programs if they would like to enter into similar agreements with us. I am seeking to expand our network of "patrons" who inspect designated National Natural Landmarks for the National Park Service, which include states, private organizations, and individual citizens. Also, we have a large data base on sites not yet designated as NNLs: we have information on approximately 3000 other sites that need more evaluation, and this information on "potential" NNLs is available from us or the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). We wish to share this information even more widely than now occurs. We are also trying to improve our cooperative agreements with some federal agencies (BLM, FWS, and the Forest Service) to better coordinate the program as it involves federal lands.

I have recently taken actions to ensure the effective organizational placement of the headquarters staff of the NNL program in order that they might be more effective in meeting the needs of state natural area programs. And I am now negotiating trade-offs to see if we can identify more financial resources for the program which would allow more regular contact with the state natural area program at our regional office level.

NNLs, though often small and sometimes representing single natural features, are nevertheless logical complements to the National Park System itself. We have 339 units in the National Park System, but we also have 578 National Natural Landmarks. The NNL program extends our preservation mission beyond just our national parks. It is my hope that the NNL program also reflects the theme that natural area preservation, regardless of the protection tool used, should ideally involve a partnership between the federal, state, and private sectors. This partnership has been in existence since 1962, since the NNL program would not have gone anywhere without the voluntary help of the American public, other agencies, the states, universities, and private conservation organizations. I wish to increase the level of this partnership now. Additionally, we must start viewing each new natural area reserve as only one part of a larger nationwide protected area network.

Better mapping of the location of all our existing protected areas will facilitate a more precise identification of gaps.

As you may know, the Service's natural area preservation activities extend beyond park boundaries through other activities as well. For example, project 8 of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program is co-chaired by the Service. World Heritage Convention activities receive regular NPS staff support. We also assist other countries on a periodic basis in planning or managing national parks around the world.

## **Refocusing our Traditional Preservation Perspective**

The second idea I want to discuss is the need to refocus our traditional preservation perspective. In 1980, the Service began to more widely recognize that the National Park System is impacted by influences originating outside it, including air pollution, water pollution, logging, exotic species, development, and noise. Using the 1979 terminology of the National Parks Land Conservation Association, "no park is an island," the public and the Congress also became concerned about the external influences on national parks, as well as the internal ones.

We recognized that parks are not isolated from outside human influences. And we know that some of our national parks are not large enough to be self-sustaining ecosystems. They must depend upon outside resources. For example, Everglades National Park's source of water originates well outside the park, and some of the seasonal range of Yellowstone National Park's elk population is outside park boundaries. If some national parks cannot or will not be made larger, it is important that land uses on adjacent lands not be detrimental ones.

A "buffer zone," as in the model Biosphere Reserve concept, is one good alternative. We also need broad-scale regional planning outside national parks, such as is demanded for the "Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem." As I indicated in my address at Yellowstone National Park in June, 1985, we need an "area of concern" around national parks, including Yellowstone, where we want close cooperation of local landowners and agencies, so conflicting land uses do not intrude on the parks.

A public law passed on June 23, 1936, grants the National Park Service authority to aid the states and local government agencies in planning public park areas. It may provide an opportunity to protect land adjacent to park boundaries by

giving the Service the ability to aid the state and local governments in land use and recreational planning. I plan to investigate whether we could use this as a possible way to influence land use outside the National Park System. Additionally, both the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have Congressional mandates to coordinate their land use plans with the plans of state and local governments. It would be a great step forward if the federal, state, local, and private sectors could really *fully* work together cooperatively in this arena of land uses next to national parks. Since it is related to influencing land use outside of national parks, I have asked the Internal Revenue Service for a reading as to whether lands adjacent to the National Park System will qualify for tax breaks if the owners apply for conservation easements, as implied in the new 1986 IRS regulations entitled "Income Taxes: Qualified Conservation Contribution," as provided in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 51, January 14, 1986).

In a world of increasing landscape fragmentation, and increasing alterations outside many nature reserve boundaries, including national parks, it is important that we recognize many of them for what they may become; habitat patches in a matrix of disturbed landscape, which could influence the viability of the biota within them. As you know, the academic study of "landscape ecology" has been in existence in Europe for a long time. It is a young discipline only recently pursued in the United States, although we have done much work that qualifies under its banner. We need to follow this European example and pursue this endeavor as an integrating science, and see if it can provide an overall theoretical framework for nature reserve management, especially outside of reserves. We need to start looking at the entire landscape more as a mosaic of habitat patches imbedded in a matrix of diverse land uses, and be concerned about patch or reserve shape, connectedness, boundary permeability, and so on. For instance, what are the pros and cons of habitat corridors for individual nature reserve system situations? If we want corridors, what is the optimal design, and for which species?

### **Summary: The Challenge Ahead**

To summarize, then, we have many challenges ahead of us. First, we must strive to coordinate better among ourselves at the federal, state and local levels, and not duplicate our efforts,

such as data gathering, or squander scarce financial or staff resources. We should also view the addition of each new nature reserve as part of a nationwide network of reserves, labeled by diverse names such as national parks, national wildlife refuges, state game reserves, nature preserves, wildflower sanctuaries, biological field stations, outdoor recreation areas, etc. Since we know we will lose natural areas, we should strive to establish coordinated priorities.

We should also continue to try to protect the small remnants of biotic community types that were once widespread in our country, which in some cases are the best examples left, though they may be too small to think of as a traditional fairly large national park or nature reserve. For example, many are under 50 acres, and some are under 10 acres.

Secondly, we need the best technical guidance science can offer. We need scientists jointly assisting top managers or administrators in long-range planning of nature reserve systems, and not have them relegated to being low-level technical advisers. We must recognize at the same time, however, that ecology and related sciences have few of the many answers we now need. So there must be a balance between more long-term research, and using available but less-than-adequate data, because of the urgency of our present situation: landscape alteration is proceeding in this country at an alarming rate.

Thirdly, we can no longer view national parks and nature reserves as islands, uninfluenced by people and their activities outside them. Our old-time view of stopping our concern at the national park or nature reserve boundary has got to be replaced. We need buffer zones and regional planning. We need to look closer at older countries such as in Europe, where their longer history of land use can teach us lessons. We need to take into account the social and economic conditions adjacent to reserves.

We can still set an example for the world, just as our predecessors did in 1872 when creating Yellowstone National Park, by being innovative in regional planning. We must, however, recognize the dimension of the problem—technical, social, economic, and political—and we need support from a wide array of interest groups. We need to articulate the problem so the public will get the message. It is going to be very difficult and we will not win all the battles, since we are

competing with a growing population and a finite amount of land area available to us to use in the United States. As the Nature Conservancy stated in 1975 in a report for us, "America is losing ground," and it still is. Not just in terms of habitat in general, but also in terms of habitat next to existing reserves.

However, we must never fail to recognize all we have accomplished in creating the reserves we now have in the United States. There are no countries who could compare with us in terms of the number, size, diversity, or quality of the national parks and various types of nature reserves we have, owned or administered by the federal government, the states, counties, cities, universities, private conservation organizations, and individual citizens. We do have some regional cooperative activities. However, this is not enough. We need *holistic* land use planning in this country as it relates to national parks and nature reserves.

To achieve this, however, there must be a widespread appreciation of the fact that we now have a problem. This demands a viewpoint by much of the American public of "looking beyond national park or nature reserve boundaries," not just to set aside more of the small remnant examples of the vast diversity of our country's natural landscape, *but* to preserve in perpetuity all the biota *in* the national parks and nature reserves we have already worked so hard to establish.

Thank you.

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## **The National Park Service in the Temporary Society: Creating a Learning Agency**

**Richard Greenough and J. Douglas Wellman**

**P**ublic agencies in democracies must adapt to changes in their social and political environments if they are to survive (Selznick, 1949). In America, the demands for agency adaptation have increased rapidly as our society has become more "temporary" (Mosher, 1971). The National Park Service, particularly in the years since the mid-1960s, has ex-