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Dedicated to the Protection, Preservation and Management  
of Cultural and Natural Parks and Reserves  
Through Research and Education

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**On the Cover:** Shiprock, a famous topographic landmark in northwestern New Mexico, stands in dramatic contrast to the Rattlesnake oil field. Located southeast of the city of Farmington, this was the site of the state's earliest oil discovery. This photo was taken May 1941. *Courtesy New Mexico State Records Center & Archives*

## Letter from Gustavus

## Islands of Hope—Now More Than Ever

August 12, 1996

About a quarter of a century ago I wrote a book called *Islands of Hope*. The idea was that National Parks and similar preserves are great places to convey the environmental ethic—outdoor laboratories and pulpits where human reintegration with the rest of the world could be demonstrated and projected outward to the society at large.

The motivation for this effort was a threefold, feedback premise:

- ❖ without such preserves humankind would lack expansive, benchmark control zones to measure and understand the impacts of modern, high-tech societies upon the biosphere;
- ❖ without such knowledge people could not develop the principles and practices necessary for fundamental environmental reform;
- ❖ lacking environmental reform, the biosphere and its dependent societies would continue to decline in health and vigor, taking the parks and other preserves down with them;
- ❖ without such preserves . . . . (and so on).



But that was then. This is now. The world is older, more tattered, heavier with more of us. True, we made some improvements of the sorts that affect what we see and what we smell, breathe, eat, and drink. Welcome as they are, these reforms constitute hard-fought and—considered worldwide—spotty ameliorations within a fundamentally unchanged social and technological system.

That system recently empowered by computerization and instant data transmission, now enfolds the world. And its voracity probes the far places to meet the needs of burgeoning humanity. Thus have human technology and fecundity teamed up to make the present condition.

As world population increased by 50 percent over that 25-year span, the rich nations got richer. But most of the world made little or no progress—neither for masses of human beings (beyond mere survival) nor for the health of the world ecosystem (stretched ever closer to its extractive and absorptive ca-

pacities). Rather, the poor nations got poorer, more crowded, and more urbanized. Peasants and pastoralists, crowded out of exhausted homelands (or expelled from prime lands converted to mechanized agribusiness), fled to the cities, or rather to their surrounding shanty-slums with no water or septic systems.

This pell-mell explosion of megacities—as dumps for excess rural people—in countries that were 80 percent rural only yesterday filled the agenda at the June 1996 U.N. Habitat Conference in Istanbul. There the delegates pondered these festering concentrations of dispossessed and desperate people. What do these multiplying, overloaded megacities portend for the future? In terms of common decency and compassion? . . . economic exploitation? . . . political instability? . . . mass migrations? . . . spreading disease and misery and terror? Forget containment in a world where no place is farther than a day's journey from any other place.



So in the big picture, the age of environmentalism, despite contrary propaganda, is not over. At its deeper level it hasn't even started.

And it is in deep trouble. The ideological backlash generated by the timid reforms that began in the Sixties has hobbled—and tainted with a demonizing tarbrush—the environmental-reform movement, co-opted much of its establishment, and tamed political leaders. These leaders should, in fact, be mobilizing all nations for the fundamental reforms needed to reclaim a healthy, sustaining biosphere for people and our fellow passengers on this, our only available living planet.

This transcendent moral and pragmatic issue should override all of the petty politics and bloody tribal wars that trivialize and worsen the human condition. Instead, in the United States (with variations in other countries) we are plagued with the Wise Use Movement and similar throwback groups whose corporation-funded think tanks and political committees work to wreck reform.

These people, variously, will not or cannot face biological facts, the most important of these being that humans at home on the biosphere are, biologically speaking, no different from cows at home on the range. Any good cattle rancher knows the limits of his or her range. People who live directly off the land have always understood that this same imperative applies to humans.

To deny that our species, as all others, must abide by the limits of a finite world takes a lot of rationalization. Then comes conversion of these rationales to plausible propaganda. Thus armed, the forces of manipulation go forth to exploit alienation, ignorance, and desperation.

It is a good time for such manipulation, particularly in the United States—a country until recently insulated from finitude. The millennium approaches. This nation, king of the hill only a breath past, suddenly knows doubt and fear.

Strange apparitions, terrorism, invade the collective consciousness. Alienation and the anxiety of economic insecurity prey upon the people. Corrupted politics produces cynicism across the land, expressed as lack of faith in governments—even in governance itself. Groups withdraw from society—religious, survivalist, anarchist. Jobs migrate elsewhere as a new global economy subjects the people of this once-abundant, self-sufficient, and insulated country to the kinds of travails that long have prevailed and are today the norm in other less-fortunate places. Social fragmentation and domestic chaos reign, not only overseas, where—as we smugly perceived—they always held sway, but now, right here at home in the good old USA. Perhaps, after all, secular democracy has failed!

The title and the substance of Marshall Berman's book, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, perfectly captures the angst of modernity, the erosive affliction of the age.

So people turn to ideological, theological, and absolutist certainties. And there are those who are willing, and paid, to lead them to the wrong battles on the wrong battlefields. Granted that most of these fearful and distraught people sincerely and justifiably seek solid ground to live their lives on. They also, in the large, lack historical perspective and knowledge of environmental affairs.

This volatile combination, mobilized in the service of selfish and ideologically narrow factions, proceeds apace to break the bonds and balances of democratic government. Such government rests on the compromised, consensual center, with live-and-let-live tolerance granted to the fringes. No single faction or philosophy "wins" in the functioning democratic government. That is what our Constitution is all about. But today common courtesy and collegiality fade away. Polluted public discourse, dominated by absolutist stridency, in turn poisons the democratic processes designed to help people of different views and interests find common ground: that zone where justice and equity determines the balance between singular interests and the public good of the inclusive community. The current "take no prisoners" attitudes and expressions of public debate lead us toward the balkanization of this American nation.



The methods employed to pervert public discourse are many and varied: Philosophy and history scrambled and rewritten. False science purveyed as truth, used as acid in the face of established fact and the looming patterns that warn us. Polluters of politics using falsehood and fear to degrade the principle that government in this country was designed to serve: the principle of public good. Demonization of those who attempt to perform government's valid and necessary duties as mediator between the powerful and the weak, and between the private and public realms. Reckless elevation of private rights at the ex-

pense of community obligations and well being. Wholesale damnation, as distinct from valid reform of regulatory regimes essential to the balances of civil, safe, and equitable society. Feeding the legislative fires of absolutist religious and social tenets—guaranteed by the Bill of Rights as matters of individual choice, but prohibited as the domain of government.

This is the fabric of propaganda that covers the hidden agendas of greed, inequity, and unconstrained power for the few.



In the field of environmentalism—which in this country is based on the three legs of livable home environments, public health, and public lands—all of the above tactics and strands can be discerned.

Civil society, as directly embodied by local governments, is strapped by local tax caps and by skewed national priorities that have produced crippling national indebtedness and a dearth of discretionary funds for the betterment of communities. With both infrastructural and social necessities deferred, our cities decay—their increasing inequities leading to class warfare. In a reversal from Third World countries, based on the different sequences of our histories, those well-off enough to do so have fled the cities for suburb and country, leaving the central cities, except during business hours, to the abandoned poor and the dysfunctional.

In all categories of decent life—social amity and security, housing, education, esthetics, rudimentary public services—the millions of abandoned people are victimized by calculated deficiencies and neglect. This forsaking of our fellows feeds a socio-environmental cancer that can destroy this country.

Relying on negative efforts such as stiffer sentences and bigger prisons, we—as a society—have not begun to touch fundamental causes, much less to develop and implement the long-term solutions to this imminently mortal tumor in our body social and political. Rather—disregarding the history that created these pools of isolation and suffering, and perverting the sciences that illuminate social pathology and recovery—we blame those who suffer and the programs and people that have tried to help them. There exists no sadder commentary on the decay of civic tradition in this country, nor of the prostitution of political and academic integrity.

The bent rationalizations for abandonment and prison storage solve none of the problems of the more fortunate. They only deepen them. They lead us ever closer to comprehensive social collapse.

Thus: Slick, high-priced propaganda for short-term gain under the cover of scapegoating shapes the dismal excuses for social trust, harnessing fear and ignorance, hoodwink a confused electorate to act against its own interests.

It is odd that the hired guns and hi-tech cowboys of today's American

Way—who tout humankind as part of nature, and view mechanized environmental destruction as “only natural”—fail to see connections between environmental degradation and social pathology. They may agree that crowded rats in a cage eat each others’ tails. But they refuse the parallel between that behavior and the equivalent anti-social behavior of crowded, despairing human beings. Indeed, we are all parts of nature.

The social environment, along with whatever gene combinations nature bestowed upon each of us, largely determines the fate of all but the more exceptional and lucky of humankind.

Our continued neglect and disrepair of the social environment will kill us quicker than the accumulating poisons in the public-health environment or the assault upon the public lands. Moreover, the social conflict that moves ever closer to open warfare (barring emergency remedies quickly followed by substantial and structural ones) will consume the social energy and material resources that the country needs to deal with more commonly understood environmental challenges.

At whatever cost this country must restore hope—based on compassion and equity and enduring commitment—in the desertified parts of our society. The only good news here is that the accursed and abused, the neglected and abandoned have, in their larger numbers, continued to have faith in the moral principles and the Constitutional law of this country. We are about at the end of the rope in that regard. We must prove up now.



The environmental laws and regulatory programs that protect public health affect every citizen, including children in the womb (and the very chromosomes that combine to make them). The presently dominant anti-government zealots—chanting their mantras of minimal (18th-century) government, deregulation, budget cuts, and agency downsizing—gut the laws and starve the testing and monitoring programs that guard us all (in this complex, exponentially evolved society) from chemicals, drugs, and other dangerous products.

Thirty-four years ago, with the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, the country-at-large became aware of the cost and dangers of accumulating toxic chemicals—many of them synthetics unknown in nature. Pesticides and other poisons developed in industrial laboratories were packaged and sold with little or no knowledge of their specific long-term (much less their synergistic) effects. Overused and carelessly dumped into air, soil, and water, they accumulated in the food chain and in the air and water of daily existence. People got sick, and didn’t know why. Lakes in the process of dying produced mutant and diseased fish. Birds that ingested DDT and similar toxins laid eggs that broke and couldn’t be hatched.

Other overloads made headlines back in those days. Feces floated where people swam. Green and purple stuff roared out of factory pipes directly into major rivers, the water supply for all those downstream. Some rivers burst into flames, ignited by a flipped cigarette butt.

The air we breathe thickened and invaded our lungs and brains with lead and caustics and many other concentrations that made us cry and cough and stay home from work with mysterious illnesses.

This may seem like old history, but the kinds of people who did that stuff then, before protective public agencies started looking over their shoulders, are still with us. It's people of this ilk, and their beholden spin doctors and politicians, who violate the public trust. And at every opportunity ambush these agencies in Congressional hearings and secretly insert disabling riders in critical legislation.

A long time ago Charles Dickens wrote social-history novels that accurately portrayed the abuses of the early Industrial Revolution in England, and the absolute contempt of men of private power for the common citizen. Our own late 19th- and early 20th-century progressive and muckraking literature documents that same malfeasance and contempt in this country.

With the surge of industrial and R&D power of World War II and succeeding decades, we were changing the chemistry of the common air and water and soil. We were swallowing incredibly potent pills whose effects would show in deformed babies, or in crippling illnesses that had incubated in the pill-takers for 20 years. We were eating things that made rats die in laboratories.

It was time to take stock and institute controls for the public welfare of the nation. Rachel Carson's book dramatized this mad progression which, unchecked, would make a toxic stew of the whole country.

Then followed bipartisan efforts in the Sixties and Seventies that developed the body of environmental law that gave us some relief from the Social Darwinism that a caveat emptor free-enterprise system was imposing on us—until then, a nearly defenseless citizenry. The public-health agencies and programs enacted in those years, however minimalist their charters, established or greatly strengthened public controls affecting clean air, clean water, consumer protection, toxic waste disposal, nuclear safety, occupational health, drug and chemical testing, medical research, and a host of other categories.

Only constant vigilance protects these zones of public concern. Yet, today, the agencies that oversee these concerns bleed white from the wounds of the long knives on Capitol Hill. This is not management reform or rationalization of regulation or pruning of deadwood. This is demolition. Nothing more blatantly demonstrates the malignant ignorance (or, for those who know better, the kept and calculated malignancy) of the zealots. With this assault on the public health of the nation and its generations yet unborn, these transient, strutting ideologues dismantle the public trust and mortgage the health of fu-

ture generations.

It grates me to hear these anti-social people talk about social and family values. And it is beyond reckoning that they cannot see that the commonweal includes them and their descendants. For, as the whole goes, so will go its parts.

For many of the reasons cited above—among them decaying infrastructures, insidious synergisms of introduced and alien materials, instantaneous worldwide exposure to epidemics, and collapsing monitoring systems—this country faces ever-mounting public health problems. Item: Today, the health of this nation's children is in the lower ranks of industrialized nations. Another, technical, example: We have not the foggiest notion yet of how to handle the moribund nuclear-energy enterprise—neither the military nor the peaceful manifestations of it. First we must decommission—at immense cost—the obsolescent power plants and the decaying weaponry. Then must follow scores of thousands of years of uninterrupted controlled storage and monitoring of these infinitely lethal, long-lived, and volatile materials. This in turn will require an enduring political stability and technical continuity unknown in and longer than recorded human history—a period of time that, moving backwards, would land us in the age of Neanderthal Man; a period of time that will make the 3,000 years of Ancient Egypt's dynastic history seem like lunch hour.

We are told that the invisible hand of the market will solve all such problems. We are told that the public sector is dead. On the face of it, just for the exemplary nuclear issue—one of many similarly complex issues—such assertions lack any merit or plausibility. They are the primitive slogans of rigorously uninformed minds.

Given the ruthless sacrifice of communities and whole regions of the country (and the greater part of the Southern Hemisphere) to the imperatives of bottom-line corporate greed, who can imagine the market taking on *pro bono publico* tasks over several thousand years. We might be able to count on a 6-months' public relations campaign.



In the zone of public lands and biological preserves—those benchmarks where wisdom might be learned and turned to general reform—erosion of acreage and quality habitat accelerates. These reductions come as directed and specific assaults, and as indirect degradations flowing from the general decline of the biosphere. Worldwide, the scramble for diminishing raw materials, fuels, and foods progressively transforms these lands from their dedicated purposes to final reservoirs of untapped natural resources. The intertwined trajectories of soaring population and matching production demands constitute, if unchecked, the master trendline of the coming age.

This context, writ large on the wall, tells us that sheer human numbers

combined with systems that promote insatiable per capita demands for more material goods, will homogenize the degrading biosphere, and the human experience within it. The last refuges for esthetic adventure in untrammelled natural settings, for ecological integrity, and for human transformation based on biological wisdom will become extinct.

The demands and levels of per capita consumption generated by these systems were unsustainable from the earliest days of the techno-industrial revolution that began 2½ centuries ago. Changes in human power and productive capacity made possible the exponential explosion of population from 500 million people in 1750 to more than 6 billion people in the year 2000—a 12-fold increase, with half of it occurring in the last 50 years.

The fact is that we are being hoist by our own petard. Short of comprehensively intelligent social and political behavior and exquisite transformative use of the very technological power by which we have entrapped ourselves, we will continue to ravage and destroy the Earth, consuming every last mineral deposit, oil pool, forest, fishery, arable soil, and habitat.

The implications of this conclusion are so profound—in such categories as population stabilization and decrease, massive transitions to renewable power sources and mass transit, settlement patterns, low material civilization, just and equitable social organization, and changing sovereignties amongst local, national, and world governments—that no political individual or party, anywhere, can face them.

We still deal with symptoms. In so doing we make no progress toward the fundamental reforms and transformative work that must be done, if we are to save ourselves and our close and distant kin on this Earth. Pollution-control devices without fundamental environmental reform are of the same futile order of utility as bigger prisons without fundamental social reform. They both stem from the same kind of simplistic thought: tighten the wing nuts on the pressure cooker and hope you're not around when it explodes.

To continue in this distracting and procrastinating mode guarantees that every ameliorating improvement within the current frame will be outrun and overwhelmed by the remorseless increase of human population—which, even with our best efforts, will have doubled again toward the end of the coming century. Trapped and blindly bashing on, we will continue, given the desperation of human needs, to recklessly consume the diminishing resources that measure our hopes and abilities for transformation, and the time left to do it.

Moreover, in such conditions of growing desperation and rampant social inequity, we will use our respective private and public powers—in whatever forms they evolve and combine—to battle over the scraps of material sustenance that remain.

In such a world of advancing poverty and constant struggle for evermore marginal survival, foresight and rational planning for the future will disappear.

Immediate imperatives will govern. Those imperatives will force the mobilization of all people to war and sacrifice. A common footing will be achieved under the lash of necessity and desperate, dictatorial leadership. Individual freedom along with social and environmental amenity will be early victims. Much worse will follow.



It pains me deeply to write this grim Jeremiad and impose it upon whatever hardy readership might persevere to its end. But the trivializing follies of this political season, highlighting the long-term loss of valuable time and energy needed for serious work, constrain me to it.

Within that larger context, the National Parks and equivalent preserves of the world symbolize the kinds of enlightenment and foresight so generally lacking these days. Through my association with parks over a large part of my life, I have discovered an intellectual and philosophical catalyst, a beacon that resolves to a guiding point much of the chaos and confusion and complexity that characterizes the modern world.

I see in the fate of these symbolic places larger fates.

If we cannot utilize these places, around the world, for thought and wisdom, as aids in our salvation, then, it seems to me, we have little chance to solve the more intractable kinds of problems that we face as a species. If we cannot see the enduring values of these belays on an ever-steeper cliff—save them from the instant resource, recreation, and commercial gratifications of the moment—that inability may seal our larger hopes as representatives of intelligent life. It may say that we are merely clever, that our flashes of brilliance must inevitably be overcome by the visceral heritage of our ancestry.



[Ed. note: With this essay, Bill Brown closes his “Letter from Gustavus” column, which has appeared regularly in the *FORUM* since 1992. Although Bill is now going to concentrate on other writing projects, we expect to have further contributions from him on an occasional basis.]

## Letter from Vancouver

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# Take Back Our Language

**T**he transition from youth and idealism to old age and treachery can be extremely traumatic for oldsters who have failed to shed their idealism and never found their way to treachery.

To me, one of the most agonizing events in the downward spiral of our quality of life is the corruption of language. Today's political and social discourse makes the dictionary not a tool but a handicap. In the service of greed and its handmaiden, money, politicians still indulge in the vocabulary of yesterday. Hope is still offered as political coin, but most voters recognize that coin as inflated beyond any ability to buy the world it promises. The result is cynicism at best, denial at worst. Shut your eyes to the tomorrow that looms and maybe it will go away.

Cornering wealth and power has become the end game for those who play it hardest. They willingly pay big bucks to flaks who distort our language to convey the opposite of its true meaning. When greed and ignorance can co-opt the word "wise," and abuse can masquerade as "use," then the power of language that once separated us from the other animals can send us back.

It's not reassuring to note that the other animals are meeting us halfway. Jarod Diamond, in his 1992 book, *The Third Chimpanzee*, notes that the common, cat-sized African monkey known as the vervet, is fully as capable as we of dissembling through what amounts to their language. They have been documented using their warning cry for "leopard" not to alert their own band to leopard danger, but to mislead a rival band into fleeing the scene of the rivals' almost certain victory.

Together with others dedicated to alerting our human band to dangers more lethal than leopards, I once strove to describe wise use as a means of preserving the biosphere for sustainable life. Today, the big bucks and animal cunning of those who would ignore wisdom or label it as "robbing us of our personal property rights," are clearing the way for ecological disaster by turning our human vocabulary into a new Tower of Babel.

The rapid dwindling of the natural resources on which our civilization rests, and the proliferation of wastes that we have fewer and fewer places to put, have sharpened our, as yet, only dimly realized perception of danger. Robbed of the weapon of language that gave us our survival edge, too many of us are fighting

tooth and nail to “git while the gittin’ is good” or simply shrugging and throwing in the towel.

One of the towels marked “hers” is mine, and I am loathe to throw it in, but as I see language corrupted in the service of ignorance and avarice, bought by money and fueled by fear, I find it increasingly hard to find reason for hope.

George Orwell, a prescient philosopher who wrote half a century ago, noted that if you rob a people of their language by deliberately distorting its meanings, you take away their ability to frame thoughts and communicate their thinking. In his 1947 essay, “Politics and the English Language,” (contained in Volume 4 of Orwell’s collected essays, titled “In Front of Your Nose”), Orwell notes: “In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible.” He deplores the growing practices of “euphemism, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness” and declares “all issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia” where thought corrupts language and language corrupts thought. Reality is replaced by whatever the idea-mongers are selling.

Today’s discourse represents a gross extension of what began as mere euphemism. There is hardly a self-serving, reprehensible action today that does not have a mind-bending label making it sound not just acceptable, but wise and preferable. And there are more and more lazy listeners who buy into the euphemistic “meaning.”

Which leaves this old language hen wondering where our culture failed us. Why do some of us find it so hard to identify with most of our chronological contemporaries? What is our task, if any, as we continue to try to make our voices heard? Do we “point with pride,” “view with alarm,” clear our elderly throats and “advise,” tax our aging muscles into “taking up the cudgels” one more time? Or do we just shut up and try to find a compatible corner in which to live out the dire consequences we warned of a quarter century ago?!

I can think of several additional “hopelessnesses” to add to Brown’s depressing list. One is the reasoning behind the opinion of some of today’s leading scientists and science writers that there is no chance of any other life like ours in the entire universe. They contend that the billions of years of lead time necessary for the flowering of our exalted human condition would culminate anywhere (including here on Earth) with extinction of the species—doomed by its seemingly irresistible lust to murder its fellow beings and foul its planetary nest.

The few positive notes are the scattered candles of dawning maturity that flicker here and there around the Earth. They need to be blown on gently, cradled in care, and rescued from the killing effects of language perversion.

If it’s not already too late.



## Report from Moscow:

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# A New Environmental Education Center for Russian Protected Areas

[Ed. note: In late August 1996 we received via e-mail the following brief report on a new organization in Moscow, the Environmental Education Centre "Zapovedniks." ("Zapovednik" is the Russian term for State Nature Reserve.) The writer, Natalia Danilina, is the director of the Centre as well as the regional representative to IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas.]

The Environmental Education Centre "Zapovedniks" was established by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to carry out a project entitled "Environmental Education and Public Awareness in Protected Areas," which is being funded by the Swiss Government. The major goals of the Centre are the following: to facilitate cooperation by Russian Zapovedniks (State Nature Reserves) and National Parks with the public, to enhance the prestige of protected areas in the public eye, and to help the public appreciate the great significance of protected areas in preserving Russian nature. It is also necessary to attract the attention and support the Russian Government has promised in many official documents.

Unfortunately, decision makers, protected areas managers, and environmentalists have only recently come to understand the importance of such work. And the lack of sufficient experience and professional skills, as well as the scant methodological literature and inadequate funding of protected area activities, does not allow Zapovedniks and National Parks to take on these tasks. To overcome these difficulties is the mission of the Environmental Education Centre "Zapovedniks."

Taking into consideration Russian and foreign experience, and working together with media at the national and local levels, the Centre has actively started to fill the information vacuum with respect to protected areas. Organizing exhibitions and expositions devoted to protected areas, both in Moscow and outlying regions; publishing colorful booklets and other informational and educational materials; conducting promotional campaigns, conferences and competitions—all of these are part of the Centre's work.

An integral part of the Centre's activity is working with potential donors to help realize educational projects in Zapovedniks and National Parks. So too is a planned series of training seminars for specialists from protected areas, as

well as from regional and local Environmental Committees. In the seminars, experts work directly with local residents, visitors, and neighborhood schoolchildren—a cross-section of the local population. Most of these specialists have advanced biological education, but many of them are new to environmental education. That is why there is such a keen need for training in communication and cooperation with average citizens.

To this end, the Centre created two-week (100-hour) original training programmes, whose development is continuing. The programmes focus on two issues: “The Psychological Basis of Effective Communication” and “Methods in Environmental Education.” The programme includes issues such as “Legislative Support for Protected Areas Activities,” “International Conventions and Agreements in the Field of Biodiversity Conservation,” “International NGOs and Nature Conservation,” and others. Besides the traditional forms of educational, such as lectures, the Programme uses interactive forms, such as various games, discussions, excursions, and conferences. Every day is a combination of three related components:

- Study hours (lectures, seminars, training sessions, educational games, etc.), organized by teaching staff concerning the problems embraced by the programme;
- Reflection on the day’s events, which help participants develop their own approaches to communication, while also offering feedback to the teacher; and
- “Creative workshops,” “round tables,” and “expert classes”—which give the participants a chance to exchange their views on various issues in environmental education.

The efficiency of the programme is evaluated by means of “incoming” and “outgoing” diagnostics, or feedback; every day is assessed through reflection, various tests, participants’ suggestions, interviews, and by other means. The final stage of the programme is an analysis in which project participants are connected with the content of the programme and also reflect on problems of environmental education and how they might be treated in protected areas.

The programme described above was tested in June 1996, when 19 specialists on environmental education from protected areas took part. The programme was highly regarded by the participants as well as by the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of the Russian Federation.

The Centre began work in April 1996. It consists of 4 full-time staff and 28 consultants, including protected areas managers; environmentalists from state, nongovernmental, and scientific institutions; and teachers, psychologists, sociologists, artists, and designers. The Centre maintains contact with all 93 Zapovedniks and 31 National Parks in Russia. More than 30 specialists from

protected areas who are engaged in environmental education have already taken part in the Centre's programme and other activities.

In connection with a hearing in the State Duma [the Russian national representative body] on protected areas issues, the Centre arranged a photo exhibition called "The Natural World of Zapovedniks" and an exhibition of children's drawings called "Zapovedniks through Children's Eyes," both of which were well-received by deputies of and visitors to the Duma. In addition, the Centre has prepared proposals to facilitate promotion of public awareness about Zapovedniks and National Parks. Some of these were included in the Duma's recommendations to the Government.

Educational and training materials for environmental education in Protected Areas have been completed, and two television programs devoted to last spring's "March for Parks" were produced and aired. And, in honor of 60th anniversary of Zapovednik "Teberdinsky," one of the oldest in Russia, a colorful booklet was published in Russian and English.

This list includes only the most important actions of the Centre.

The Centre "Zapovedniks" works closely with the Department for Protected Areas Management of the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, the Russian Forest Service, the Ecological Committee of the Russian State Duma, and with many nongovernmental organizations.

The Environmental Education Centre "Zapovedniks" looks forward to co-operating with all organizations interested in the development and conservation of the unique network of Russian Zapovedniks, National Parks, and other protected areas, and in promoting public awareness about them. We are also interested in facilitating the exchange of information and experience concerning environmental education in protected areas in Russia, other countries of the former Soviet Union, and the world in general.

Our address: Environmental Education Centre "Zapovedniks"; ul.Krasikova, 27 (Institute of Economics, 15th floor); 117218 Moscow, Russia; phone/fax: +7(095) 332-4829, (095)332-4828; e-mail: zapchin@glas.apc.org. Director of the Centre: Natalia Danilina.



## Wildlife Management in the National Park System:

# The Self-Regulation Theory Revisited

**T**he National Park Service, specifically Mike Soukup, Associate Director for Natural Resources; Dan Huff, Chief Scientist, Rocky Mountain Field Area; Mary Foley, Chief Scientist, Northeast Field Area; and Ron Heibert, Chief Scientist, Midwest Field Area organized a discussion on "Wildlife Management in the National Park System: The Self-Regulation Theory Revisited." The discussion took place on Tuesday evening, August 13, at the Ecological Society of America meetings in Providence, Rhode Island. It was attended by about 70 individuals.

The purpose of the discussion was to present information on different facets of the natural regulation problem using examples from selected parks and then to allow the audience to discuss and debate these issues. The purpose of the discussion was to begin to develop a dialogue with the scientific community and to seek input and understanding of the differences between wildlife management approaches undertaken by the National Park Service and those of other agencies.

Three papers were presented to provide background information and one paper provided a synthesis. The background papers dealt with a specific park/species, and the authors were asked to address the following questions.

1. Using your species/park as an example: how does NPS wildlife management policy conflict with the management objectives of other public resource managers?
2. If necessary, can thresholds for

management intervention be established in order to effectively manage your species?

3. In terms of your case example: Is the scientific base adequate to make and implement effective management decisions?

Rolf Peterson (Michigan Technological University) presented a paper entitled "Wolf-moose interaction in Isle Royale National Park: What's 'natural regulation' got to do with it?". He reviewed the two hypotheses underlying the natural regulation approach as they applied to moose in Isle Royale National Park—these being that moose do exhibit density-dependent self-regulation and that wolves do not limit the population growth of this prey species. He showed how, over the 38 years of study on Isle Royale, conclusions regarding these hypotheses have varied, and it is only now that a fairly clear picture is emerging. This is that density-dependent responses in moose have been insufficient to stabilize

population growth and that wolves do influence moose population growth. Thus he concluded that both of the natural regulation hypotheses must be rejected. He also speculated on management intervention in the event of the extinction of wolves on the island, concluding that reintroduction was a policy, rather than a scientific issue.

Brian Underwood with William Porter (Syracuse University) presented a paper entitled "Of elephants and blind men: Deer management in the U. S. National Parks." They outlined the historical changes in white-tailed deer populations in the U. S. They contrasted management goals of the National Park Service which tends to focus on population process, with state agencies which tend to focus on population size. They argued that establishing thresholds for management intervention in terms of ecological integrity was difficult, not because of the science but because management goals were poorly defined. Finally they implied that like blind men in the parable of the title, state agencies and public groups perceive the actions taken by an individual park as representing the whole of National Park System policy. They felt the National Park Service can no longer afford a management program that is composed of an amalgamation of actions taken by individual parks. Instead it needs a coherent national policy encompassing the broad dimensions of deer management.

Dan Huff with John Varley (Yellowstone National Park) pre-

sented "Natural regulation revisited: The case for Yellowstone's northern range." They discussed the controversy over elk management that has followed the park virtually since its inception. They summarized recent studies on the northern range that have shown that the grasslands are productive, with some areas exhibiting enhancements in productivity as a result of grazing stimulation, and that it is difficult to find evidence for overgrazing. They concluded by voicing concern that the experiment in natural process management be allowed to run its course and not be prematurely interrupted by changes in management.

Gerald Wright (University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit) provided an overview of how wildlife management has evolved in the National Park Service. Management has evolved from intensive, species-specific, and highly interventionist management efforts, to, over the last 30 years, less and less human interference with the natural processes of park ecosystems. Wright then synthesized the contents of the three papers in terms of their responses to the three questions asked of the presenters. It is clear that National Park Service policies are different from those of state agencies and conflicts can and have occurred because of this. One reason for this is that state and other federal agencies have focused on ways to manage populations with more control, whereas the National Park Service has done just the opposite. Establish-

ing thresholds for intervention in the cases presented, as in situations in other parks, is difficult, not necessarily because of the lack of scientific information but because such thresholds imply management goals. Goals in turn rely on value judgments. It can be argued that the National Park Service has not yet adequately defined its management goals for wildlife in parks. With the exception of Isle Royale, it was the consensus of the papers that in most cases, there is still an inadequate scientific underpinning to support management intervention that might be used to deal with over-abundant populations.

Following the papers a question-and-answer session with the audience ensued which provided an opportunity for members of the audience to present additional points of view. The discussion was lively and extensive. Several members of the audi-

ence pointedly disagreed with National Park Service management policies, particularly at Yellowstone, and felt that population controls were overdue in order to restore a healthy ecosystem. In their opinion, many areas in Yellowstone were seriously degraded because of heavy ungulate use. Particular emphasis was given to the restoration of aspen stands and riparian areas. Obviously no consensus on this issue was reached, but the dialogue was healthy and constructive.

Few questions were raised regarding the management policies at Isle Royale. Likewise, even though many in the audience were presumably eastern ecologists, National Park Service white-tailed deer management policies received little scrutiny.

I feel the session achieved its goal of opening a dialogue with the scientific community over controversial management issues in the National Park System.



## Editor's Preface

**T**his special issue is above all a collaborative effort. The idea for its content grew out of a spirited discussion with fellow NPS historians in Baltimore during the spring of 1994. At that time, many of us expressed grave concerns about the future of our profession as the specter of a servicewide reorganization loomed inevitable. As we considered various approaches to personal and professional survival, the notion to establish closer ties with our academic brethren seemed a practical as well as expedient way by which to enhance public recognition and acceptance of our in-house scholarship.

While the *Vail Agenda* (1992) championed the call for heightened professionalism within the Park Service, it essentially failed to provide the road map necessary to make such lofty ideals attainable. Thus the Baltimore gathering, in part a follow-up response to the deficiencies of the Vail Conference, provided NPS historians with a rare opportunity to chart their own course for the future. Enthusiasm ran high; creative thinking and coherent articulation were the standards as we painfully dissected the strengths and weaknesses of our profession.

Among the myriad topics discussed, we unanimously concluded that although work produced within the National Park Service meets the highest standard, it is generally speaking either unknown to or judged inferior by our academic colleagues. In our effort to address issues germane to cultural resources management within the insular world of the National Park System, we have—perhaps unconsciously, perhaps not—drifted increasingly distant from the larger corpus of historical scholarship. This issue, then, represents a compilation of thoughts that a handful of key scholars of the American West presented at a workshop held last fall in Denver. The objective of the meeting, which was linked to the 1995 Western History Association Conference, was to acquaint NPS professionals with contemporary themes of the so-called “New Western” history and to discuss their applicability to national park interpretation programs.

**Michael E. Welsh**, professor of western history at the University of Northern Colorado and author of numerous administrative histories for the National Park Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, leads the list of writers. It is perhaps appropriate that as facilitator for the NPS workshop, Welsh’s well-crafted essay provides the backdrop for all subsequent contributions. Essentially historiographic, Welsh’s commentary not only defines the meaning of the term “New Western” history, but provides the reader with some of its more outstanding examples. As he methodically establishes the relationship between

new trends in western scholarship and the interpretive demands of a better informed public, Welsh rightfully challenges National Park Service personnel to be prepared to address a more mobile and highly diversified constituency in the immediate future.

Professor **Richard White**, winner of the coveted MacArthur Fellowship and author of several award-winning books on western history, focuses on the natural setting of national parks to underscore his appeal for more meaningful interpretation. According to White, recent historical scholarship on the American West—which by default includes many of the nation's premier national parks—is not so much “new” as it is a more balanced and less exclusive analysis of the past. America's love affair with the preservation of “pristine” landscapes, argues White, is for all intents and purposes a fantasy. Most of what we prefer to view as wilderness, in fact, has a long and complex history of human inhabitation and alteration to the natural landscape. Visitors to these federal preserves deserve a more objective interpretation of their origin than traditional historical narrative has offered in the past. The National Park Service has an unprecedented opportunity to assume the lead in revising the heretofore ethnocentric explanation of our national heritage.

**Duane A. Smith**, scion of the mining frontier in the American West and author of twenty-five books on the subject, offers us a contrasting view to Richard White's essay. Urbanization, writes Smith, not rugged individualism, was the principal agent for the settlement of the West. Although the rough-and-tumble image of the Rocky Mountain mining camp may have appeared chaotic and haphazardly conceived, Smith convincingly argues they were the precursors to what is unquestionably the highly urbanized West of today. Smith challenges National Park professionals not to conveniently establish the parameters of western history from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The urban West—aided at every turn by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and a litany of other federal agencies—is an ongoing frontier. Evidence of this remarkable growth during the twentieth century, and especially since 1945, is clearly evident in the hinterland communities of the region. National Park Service personnel must strive to keep their visitors informed of these most recent historical episodes as well.

Southwest System Support Office Superintendent **Jerry L. Rogers**, whose thirty-plus-year NPS career ranges from park historian to keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C., gives readers an eyewitness summary of the recent reorganization and restructuring. This thought-provoking analysis is useful to all NPS employees because it offers a refreshing departure from the typical “doom and gloom” prediction of the future of this agency. Although not without personal criticism of the process, much of which Rogers cogently justifies, he reminds NPS personnel that the integrity of the Service—in large measure because of dedication of its employees—remains essentially intact. Rogers

cautions, however, that effective leadership is required to enable us to weather the storm that will eventually direct us toward calmer seas.

NPS Chief Historian **Dwight T. Pitcaithley** not only enlightens us about the origins of the agency's history program, but more importantly reveals the direction in which he hopes to guide that program into the twenty-first century. In effect, Pitcaithley's essay is a response to Welsh's earlier challenge to the National Park Service to satisfy future public demands. Pitcaithley details the one-time bifurcation of the history program into two separate entities: education (interpretation) and compliance. The effectiveness of the NPS history program in the future requires not only internal reunification with the interpretation program, but also external partnerships with scholars in academia as well as public history.

In closing, I wish to gratefully acknowledge those who made this issue possible. To Intermountain Field Director John Cook and to Jerry Rogers, my thanks for your support and sanctioning of the NPS Historian/Interpreter Workshop in Denver. To Dwight Pitcaithley, a man of his word, who through his able and enthusiastic staff provided the financial support and advisory assistance required to bring the seed of an idea proposed in Baltimore to full flower. To Bob Spude and the staff of the Rocky Mountain System Support Office, who assisted with local arrangements and the numerous daily details of the workshop. To each contributor for his time and sincere concern about the future of the National Park Service. To Jane Harvey, wordsmith extraordinaire, who helped me fine-tune the essays. To the fifty-six participants who showed an interest in the workshop and exhausted time and money to attend. And, of course, to Dave Harmon and the staff of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM for offering to share highlights of the workshop with a broader reading audience. I hope all of you find this special issue worthwhile reading.



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## The National Park Service and the American West: New Voices, New Missions, New History

Americans have long been fascinated with the glamor and romance of the West. From Hollywood to Houston, and from clothing to cuisine, the cowboy, Indian, pioneer, and the rugged landscape have gripped the imagination of young and old alike.

Thus it is not surprising at the close of the twentieth century that the National Park Service, formed in the West to preserve natural resources from the depredations of the industrial capitalism that created America's cities, now must address a new generation of visitors, residents, public officials, and park service imperatives, even as scholars question the very meaning of the frontier. How the NPS meets that challenge will influence its policies, services, and programs well into the next millennium, and will require much more attention be paid to the place of history than the agency has heretofore given the meaning of the past.

For decades, the story of the American West seemed as immutable as that told by Park Service interpreters at Civil War battlefields, Revolutionary War sites, and Independence Mall. First given credence in the 1893 essay of Frederick Jackson Turner, the "frontier thesis" supposedly argued that "the West explains America." Whatever caused the nation to embrace the triangle of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happi-

ness most surely emerged from the westward advance of Europeans, redefining themselves constantly as they approached the Pacific shores. Even though Turner himself conceded the essentially urban future of twentieth-century life (the same 1890 census that declared the frontier "closed" also found two-thirds of all westerners living in towns of 2,500 or more), his ringing prose and powerful metaphors said it all for scholar and popularizer alike: there was no place like the West, and there was no reason to diminish America's "creation story."

One reason that the western metaphor gained such credence was the larger dynamic of American historiography, from the earliest days of the republic until the 1960s. That is best described as the narrative of "nation-building," in which the story of crafting a powerful society paralleled the actual events of the people telling the tale. Written primarily by white, male, Protestant scholars and amateurs, American history focused upon topics of political, economic, military, and diplomatic life. These

homilies were targeted at a nation of immigrants, whose educational level in 1900 was but the fourth grade, and whose barriers of language and culture forced the most simple and clear messages for inclusion in the public school curriculum.

Not surprisingly, the essential feature of the nation-building historians was the championing of individualism, conquest, and dominion. Ignored were the unpleasant results: slavery, racism, sexism, assault upon the environment, and the inconsistency of opportunity and oppression. By the 1960s, this explanation of the country's heritage had hardened to the belief that there were no differences, that "any boy could grow up to be president," and that America was the greatest nation that the world had ever seen.

The American West came to represent all that the nation-building school dreamed. In 1950, a survey of all films made in America since the turn of the century found that western movies made up 50 percent of the total. In addition, by 1959 the new medium of expression, television, boasted that 17 of the top 26 shows were westerns. Thus it was no surprise to park interpreters at Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas, that visitors complained that the location did not remind them of John Ford's frontier posts (nearly all of which were filmed in Monument Valley, Arizona).

One day, as the German Jewish economist Karl Marx warned, people would question the assumptions of

the nation-builders. That moment arrived in the 1960s as the children of the post-World War II "baby boom," weaned on the stories of male power and privilege in their local theatres and their own living rooms, became critical of the "disconnect" between freedom and inequality. From civil rights to Vietnam to environmental protection, young people changed the direction of America. This in turn drove scholars to craft a new narrative, known as "group identity," that highlighted the inability of people of color, women, and the poor to feel included in the words of "God Bless America" or "The Star-Spangled Banner."

From this message of opposition and protest came blessings and curses for the nation, and for the region most identified with the problems of the past. Voices that had been slighted (women, blacks, Latinos, American Indians, Asians, and others) cried out for recognition. They declared that America could not be made whole until it faced its denial of the true story of conflict and mistreatment. A rich and diverse narrative thus began to form, resisted by those whose intellectual lives had been shaped by the scale and scope of nation-building. One consequence of this struggle for the soul of America by the 1980s was the rise of "political correctness," caused by the "separatism" that excluded groups felt. No one, it seemed, could tell anyone else's story, and the country froze for a time as it searched for a way beyond the confines of group glorification.

It is small wonder, then, that public schools, the Park Service, museums, and other purveyors of America's story came by the 1990s to doubt whether the past had any meaning. Yet precisely at that moment, a third force in historical thinking surfaced to meld the best of nation-building and group identity: the "mixed-world" concept that crystallized in the book by Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes, 1650-1815* (1991). White, who would receive a MacArthur Foundation "genius" fellowship in 1995 for his contributions to scholarship, asked about the place of accommodation in the dynamic of cultural interaction. Studying Indian-European contact, a field that the group-identifiers had charged with emotion with such titles as Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1968) and Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), White and other scholars suggested that case studies of people seeking balance were needed to defuse the tension caused by the polarizations of the previous generation.

In matters of nature and the environment, the voice most closely associated with the field was Donald Worster. A native of Needles, California, who grew up in the dry Arkansas Valley of Kansas and Colorado, Worster wrote powerfully of the mistakes made by people like his own family. In *Dust Bowl* (1981), and then *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the Amer-*

*ican West* (1985), the son of irrigation farmers asked the question first posed by Karl Wittfogel: "How in the remaking of nature do we remake ourselves?" A good answer to that query came from William N. Cronon, another MacArthur Fellowship recipient, who wrote *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983). Cronon suggested that nature's voice needed attention, as it could change itself quite well without the aid of humans (through fires, floods, droughts, etc.). Then Cronon identified the habits of Native societies to alter the landscape to their advantage (especially the use of fire to clear underbrush that in turn made game easier to hunt). Colonists from England, fleeing a land of scarcity, found in the abundance of the New World a life of which they could only dream, and one that they remade in the search for security from want.

The linkage of Indians to settlers gave rise to other works of the past decade that offer insight for Park Service interpreters and historians. Albert Hurtado and Peter Iverson prepared the most comprehensive recent collection of essays, documents, and readings in their 1993 volume, *Major Problems in American Indian History*. Such general works fit with the newer quest for broadly defined messages of the West, such as one could find in Patricia Nelson Limerick (also a MacArthur Foundation Fellow), *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987); Richard White, *"It's Your*

*Misfortune and None of My Own:*" *A Modern History of the American West* (1991); and William Cronon, et al., *Under An Open Sky* (1992). All of these works declared the need to seek newer visions, beginning with the first inhabitants of the North American continent. They also suggested that the story of the West did not end when the U.S. census declared the frontier closed in 1890—an idea that had been pioneered by Gerald D. Nash in *The American West in the Twentieth Century* (1977), and further defined in his collection of essays, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (1991).

Census indicators for the year 2010 state that Latinos and Latinas will become the nation's "largest minority," surpassing the historical place of blacks in America's tale of equality promised and denied. That phenomenon will have an impact upon the National Park Service, especially in the rapidly growing Southwest but also elsewhere throughout the country. Confusing to many people is the division among scholars of the "Borderlands" and the "Chicano Movement." The former arose in the early 20th century under the direction of Herbert Eugene Bolton, professor of history at the University of California. Seeking to elevate the nearly invisible status of Spanish-speaking Americans, the biographer of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his peers selected the conquistador, padre, and the Spanish mission as the icons of admiration for Anglo audiences. While this resulted

in some measure of acceptance of a sanitized and essentially deracinated Hispanic past, it did little to satisfy the 1960s activists self-identified as "Chicanos." In the process of protesting the mistreatment of their people at the hands of Anglo employers, politicians, educators, and merchants, Chicanos also crafted a story of pride and glory that they named "Aztlán:" the mythical homeland in the northern mountains of New Mexico that they claimed gave birth to the powerful Mexican warriors whom the Spanish met and vanquished in the sixteenth century.

Because the Chicano/Borderlands dispute threatened to blur the real contributions of people of Hispanic descent, scholars in the 1990s began to ask the same questions as their peers in Indian and environmental history: is there a place for accommodation alongside victimization and conquest? That answer is best seen in two works, one a general survey and one a monograph. The former is David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (1992). Weber essayed the most thorough treatment of the Spanish presence from Florida to the West Coast since the days of Father Francis Bannon (himself a disciple of Bolton), giving much credit to the work of scholars like Ramon A. Gutierrez, yet another western history MacArthur winner and the author of the much-praised and condemned *When Jesus Came, The Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (1991). Gutier-

rez, of Hispanic and Navajo descent, wove an interdisciplinary tale of Spanish-Pueblo interaction that leaned heavily on Native creation stories, the journals of priests, and the court records of the Spanish elite of the eighteenth-century Southwest. Weber's and Gutierrez's narratives moved beyond the glamourization of Bolton, and the bitterness of the Chicanos, to suggest that the new "majority-minority" of Latinos have much to say about the future of America, and of the shape of its stories.

Nothing to emerge in the past generation of scholarship offers more for new interpretations within the National Park Service than the shelf of literature about women, families, communities, and the relationships between males and females. Whether because of the scholarship driven by the feminist movement, the visitor base of the parks, or the changing character of the Park Service itself, the next generation of interpretation cannot ignore the place of women, children, and communities in both the park units and the surrounding countryside. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson edited in 1988 one of the best general collections of the many contributions made by women in the West, and the difficulties they faced from the environment, their own men, and themselves, in *The Women's West*. A larger study that contains many trenchant western essays was prepared by a western historian, Vicki L. Ruiz, and her colleague Ellen Carol Dubois, *Unequal*

*Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (1994). They and their contributors argued that western women's history should be careful not to glorify (even subconsciously) the exploits of white women, but should listen to the pleas of women of color.

Of the many other works on women in the West, three are of interest to Park Service interpreters and historians for their content and focus. Jane Tompkins, a professor of literature at Duke University, attempted in 1992 to explain the gender inequities in western film and novels in *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*. Robert V. Hine, a social historian from the University of California at Riverside, wrote a thoughtful examination of the dilemma of individualism in the West, *Community on the American Frontier: Separate But Not Alone* (1980). He revealed how confusing it was to believe in the bonds of fellowship when one deliberately left one's home to seek the promise of the West, whether in the goldfields of California, the farms of the Great Plains, or the hippie communes of the 1960s Southwest. Sarah J. Deutsch merged issues of race, class, and gender in the history of Chicanos in *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (1987). Deutsch learned that the classic immigration factors of "push" and "pull" applied internally to the movement of native-born U.S. Latinos as they left their villages in north-

ern New Mexico for the railroads and coal fields of southern Colorado, the factories of Pueblo and Denver, and the sugar beet fields of northern Colorado. She also postulated that this journey reduced the power of Hispanics as they accommodated themselves to the masculine-dominated cash economy of urban America.

How all this new thought, as varied and speculative as it seems, affects the Park Service is apparent in a new book by Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice* (1996). Whether because of its quasi-military traditions, or its public communications, the NPS, says the author of earlier studies of women schoolteachers in the West, was not the most accommodating agency for women, either as rangers or as administrators. Yet the realities of the late twentieth century, where more women than men attend college, enter the work force, and shape the economic decisions of the household, indicate a need for the Park Service to meet the needs of women intellectually as well as economically.

Kaufman's book also speaks to the difficulties of the NPS as it seeks a new voice, a new face, and a new image for the generation of visitors, public officials, and scholars interested in its operations and its traditions. As the NPS, along with its peers throughout the federal government, faces limited financial resources and growing demands for services, its interpreters, historians, and other personnel must discover the means and the commitment to speak in new

ways to constituencies that view the NPS through divided lenses. Perhaps the best way is for Park Service personnel to understand that new ideas and concepts in history can be exciting, liberating, and interesting both for themselves and their visitors. A focus on families, communities, women, and people of color can be represented in "real-world" terms devoid of the awkwardness that characterizes political correctness. In addition, the NPS needs to examine its own past more carefully, by means of scholarly studies, to place itself in the context of historical trends and patterns that influence all of American life.

An example of the lessons that the NPS learns about itself, and about the broadening effect of the latest scholarship, came to this author in the writing of *A Special Place, A Sacred Trust: Preserving the Fort Davis Story* (1996). Despite the west Texas post's importance in the Indian wars of the 19th century, its well-preserved ruins, and the nation's embrace of frontier history, proponents of Fort Davis's inclusion in the NPS system fought for decades to convince the park service, local cattle ranchers, and the U.S. Congress of the merits of the fort (whether historic, economic, or political). Only when the champion of park formation, Barry Scobee, expanded upon a tale of romance, fantasy, and tragedy known as the "Indian Emily" story, did locals and Texas politicians alike pay attention to his pleas. Such was the grip of the "Pocahontas-like" narrative of an

Indian maiden who died warning the fort of Apache attack to save her soldier-lover, that visitors, residents, and luminaries like U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough refused for years to accept the Park Service's efforts to authenticate the Fort Davis story.

One danger in studying the past is the failure to recognize the future when it is upon us. That should not be the case for the National Park Service as it moves its staff, units, visitors, and other constituent groups towards

a new vision of history and memory. It has often been said that how a nation explains itself indicates its health and prosperity. America is built upon change, and the Park Service is dedicated to preserving changes made by previous generations. Believing that the past is worth knowing, and worth revealing to its new patrons, can maintain the Park Service's deserved reputation as the "keeper of the nation's stories," and the instructor of its proud traditions.



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# The New Western History

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## and the National Parks

**T**hese are contentious times. Americans are disputing not only their future but their past. They have fought over exhibits on the West and over commemorations of the bombing of Hiroshima. We fight over the past because history matters as a way to shape public understanding of what America is and who Americans are. Public history risks public contentiousness.

The National Park Service cannot avoid this contentiousness because public history—interpretations of the past—are encoded not just in books and films, museums and monuments, but also in the land itself and in institutions like the National Park Service that administer the land. At the turn of the century, Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis became embedded in the national parks. Then widely accepted by historians, Turner's frontier began with nature and wilderness. Once, his thesis proclaimed, the continent was a wilderness inhabited by Indians who did little to shape it or change it. History appeared with whites who carried progress and change from east to west, rearranging and shaping the continent as they proceeded. But as they went west, the civilization they carried was itself transformed, shaped, and given new form by contact with the wilderness. In Turner's history, American civilization became not just European civilization

in a new place. It was transformed by contact with American nature. We became "Nature's Nation."<sup>1</sup>



In this Turnerian view most national parks represent either remnants of that original nature or else sites that commemorate episodes in the mutual transformation of land and civilization. This is part of their value and justification. Indian peoples in this Turnerian version are naturalized. They do not really have a history before whites. They might once have lived in this land, but they left the land

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1975); see Richard White and Patricia Limerick, *The Frontier in American Culture*, edited by James Grossman (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994). The phrase "Nature's Nation" is stolen from Perry Miller, who was in no way or form a Turnerian. *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

in the parks as they had found it: pure and pristine. Some of the parks themselves subvert this popular Turnerian view. Only an Indian history that unfolded long before the arrival of whites, for example, could explain Mesa Verde. But on the whole, national parks stand for wilderness, the original nature of the continent.

By the late 1930s Turner's hold over academic history had weakened and, except among some Western historians, Turnerianism had largely disappeared in most university history departments by the 1950s. Over the last twenty years or so, but particularly in the last years, there has been a resurgence in Western history. In its academic origins the so-called New Western history was not primarily a challenge to Turner. Why challenge an interpretation that few academic historians actually held? It was instead a challenge to American historians who wrote American history as if the entire country could be reduced to the Northeast and, in a few unfortunate episodes, the South. The New Western history asserted that the West mattered in understanding American history.<sup>2</sup>

But a funny thing happened. The press picked up the New Western history and reporters assumed that

the New Western history was primarily about challenging Turner. They made the assumption not because academic historians believed in Turner, but because they themselves did. They were wrong about the academic controversy. But, in another sense, they became correct about a public controversy that followed. To the surprise of many New Western historians, and to many historians in general, Turner may have lost his hold over the academy, but he had maintained his hold over many Americans. True, they may have never heard of Turner, but they had assimilated his view of American history and made it their own. The national parks, like so many other symbols of American life, reinforced their understandings. To challenge Turner was to challenge, among other things, an interpretation of history prevalent in the popular understanding of the parks.

The New Western history in its account of the history of nature, of native peoples, of settlement, and of society, contradicts the Turnerian story and thus contradicts a popular understanding of the parks. The New Western history plots a different history. Most New Western historians see the West as a historical creation, not a natural fact. It was not a wilderness awaiting settlement. It was already inhabited by Indian peoples, Hispanics, and agents of various European states before Anglo Americans arrived. These peoples, particularly Indian peoples, had long been shaping and transforming the land-

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<sup>2</sup> For examples of the New Western history, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987) Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

scape through fire, agriculture, hunting, and pastoralism. The western plot is less the mutual transformation of wilderness and American civilization than a scene of contact between numerous competing groups of uneven power. The story told by New Western historians involves more groups, more complexities, and more contingencies than the old frontier narrative which put white Americans on one side and Indian peoples and nature on the other.



In the old frontier narrative, the story begins when whites appear on the scene. The setting is a stable and, until then, unchanging wilderness, but it is harder to pinpoint a beginning in the New Western history. History is always already underway. This is particularly true of environmental history, which is a significant component of the New Western history.

Because so much of our understanding of the national parks is caught up in the idea of wilderness and wild nature, this history has implications for the parks. Parks, of course, do preserve wild habitat and even some wilderness in the sense of land unaltered by human activity. But if many areas of the parks were shaped by Indian use, then they were not pristine areas of wilderness. They were and remain contingent, historical landscapes. Furthermore, the changes that have occurred on the national park lands since the incorporation of the parks can only be un-

derstood in relation to the suppression of various Indian practices: burning, hunting, and grazing. Wilderness is not so much preserved as created.

Fire provides a specific and familiar example. It shaped the lands Europeans found as they moved westward. Much of North America is pyrogenic landscape.<sup>3</sup> It is born in fire, both natural and human-set. Europeans noted this when they first settled on the eastern seaboard, and continued to notice it as they moved west during the nineteenth century. On September 23, 1804, near the Vermillion and Teton Rivers, for example, the journals of Lewis and Clark noted Indians lighting the prairie to signal their approach. The following spring, on March 6, 1805, the journals recorded:

Smokey all Day from the burning of the plains which was set on fire by the Minetarris for an early crop of grass as an endusement for buffalo.<sup>4</sup>

Modern scholars have made a cottage industry of studying these fires. Steve Pyne, who himself was for a long time a Grand Canyon fire fighter, has written a massive study of

<sup>3</sup> For the impact of fire, see Stephen Pyne, *Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Gary E. Moulton (ed.), *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) vol. 3, Sept. 23, 1804, 3: 104, March 6, 1804, 3: 390.

the role of fire in shaping the continent.<sup>5</sup> What these studies reveal is both the ubiquity and complexity of Indian-set fires. We cannot speak of them as if they were a homogeneous phenomenon with a single purpose. Their frequency, seasonality, purpose, and location all vary enormously.<sup>6</sup> There was a range of rationales for burning in given areas. There were signal fires. There were fires to clear forest and fires to alter habitat, as when plains Indians burned to promote earlier growth of grasses. There were fires to open forests and make travel easier, and fire as a hunting technique. There was fire as a weapon in war, and there was accidental fire.

The skill and sophistication with which Indians used fire varied from group to group. Indians in California seem to have had a very sophisticated ability to use fire to create and maintain desired animal communities. In the forests of the Northwest, in the mountains of Montana and California Indian-set fires played major roles. Modern ecologists have re-evaluated the desirability of these fires and have in many cases suggested replicating the fires Indian peoples set, but they are not the first ones to

notice them. In the 1870s John Wesley Powell believed that the forest of the Rocky Mountains were threatened by Indian fires.

Everywhere throughout the Rocky Mountain Region the explorer away from the beaten paths of civilization meets with great areas of dead forests . . . in seasons of great drought the mountaineer sees the heavens filled with clouds of smoke. In the main these fires are set by Indians.

The fires, Powell concluded, "can be curtailed by the removal of Indians"; once protected from fires, the forests would increase in extent and value.<sup>7</sup>

Indians and their fires were, of course, removed from many of these forests, including those that became part of the National Park system. Their fires had shaped these forests, and the removal of fire has had significant impact on the health and viability of the forests themselves. Even when wildfires were later allowed to burn, they became buried in new forests with massive accumulations of fuel.

These kinds of examples with numerous local variations can be extended across the West, but the major point is relatively consistent and clear. The land that incoming Anglo-Americans regarded as wilderness awaiting human transformation was itself already a human landscape,

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<sup>5</sup> Pyne, *Fire in America*.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Lewis, "Why Indians Burned: Specific Versus General Reasons," *Proceedings, Symposium and Workshop on Wilderness Fire* (Missoula, Montana: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service) November 15-18, 1983. *General Technical Report, INT-182* (Ogden, Utah: Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station), no date, 75-80.

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<sup>7</sup> Pyne, *Fire in America*, 80.

shaped by human actions in ways the newcomers often did not recognize. When, like Powell, they recognized the transformation, they disapproved and sought the removal of Indians.

The New Western history recasts both the setting and the early sections of Western history, but it also rearranges other parts of the narrative. Too often the history of the West is presented as one of unrelieved conflict and inevitable white triumph. Various parks and national monuments preserve sites of conflict. Others, such as Fort Vancouver, preserve sites of a different world, a mixed world, that we more often forget. In various places and for varying amounts of time there existed a mixed world which in some ways is undergoing a resurgence today as tribes reassert their legal rights in ways that may challenge a historical interpretation of the history of expansion encoded in the parks.

Turner gave white migration the inevitability of a natural force, flood, or a volcanic eruption. And we speak of it as flowing as if it were a river, or an eruption. And we, prisoners of our metaphors, expect that nothing could have stood in front of it. It was destined to overwhelm all who opposed it. Things could not have been different. When we pick our symbols of this encounter, we encapsulate our assumptions. We think of mounted warriors of the Great Plains confronting covered wagons. We think of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. We think of Wounded Knee. We think of constant and inevitable conflict.

Over large sections of the West, however, Indians and non-Indians worked out, at least for a while, an accommodation. Some encounters in the West indicate other possibilities. Dr. Charles Pickering is not a prominent name in the annals of American exploration. He was, in nineteenth-century terms, a naturalist; yet he gained appointment as an ethnologist to the Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-42 (more commonly known as the Wilkes Expedition). He was to study humans, not plants or animals. His appointment yielded the book, *The Races of Men*. Only 100 copies of the original were published.<sup>8</sup>

In hindsight, joining the Wilkes expedition was one of those choices that Pickering might have better passed by. Lieutenant Charles Wilkes was not *the* only problem, but he was most definitely a problem. Wilkes, described rather forgivingly by one historian as a "paranoid martinet," had formidable skills as a navigator and chart maker, but he also imagined himself a competent scientist, and he hated the "scientifics" who recognized neither his talents or qualifications. That the commander of a scientific expedition hated sci-

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<sup>8</sup> I will cite J. Neilson Barry (ed.), "Pickering's Journey to Fort Colville in 1841," *Washington Historical Quarterly* (1929) 20:54-63, an excerpt from a second edition of *Races of Man*, rather than the hard-to-obtain volume itself. Charles Pickering, *The Races of Man and Their Geographical Distribution* (Boston: Little & Brown, 1848).

entifics might have served as storm warning, but it was hard to distinguish among Wilkes' hatreds and dislikes. There were so many of them. He brutalized his crew, browbeat his officers, slaughtered South Sea Islanders, and alienated most everyone he met. One of his midshipmen called him more of a monster than a man.<sup>9</sup> All of this lay in the expedition's long bloody wake when the ships reached the Northwest Coast in 1841.

Charles Wilkes was the kind of man who seems a walking trump card when it comes to arguments about the inevitability of racial conflict in the West. He was impatient with what he regarded as inferior races and inferior classes. Wilkes operated in a customary world of Indian deficiency. He assumed there existed a chasm between peoples.<sup>10</sup> This unbridgeable chasm is a lingering cliché that many of us still hold. Although we are likely to make the Indians virtuous where Wilkes saw them as vicious and deficient, we nonetheless presume a "clash of cultures." Wilkes, however, forms only the conventional background to an astonishing foreground that Pickering revealed in his book. Wilkes' certainty and utter

faith in his own prejudices makes Pickering stand out all the more clearly. Unlike Wilkes, Pickering could be pleasantly surprised by the unexpected.

When Wilkes, anchored in Puget Sound, ordered Lieutenant Robert E. Johnson to lead a foray across the Cascade Mountains and "explore the interior," he expected not only a reconnaissance of "wilderness" but an encounter with "savagery." That is why he ordered Pickering, the ethnologist, to accompany Johnson. The whole party consisted of seven men.<sup>11</sup> They accomplished nothing of real consequence. But on one side-trip of this obscure expedition, they experienced a small, but revealing jewel of a moment, one that deeply impressed Pickering. That moment came at the end of Johnson's journey as the returning party descended the western slope of the Cascades.

In 1841 physical culture was beginning to make organized exercise a part of American education. "Gymnastic exercises" was an elastic term in the early 1840s. It applied to the "more active species of exercise." Most likely, these gymnastic exercises were calisthenics that operated on a military model and demanded "military postures." But then, again, they also might have been simply sports or games of one kind or another.<sup>12</sup> There is no way to be sure,

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<sup>9</sup> William Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Viking, 1986), 276, 286.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*, 5 volumes and atlas (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845), 4: 298-304, 311, 417.

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<sup>11</sup> Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, 4: 305

<sup>12</sup> Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health, Fitness, Sport and American Society* (New York: Pantheon Books,

but let's imagine that the gymnastic exercises were calisthenics.

At their last encampment, twenty miles from Puget Sound, the Johnson party met some Nisqually Indians who were camped nearby for purposes of their own. And at this encampment it occurred to someone "to [initiate] the Indians in gymnastic exercises." There on a prairie in the shadow of Mount Rainier were American sailors, marines, and scientists in military posture with Nisqually men and women lined up alongside them. And they all began to do synchronized gymnastic exercises. The Indians, Pickering said, "entered into the sport very willingly and with some spirit."<sup>13</sup>

We can take that moment of Indians and whites, "synchronized and spirited," and use it as a prism for the remainder of the expedition. From Pickering's account we can imagine a set of circumstances and possibilities in which Indians and whites exercising and praying on the prairies seemed ordinary instead of an odd and surprising moment of harmony where we generally expect to find conflict. Pickering and Johnson's travels recorded a mixed world in which the later categories and boundaries of white and Indian, conqueror and conquered had not yet hardened. Pickering saw a world, a set of possibilities, that Wilkes seemed congenitally unable to see.

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1986) 85-87, 96, 97; "Gymnastic Exercises," *Journal of Health* (January 1830), 132.

<sup>13</sup> Barry, "Pickerings Journey," 63.

Johnson's party explored lands already long, if sparsely, settled by Indians and more recently settled by smaller number of other peoples: some Spaniards, British and Scots, Canadians, Hawaiians, Indians from the East, and a few Americans. This settlement had already produced a group of children of mixed descent. But these divisions into whites, Indians, and mixed-race were all Pickering's distinctions. He was told that "no idea of difference of race such as is recognized by Europeans, ever enters into the heads of the natives."<sup>14</sup>

The "natives" were hardly a simple lot. Johnson, Pickering, and their companions met Indian women gathering clams and Indian men fishing for salmon. In other lodges they saw buffalo robes, evidence of hunts made eastward across the Rockies. At Spalding's mission, Pickering saw Indian farms and farmers whom Spalding characterized as "generally being an exceedingly industrious people." A few days later he saw four generations of another Indian family gathered under a canopy "hardly sufficient to shelter a sheep." He saw lodges made of mats, and tipis like those of the plains, and Indians living in log cabins. All of these diverse people were Indians, and around them were Hudson's Bay Company forts as well as American Board missions.<sup>15</sup> In short, there was, on the eve of American settlement, a complicated world already well in

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<sup>14</sup> Barry, "Pickerings Journey," 61.

<sup>15</sup> Barry, "Pickerings Journey," 54-63

place. Everywhere there was exchange and interchange. This was a mixed world. These were people fully aware of differences, but disinclined to structure these differences around race.

I introduce Pickering, his gymnastic Indians, and his seemingly inconsequential journey to underline a simple point about the Western past—the American past. It was not only contingent, but it also contained possibilities that we forget because they cannot always be recognized in the present. The Western past is fuller than our popular histories make of it. Pickering's response does not, of course, erase Wilkes' more typical and scornful reaction. Moments of gleeful surprise do not erase Little Big Horn, or Wounded Knee, or innumerable other conflicts and atrocities that scar the Western legacy. But that is not the point. The point is that this West was a world that harbored both

gymnastics and annihilation.

There are remnants of this world, too, within the national parks. The legacies of this mixed world are part of the history that the National Park Service should preserve and interpret, because they are for the most part the histories of the parks themselves. There is a mixed world that in a sense has continued within the parks. Today, Indians use park lands for hunting, for gathering, and for religious ceremonies, years after these lands have been withdrawn into the national park system. What the New Western history suggests then is an opportunity for parks to see themselves as historical—and not simply natural—sites. More importantly, it offers the National Park Service the opportunity to recognize that history involves the conflict and accommodation of many groups, and not the inevitable dominance of a single group.



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# Land of Constant Change:

## Uncle Sam and the Town Dweller Settle the West

**T**he story of the West is the story of change and transition. Frederick Jackson Turner described these changes perfectly in his famous 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." That pioneering miner/journalist Samuel Clemens, working in Virginia City, Nevada, understood it, too, when he wrote in *Roughing It* that "change is the handmaiden Nature requires to do her miracles with." As Richard White notes in his essay in this issue, nature has been changing the West for eons, humans for a couple of millennia. In recent generations, however, the pace has certainly quickened, thanks to humans.

The Four Corners—where Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado touch—is a beautiful, haunting land of mountains, river valleys, deserts, and mesas that typifies such change. Southwestern Colorado with its rugged San Juan Mountains on its eastern and northern border, has over time transformed into a land of remarkable contrasts. For more than 2,000 years, the people who lived here promoted changes in the land. Even the climate changed, perhaps forcing the region's earliest settlers, the Anasazi, to migrate to a more hospitable land.

Because of the nature of these changes, the Four Corners offers a classic example by which to assess the pattern of western settlement. Turner, who stood at Cumberland Gap and South Pass to witness the frontier passing, could easily—and perhaps more dramatically—have

looked to the Animas Valley of southwestern Colorado. Beginning with the hunter-gatherer Anasazi, famous for their home in the present-day Mesa Verde National Park, the entire saga of the American West marched through the San Juan Basin. The nomadic Utes were next to occupy the grasslands of southwestern Colorado. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Spanish arrived in search of the illusive *El Dorado* of riches and an easily accessed land route to the Pacific.

Fur trappers, miners, town builders, farmers and ranchers followed in the nineteenth century. Mounted troops rode to protect the settlers as railroad builders eased travel and reduced their isolation. Then came health seekers, tourists, and, finally, a new breed of urban dweller. Indeed, history records that much of the change in this rugged,

mountainous domain depended upon or resulted from urbanization. Town dwellers—not cattlemen, farmers, and other “classic” western pioneers—not only influenced permanent and successful settlement, but also charted the course of its future.

Inherent within this settlement pattern, certainly after 1860, was the dominate role of the federal government. For more than a century, Uncle Sam has been a willing partner in fostering change throughout the West. Federal presence in the Four Corners, coupled with accelerated urbanization, has sustained momentum as the twentieth century fades into the twenty-first.

To all who settled there, the West signified the land of opportunity, the promised land of their dreams and expectations. Each group affected the environment and changed what they touched. Each has left his mark on the land; the region changed, sometimes slowly, very often dramatically. Colorado poet Thomas Hornsby Ferril understood this, when he wrote in “Noted”:

Noted: by the time you touch  
any twig or grama blade,  
you have changed that much.  
Noted of a cottonwood:  
Hate could crack you down,  
War is ever twice as near  
as the nearest town.  
Noted of a cottonwood:  
Love can hold you ever.

The land changed, the people changed—a legend had been born. Love, hate, war, all have played a role

in southwestern Colorado. In the past 130 years, however, three constants have been the driving force for changes that have occurred—transportation, urbanization, and the federal government.

Transportation was and still is a key element in the development of the isolated Four Corners region and its San Juan Mountain communities. There seems little question that the issue of distance played a significant role in Anasazi life; the road system radiating out from present Chaco Culture National Historical Park suggests this. The Chaco people traded with others to the south and west. Doubtless the time required to establish contact, based upon the distance they needed to travel, influenced their decision to abandon the area.

Beginning with the European *entrada*, “innovations” helped overcome the problems of distance and isolation. First, the horse enabled greater mobility while it eased travel. It completely altered Ute life by allowing for a greater concentration of Indians into fewer villages because it reduced the work of hunting. Next came that wonder of the nineteenth century—the railroad. How it improved the daily life of the miners, farmers, ranchers and city dwellers, by providing rapid, year-round transportation at a reduced cost—comforts only dreamed about in earlier years.

Still, isolation and distance gripped the region. Each succession of inhabitants tried their best to resolve these problems. Geographic

isolation has remained the focus of all who have chosen southwest Colorado as their home of residence. In recent years, however, the automobile, truck, and plane promised and delivered much needed improvements. It now takes only hours to reach Denver or Albuquerque, where it used to take days. Nevertheless, consumer markets remain an intimidating number of miles away. Travel to and from business meetings still proves inconvenient, and the cost of goods and services delivered to the area is excessive. In the long term, however, transportation improvements have affected the environment and changed forever the quality of life in the West.

Will Rogers landed in Durango in July 1935. In his newspaper column, Rogers left a perceptive glimpse of the alpine community and its people: "Durango, a beautiful little city, out of the way and glad of it." However, the continuous effort to improve transportation and communications has produced both positive and harmful effects in the Four Corners. For example, it has created new jobs and economic opportunities, but salaries fail to keep pace with national trends because local businesses incur unusually high overhead costs.

Similarly, the communication revolution has dispelled Will Rogers' perceptions of quaintness and simplicity. Through the use of the telephone and the computer/Internet, the Four Corners has narrowed its communication gap to seconds, thus changing forever the work patterns

and life styles of many local residents. Some more fortunate individuals are able to live in the scenic Southwest while holding down high-paying jobs in other localities. From Durango, they establish and maintain contact with people throughout the entire world. In effect, technological innovation—not rugged individualism—has defined the future of the once-isolated San Juan Basin.

Rugged individuals alone did not conquer the West. Rather, ordinary people, with virtually inexhaustive assistance from Uncle Sam, boldly faced and overcame its extraordinary challenges. Nowhere has this love-hate relationship been more clearly demonstrated than in southwestern Colorado, where the federal government played a principal role throughout its history. First, the federal government created Colorado territory in 1861, and during subsequent years did all it could to encourage farmers, miners, railroad builders, and their contemporaries to come west to harvest its natural resources for the benefit of the whole nation. Government influence did not stop there. From something as ordinary—yet, at the time revolutionary—as rural free mail delivery in the early days to the Environmental Protection Agency's removal of Cold War uranium tailings, the federal government left an indelible imprint on the quality of life in southwestern Colorado.

The creation of Mesa Verde National Park in 1906 gave the region its first prime tourist attraction. Mesa

Verde provides a case study of what the federal government can represent to an isolated area. The park is the touchstone, the crown jewel, of non-regulatory federal involvement in southwestern Colorado. Tourism, first noted in the region as early as the 1870s, assumed new meaning with the creation of a national park. The neighboring three communities—Cortez, Mancos, and Durango—quickly realized the benefits of its presence as each community struggled to gain dominance over this windfall.

Similarly, the creation of the San Juan National Forest enhanced attraction to the Four Corners. Here, as elsewhere, vocal Westerners asserted their “right” to use the land, protesting that its resources were being curbed. In the short view, they may have been right; yet, despite local fears, the government persisted, resulting in a second major recreational and tourist attraction in southwestern Colorado.

Government involvement did not cease with these benefits. Land that could not be given away as homesteads throughout the West remained in federal control under newly established agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management. Before this agency, the alphabet agencies of the New Deal pumped money and jobs into the region. Fondly remembered were the activities of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Rural Electric Association. The latter brought electricity—an unprecedented change—to municipalities

where it had never existed.

During World War II and for twenty years afterward, the Atomic Energy Commission energized the region, leaving in its wake a legacy of excellent roads and “hot” mine and mill sites. The Southern Utes and Ute Mountain Utes, whose social and economic development has been tied to Washington since the late 1840s, have recently benefitted from a financial windfall because of the 1987 Supreme Court ruling that Indian tribes could establish legalized gambling. The list could go on. In summary, the fiscal and institutional influence of the federal government has had an astounding long-term impact on this once politically insignificant, economically marginal and thinly populated region.

The significance of the federal government’s role in the Four Corners should not be understated. While not without opposition, the National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and myriad other agencies generally speaking have asserted a positive influence throughout the West. There is no question that their impact has been positive in southwestern Colorado. In the first place, these federal agencies have preserved the land; including tremendous natural resources and scenic attractions in the San Juan National Forest as well as Mesa Verde National Park. What would the region have been like without them?

Indeed, the credo of the West

might read: Where Washington went, change followed. Above all, urbanization has been the most active catalyst for change. Cities and towns "conquered" the west, not the so-beloved legendary individuals and industries. Mining, that paramount energizer of urban development, came early to the San Juans. Telluride, Ouray, Silverton and a generation of smaller towns and camps brought urbanization to full flower. While many of these communities died (producing yet another tourist attraction), they hardly can be defined as failures. They served a purpose as support agencies for the mines; when mining activity ended, so did their reason for existence.

In the long term, however, the mining camps attracted farmers, ranchers, railroads, tourists, roads, industry, and neighbor communities. They opened the region and sustained it until a broader-based economy could take root. Telluride, Durango, and Cortez in Colorado, as well as Farmington, New Mexico, exert influence over a region that looks rural, but is in fact highly urbanized. The transition from ruralism to urbanization happened, but not without heartache. It has been ongoing for well over a century and continues to the present day. Most of the newcomers who profess their desire to live in a "rural setting" and who cherish their "rural life style," are, in reality, completely urbanized.

What, then, is the future of the rural population and the Four Corners' communities? Transition has re-

vamped the traditional economy. If it were not for the federal (and to a lesser degree, the state) government, tourism, and increasing computer-generated opportunities, the region today would be faced with widespread economic problems and a declining population base. Miners no longer dig except for a handful of coal mines; ranching is only a shadow of what it once was; lumbering has disappeared; and the railroad has been converted into a tourist attraction. While farming is still evident, it remains hampered by isolation and weather, just as it was 100 years ago. Modern day farmers cannot raise anything "exotic," which might give them a market advantage, because of the short growing season and the semi-arid environment. Also, because of transportation difficulties, heavy industry has never taken hold in the region.

Much of this tremendous transition has occurred since World War II, but some of it has roots over the past century. What has enabled the region to weather these fundamental changes in large measure has been the federal government's land-use policy. Without the development of the ski industry, the creation of national forests, and establishment of national parks, the Four Corners' communities might never have flourished. In addition, the Atomic Energy Commission's road building program not only eased transportation but also stimulated tourism by opening a vital link to southern California through Flagstaff and the Navajo reservation.

Thanks to the development of the ski industry, tourism has become a year-round industry. The economies of Telluride and Durango, once declining mining towns, have been strengthened because of skiing. Still, while tourism touches every aspect of life in the Four Corners from the farmer to the urbanite, it cannot provide a guarantee that all is well. Just as with the federal government, there exists a love-hate relationship with tourism. Four Corners' residents complain about traffic, uncontrolled growth, inconsiderate visitors, pollution from the vehicles as well as smoke from the train, and crowded conditions where locals once enjoyed open space.

The federal government has even played a role in higher education. In 1910 the government sold Fort Lewis, a one-time military post and Indian boarding school, to the State of Colorado after which it evolved into the four-year college that now resides in Durango. Today, Fort Lewis College represents one of the region's most successful economic, cultural, and educational foundations.

Nevertheless, Uncle Sam has not always been appreciated. The so-called Sagebrush Rebellion may be history, but not the circumstances that caused it. People in the West persistently resent the presence federal government; they protest its rules and regulations. Although many farmers and ranchers receive federal subsidies, they resent the strings that are attached. "Federal regulations"

are fighting words in southwest Colorado.

Water, too, has produced fighting words. The ongoing debate concerning the Animas-La Plata Reclamation Project illustrates the continuous struggle between regionalism and federalism. Will this be the last great federal water project? Regional expansion depends on the availability of water; once again, Washington's involvement is crucial. Its role in building the Vallecito, Lemon, McPhee, Navajo, and, most recently, McPhee storage reservoirs has provided both water and recreational opportunities to the region. Agriculturists and urbanites have each benefited. Without federal presence, nothing of this scope could have been accomplished.

In retrospect, it has been villages and towns that have come to dominate the region's economy and foster its social diversification. People come for the scenery and the tourist attractions, but most stay to become residents of these hinterland communities. They find employment, most of their cultural and educational amenities, and other urban allurements—as well as the urban problems that face most Americans. The future of southwestern Colorado is tied, as it has always been, to its urban centers.

The transition goes on; people are coming to live in southwestern Colorado because its livable here. They enjoy the climate, savor the scenery, as they continue to work in Los Angeles or Chicago. They achieve this wonder because they can work by

Internet and computers, or even commute, as some do, to work a few days each month. One obvious consequence has been an increase in real estate values and building fancy homes with wonderful mountain vistas. The money they bring has both helped and hurt. But old-timers probably said the same thing about newcomers to the San Juan Basin at the turn of the century.

The result of this ongoing change, in a real sense, the region's "New Western History." Residents of the West must accept the change, they cannot recreate something, a vanished past, a dream of a perceived yesterday. They must look at the present and plan for the future and not bemoan what has happened in the last thirty or forty years. Old timers might think the whole world has gone to "hell in a hand basket." It has not. Stewardship or greed, one or the other, holds the future in its hands—the choice has to be made.

Change has been constant, transition an ongoing feature of life in the Four Corners. In the words of the English poet, Charles Kingsley, in his poem "Old and New":

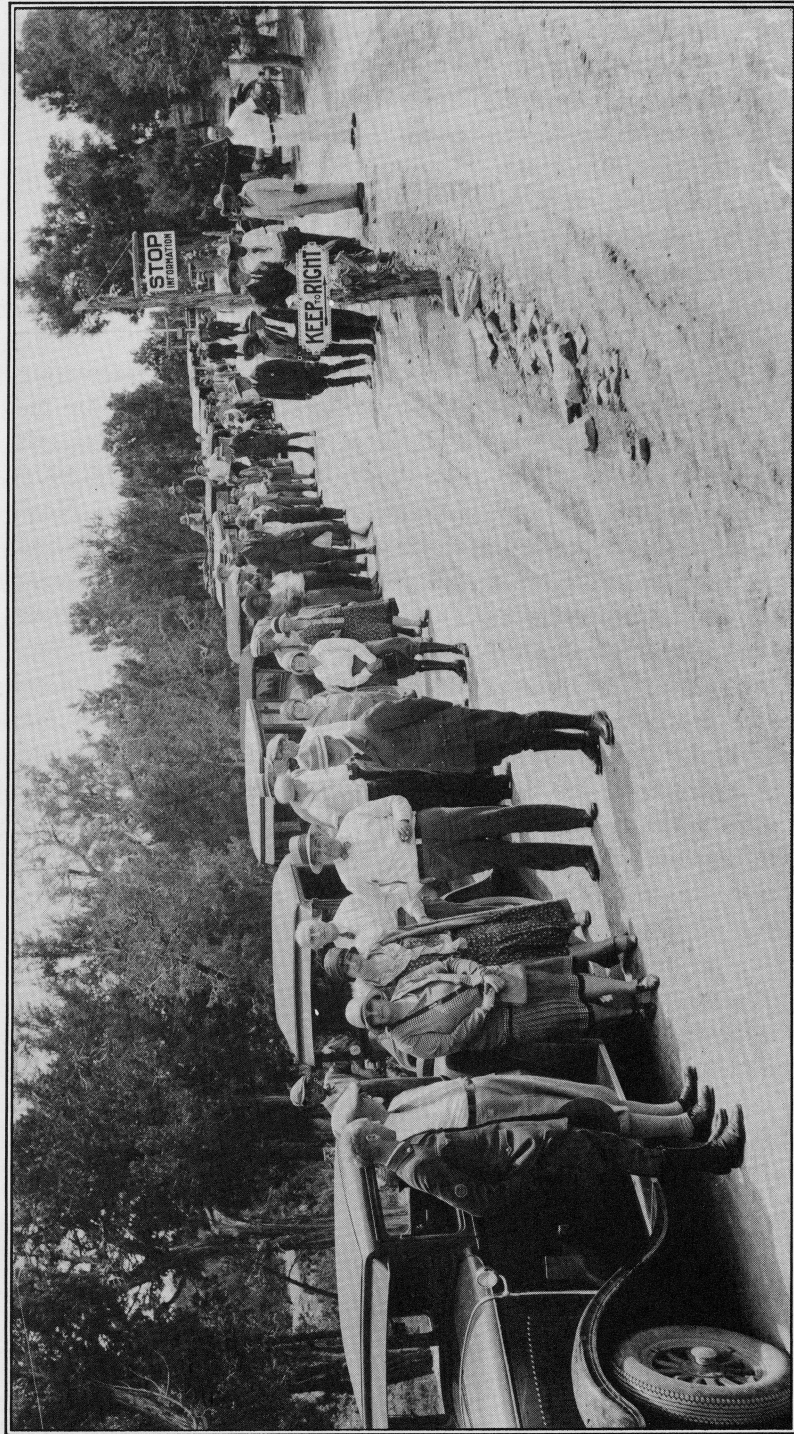
So fleet the works of men back to  
the earth again,  
Ancient and holy things fade like a  
dream.



For further reading on this fascinating land see: Art Gómez, *Quest for the Golden Circle: The Four Corners and the Metropolitan West 1945-1970* (Albuquerque, 1994); Allen Nosaman, *Many More Mountains* (Denver, 1989, 1993), 2 volumes; Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Boom Town* (Niwot, Colorado, 1992 edition), and his *Shadows of the Centuries: A History of Mesa Verde National Park* (Lawrence, 1988); and Carl Ubbelohde, et al., *A Colorado History* (Boulder, 1995).



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A 1929 throng awaits the start of a Mesa Verde "auto caravan." Already the park was becoming crowded as the public flocked to this popular attraction that has economically benefited southwestern Colorado for ninety years. *Courtesy: Mesa Verde National Park.*

# The National Park Service Restructuring:

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## A Perspective

**T**his writer has always believed himself an agent of change—a reformer in and of the National Park Service—not because the NPS is bad, but because its potential is so great, and because the United States and the world so desperately need a National Park Service at the peak of its potential. After trying every means from guidelines, policy, and dicta from Directors and Secretaries of the Interior to statutory requirements, it finally became clear that the way to influence the NPS is to influence the values of the 18,000 or so individuals who are the NPS. The people of the NPS will resist to the death a requirement to do something in which they do not believe, but will die trying to do that which they believe right and necessary. Central among the many elements of the institutional culture of this organization is the confluence of thousands of individually held values. The 1995 restructuring of the National Park Service will ultimately succeed because of that fundamental truth.

Restructuring came about when the agency was confronted with a problem so difficult it seemed impossible of solution without fundamental change. The problem was to achieve the employee reductions required by a joint presidential-congressional agreement to take 280,000 employees out of the federal work force. The NPS share of this reduction was announced to be 1,380 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in a first round, with a similar reduction to follow later. In a bureau already seriously understaffed for its 80 million acres, 240 million visitors, tens of thousands of miles of roads and other infrastructure, and uncounted millions of natural and cultural resources, the decision was made to insulate the parks, insofar as possible, from the effects of the reductions.

The cuts would come from central offices.

The 1991 Vail Conference, on the 75th anniversary of the NPS, had surfaced widespread and deep discontent among the people of the agency. More than a hundred steps were identified to rectify problems real and perceived. Decisive action could easily have accomplished most of these steps within three or four years. Instead, implementation floundered—clumsy and directionless—for lack of a driving vision.

Frustrated and uncertain about where the fault lay, the working groups assembled from the field in 1994 to plan for the drastic FTE reductions seized the opportunity to make drastic changes. Goals, not all openly acknowledged in the restructuring plan, included the following:

- Changing in the Executive Corps of the NPS (basically the Regional Directors and the Associate Directors).
- Eliminating the command-and-control management systems exercised principally by Regional Directors and park Superintendents.
- Differentiating between leadership and management, and focusing Executive-level employees upon leadership.
- Creating open and participatory management systems that derive quality assurance from peer pressure.
- Creating a more "horizontal" management structure, with lower overhead and broader and weaker spans of control for supervisors.
- Eliminating the apparent direction of park managers by central-office professionals in the name of helping the managers.
- Eliminating park-vs.-park and Region-vs.-Region competition for dollars, FTEs, and influence.
- Creating interdependent cooperation among parks, Regions, and other entities.
- Creating new opportunities for potential leaders to develop and demonstrate their aptitudes.

Several changes in organizational jargon were adopted to provide symbolic reinforcement to the goals. These propagandistic changes, predictably, have proven cumbersome. "Cluster" is generally accepted and

understood, but is at best an unpoetic term subject to derision. "Field Area"—habitually applied informally to parks—now begins with capital letters and substitutes approximately for the banished term "Region." Central-office professionals, presumably as penance for past excesses, must now explain to incredulous citizens that they work in a "National Program Center"—or, worse, a "Systems Support Office" (SO). "Program Leaders" subordinate to "Team Coordinators" requires explanation from time to time.

Underscoring the folly of changing an organization by changing its nomenclature, a panel of the individuals who developed the restructuring plan, meeting earlier this year with Cluster and Systems Support Office leaders, repeatedly used traditional but defunct terminology rather than the newspeak of their own invention. But let us not ourselves descend into superficiality by attacking the restructuring for its superficialities. What, after a year, have the substantive changes meant?

Enormous changes have occurred in the Executive Corps of the Service. The "Directorate"—previously made up of the Director, the Deputy Director, seven Associate Directors, and 10 Regional Directors—has been reduced by 26%. It is now the National Leadership Council, consisting of the Director, the Deputy Director, five Associate Directors, and seven Field Directors. The duty stations or incumbents of all but three of the previous 19-member Directorate have

changed, and the nature of the duties for all except the Director and Deputy have changed fundamentally. Several reassignments, including the one that directly affected this writer, have brought capable talent and new energy to the top. A few, inevitably, have not matched duties with capabilities, but a more comprehensive change in leadership could hardly be imagined.

Command-and-control management is as dead as it ought to be if chaos is to be avoided. It will always be necessary for the field to respond promptly and according to the "party line" to certain requests from headquarters, but such requests are less frequent than before. Field Directors, with their limited staffs, have no choice but to limit either command or control to the most important matters. As intended, this has forced Field Directors to eschew the details of "management" and to address themselves to the broader domain of "leadership." The best Field Directors are encouraging empowered experimentation within certain broad but necessary directions and limits. Unfortunately, sweeping reform seems always to reveal a few at high levels who relish change but lack vision of what is to be built. This destructive minority even today answers every question from subordinates with "You tell me!", avoiding the details of management but abdicating the responsibility of leadership. Among central offices, some of the National Program Centers carved from the former Washington Office

appear to have had the greatest difficulty with the new concepts. And beyond a few training courses, the mechanism developed to implement the restructuring does not reach into individual parks. As a result, some Superintendents are actively promoting the new concepts with their staffs while others have changed not at all.

The goal for a more "horizontal" organizational structure was adopted in response to the broader Administration program for "reinventing government." It reflects business management philosophy of the eighties and nineties, and goes hand-in-hand with several of the other goals. In the central offices of the Intermountain Field Area, at least, it has been achieved, but this appears not to be the case in every Field Area.

The other goals are for the most part being achieved as a result of the transfer of Regional power to the Clusters. To put things in plainest words, prior to the restructuring, 34 park Superintendents worked for me and now I work for them. They are not my line superiors, but my success depends upon their satisfaction. Neither I nor any of my subordinates can direct a park Superintendent, formally or in the name of rendering service. There are, of course, occasions on which my subordinates and I disagree with park Superintendents in significant ways. Although daunting at first, every such disagreement thus far has been satisfactorily resolved through collegial discussion with the other parties.

The most important factor is the

Cluster, however, and one hopes they are all like the Southwest Cluster. Historically never dominated by one or two Superintendents of big parks with big budgets, independent political support, and a habit of receiving deference, Southwest parks found interdependent cooperation natural. Rookie Superintendents, parks newly transferred from the former Western Region, small parks, and lesser-known parks have all been prominent in the Cluster Leadership Committee (called Advocates in the Southwest to reflect their duties to all parks in the Cluster). The two individuals who have served as Cluster Chair have both worked to elicit consensus among their colleagues without advantage to the interests of their own parks or their friends. With all business conducted in the open, it is impossible for any member to forget or ignore his or her obligations to every other member. Cluster meetings have been forthright and lively, but factionalism has yet to rear its ugly head.

With great care, Clusters have begun to sanction "advisory groups" of specialists in fields such as administration, facilities management, and resource management. These groups promote communication among professional peers and render specialized advice to their Clusters. It is noteworthy that the proposed groups that have been denied sanction were those that appeared to be attempting to define power bases or areas of "turf" for themselves contrary to the spirit of the restructuring.

In some cases, "self-directed work groups" have developed to address matters not ideally suited for Cluster action. "Vanishing Treasures" is a group of 38 parks in two Clusters that grew from an initial four parks calling attention to difficulties in preserving historic and prehistoric ruins in the arid West. A somewhat similar group has evolved to provide coordination and a reasonable degree of consistency in American Indian Trust Responsibility and compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in all three clusters of the Intermountain Field Area. Mindful of the fact that authority resides in the Clusters, these groups have nonetheless performed useful and independent work.

Serious concern has been expressed about Superintendents having full authority to approve certain documents without the quality assurance reviews and approvals previously performed by Regional Offices. The Intermountain Field Director has given a simple order that such approvals must include a peer review. The SO has offered to work with Southwest Superintendents to develop processes for peer reviews. Each Superintendent who is preparing an General Management Plan, for example, will devise his or her own peer review process. The Southwest SO will watch, usually participate as a "peer" chosen by the Superintendent, monitor the successes and problems of the various approaches, and share the information with the Cluster. Thus far, no Superintendent has

done other than to seek broad, well-informed, professional participation in their peer reviews. Should one take the opposite approach—seeking to limit comment to those known in advance to agree with their perspectives—they would almost certainly be thwarted by the public visibility of the process.

The trickiest subject, of course, is dividing up money and FTEs among the various parks and central offices. The first year's experience has seen a few protracted disagreements and isolated instances of suspicion. These have been handled very effectively by asking all parties to consider the situations from the perspective of the Field Area as a whole. Much credit is due to the impeccable demeanor of the Deputy Field Directors who, although each is assigned responsibility for a specific Cluster, have consistently focused attention of all parties upon every park and Cluster in the Field Area rather than upon narrower interests. Even more important is the maintenance of an awareness that in most cases the organization is not "dividing money" but rather prioritizing proposed projects according to known criteria—a situation in which peer pressure and open processes bring out the best in people.

One of the most successful aspects of the restructuring has been in the area of leadership opportunity. The almost complete makeover of the Executive Corps has created upward mobility to fill behind those who moved into Executive ranks. And the dispersal of the work of the previous

Executive Corps to numerous Cluster Leadership Committees, advisory groups, self-directed work groups, and special committees has drawn attention to the leadership qualities of many who had previously gone unnoticed. Interdependence has also come easier than many anticipated among central offices as well as among parks. By mutual agreement among the Intermountain SOs, one SO handles concessions management for all three clusters. Another handles aircraft management for all three. Two SOs with National Register Program capabilities provide services to the third Cluster, which is not staffed for that function. In these and many other program areas, the SOs and the Clusters make best advantage of one another's strengths and compensate for one another's weaknesses. This is not yet the case servicewide. In at least one Field Area, three seriously understaffed SOs are organized equally, identically, and separately.

This observer would prognosticate that within the near future the National Park Service will apply a critical review to the restructuring. Obvious problems such as the one noted just above will be corrected. Nomenclature will return to terms that require less effort to remember, do not bear such obvious stamps of bureaucracy, and are easier for the public to understand.

The basic elements of the restructuring—dispersed power, open and participatory processes, leadership opportunity, and peer pressure on behalf of quality—will continue.

Better than any management system we have had in the past, these elements tap into the confluence of thousands of individually held values that are the core of the National Park Service and the secret to its success.



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# The Future of the NPS History Program

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**T**he presentation of history in public settings has recently been the subject of great debate in this country. The conceptualization of museum exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress prompted a flurry of newspaper, magazine, and television coverage; the development of standards for the exploration of history in the public schools drew significant criticism; federal funding of cultural programs by the National Endowment for the Humanities prompted extensive debate within Congress. Within the current initiative to reexamine federal roles and programs, the National Park Service has reorganized and decentralized, and, in the process, fundamentally altered its approach to managing the National Park System. The NPS must now decide how its history program can best respond to these changing cultural and organizational conditions.

As we begin to chart a new course, I am optimistic that the NPS can, and will, take advantage of opportunities that were not available during earlier times. As Chief Historian (and a twenty-year employee of the National Park Service), I am also mindful that the agency has a long tradition of excellence in preservation and education that is emulated in local, state, and private historic sites throughout the country.

Our system is not perfect, however. There are many areas that can be refined and strengthened. The following essay reflects my thoughts on the future direction of the program. It is grounded in my conviction that the study of history is not only relevant to our contemporary society, but essential, if we are to understand our current condition and create a future based on knowledge and wis-

dom. It is also based on my belief that, to be meaningful, history must be examined totally—the uncomfortable along with the comfortable, the complex along with the simple, the controversial along with the inspirational. We cannot learn from the past unless we explore it in its entirety.

In its sixty-five-year history, the National Park Service's history program has undergone significant change. Starting with the hiring of Verne Chatelain in 1931 as the first Chief Historian, the direction and emphasis of the program has evolved with the changing requirements of the times. Chatelain was first assigned to the Division of Education under the direction of Harold C. Bryant, but quickly won support for the creation of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings. Chatelain and his fellow historians (at that time, the few histo-

rians in the NPS were all men) focused on establishing the role for history within the agency, developing historic preservation standards, and dealing with the crushing demands of the New Deal programs. They also struggled with defining that role in the shadow of Colonial Williamsburg, which was successfully setting a new standard for the entire concept of historic preservation. It seems that the program skillfully combined historic preservation issues—philosophical and practical—with the need for quality research for resource management and interpretive purposes.

Following the enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which considerably broadened the definition of preservation throughout the country, NPS historians assumed a leading role in the agency's Section 106 compliance responsibilities. The signing by President Nixon of Executive Order 11593 in May 1971, requiring federal agencies to locate, document, and carefully attend to their historic properties, further moved the history program in the direction of legislative compliance and cultural resource management (CRM). This focus on the CRM aspects of historic preservation resulted, over time, in a gradual separation of the history program from issues dealing with the interpretation of history and of historic places. Many, if not most, history research projects following 1966 were designed to provide information for the physical preservation (or restoration and reconstruction) of historic

sites, rather than for the interpretation of those sites to the public. Even though much, if not most, of that research could have been used for educational purposes, the perception was that it had been designed for other purposes. The reality of that estrangement between the history and interpretation programs was that "historians" in the National Park Service became involved almost exclusively in CRM, and "interpreters" (although many had, and have, academic backgrounds in history) designed and implemented the NPS's educational programs.

The reorganization and re-engineering of the National Park Service over the past two years has once again required the history program to reevaluate its purpose and reexamine its role within this new organizational and philosophical structure. Several factors, internal and external, have influenced this process. *The Vail Agenda* (1992) calls for heightened professionalism in all of the NPS's programs, and specifically recommends creating "a greater appreciation for research and scholarly activity." At the same time, it recognizes that our understanding of the past is not static, but rather "an evolving mosaic, crafted anew by each successive generation." As historians know, these are not profound thoughts. They do, however, represent a fundamental shift in approach for an agency that has not, at times, appreciated the basic nature and evolution of thought within the field of historical inquiry.

In 1993, at the request of Congress, the National Park Service requested the assistance of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) in reconceptualizing the NPS thematic framework for history and prehistory. Originally designed during the 1930s, the framework had been modified over the years, but in relatively minor ways. The resulting work group, consisting of NPS historians and scholars from outside the NPS and chaired by Page Miller, completely revised the existing framework and brought the NPS's outline for history in line with current scholarship.

Recognizing the benefits that come from working closely with the NPS's academic partners, Director Roger G. Kennedy, in late 1993, asked the National Park System Advisory Board to create a humanities subcommittee that would make recommendations for improving the NPS's history and archaeology programs. Chaired by James O. Horton of George Washington University, the committee consisted of Frederick Hoxie, Raymond Arsenault, Lois Horton, Laurence Glasco, Alan Kraut, Marie Tyler-McGraw, and Holly Robinson, and an equal number of NPS historians and archeologists. Written in February 1994 and adopted by the Advisory Board the following month, *Humanities and the National Parks: Adapting to Change* identifies ways to strengthen the environment for education within the Park Service. Its recommendations are designed to strengthen NPS

research and scholarship in the parks, encourage the professional development of its people, and help the agency reach a national audience more effectively with the story of the parks.

Finally—but equally important—the historical profession itself has become more interested in the public presentation of the past. The rise of “public history” as a legitimate branch of the profession, complete with its own organization, has prompted much greater interaction between the academy and historians who work in more public settings. Over the last ten years, the Organization of American Historians has greatly expanded its interest in public history, as evidenced by the addition of film and exhibit reviews in its journal, as well as the creation of both a public history committee and a National Park Service Committee chaired presently by Gary Nash from the University of California at Los Angeles.

This new organizational and professional environment requires a new vision for history—one that takes advantage of the many opportunities presently available for strengthening the program throughout the NPS. This new direction is based on two fundamental thoughts: 1) the necessity for the history program, in all its manifestations, to renew its links with the historical profession and its standards and processes; and 2) the importance of the inherent and appropriate connection between the ongoing pursuit of historical knowledge

and the NPS's interpretive and education responsibilities. This new emphasis is important—indeed, critical—if the NPS is to foster a renewed intellectual vitality for its educational programs and play a more meaningful role in public education. Many of the following ideas are, of course, not new, and have been, and are being, implemented throughout the National Park System. What is different is that they need to become a regular and consistent part of the agency's way of doing business. They need to be institutionalized.

Over the past twenty-five to thirty years, as the NPS defined its history program within the developing field of cultural resource management, it largely lost contact with the profession of history outside the agency, and with the sense that such contact was important. A renewed emphasis on professionalism for historians and historical work implies a renewal of those lost connections. Professionalization implies an acceptance of the need for historians (those in the 170 series, as well as those engaged in the interpretation of history) to attend professional conferences and participate in the discussion that historians have about the past. It may mean that for some, due to lack of travel funds, participation is limited to following the discussion in the many historical journals that regularly deal with issues relevant to NPS sites. (The OAH recently offered all parks an opportunity to subscribe to *The Journal of American History* at a greatly reduced rate.) Subscription to journals

is the most inexpensive way of keeping current with ever-changing historical scholarship.

Professionalism means that all historical research should be reviewed not only within the NPS, but outside by scholars knowledgeable in the field. More NPS research should be submitted for publication in historical journals. Publication and a consistent peer-review process not only demonstrates that the research has met the standards of the profession, but also—and more important—results in higher-quality products. My office is currently exploring ways that would permit NPS research to be published by academic presses at less expense to the agency.

As the National Park Service rethinks its role as an educational institution, it should also reassess the responsibilities of various offices in contributing to a more sophisticated educational program at specific parks and throughout the National Park System. In this, the last decade of the twentieth century, American historiography is a most exciting and ever-changing field of inquiry. Western history, in particular, has completely transformed itself within the last decade. Likewise, scholarship over the past twenty-five years in the areas of women's history and ethnic history has greatly influenced the manner in which we view the historical development of contemporary society. If the National Park Service is going to contribute to the public discussion about the past, its interpretive planning and design functions must in-

clude a recognition that 1) evolving historical ideas and debates are relevant to the NPS, and 2) engaging those discussions responsibly is fundamental to the NPS's role in public education.

In the future, interpretive materials will tend to be less omniscient in their approach—offering only one view of the past—and will suggest a greater sense of the complexity of the past. Plantations, for example, of which the NPS has more than a few, will be interpreted from at least two perspectives: the owner's, and the slaves'. History does not possess only one truth, but rather many truths—and we contribute to the public's knowledge about history, and the special places we manage, by presenting a past with multiple voices, multiple views, and differing, even conflicting, interpretations. In addition, just as historical research should undergo rigorous peer review, so should interpretive programs and products. With the availability of new scholarship and exciting ways of presenting it, it is no longer acceptable to be satisfied with merely “getting the facts right.”

Some of the elements of this re-fined approach to our work have already been implemented. On June 28, 1996, six National Park Service employees completed a four-week seminar on the history of the American Indian at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Envisioned as the first of five seminars that will be held annually in coming years, the gathering joined academic scholars, American Indian historians, and NPS histori-

ans, ethnographers, and interpreters in an intensive period of study. A successful request to the Cultural Resource Training Initiative (CRTI) fund resulted in all travel, per diem, and tuition expenses being paid through a grant. With the intent of further joining NPS employees with scholars outside the NPS, my office sponsored a one-day workshop during the Western History Association meeting last October to explore new directions in Western history. Spin-off workshops were subsequently held at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, and Fort Laramie National Historic Site. A similar workshop was held last month during the Berkshire Conference on Women's History in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Through an agreement with the Organization of American Historians, we sponsored a major conference on U.S. Grant at Columbia, and Antietam National Battlefield convened a three-day interpretive workshop involving three nationally recognized historians and museum specialists. The 1996 National History Day contest was partly sponsored by the National Park Service, and each award winner received a medal embossed with “Sponsored by the National Park Service” on the reverse side. Also beginning this year, the National Park Service will join other sponsors of Colonial Williamsburg's Seminar for Historical Administration, which has trained historic site managers for over thirty years.

These and other projects and initiatives are designed to expand the opportunities for NPS personnel to gather with historians of all kinds to pursue common goals. Scholars have recognized for some time that the search for historical truth is not a solitary pursuit. It is best conducted in forums that allow continual discussion about and questioning of historical presumptions, and reassessment of presumed truths. Through its education mandate, anchored in the 1935 Historic Sites Act,

the National Park Service has an obligation to present to the American public a history that promotes an understanding of the complexity of historical causation, the perils of historical stereotypes, and the relationship between past events and contemporary conditions. By recognizing its appropriate role within the historical and educational professions, the National Park Service can promote a better public understanding of this country's past within the context of a national education program.



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# Reforming Public Land Management

## with New Incentives

### Summary

Nearly all of the environmental problems that besiege public lands can be traced to the budgets that govern the agencies managing those lands. Those budgets generally reward public-land managers for losing money on environmentally destructive activities. Well-trained managers with the best of intentions end up responding to those rewards rather than managing the land in the best possible way. The results are familiar: below-cost activities, shortages of valuable resources, user conflicts, and bureaucratic bloat.

Public land controversies and problems will be resolved only when the budgetary rewards are changed. Such a change must create and emphasize a feedback loop from the land to the manager. This means a system of user fees, a share of which is kept by the agencies managing the land.

To insure a level playing field, managers must be allowed to charge fees of all users. Agencies must also allow people to purchase timber, grazing rights, or other resources even if they don't intend to use those resources—effectively creating a system of conservation easements on federal land.

Finally, special provision must be made for resources that cannot be protected through user fees—especially biodiversity. A biodiversity trust fund, seeded with a share of public land user fees, can effectively insure the protection of endangered species and other aspects of biodiversity.

### Top Down or Bottom Up?

The federal government can manage public lands and resources either from the top down or from the bottom up. Top-down management means that Congress or a centralized bureaucracy determines what is right and imposes that solution down to the ground. Bottom-up management means that Congress creates a set of structures and rules and then lets on-the-ground managers make the day-to-day decisions.

Representatives of many interest groups are convinced that they know the best way to manage public lands, and they fear that—given discretion—local land managers will come up with the “wrong” answer. Thus, interest groups continually—and sometimes inadvertently—press for the top-down solution.

The result is a hodge-podge of mandates, slush funds, and special interest favors that often conflict with one another and that inevitably gen-

erate mountains of red tape. Users are neither well served nor satisfied with the land management that this produces, but few seem willing to give up the dream of top-down management that favors their interests.

One of the side effects of top-down management is the increasing polarization over public land issues. This is no accident: It is the predictable result of a system that promises total victory to those who are the best organized politically. Interest groups quickly discover that political organization thrives on enemies and demonization.

Bottom-up management doesn't promise total and complete victory over one's enemies. Thus, it holds little attraction for the interest groups attempting to influence public land management. Yet if the rules are carefully designed, bottom-up management can result in a system that satisfies nearly everyone and promotes cooperation instead of polarization.

### **Top-Down Rewards Bad Management**

As interest groups compete to get the laws and regulations written in their favor, few pay attention to agency budgets. This is a mistake, since those budgets usually provide the real guidance for what an agency does. Given a conflict between the budget and the law, the agency will usually end up following the budget.

Nearly every environmental problem on the public lands can be traced to the budgetary process. Most often,

agency budgets reward managers for losing money on environmentally destructive activities. For example:

- Despite multiple-use legislation, Congress lets the Forest Service know what it really wants by giving the agency *99 percent* of its budget requests for timber sales but only *70 percent* of its requests for most other resources.
- National forest managers can also keep *an unlimited share of timber receipts*, leading them to treat timber as a fund-raising tool. In contrast, they aren't allowed to charge fees for most recreation and can't keep most of the fees they do collect.
- The Bureau of Land Management gets significant funding from Congress for range management. Congress affirms this bias by allowing the agency to keep *half of all grazing fees* plus *all* of certain oil and gas revenues for range improvements.
- The Park Service isn't allowed to keep fees collected from concessioners. As a result, it negotiates low fees and instead has the concessioners provide *in-kind services* to the parks.

Below-cost timber sales in fragile watersheds, conflicts between wildlife and livestock, elk overgrazing in Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain national parks, overcrowding in Yosemite and Grand Canyon, and many other public land problems can

all be traced directly to top-down management and, in particular, to the resulting budgets.

### **Bottom-Up Budgeting to Reward Good Management**

Budgeting from the top down creates perverse incentives for managers to overuse natural resources and for users to fight over resources and funds. Budgeting from the bottom up can solve these problems, but only if certain criteria are met.

First, agency budgets must come from user fees, not tax dollars. Funding out of user fees ties managers to users and gives managers immediate signals about whether they are doing well or poorly. Funding out of tax dollars leaves managers beholden to politicians and special interest groups.

Second, agencies must be allowed to charge for all uses. Any uses that lobby for low or zero user fees will actually be doing themselves harm, since managers will be most responsive to those who pay them the most.

Third, agencies must be funded out of the net income they earn from resource management. Funding agencies out of the gross income will lead to overdevelopment as managers use any profits they earn to cross-subsidize money-losing—and probably environmentally destructive—activities.

Fourth, the use-it-or-lose-it contracts that pervade federal land management must be changed to use-it-or-serve-it. This will make it possible for people to buy timber sales

and not cut the trees or to pay grazing fees and leave the forage for wildlife.

Finally, some provision must be made for those resources that cannot be protected by user fees. Biodiversity is the most important such resource. The natural tendency is to fund these resources out of tax dollars, but that will merely create a whole new set of top-down problems as powerful members of Congress fund their favorite endangered species and neglect the rest.

### **Privatization Won't Solve Public Land Problems**

Some people argue that privatization of the public lands is the ultimate form of bottom-up management. But privatization is neither necessary nor sufficient to solve public land problems.

A glance at U.S. agricultural policy shows why privatization is not a sufficient solution. The nation's 420 million acres of agricultural crop lands receive an average of \$15 to \$20 billion of direct federal subsidies per year. This does not count subsidized irrigation water provided by the Bureau of Reclamation or the costs to consumers of higher prices imposed by import tariffs on sugar and other protected farm products. This means that the average subsidy is well over \$35 per private-farm acre.

By comparison, the nation's 640 million acres of non-defense federal lands receive direct federal subsidies of less than \$6 billion per year, or

under \$10 per acre. Privatization is clearly no guarantee of an end to subsidies.

Outright privatization will fail to protect biodiversity and other environmental values that cannot be captured in the marketplace. Advocates of privatization say that this problem can be solved by selling lands with protective covenants that will protect such values. But this means privatization will require two major political battles: One over the protective covenants and one over privatization itself. Neither of these battles are necessary to solve the fiscal and environmental problems posed by federal lands.

### **State Control Won't Solve Public Land Problems**

As a less controversial alternative to privatization, some people propose that federal lands be turned over to the states. But a review of state land and resource management reveals that the states' records are little better than that of the federal government.

A survey of fifty state park agencies found only two that are funded entirely out of user fees. A survey of the fish & wildlife agencies in 47 states found only ten that are funded out of user fees and federal grants from taxes of hunting and fishing equipment. At least fifteen states lose money on their state forests, and nearly all of the state forest agencies depend heavily on state tax dollars for general forestry programs.

In general, the states are just as

likely as Congress to cater to special interests by passing special mandates, creating slush funds out of user fees, or building other favors into state land policies. Nor are state legislatures any more aware than Congress of the incentives created by the budgets they prepare for state land and resource agencies. Few states allow agencies to keep user fees without going through an appropriations process, and many penalize managers for earning more revenue by simply cutting other parts of their budgets.

Some state agencies do make money, but ironically they do so because of a requirement in federal land grants that lands be managed for schools or other beneficiaries. Even this does not insure good management unless the agencies are carefully monitored by the beneficiaries or other parties.

Transferring federal lands to the states may save federal tax dollars. But it is not likely to improve land management. Nevertheless, the state experience suggests that the land trust might be a good model for reforming federal land agencies.

### **A Proposal for Federal Land Trusts**

Public land reforms should accomplish several goals. They should make land managers more responsive to users and more sensitive to environmental values. Reforms should save taxpayers money, possibly even returning money to the Treasury to compensate for all of the expenses

incurred over the past century. Finally, they should lead users to cooperate with one another rather than polarize over public land disputes.

To achieve all of these goals, I propose to convert federal lands into public land trusts as follows:

- Each unit of the national forest, national park, and national wildlife refuge systems as well as each BLM district would become a *separate land trust*. At the discretion of the secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, some units might be merged at the outset and other units could later merge through cooperative agreements.
- All of the land trusts would have an obligation to manage the lands *in trust for the people of the United States*. A land trust that abuses this obligation could have its charter revoked by Congress at any time.
- Each land trust would have a *membership* consisting of anyone willing to pay a modest annual fee. *Members would elect the land trust's board of directors*.
- The board of directors would have the power to *hire and fire* the land trust's supervisor or superintendent and to *approve annual operating plans and budgets*.
- Land trusts could *charge fees of all users at fair market value* and would be encouraged to form cooperative agreements with adjacent landowners for joint fee collection and enforcement as well as to sell conservation easements to people who want to buy development rights but not use them.
- Congress would appropriate seed money to each land trust equal to its previous year's budget. Thereafter, the trust would *keep all the net income* it earns each year. Accounting would be simple: At the end of the year, an auditor would total the trust's receipts, subtract the costs, and give the trust the net. Unspent funds could be carried over, and trusts might be given limited borrowing power. Unlike state land trusts, these federal land trusts would not be obligated to make money, but they would have an incentive to avoid money-losing activities.
- In lieu of property taxes, *counties* would get a fixed share of gross receipts. Considering that an expansion of user fees would greatly increase those receipts, dedicating 10 to 15 percent to counties would maintain or increase payments to nearly every county that now receives payments from federal land agencies.
- National forest and BLM *wilderness areas* would become their own separate land trusts, perhaps grouped on a state or regional basis. Wilderness boards of trustees would be elected by wilderness permit holders and would use wilder-

ness fees to buy conservation easements on adjacent lands, thus expanding the wilderness system as people use it.

- To protect biodiversity, 20 percent of all land trust revenues would go into *a national biodiversity trust fund*. A board of trustees consisting of conservation biologists or ecologists selected by, perhaps, the Secretary of the Interior or director of the Smithsonian would decide how to spend this income. The board could buy conservation easements, pay public or private land managers to use or avoid certain practices, or pay bounties to landowners whose land provides breeding habitat for selected rare or endangered species.
- A similar trust fund could be created to protect *historic and prehistoric resources*. This trust fund would get its funding from 20 percent of the receipts collected by the 204 National Park System units that are primarily of cultural interest.

As proposed, this system contains numerous checks and balances to insure that federal land management is environmentally sensitive, fiscally responsible, and responsive to users:

- Funding out of net income gives managers *an incentive to avoid environmentally destructive low-cost activities*;

- A broad range of user fees gives managers *an incentive to balance the range of resources they produce*;
- Conservation easements, the wilderness trusts, and the biodiversity trust fund will give managers *an incentive to protect noncommodity values*;
- The board of trustees would provide a further check to insure that managers consider *a broad range of values*. Note that, since anyone can join a land trust and vote on board membership, each board will have a local-national balance that reflects the national interest in the land each trust manages;
- The ultimate check on each trust lies in Congress' power to *revoke the charter* of a land trust that abuses the land in its care.

In 1994, national forests, national parks, national fish & wildlife refuges, and BLM districts cost taxpayers \$4.7 billion more than they returned to the Treasury. Assuming reasonable user fees, I project that this proposal will instead return nearly \$750 million to the Treasury each year. The biodiversity trust fund will have nearly \$1 billion per year, which is significantly more than agencies now have to protect endangered species.

The trusts themselves will enjoy budgets of about \$2.5 billion per year. While this is less than half of their current annual budgets, a huge percentage of those budgets are ab-

sorbed by higher levels of the bureaucracy—state, regional, and Washington offices—that will largely disappear under this proposal. Given the incentive, on-the-ground managers should find ways to increase fees and reduce costs.

A few units of the National Park System—primarily historic sites that receive very few visitors today—will have a hard time making it under this system. These are mainly areas that probably should never have been made national parks in the first place. A process might be created to simply turn these areas over to state or local agencies or non-profit groups.

Not only will this system reduce environmental problems, it will reduce environmental controversies. Rather than shrilly debate public land management, environmental groups and land users will have an incentive to cooperate with one another. Instead of opposing all livestock grazing, wildlife supporters may negotiate reductions in grazing with ranchers. Instead of appealing timber sales, wilderness advocates will bid on them using wilderness permit fees. Instead of opposing all mining or oil & gas drilling, endangered species advocates will use biodiversity trust funds to ensure that such mining or drilling is sensitive to other resources.

### Conclusions

Public land management is flawed and contentious because it is dominated by a top-down process that encourages favors to special interests

and promotes polarization to obtain such favors. By setting up a process that encourages bottom-up management with appropriate checks and balances, Congress can:

- Protect a broad range of environmental values;
- Promote sustainable production of multiple commodities without conflict;
- Eliminate a major source of public friction; and
- Save taxpayers more than \$5 billion per year.

Although this seems to be a win-win situation with benefits for nearly everyone, interest groups remain reluctant to support it for fear that some other group will obtain favors at their expense. To overcome this obstacle, I am beginning to promote a concept I call “subsidies anonymous”:

“My name is Randal, and I am a subsidized public land user. I am willing to give up my subsidies *provided* all other public land users give up their subsidies.”

When presented in this way, this proposal gains the support of a wide range of environmental and user groups, including ranchers, timber purchasers, recreationists, and wildlife advocates. With this broad support and Congress’ current willingness to consider new ideas, it should be possible to resolve these issues.

The land trusts I have proposed may not be the only way to solve

public land issues. But they are the best way I have found and one that is also politically feasible since they maintain all of the goals of public

lands that we cherish—such as multiple use and sustainability—without any of the current problems.

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## The Public Lands and the National Heritage

**T**he fundamental question in public land law and policy always has been, and always will be, as long as we have them, whether the federal lands ought to remain in United States ownership. For nearly the whole of the nation's first century, we were clear about the answer. The lands and their many resources could best serve the national interest through their transfer. In addition to providing a modest but steady flow of needed income, land transfers could unite the country geographically, both as a magnet for westward-yearning homesteaders and as a reward to the rail companies that would bind the coasts. A bountiful inducement was, we should remember, surely needed: Lincoln's dream in 1862 of a transcontinental rail line was no less daunting than Kennedy's, a century later, of a moon landing. Lincoln knew, too, how the free national gold and silver from the fields in California, Nevada, and elsewhere had made the United States a world economic force. The Great Barbeque of the nineteenth century might have been a national giveaway, but it was also a national investment.

Our premises began to expand when Hayden's report, Jackson's photographs, and Moran's paintings made their way back east, verifying every last word Jim Bridger had said. We quickly set aside the magical high plateau at Yellowstone with its geysers and its habitat. No nation had ever done such a thing before, yet for a generation Yellowstone was an isolated act: the truer reflection of our view toward the national lands in 1872 was the passage of the General Mining Law.

Then, in 1890, with John Muir's fervid pleading making a movement out of scattered drawing-room conversations, Congress declared a national park, the world's second, in the Sierra. Just a year later, presidents began employing a miscellaneous congressional rider as an extraordinary

lever for conservation of forests and watersheds. By the time Roosevelt and Pinchot were finished, in 1907, nearly ten percent of the whole country had been withdrawn from transfer and put under aggressive federal management as national forests.

On one level, the parks movement—and the related wildlife refuge initiative sparked by Roosevelt—headed off in a different direction than the more utilitarian national forests. It certainly seemed that way to Muir. But on another, and ultimately deeper, level, the parks, forests, refuges, and, by 1934, the public domain lands, all worked on exactly the same premise: the nation ought to hold large blocks of land.

Of course, the fact that we have a national land estate owes plenty to serendipity and accident. In the case

of the public domain lands, private default played a greater role than public decision. And the national park idea started out as a state park idea and might have stayed that way. Congress's first park, after all, was a state park, created in 1864 when the national legislature gave Yosemite Valley to California.

But we continue to have a public land system today for reasons as well as vagaries. The justifications have been tested many times, as recently as the 1940s and the late 1970s, but those efforts were rejected because in the last analysis the arguments for a sell-off seemed preposterous to the people. The fact that today we have another debate over public-land ownership doesn't diminish the idea. We are still debating due process and civil rights also. Each new generation has to reaffirm our nation's core ideals and, in a democracy, reaffirmation usually blooms from the loam of a good, vigorous fight.

I'd like to make it clear what I, at least, am not fighting about. Public land policy needs reform. We need to involve local citizens and governments more extensively, collaboratively, and better in public lands decisions. Although we can't always spare so much of our top officials' time, the consensus efforts of Betsy Rieke at the Bay-Delta and Bruce Babbitt with the Colorado grazing meetings, not top-down directions, are the right approach. Local people have knowledge, expertise, and a lot at stake. The federal agencies are fraught with inefficiencies and bad

incentives. Private landowners need more certainty when they sign off on an endangered species plan. In these and other areas, changes ought to be fundamental, not cosmetic. A rough working model, the framework for the Babbitt and Rieke efforts, might be substantial federal standards implemented through deep community participation and tailored to reflect local conditions.

But give away or sell off the public lands in this generation's fight? Not on your life. We'd lose far too much—too much openness, too much freedom, too much protection against the thunder heads that lie thick above our children's heads, and the even darker ones that lie above our grandchildren's.

I don't trust the bills that we're seeing pushed so hard. You can learn about a bill from its text but you find out even more from the people who are pushing it. By and large, the pressure is not coming from the stickers—the ranchers who have made up their minds to protect the riparian zones, the family timber operations who are grooming the stands for their grandchildren, the local mines who are determined to protect the streams from erosion and acid mine drainage, or the businesspeople who know that the big sky and the open terrain are their communities' best assets.

The stickers take the long view, more so now than ever. That doesn't mean they aren't mad. Many of them are, and some have signed up with the Wise Use Movement. But they want reform, not demolition. They know

that most family ranches can't outbid the subdividers for the valley floors, that the streams and the elk herds may not remain open to the public, and that the odds go way up for pits and slashes on the ridges above town that go from summer green to autumn gold to winter silver.

However you characterize their motives, the people behind these bills favor sharply increased extraction. They claim to be for efficiency and they are—a sharp-edged, straight-ahead, short-term efficiency, a sword's thrust. There is precious little concern for community stability, for the environment, or for social equity.

Take the notable omission of Indian tribal governments from the reform proposals. Remember that these are supposedly proposals to "return" the land to the states as a matter of equity and to allow local governments—close to the ground, close to the people—to make decisions.

If so, why exclude the tribes? Tribal governments possess one of the three sources of sovereignty, along with the United States and the states, in our constitutional framework. There can be, of course, no "return" of public lands to the states, who never owned them. But the tribes did own them, as a matter of historical fact and American real property law. In aboriginal times, before the treaties, they owned all of it in a shared estate with the federal government. Chief Justice Marshall made that clear in 1823 in *Johnson v. McIntosh*. The tribes ceded much of that aboriginal land to the United

States, but reserved large holdings in the treaties or other transactions. Most of the treaty land—theirs forever, so we said—was then taken by various devices ranging from wars to land rushes to fine print. In all, the treaty land, fee simple land, probably amounted to 200 million acres, more than the national forest system. Indian land holdings today total about 55 million acres.

Ask the Klamaths about their lost treaty reservation, once 1.1 million acres that until 1961 ran from just north of Klamath Falls nearly all the way to Chemult, more than sixty miles: ponderosa pine country, some of the best there is; Klamath Marsh, where tribal members hunted for duck and otter and gathered the wocus plant; the Sycan and Williamson Rivers, spring-fed streams both, full of food; open meadows where the Interstate Deer Herd wintered. Ask the Sioux about the Black Hills and the Sun Dance places and vision quest sites and the deer and the quarter of a billion dollars held today in a federal trust account that the Sioux Nation staunchly refuses to accept as payment for the old land. Ask the Utes of Colorado about the solemn treaty of 1868 that Ouray and Nicagaat so carefully negotiated, twenty percent of Colorado, most of the Western Slope—and about how the whole San Juan range was torn off in 1874 in the name of gold and how the reservation was obliterated in 1880 after what we once dared to call the Meeker Massacre but now know was the Battle of

Milk Creek between two governments across a canyon of cultural differences. Ask the Santa Clara, Sandia, and the other New Mexico pueblos about the corrupt Pueblo Lands Act of 1924 and the land that should still be theirs.

Are these land-transfer bills really about history or equity or local government?



It may be useful to look at the individual public land systems to see some of the reasons we have a national land estate and how we would wound the people and our future by selling those lands to the states, the companies, or the companies via the states.

The national parks, as surely as the Statue of Liberty or the Stars and Stripes, stand for what we believe in as a people, as a national society. The national park idea is one of our country's best cultural inventions, now emulated the world over.

The high, jagged, lonesome granite that helped cut our myths and our character is on grand display in many of them. You know their names, names for all time. The deepest canyon holds more exposed geology than anywhere else. It is the world's university of geology. The earth's finest remaining geyser fields—almost all of the others have been drawn down—lie beneath the lodgepole pine stands in the Northern Rockies. The millennia of our deep human history, and our growing apprecia-

tion of it, is honored in the park near the Four Corners.

The Hansen bill would just study the parks for closure. Its proponents express surprise, shock, at the idea that the great parks would be sold off. But then, we should ask, why study the whole system for closure? Of course, there are a handful of parks that don't speak to our national heritage, that don't inspire our pride and wonder. Such a study of those few and small parks, with recommendations to Congress, can be done administratively, with little time or money. But don't indulge the subtext of this bill, which is a raid on our dowry of history, science, refuge, and inspiration.

I imagine that everyone in this room is a critic of the Forest Service. I know I am. The agency has all manner of faults: it extracts too much, it extracts too little, it moves too fast, it moves too slow, it is too distant, it is too co-opted by locals. Yet where else in this country, where on earth, is a large land base run so well for so many competing purposes?

With all its warts, the Forest Service has a tradition of excellence rare in public offices. Pinchot's views, because they are so formidable, are debated yet today, but his standards of quality are unimpeachable. The Forest Service still gets the best young blood out of the natural resources schools. Forest Service research serves our resources well. A large and diverse land system furthers that work. The contest in the Pacific Northwest has focused on the na-

tional forests precisely because, in spite of the overcutting since the 1960s, the national forests have been the most conservatively managed lands and hold almost all of the old growth outside of the national parks.

The national forest system, which Senators Burns and Murkowski want to study for disposal, well serves us and our future. The forests are the watershed for the West. The range is in good condition. The national forests are key habitat for wildlife. It is a fact, not a slap at the states, to say that the states have no institutions in place comparable to the deeper and more broad-gauged Forest Service. A number of western states, believing that state trust lands must be dedicated solely to extractive uses, refuse to allow, or sharply curtail, non-revenue-producing multiple uses, including recreation. Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Montana all lack forest practices acts. In those states that have acted on forest practices, the statutes fall well short of federal legislation.

The BLM lands and the wildlife refuges have long been undersupported. The agencies haven't had the time or opportunity to build the personnel or esprit that characterize the Forest Service. Yet both are rapidly improving offices, growing more professional each year.

The Hansen disposal bill would transfer all BLM lands to the states, without payment. No compensation for the coal under Kaiparowits, one of the world's premier deposits, or for the fine Oregon and California and

Coos Bay Wagon Road timber lands in western Oregon? Why would someone propose this? Is it for long-term sustainability? Or would we see a second, quick-draw transfer, also for a song, but this time to the big private interests?

Is it sensible abruptly to jettison the knowledge and practices that have built up over the years in the federal land agencies? Granted, while there is creativity and quality, there is also inefficiency and wrongheadedness. Yes, the federal agencies have yet finally to learn that they should be citizen convenors—collaborators, not masters. But how many years, if it ever happened at all, would it take a western state in these budget-tight times to build a comparable ability to manage tens of millions of new acres?

And then there is wilderness, which, after all the years, we have managed to preserve only as a whole nation. Now, we learn, even the BLM lands have wondrous wild backcountry.

Kaiparowits, the interior of the Colorado Plateau, itself the interior of the nation, is not just for coal. Few people come to this southern Utah plateau because modern conveniences are so distant, traditional beauty so scarce, normal recreational opportunities so limited. Precipitation measures ten to twelve inches a year. There are just two or three perennial streams, and they carry little water. One dirt road, usable by passenger cars, runs up to Escalante. Otherwise, it is all jeep trails. Piñon-

juniper stands offer almost no cover from the sun. Cross-country backpacking is for experts only. You have to scour the topographic maps, plan your trip with care (being sure to hit the springs), and stick to your plan. Even a short hike is a challenge. From a distance, Kaiparowits looks flat on top but in fact it is up-and-down, chopped-up, confusing. You can get lost, snakebit, or otherwise injured. There's no one to call.

Kaiparowits is, in a word, wild—"wilderness," as Raymond Wheeler put it, "right down to its burning core." Eagles, hawks, and peregrines are in here, especially in the wind currents near the cliffs, and so are bighorn sheep, trophy elk, and deer. Archaeologists have recorded some 400 sites but there are many more—there has been little surveying, except near some of the mine sites. From Kaiparowits you are given startling Plateau vistas in all directions, vivid views more than 200 miles if the winds have cleared out the haze, views as encompassing as those from the southern tip of Cedar Mesa, the east flank of Boulder Mountain, the high LaSals, Dead Horse Point, long, stretching expanses of sacred country. If you climb the rocky promontories on top of Kaiparowits, you can see off to Boulder Mountain, the Henrys, Black Mesa, Navajo Mountain, the Kaibab Plateau, the Vermilion Cliffs.

The languid stillness of Kaiparowits turns your mind gently and slowly to wondering about time, to trying to comprehend the long,

deep time all of this took, from Cretaceous, from back before Cretaceous, and to comprehend, since Lake Powell and the seventy-story stacks of Navajo Generating Station also now play part of the vista, how it is that our culture has so much might and how it is that we choose to exert it so frantically, with so little regard of the time that you can see, actually see, from here. Perhaps somehow by taking some moments now, here, here in this stark piñon-juniper rockland place, here in this farthest-away place, a person can nurture some of the fibers of constancy and constraint that our people possess in addition to the might. The silence is stunning, the solitude deep and textured.

Kaiparowits makes you decide on the value of wildness and remoteness. Kaiparowits is where the dreams for the West collide. Coal, jobs, growth. Long vistas, places to get lost in, places to find yourself in.

The BLM wild lands teach us, also, about the people who once lived and worked and loved and worshipped for such a long time in what has been called BLM land for such a short time.

Last year, my son Seth, then twenty, and I took a long, home-from-college trip to the canyon country. We hiked most of one day up to our calves in a creek that over the course of some seven million years has cut a thousand feet down through the fiery, aeolian Wingate Sandstone and the layers of rock above it.

In a rare wide spot in the canyon,

behind a cluster of junipers, we found a panel of pictographs on the Wingate. The artisan painted this row of red and white images—supernatural and life-size—two thousand years ago, perhaps more. The three stolid figures had wide shoulders, narrow waists. We could see straight through the round staring eyes, and the eyes could see through us. We called it “Dream Panel.”

It would be so contemptuous of time to deal away Kaiparowits and Dream Panel. Perhaps the states would protect these and other wild places of national worth as well as they are protected now. But do we want to risk it?



The debate over holding the public lands is magnified in these times. Today, far more so than during the 1940s, even the 1970s, the pressures on the lands and communities are different and greater, the reasons for retention more and stronger. And the difference between now and then is one of kind, not just scale.

For a century and a half, the American West has hitched its destiny to rapid population growth. And most people would agree that wide-open boosterism had its place and time. The West, after all, was the nation's last place to be settled, and civic infrastructures—whole economies, really—had to be built out of rock, sand, and stingy rivers.

But now, for the first time in history, westerners are directly question-

ing growth—its high price tag and the way it is remaking communities and the land itself. You hear these concerns all across the region, from Denver to Reno and from Phoenix to Seattle. You hear them, too, in the cattle, farm, and tourist towns.

It is no wonder. In just two generations, since World War II, the West has industrialized and urbanized in a way perhaps unparalleled in world history. Contrary to the popular impression, the key period for settling the West was not the westward expansion of the nineteenth century. The most recent era, the one we are still in, has become the decisive time for peopling the region.

It has come on so fast. Civic leaders had always wanted much, much more population and wealth, and beginning in 1945 they got it. The Cold War was a bonanza for the West, which had the open land required for military installations. The soil, when irrigated, could grow any crop from alfalfa to pecans. The land was magnificent, perfect for locating subdivisions and companies.

Perfect also were the post-War politics. Washington, D.C. picked up the bill, building the military installations, subsidizing water projects, and underwriting the interstate highways. Federal largesse carried few strings: there was minimal oversight of health, environmental, or budgetary matters.

In 1945 the West's population stood at 15 million. Today it is 56 million. The Southwest has been transformed from a backwater of 8

million people to a powerhouse of 30 million today. Nearly all of the growth has come in the cities. The Denver area has boomed from 475,000 to 2.1 million. Phoenix, a dirt-road settlement of 5,500 people in 1900, grew to a metropolitan area of 250,000 by 1945. Today the Valley of the Sun is pushing 2.5 million. Las Vegas could not even qualify for the census, which required 2,500 people, until 1930. At the end of the War, the Las Vegas area had about 40,000 people. This year it reached 1 million.

The benefits—economic, civic, and cultural—have been many, but they seemed mostly unalloyed in, say, 1975. Since then, the costs of explosive growth and consumption have become ever more evident.

Our sense of society has been stressed and torn. Overcrowded schools. Soaring health bills. Dangerous, sometimes deadly, streets. More prisons to build. Smog, traffic congestion, and industrial pollution. Bursting federal, state, and municipal budgets. All of these are growth-caused or -related.

So is the increase in loss of life and property from natural disasters. We are building too close to the fault lines, rivers, and tinder-dry forests, and we are paying the price.

Though the population is urban, the post-War boom has taken a heavy toll on the rural West. The resources couldn't come from the cities themselves. They had already exhausted their own water supplies. Coal-fired power plants near the cities would

make the smog—a word invented in post-War Los Angeles—even worse.

So the cities reached into the public and Indian lands of the interior West. For the southwestern urban areas, the main target was the Colorado Plateau, the Four Corners Area, the spectacular redrock canyon country, home to the nation's most traditional Indian people. The Plateau's deep canyons would make superb reservoirs. The ages had laid down some of the best coal, oil, gas, and uranium deposits on earth.

Almost before anyone knew it, the Colorado Plateau was laced with dams and reservoirs up to 200 miles long, power plants with stacks 70 stories tall, 500- and 345-KV powerlines spanning hundreds of miles, and uranium operations that required mining, milling, and, almost as an afterthought, waste disposal.

In all, this big build-up of the Colorado Plateau—its heyday ran from 1955 through 1975—was one of the most prodigious peacetime exercises of industrial might in human history. Among the few competitors is the furious build-up of hydroelectric and nuclear energy in the Columbia River Basin, also in the post-War era. On the Plateau we mourn the loss of mystical canyons, fabulous archaeological sites, and 200-mile vistas; on the Columbia we grieve for once-free rivers and the quick, strong, silvery Pacific salmon.

We also face an intangible cost: we are losing the West, both the slow-moving, uncluttered way of life and the spirituality that lies thick and

sweet over every river, every high divide, every big expanse of open sagebrush range.

We have not yet lost the West. But a question now looms over the land: Suppose we do for the next 50 years, or even the next 25, what we have done since World War II; if we do that, will we still have the West?

Coming to grips with population growth and consumption and achieving sustainability is almost incomprehensibly difficult. We must operate on all levels, from conserving and recycling at home, to local and state planning, to global population. There are staggering problems of economics, technology, and social equity. It will take decades of diverse and diffuse strategies, and a fundamental shift in our ethics so that we will voluntarily stabilize population, to reach an equilibrium.

But mark it down, too, that westerners now have actively begun the discussion about the scale of this unprecedented growth and about how, almost incredibly, it continues apace. That discussion is the first step: discussion breeds civic resolve, which in turn spurs action.

In that setting, what better buffer, what better storehouse, what better endowment, could there be than the fact of the public lands? Where else can we find the kind of wide-open space we cherish so, that so defines the West, its history, and its possibilities? What better hope is there for healthy lands and waters? Are we not singularly blessed in these times by the blend of vagary, courage, and blinding insight that has left us this estate?

So the public lands are inexorably tied to the future of the West, just as they have been bonded with its past. With all the imperfections, the American public lands constitute our planet's best laboratory for sustainability, broadly writ. Our every experience and intuition ought to tell us that we must not jeopardize that by a transfer of the federal lands. Their sale directly raises another specter: we may lose the West. And that would be a loss for us, but a far greater one for our grandchildren, and those beyond them, faceless but real people who would be left to wonder why their ancestors once so freely and easily called the American West a sacred place.



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# About the GWS . . .

The George Wright Society was founded in 1980 to serve as a professional association for people who work in or on behalf of parks and other kinds of protected areas and public lands. Unlike other organizations, the GWS is not limited to a single discipline or one type of protected area. Our integrative approach cuts across academic fields, agency jurisdictions, and political boundaries.

The GWS organizes and co-sponsors a major U.S. conference on research and management of protected areas, held every two years. We offer the FORUM, a quarterly publication, as a venue for discussion of timely issues related to protected areas, including think-pieces that have a hard time finding a home in subject-oriented, peer-reviewed journals. The GWS also helps sponsor outside symposia and takes part in international initiatives, such as IUCN's Commission on National Parks & Protected Areas.

## Who was George Wright?

George Melendez Wright (1904-1936) was one of the first protected area professionals to argue for a holistic approach to solving research and management problems. In 1929 he founded (and funded out of his own pocket) the Wildlife Division of the U.S. National Park Service—the precursor to today's science and resource management programs in the agency. Although just a young man, he quickly became associated with the conservation luminaries of the day and, along with them, influenced planning for public parks and recreation areas nationwide. Even then, Wright realized that protected areas cannot be managed as if they are untouched by events outside their boundaries.

## Please Join Us!

Following the spirit of George Wright, members of the GWS come from all kinds of professional backgrounds. Our ranks include terrestrial and marine scientists, historians, archaeologists, sociologists, geographers, natural and cultural resource managers, planners, data analysts, and more. Some work in agencies, some for private groups, some in academia. And some are simply supporters of better research and management in protected areas.

Won't you help us as we work toward this goal? Membership for individuals and institutions is US\$35 per calendar year, and includes subscription to the Forum, discounts on GWS publications, reduced registration fees for the GWS biennial conference, and participation in annual board member elections. New members who join between 1 October and 31 December are enrolled for the balance of the year and all of the next. A sign-up form is on the next page.

# The George Wright Society

## Application for Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ZIP/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Workplace phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please ✓ the type of membership you desire:

- ☐ Patron \$500/year
- ☐ Life Member \$350/life
- ☐ Supporting Member \$100/year
- ☐ Regular Member \$35/year
- ☐ Student Member \$25/year
- ☐ Institutional Member \$35/year
- ☐ Here's an additional contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Dues and contributions are tax-deductible in the USA.

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# Submitting Materials to THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM

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