THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM

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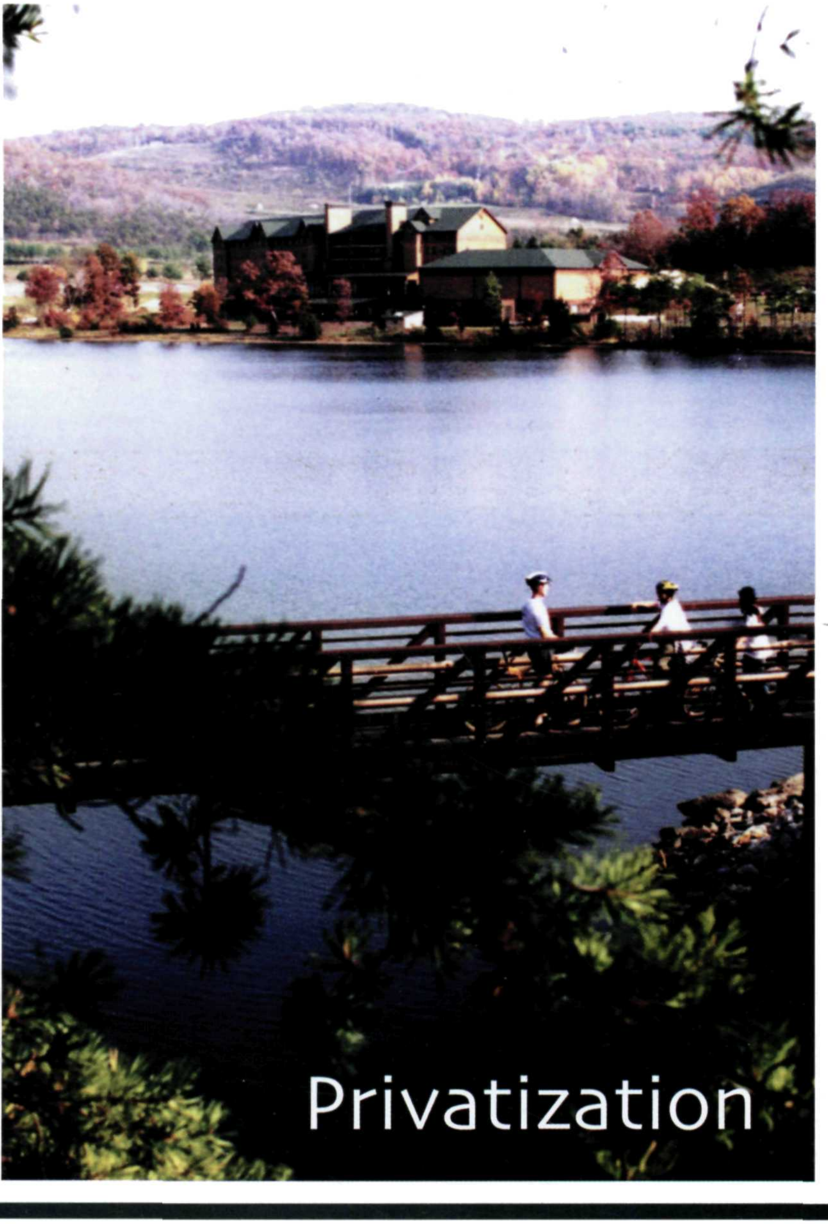

GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY
1980–2005
25 years of service

Origins
Founded in 1980, the George Wright Society is organized for the purposes of promoting the application of knowledge, fostering communication, improving resource management, and providing information to improve public understanding and appreciation of the basic purposes of natural and cultural parks and equivalent reserves. The Society is dedicated to the protection, preservation, and management of cultural and natural parks and reserves through research and education.

Mission
The George Wright Society advances the scientific and heritage values of parks and protected areas. The Society promotes professional research and resource stewardship across natural and cultural disciplines, provides avenues of communication, and encourages public policies that embrace these values.

Our Goal
The Society strives to be the premier organization connecting people, places, knowledge, and ideas to foster excellence in natural and cultural resource management, research, protection, and interpretation in parks and equivalent reserves.

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On the Cover
Rocky Gap State Park, Maryland, an example of a public–private partnership. *Photo courtesy of Maryland State Park Service*

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Privatization: An Overview

Maurice H. Schwartz, guest editor

SOCIETY NEWS, NOTES & MAIL

Minority Student Travel Scholarship Launched in Philadelphia

As briefly noted in the last issue of the *Forum,* we inaugurated the George Melendez Wright Student Travel Scholarship program at the GWS2005 Conference in Philadelphia. The scholarship was created to encourage students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to participate in our biennial conference and develop an interest in the conservation and preservation of parks, protected areas, and cultural sites worldwide. By offering these scholarships, GWS hopes to encourage students to pursue a profession in fields directly related to parks, protected areas, and cultural sites. Scholarship recipients had the opportunity to participate in conference sessions and learning activities, as well as network with peers and professionals from a variety of disciplines in protected areas conservation. (The photo shows one such event—a special luncheon for the scholarship winners.) The GWS extends a special thanks to Pamela Wright Lloyd and James Lloyd for a generous initial donation to the

scholarship fund. Their donation helped encourage institutions to come forward in support of specific scholarship candidates; these sponsors included various CESUs, Texas A&M University, Yale University, University of Northern British Columbia, and the Student Conservation Association. By leveraging the Lloyd donation and GWS-committed funds with the institutional support received, we were able to benefit more than 25 students—far more than the number originally envisaged. George Wright Society Board members and Texas A&M Associate Professor Michael Schuett ranked and scored 60 candidates and solicited sponsorship for the selected students to increase the funding pool. We thank all the sponsors and individuals who helped realize the vision of bringing a diverse and talented student pool to GWS2005.

GWS Presidents Gather at GWS2005

For the first time ever, we took the opportunity in Philadelphia to take a group photo of all GWS presidents, current and past, who were in attendance. It was one small way to congratulate ourselves on our 25th anniversary. Luckily, almost all our living past presidents were

there. Pictured in the photo, from left to right (with his or her years of presidency in parentheses): Vernon C. "Tom" Gilbert (1980–1982), Richard West Sellars (1999–2000), Dennis B. Fenn (2003), Robert J. Krumenaker (2001–2002), Jonathan B. Jarvis (1997-1998), Stephanie Toothman (1996), Dwight T. Pitcaithley (2004–present), Melody Webb (1989-1992), Gary E. Davis (1993-1995). Not pictured are the late Douglas H. Scovill (1983–1985) and Christine Schonewald (1986–1989), who could not attend.

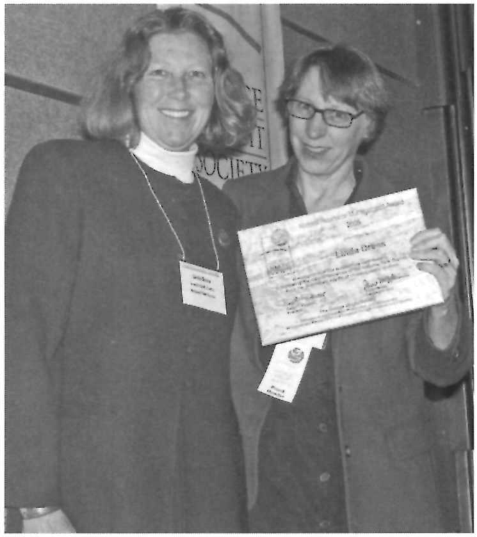
2005 GWS Awards Program Recognizes Excellence in Several Fields

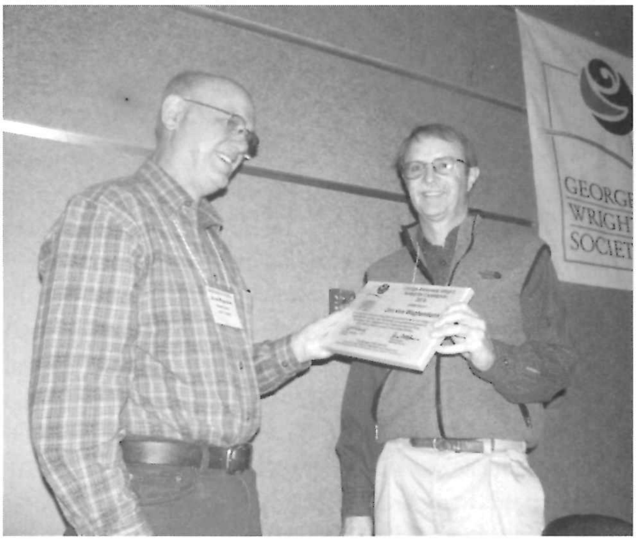
The latest round of GWS awards were bestowed in Philadelphia in a series of brief ceremonies that preceded plenary sessions at GWS2005. With the exception of the historian John Hope Franklin, who was a co-winner of the Society's highest award, the George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence, all of the winners were able to attend and receive their award in person. The winners were:

- *George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence:* this was shared by Franklin and Jan van Wagtendonk. Franklin was honored for his lifetime of scholarship in the field of African American history and the history of enslaved Africans,the impact of that scholarship on the spread of civic engagement, and for his leadership as past chair of the National Park System Advisory Board. Van Wagtendonk was cited for his groundbreaking research in the areas of recreational carrying capacity and wildland fire, and for his contributions to the development of Yosemite National Park's wilderness management plan.
- *George Wright Society Natural Resource Management Award:* Linda Drees received this

award for planning, organizing, and overseeing the 16 National Park Service exotic plant management teams.

- *George Wright Society Cultural Resource Management Award:* Nora Mitchell was recognized with for her pioneering work on the concept of cultural landscapes and on the integration of cultural and natural heritage
- *George Wright Society Communication Award:* David Andrews, the editor of *Common Ground,* took this award for his leadership of the magazine, which focuses on archaeology, ethnography, and other aspects of cultural resources and preservation.





Clockwise from top left: David Andrews receives his award from GWS Board Member Rebecca Conard; Linda Drees (l) with GWS Vice President Abby Miller; Nora Mitchell accepts her award from GWS President Dwight Pitcaithley; and Jan van Wagtendonk (l) with GWS Board Member David Parsons. *All photos on pp. 2–4 courtesy USNPS/Chuck Rafkind.*

New and Noteworthy

- ***Protected Area Management: Principles and Practice,*** second edition, by Graeme L. Worboys, Michael Lockwood, and Terry De Lacy. The expanded edition of this textbook is probably the most comprehensive work of its kind. Focused on Australia, but with examples and principles that can be applied around the world, the book has five new chapters (including ones on marine protected areas and evaluating management effectiveness), Published 2005 by Oxford University Press; ordering information is available from www.oup.com.au.
- ***Heritage Values in Site Management: Four Case Studies,*** edited by Marta de la Torre, analyzes the creation of management of heritage values at Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site in Canada, Chaco Culture National Historical Park in the USA, Port Arthur Historic Site in Australia, and Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site in the United Kingdom. The case studies are detailed and well illustrated. A supplemental CD-ROM with management documents is included. Published 2005 by the Getty Conservation Institute; ordering information is available from www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/.
- ***The Protected Landscape Approach: Linking Nature, Culture, and Community,*** edited by Jessica Brown, Nora Mitchell, and Michael Beresford, is a compilation of the latest thinking on category V protected areas. Building from a set of overview chapters, the greater part of the book is given to case studies from around the world, with emphasis on activity outside of Europe, where the concept originated. Published 2004 by IUCN; ordering information is available by e-mailing books@iucn.org.
- **2005 World Database on Protected Areas.** Launched at the 2003 World Parks Congress, the WDPA is an outgrowth of the paper-based editions of the *United Nations List of Protected Areas.* The core global database on protected areas, the WDPA is managed by the U.N. Environment Program's World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, U.K. The WDPA consists of an ArcGIS database and associated Excel spreadsheets organized by region. Currently, there are over 108,000 protected areas in the database, 40,000 of which have boundary data. Although data are continually being updated, the 2005 edition is available on CD; it boasts much more accurate data than the initial release. The CD includes the free ArcExplorer application so users without the full GIS package can do simple manipulations of maps and other data. For more information on the CD, go to www.biodiversity.org/wcpa. WDPA data also can be queried or downloaded at www.unep-wcmc.org, or at gis.conservation.org, or at gis.tnc.org.

PRIVATIZATION: AN OVERVIEW

GUEST EDITOR: MAURICE H. SCHWARTZ

Privatization: An Overview—Introduction and Summary

Maurice H. Schwartz

THIS ISSUE OF THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM IS PRIMARILY DEVOTED TO PRIVATIZATION of the national parks. State parks are the subject of one of the papers in view of their special relationships to national parks.

The opening article by Thomas A. More's provides a start-up definition of privatization. He writes that the privatization of public resources has been underway in the United States for the past 30 years. Privatization is best understood as a multi-dimensional process that that can exist in varying degrees. It can range from simple changes such as the adoption of the business vocabulary (e.g., "customer service") to complete "load shedding"—the actual transfer of lands or programs to private organizations. In short, privatization is the shift away from direct government provision of goods and services to the private sector.

Three of the authors—More analytically, Alfred Runte historically, and Ney C. Landrum on the state parks—essentially examine the nature and scope of privatization of the parks. Two authors set forth the objectives and values of privatization: Sylvia LeRoy very broadly, and Geoffrey F. Segal very specifically. Two more, John Shultis and John L. Crompton very specifically, analyze the forces underlying the privatization movement. Finally, Bill Wade and Scott Silver, challenge the objectives and values of privatization of the parks. In summarizing all these articles for this introduction, I have used their own words as much as possible.

In "From Public to Private: Five Concepts of Park Management and Their Consequences," Thomas A. More provides management models that range from purely public to purely private. First, however, he reviews the historical context of privatization. He reminds us of the "radical suggestion" made in 1870 "that there ought to be no private ownership of any portion of that region [Yellowstone], but that the whole of it ought to be set aside as a great national park." Between the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the radically changing temper of our times, Theodore Roosevelt's philosophy essentially prevailed. "Government's role in conservation was clear: halt the rapacious use of resources—the 'slash and burn' policies—that characterized the late 19th century." Beginning in the 1970s, the public has been encouraged to weaken government. Privatization has emerged as a leading national policy. A major response has been public strategies based on various business principles and practices.

Following the historical context, More

presents five alternative management models, examining each in considerable detail. First, at one end of the public–private spectrum is the fully public model. Under this model, park management should be fully funded through taxes. Second, public parks could operate like public utilities, such as water authorities, in which users pay some (or all) of the costs. Making the parks financially self-sustaining is a primary goal so that non-users have no tax burden. Outsourcing is a third management model, The public sector provides funding, but private firms compete for production rights. The fourth management model is private ownership of parks and protected areas by not-for-profit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy. The fifth model is fully private, in which individual firms purchase and operate natural areas on a for-profit basis. In concluding, one of the issues that More notes is the profound difference between the 1870 vision and today's practices and rhetoric.

That the public lands have always been highly commercialized and that privatization is nothing new are the initial thoughts expressed by historian Alfred Runte. "Even some of our greatest environmentalists, Ansel Adams, for example, have made millions off the public lands. Best's Studio, years ago renamed the Ansel Adams Gallery, sits prominently in Yosemite Valley. It is a distinctly commercial enterprise. Does it matter that Adams's heirs pay a franchise fee for the privilege of remaining on public land?" Runte asserts that privatization differs only by degree from other business-oriented park objectives." The privatization movement is just the latest chapter in the history of the growth of business involvement." Take away the automobile, he feels, and privatization is dead, at least, that "clamoring to pockmark the public lands with development. How would the visitors get there?"

By no means are all privatizations contrary to the public interest. Runte draws our attention to the rebuilding of the historic red buses in Glacier National Park. All 33 of them are back on the road, he proclaims, "thanks to a partnership including Glacier Park Inc., the National Park Foundation, the Ford Motor Company, and several others, "Does it matter if someone profits? Not if how they profit demands good stewardship." A comparable rediscovery of community is occurring in Yellowstone. Xanterra, its principal concessionaire, now sponsors Heritage Days, for example, through which it has pledged the restoration of Yellowstone's historic motor stages. "There are responsible concessionaires, and some downright good ones, just as government can be irresponsible." Ultimately, the real issue is the culture, our penchant as Americans for commercializing everything. Our colleges and universities have increasingly adopted the argument that everything should pay its way. "We cease looking for the core of the problem at the peril of the best idea we ever had."

Ney Landrum reminds us of the many roles played by state parks supplementary to the national parks and goes on to analyze what he terms "entrepreneurism" in the former. It is a useful concept that suggests active business-oriented leadership. The wide diversity of state park philosophies and management approaches in use today reflect the many fundamental differences among the states themselves. One of the most controversial issues is the place of entrepreneurism, involving commercialization and/or privatization, in state park operations. Landrum uses the term "commercialization" for activities involving money-making and "privatization" for activities such as turning over park facilities and functions to private entities for handling. Both practices have been a regular part of the state park scene for many years.

The ability to derive revenues from state park operations has been a strong motivating force from the very beginning. When California undertook to open a part of the Yosemite Valley in 1866 for public recreational use (in what is usually regarded as the very first state park initiative), it sought to finance the operation through a variety of on-site entrepreneurial measures. Not long after, Stephen Mather introduced the concept into the national parks with fancy resort accommodations built by private concessionaires at Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, and elsewhere. Successes there created a powerful precedent, and the idea for both plusher park developments and the involvement of private enterprise caught on, gradually gaining momentum in the state parks as well. Indeed, many of the facilities and programs in the state parks today are designed as much (if not more) to produce revenue as to satisfy public recreation needs. "There is no single paradigm for an ideal state park system in America," writes Landrum. Determining an appropriate degree of commercialization—whether much, little, or none—and the extent to which privatization can be helpful and productive in the process, will have a critically important bearing on the shape that future state park system will take.

While noting a number of very positive developments in the management of protected areas in Canada, Sylvia LeRoy writes that there is growing recognition that government ownership and regulation is failing Canada's parks. Her article brings together the entire range of privatization options for reform, from user fees all the way to limited commodification and complete turnover to private operators. Her article contains a particularly useful and logically constructed annotated presentation.

There has been a global trend for park systems to rely increasingly on user fees. The provision of services also becomes more efficient, innovative, and responsive to the public when parks depend on internally generated revenue for significant portions of their operational budget. Non-users are no longer being taxed for a service they don't use. User fees internalize the costs of parks. The concerns that have been raised that fees will prevent low-income citizens from accessing public parks may well be unfounded. The necessary accountability and transparency can be achieved by decentralizing park management. Park managers may consider the development of new revenue generation mechanisms, such as concessionaire contracts or the establishment of new visitor services and recreational opportunities. Following the example of the National Audubon Society, consideration should also be given to turning a small portion of land in some parks to multiple use—commodity production that can generate revenues to enhance and preserve more ecologically sensitive areas. Other privatization techniques, such as outsourcing services previously provided in-house, can also help generate efficiencies.

Policy-makers should learn from appropriate models of private stewardship. Many lands are protected by the common law doctrine of trust, defined broadly as "a fiduciary relationship in which one person or organization holds or manages property for the exclusive benefit of another." The growing success of private conservation initiatives shows how realistic market pricing, and non-profit or private management models, can help create the incentives needed to secure the health of our parks for future generations.

Geoffrey Segal kindly provided his article at our request. It is a transcript of written testimony that he presented in 2003 to the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on National Parks. It deals primarily with competitive sourcing, an initiative of special interest to the National Park Service. Segal prefaced his transcript by noting that "recently the management of the National Park Service (NPS) has been under a microscope. A series of financial lapses and a multi-billion dollar backlog of maintenance and other work signal weak standards and general mismanagement." In the article, Segal notes that the president's management agenda (PMA) is a set of initiatives designed to improve the management of federal agencies by adopting performance-based criteria for decision-making and action. Competition or competitive sourcing is a major component of the PMA.

Competitive sourcing has two often-overlooked related benefits. First, it allows agencies to refocus on core functions and mission-critical activities. Secondly, it helps them address their human capital management. A common misconception about competitive sourcing is that it leads to layoffs and to loss of pay and benefits for workers. But a long line of research shows that in fact the majority of employees are hired by contractors or shift to other jobs in government while only 5–7% are laid off.

Some opponents of competitive sourcing insist that our national parks are special, and that they should be shielded from competition. However, several states and provinces in Canada have long used competitive sourcing and the private sector to provide services in their respective park systems. In fact, according to the Council of State Governments, parks departments that were surveyed "were more likely than other [executive] agencies to expand [competitive sourcing] in the past five years." Despite the benefits of competitive sourcing there remains skepticism and objections to the initiatives. The American taxpayer and park visitors deserve the best services possible. Competitive sourcing gives NPS an opportunity to improve its efficiency, tackle its massive maintenance backlog, and focus its resources and energy on its core functions.

John Shultis is concerned with parks in the context of protected areas and with privatization in the context of neo-conservative philosophy and policy. The following is the abstract of his article that he generously provided at an early date.

All management decisions, whether based on empirical data or not, are expressed within the rubric of existing socio-political ideologies. At the beginning of the 21st century, a major social force affecting protected areas is the growth of neo-conservatism. Like the Keynesian system before it, neo-conservatism and its associated economic doctrine of fiscal conservatism have expanded throughout most of the Western world to pervade all political party agendas.

Policies associated with fiscal conservatism that affect protected areas include: (1) decreased taxation at both the individual and corporate level; (2) decreased government spending; (3) public–private sector partnerships in the provision of traditionally public-sector activities; (4) the introduction of user fees to help offset decreased government spending; and (5) a laissez faire economic system, which allows the market (rather than government) to set prices, levels, and locations of goods and services.

Protected areas have not been immune to the re-introduction of these economic policies. Indeed, funding for "environmental" concerns such as protected areas are often among the first government spending to be targeted for budget cuts and downsizing, and many governments throughout the world have thus decreased government allocations, introduced and increased user fees, and increased commercialization and privatization within park agencies.

Case studies in Canada, New Zealand, and the United States highlight the global significance and common impacts that downsizing, budget cuts, and increased commercialization have had on park managers and systems. Greater awareness of these tenets and common effects of neoconservatism will allow scientists to better understand how they affect contemporary decision-making in parks, and can also allow natural and social scientists to predict future research needs or priorities.

John Crompton graciously authorized us to reprint the executive summary of his early excellent analysis of the "Forces Underlying the Emergence of Privatization in Parks and Recreation" that was originally published in 1998 in the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*. Tom More, in turn, neatly summarized Crompton's summary in his article. More's summary of Crompton's four forces is as follows. First, direct service provision by public agencies became seen as costly and inefficient. Typically, two-thirds of an agency's budget is devoted to salaries and benefits. Many employees have long-term tenure, limiting the agency's ability to respond to shifting public demand. Flexibility also is limited by agency mandates and regulations necessary to ensure public accountability for funding; private firms lack such restrictions. Second, political thinking converged. Conservatives who wanted smaller government believed public agencies were costly and inefficient. Liberals found agencies to be bureaucratic and wanted better funding and service delivery for parks. Both groups thought privatization could achieve their objectives. Third, direct service provision by public agencies can be monopolistic, and monopolies have inherent inefficiencies. For example, monopolies lack incentives to be responsive to clients or to innovate. Privatization injects competition to promote innovation, efficiency, and responsiveness to changing demand. Lastly, the need for a service can be distinguished from its production. A public agency can provide funding, but may contract with private firms for actual service production. Many natural resource management agencies in the United States, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere now contract out for maintenance service, facility operation, interpretive and educational services, etc. Contracting out enables periodic review of performance, and contract changes if necessary.

Bill Wade does not agree that privatization is the solution to Garrett Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" whereby excessive visitation fostered by "freedom in a commons" ends up bringing ruin to all. Wade goes on to say that while issues of "carrying capacities" still persist, a new, more serious form of exploitation has become an increasing threat to the values and purposes of the National Park System in recent years. This threat is privatization, or more specifically, commercialization. In fact, this threat has accelerated over the past four years. It is especially disturbing that a major source of this new exploitation is the government itself. Noting that some forms of private enterprise have been present in national parks almost since their inception, Wade writes that there is a major difference between commercial activity permitted for the public interest, and the "privatization" that is being promoted today.

Perhaps the most menacing form of privatizing is that of increasing preferential treatment for special interests in the management and use of national parks. One is the greater tolerance for, if not insistence, that motorized recreational uses in parks be increased. A second example of preferential treatment appears to be an attempt to subvert the public's role in park planning by giving interests in so-called gateway communities unprecedented and disproportionate influence over the planning and decision-making processes in the adjacent parks.

The rationale hyped for privatization is that it costs less. While direct costs may appear to be lower, when added with the indirect costs of administering the contracts, auditing their work and expenditures and compliance, the costs may well be higher than the cost of the government doing the work. Moreover, when factors such as loss of flexibility, continuity, and institutional memory are considered, the "costs" are even higher.

Scott Silver analyzes the roots and legislative history of, and the 2004 successor to, the 1996 Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. He writes that the first step towards "Fee-Demo" was the 1962 report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. The latter led to the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, which authorized charging for certain limited recreation user, access, and entrance fees on federally managed public lands, and expressly prohibited the charging of all others. Revenues were unavailable for direct use by land managers.

Fee-Demo was formally recognized in 1996 by a rider to the Department of the Interior appropriations bill. Eight years later, with the passage of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act in 2004 as a rider to the omnibus appropriations bill, Fee-Demo was revoked. Silver expresses the view that the purpose of Fee-Demo was to give the federal land management agencies a chance to demonstrate to Congress that a wider range of recreation fees than had been authorized in 1965 could be effectively charged and collected.

Fee-Demo became a highly controversial issue with opposition coming from all directions. Cities, counties and even entire states passed resolutions and memorials in which opposition to the program was expressed to the land management agencies and to the president of the United States. Multiple bills were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to terminate the program, though no such bill was ever permitted a legislative hearing. Many see Fee-Demo as part of a larger privatization agenda. A handful recall an original purpose of replacing allocated funding with user fees. Perhaps the most common argument is that only those who use the resource should pay for it. The issue of charging recreation user fees for use of federally managed public land has engendered strong support and equally strong opposition. It is an issue that is as contentious today as when it was first proposed.

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From Public to Private: Five Concepts of Park Management and Their Consequences

Thomas A. More

Introduction

THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC RESOURCES HAS BEEN UNDERWAY in the United States for the past 30 years. Privatization is best understood as a multi-dimensional process that that can exist in varying degrees (Crompton 1998). The goal of this paper is to set the privatization process within an historical context, outlining alternative models for the management of public lands, and evaluating some of the consequences of the shift towards privatization. I conclude that many current management policies such as the user fee program and public–private partnerships are simply steps on the road to privatization and that a renewed appreciation of the social role of public land management agencies is essential to preserve the conservation gains of the two previous centuries.

The historical context for privatization

On September 20, 1870, Nathaniel Pitt Langford, a leader of the second Yellowstone expedition, wrote in his diary: "Last night, and also this morning in camp, the entire party had a rather unusual discussion. The proposition was made by some member that we utilize the result of our exploration by taking up quarter sections of land at the most prominent points of interest," specifically, those that "would eventually become a source of great profit to the owners." Yet Cornelius Hedges declared "that he did not approve of any of these plans—that there ought to be no private ownership of any portion of that region, but that the whole of it ought to be set aside as a great National Park, and that each one of us ought to make an effort to have this accomplished" (quoted in Runte 1997: 41).

That was a radical suggestion for 1870. Late 19th-century American culture was dominated by a spirit of extreme individualism (Dustin et al. 2004). As the country moved westward, the settlement and private development of the public domain was a primary goal of public policy. Americans viewed themselves as rugged individualists and 19th-century governments tended to be limited in scope; few would have foreseen the development of (or need for) the network of preserved public lands that arose in the 20th century. Yet seeds of change were in the wind. American intellectuals in the East were disturbed by the looting of Southwestern Indian ruins and pressed for preservation through government action (Dustin et al. 2004). The pressure they exerted on Congress resulted in the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gave president Theodore Roosevelt the preservation mechanism he needed. Characteristically, Roosevelt acted immediately and with vigor, preserving multiple national monuments and nearly tripling the size of the national park system (Runte 1997). He was able to do so, at least in part, because he embodied the new spirit of progressivism—the belief that educated intellectuals should take responsibility for the direction of society through an activist government (Dustin et al. 2004). The era of progressivism (running roughly from 1890 to 1929) established the foundational role of government in many aspects of American life, including parks and conservation. Roosevelt, the movement's guiding spirit, had earned his reputation fighting the corporations of the time, especially Standard Oil; he believed that big business was important, but felt it needed to be balanced by labor and government. Government's role in conservation was clear: its duty was to halt the rapacious use of resources—the "slash and burn" policies—that characterized the late 19th century, while ushering in a new era of "scientific" conservation.

This pro-government sentiment was seminal to the conservation of parks at all levels of government, and some of our greatest national parks and monuments trace their origins to this period. The government's role in conservation was further solidified during the Great Depression when public works projects designed to provide jobs focused on improving public parks, and over 20,000 projects were completed across the U.S. (Steiner 1972). Many state park systems were founded in this era. World War II required massive governmental efforts, and the success of the war effort and subsequent reconstruction programs confirmed government's effectiveness. By 1950, the country was becoming increasingly middle class, although the new wealth was unevenly distributed and millions of minorities had no share in it (Patterson 1996). Generally, however, people were optimistic and public attitudes about government and its employees were positive.

Outdoor recreation boomed in the postwar era. Newfound wealth and leisure, coupled with transportation advances, encouraged Americans to get on the road and visit the natural and historic wonders of which they had heard so much. To many, national parks, monuments, and historic sites embodied the quintessence of the American spirit (Runte 1997), and the people who ran them were considered dedicated civil servants.

But attitudes about government began to change in the 1970s as Americans' incomes started declining, particularly among the middle class and below (Cassidy 1995). Many economists attributed the declines to factors such as globalization, waning labor influence, technological advances, and immigration. The public, however, was encouraged to blame government and government agencies. Lyndon Johnson, the last great liberal president, left office in 1968 to be followed by a series of more or less conservative presidents who saw their mission to either control or reduce the size of government. Intellectually these changes were rationalized by the development of a new "neo-conservatism," or libertarian political philosophy, that argued that public programs and agencies were the source of America's problems rather than the solution because they interfered with the efficient operation of the free market (e.g., Nozick 1974). Libertarian, market-based thinking gained strength as capitalism replaced the planned economies of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War, and the accompanying rhetoric transformed civil servants into bureaucrats, dedication to mission into inflexibility, and proper, methodical procedure into red tape. In consequence, today's attitudes about government agencies, civil servants, and even public parks seem a world apart from those of a mere half-century ago.

Privatization—the shift away from direct government provision of goods and services—has been a central tenet of the neo-conservative ideology, so it is important to understand its intellectual underpinnings. Throughout history, societies have used various methods to distribute goods and services: despots could act capriciously, rewarding favorites or relatives; socialist societies provided rewards to all without recognition of the productive contribution of individuals. But under capitalism, private markets are thought to be superior because they preserve significant freedoms: under a market system you can sell your labor, pick your own job, and buy only what you want to buy (Okun 1975). Only competition—Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand"—guides the system. In sharp contrast to the progressive ideal of guiding society through intelligent, informed choice, the market itself represents a sort of blunt force; it is the amalgamated preferences of millions of separate individuals making presumably self-interested decisions. The Invisible Hand works because the desire for profit creates a natural incentive for producers to respond to shifting public demand through innovation and efficiency. Competition ensures that inefficient or unresponsive producers are weeded out naturally, so that resources are channeled away from unproductive uses towards more valuable ones (Okun 1975). But, when government interferes with the market, artificially supporting some activities or restricting others, it creates inefficiencies that result in less than optimal resource allocation (Rosenthal et al. 1984).

That, in theory at least, is the case for the market, and it has had a profound effect on policy throughout the public sector. In park and recreation management, Crompton (1998) identified four factors stimulating the growing interest in privatization. First, direct service provision by public agencies became seen as costly and inefficient. Typically, two-thirds of an agency's budget is devoted to salaries and benefits. Many employees have long-term tenure, limiting the agency's ability to respond to shifting public demand. Flexibility also is limited by agency mandates and regulations necessary to ensure public accountability for funding; private firms lack such restrictions.

Second, political thinking converged. Conservatives who wanted smaller government believed public agencies were costly and inefficient. Liberals found agencies to be bureaucratic and wanted better funding and service delivery for parks. Both groups thought privatization could achieve their objectives.

Third, direct service provision by public agencies can be monopolistic, and monopolies have inherent inefficiencies. For example, monopolies lack incentives to be responsive to clients or to innovate. Privatization injects competition to promote innovation, efficiency, and responsiveness to changing demand.

Lastly, the need for a service can be distinguished from its production. A public agency can provide funding, but may contract with private firms for actual service production. Many natural resource management agencies in the United States, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere now contract out for maintenance service, facility operation, interpretive and educational services, etc. Contracting out enables periodic review of performance, and contract changes if necessary.

In sum, privatization proponents suggest that competition promotes efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness to changing public preference. Over the past several decades, these arguments have had a profound effect on the management of public parks throughout the United States, particularly in terms of budget. Acadia National Park provides an interesting example. According to Acadia's business plan, prepared in 2001 (on-line at www.nps.gov/acad/pdf/bizplan.pdf), the park's funding has increased steadily since 1980, but not nearly enough to keep pace with inflation, increased visitation, added programs and mandates, and the park's increasing complexity. The result has been a dramatic, and on-going, budget shortfall. In 2000, for example, regular appropriated revenues accounted for only 55% of the park's operating budget—the remainder needed to be made up from alternative sources including user fees, donations, and special appropriations.

Unfortunately, Acadia typifies the plight of park management agencies at all governmental levels. Faced with stagnant or declining appropriations, and having the ideology of the private sector held up as exemplary, agencies evolved various coping strategies. These strategies included greater reliance on business techniques, including developing business plans, marketing, pricing (user fees), customer-oriented ideologies, etc. As Crompton (1998) makes clear, however, privatization is actually a process rather than a single one-time change. It can range from simple changes such as the adoption of the business vocabulary (e.g., "customer service") to complete "load shedding"—the actual transfer of lands or programs to private organizations. In the following section, I outline five alternative management models ranging from fully public to fully private. Given the prevalence of pressures for privatization, it is important to understand the costs and benefits of each.

Five management models for parks and protected areas

From the preceding discussion we can abstract five alternative models for the management of parks and recreation areas, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. First, at one end of the public–private spectrum, is the fully public model. Under this model, park management is considered to be a legitimate governmental function that should be fully funded through taxes. Decision-making is the responsibility of agency personnel but occurs with substantial public involvement, is subject to legislative oversight, and transparency is legally required. Agency finances also are open to public scrutiny. Criticisms of the public model have been that it requires non-users of park services to pay through taxes, and that bureaucrats lack incentives to control costs and are not quick to respond to changing public demand. But its major advantages include having the parks available for use by all the public at little or no direct cost, inclusive decision-making, and the ability to undertake non-economic (unprofitable) goals such as the preservation of biodiversity or ecosystem integrity.

Second, public parks could operate like public utilities, such as water, gas, or electricity, in which users pay some (or all) of the costs (Quinn 2002). Public oversight and management is required as in the fully public model; making the parks financially self-sustaining is a primary goal so non-users have no tax burden. Some also argue that fees increase efficiency by making managers more responsive to park users/customers and their needs, while making the agencies more fiscally accountable. Fees have other effects as well. For example, they can redistribute use both across time and over areas, and their careful application may help relieve crowding and reduce damage on over-used sites. But fees are socially regressive, discouraging use among lower-income people much more than among upper-income people (More and Stevens 2000). As fees rise, the remaining public money simply subsidizes the already comfortably well-off; fees sap the social importance of parks. Moreover, most public utilities use fees to promote conservation—electricity is priced because we want people to turn off the lights when they leave the room to conserve finite resources like oil, coal, or gas. But, except in certain specific locations, outdoor recreation is not nearly as finite as these resources, and there is little need to conserve in the same way. My use generally leaves the area unchanged and does little to affect your use on the next day. In fact, we have typically considered participation desirable: people should be encouraged to explore the natural world or our great historic sites. Fees also increase pressures for facility development (Sax 1981; More et al. 1996) and may lead to increased commercialization. Is it necessarily good to have managers completely responsive to changing public demand, especially when the goal is preservation rather than development? Could following the market and the whims of changing public tastes result in over-development? Finally, depending on fee revenues can leave parks vulnerable to market fluctuations, such as when a decline in visitation in summer 2003 left Acadia National Park with a severe deficit that reduced summer staff and created greater maintenance delays.

Outsourcing is a third management model, one that differentiates between the need for a service and its production (Crompton 1998). The public sector provides funding, but private firms compete for production rights. This competition helps keep costs low and maintains flexibility through periodic contract review. Careful outsourcing adds flexibility by minimizing the need for public employees and reducing the amount of an agency's budget devoted to salaries and wages. It may, however, increase the number of people needed for contracting and oversight. Moreover, private contractors must make a profit in addition to paying labor salaries and benefits. Profit is not a requirement in the public system so that paying it can raise the total provision cost. In general, outsourcing strikes me as being a "sharp pencil" problem—one requiring careful calculation to determine if there will be a significant savings to the public. Outsourcing may offer agencies some short-term savings, but its long-term consequences are uncertain. Private contractors often rely on low-wage employees and pay fewer benefits than does government, an arrangement that may result in significant long-term social costs (Conlin and Bernstein 2004).

The fourth management model is private ownership of parks and protected areas by not-for-profit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the National Audubon Society, or other state and local groups. This model, preferred by libertarians (e.g., Grewell 2004), relies on like-minded individuals to band together to purchase areas of interest to themselves. Since the public sector has no inherent role, non-users have no tax burden. Significant amounts of land have been preserved under this model; The Nature Conservancy, for example, has nearly 1 million members and protects over 100 million acres of land worldwide (TNC 2005). There also are successful public–private partnerships in which the more flexible not-for-profits have purchased land as it became available on the open market, preserving it until the government obtains the required appropriations and authorities for acquisition. But the extent of such activity is unclear and scarcity can raise the price of many of the most unique sites, making them unaffordable to all but the wealthiest organizations. Since these organizations must be financially self-sustaining, the costs must be borne primarily by their members or from charitable contributions. While they do not require tax funding, not-for-profits seem to have an omnipresent need to raise money, leaving them vulnerable to economic fluctuations, especially if they compete with one another. In consequence, some have developed close ties with industry. and the potential for commercialization needs to be carefully watched. Some critics have suggested that large U.S. conservation organizations have become as corporate as industry itself and can be reluctant to take strong positions on conservation issues for fear of offending potential donors (Frome 2004). Alternatively, some organizations may take extreme positions to attract membership. In either instance, the goal may be more to enhance the conservation organization rather than to promote effective solutions to problems. For example, wilderness advocate Michael Frome (2004) argues that the forefront of today's wilderness conservation efforts is to be found in grassroots organizations rather than in the larger, more corporate not-for-profits. Finally, while most not-for-profits seem to operate forthrightly, they are not necessarily subject to the same transparency required of government agencies.

The fifth management model is fully private, in which individual firms purchase and operate natural areas on a for-profit basis. The principal advantages of this model are its efficiency and lack of tax burden. But it is interesting to speculate how much land could be preserved if this system were fully adopted. Since private markets are efficient, only those areas capable of producing profit would remain. There are some natural areas like this; they tend to be small, intriguing or spectacular places where access is easily controlled, and those not willing to pay can be excluded. Indeed, the ability to exclude is essential to privatization: profit depends on excluding anyone not willing or able to pay the price. And, while such areas may preserve a specific natural or historic feature, they also can be highly commercial with shops, restaurants, and other focal points to enhance profit. Sometimes larger areas can be preserved as well. In Canada, for example, one hotel corporation advertises a "wilderness experience" at one of North America's largest and longest established private reserves. But access is expensive, and the resort is developed for four-season recreation activities. In sum, full privatization provides all the efficiency of the market with no cost to the taxpayer. However, it is likely to focus only on those areas capable of making a profit, while ignoring factors like ecological integrity and public access, and there are no guarantees against future development or alternative uses as the market dictates.

Conclusion: The road to privatization

The models outlined above are abstractions; each could be presented in much greater detail (cf. Quinn 2002). Collectively, however, they suggest that the privatization of public lands is actually a complex process—a series of small changes that may eventually lead to a major change. The complete transfer of lands and programs from the public sector to the private sector is only the final step.

Consider for a moment the original vision of Cornelius Hedges and others on Langford's Yellowstone expedition. The difference between their vision and today's practices and rhetoric is profound. The members of Langford's expedition explicitly rejected the ideas of profit and private ownership; Yellowstone, they believed, was simply too important to be left to the private sector—it needed to be public in the most profound way possible. Of course Yellowstone, Yosemite, and other parks have been cleverly exploited for private profit in multiple ways over the years (Runte 1997), but they have remained firmly entrenched in the public's mind as belonging to the public in the way that Hedges and Langford had intended. Such thinking represents a significant challenge for today's privatization advocates: how can the public be shifted from an ideal of parks as fully public to one in which they are operated increasingly under a market-driven, private system? The answer, of course, is a series of intermediate steps—user fees, public–private partnerships, the use of the business vocabulary, the development of (and increasing reliance upon) "friends" groups, etc.—each of which moves the parks a bit further from the fully public model towards the private. After each step, the public has been given a chance to adapt—to get used to the idea. And each step has had vigorous advocates ranging from liberals who want better funding for parks to conservatives who want smaller government. Managers and agencies are central to this process. In the past, the agency managers, starved for budgets, have argued vigorously in favor of such programs. Yet, by now, the direction of the changes must be clear. It is certainly possible to advocate for further privatization of public lands, but agency managers must do so with a clear understanding of the consequences of such changes—of where they are leading. Should public agencies advocate increased fees? Should they help form "friends" groups to undertake maintenance tasks for which no public funding is available? Should agencies encourage private operators to provide services that they can no longer afford to provide?

Ultimately, of course, we must decide if these changes are good, and the best way to do so is by focusing on the consequences. A fully private market system allocates goods and services such as parks on the basis of people's willingness to pay: The more you are willing to pay, the greater your access. Unfortunately, willingness to pay makes no provision for the ability to pay, and, as wealth has concentrated over the past 30 years, marked differences in people's ability to pay have emerged (Hurst 1998). Working-class families are struggling while wealthy families are doing well, and this presents a problem in the allocation of *public* goods. After all, the reason that the public sector (and public agencies) exists is to accomplish things that the market cannot. The market emphasizes the differences between people—people with innate talents, good health and vigor, or inherited wealth get more than people without those advantages. The public sector, by contrast, emphasizes what we share in common, jointly, together. Both perspectives have a long history in American culture. We tell our children to work hard to get ahead (of their peers). But we also tell them that everyone is created equal so that, on public land at least, there is no need to tip your hat to anyone—you are an owner, not a customer. So in the last analysis, the choice between competing models of park policy depends on the kind of society we choose to be—something each of us must decide individually.

For my part, I personally believe that a case can be made for either the fully public model or one of the two private models (not-for-profit and for profit), but I have difficulty with the public utility and outsourcing models. These models encourage public agencies to act like private firms and such arrangements tend to enhance agency interests while preserving inefficiencies at the expense of middle- and working-class Americans. User fees clearly favor the wealthy at the expense of low-income people, partnerships can create undue influences in public management, and the business language shifts the conception of management away from the public and towards the private. Personally, I oppose the privatization of public parks, and I believe that we need more, rather than fewer, protected areas. I can accept the full privatization of parks, but only if we as a society are willing to admit that participation and visitation are just a simple matter of consumer preference—that choosing to visit Yellowstone, Yosemite, or Lincoln's boyhood home is little different from choosing a television or deciding to have potato chips for lunch. Unfortunately, this is an assumption that I, for one, am not willing to make. I continue to believe that walks in the woods, days at the beach, and sunsets are good for people both as individuals and families, and that the appreciation they generate will ultimately be good for the land itself. Even more importantly, I agree with Runte (1997) that public lands and historic sites continue to be constitutive of our national identity so that visitation should be encouraged rather than discouraged. Consequently, I believe that public provision of parks is both appropriate and desirable and I intend to keep working towards the ideal of fully public park ownership that Cornelius Hedges and William Langford articulated 135 years ago.

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The Greater Realities of Privatization: A Historian's Perspective

Alfred Runte

THE ISSUE OF PRIVATIZATION, HISTORY IS BLUNT TO REMIND US, is not consistently as neat as it seems. The public lands have always been highly commercialized; by itself, the issue is nothing new. Even some of our greatest environmentalists, Ansel Adams, for example, have made millions off the public lands. Best's Studio, years ago renamed the Ansel Adams Gallery, sits prominently in Yosemite Valley. It is a distinctly commercial enterprise. Does it matter that Adams's heirs pay a franchise fee for the privilege of remaining on public land? Does it matter that Delaware North, the primary concessionaire in Yosemite, pays for that privilege, too? No franchise fee changes the fact that the public lands generate profits for a few. Everything said to the contrary is merely to rationalize why those commercial privileges should persist.

Simply, American culture remains the problem here. The American system, its principal argument begins, has always kept government out of business. Today, the argument dramatically holds in Iraq, where the federal government has turned most construction over to private contractors. After determining the standards and deadlines, government gets out of the way. If the contractors' incentive is to make a profit, government's obligation is to allow that they do, for only by allowing private enterprise, the argument comes full circle, can government efficiency be ensured.

The point is that more than 100 years ago, American culture beat out the government in the management of the public lands. Government got the hard job—preserving what existed and buying more. Concessionaires got the right to profit. The final triumph of private enterprise was turning what people truly needed into simply what they desired. Inexorably, public facilities and services grew far beyond providing just basic services. In the national parks, for example, the true need for a place to eat and sleep became an excuse to pursue recreation. First under the railroads, then spurred by the automobile, and often promoted by environmentalists themselves, others "services" keep entering the equation, until the very definition of "service" changed.

The privatization movement is just the latest chapter in that history. It may differ in wanting the government entirely out of the way, but again, only by degree. Commercial interests have always asked the government to stand aside from the chance to profit. It is just now, with the public lands established—in both fact and popularity—that those interests feel no need for government. The biggest cost is behind them and the nation—having to secure the opportunity.

That said, everyone is playing the game, including environmentalists. It is just that their commercial pursuits, or so they argue, fund "appropriate" causes. Were the Disney Company to make the same claim, Audubon, the Sierra Club, and others would let out a howl. Similarly, when environmentalists advertise and conduct mass mailings, that is considered outreach. A corporation doing the same thing is lobbying. The difference in the meaning is who is saying the words. Today, there are few nonprofits failing to make the argument they never abuse the public trust, while corporations always do.

The argument about entrance fees falls in the same category of who is making the claims. Years ago, when environmentalists believed the parks were overcrowded, they themselves recommended the fees be raised. Now that commercial interests are supporting the argument, the fees suddenly are too much. In truth, they are just about what they have always been, with the exception of fees never before collected for visiting specific sites and trailheads. In 1959, touring the national parks, my family paid a \$3 entrance fee at Yellowstone, Yosemite, Crater Lake, and Grand Canyon. The permit was for seven days. Since a gallon of gas was 25 cents, and a motel \$3 a night, we might extrapolate that the \$3 we paid in 1959 would be \$20 dollars today. And indeed, visiting Yellowstone in May 2004, that was the fee my wife and I actually paid.

Then let's play To Tell the Truth. Will the real developer of Yellowstone stand up? Is it the concessionaire; is it the Park Service; or is it truly, as they claim, public tastes driving them? The Park Service would not "need" to be widening and straightening the roads, for example, if the public's desire for SUVs did not "demand" them. That is culture, and everyone is to blame. When I was a seasonal ranger in Yosemite, it never ceased amazing me how many of my environmental friends—railing against development—enjoyed the Ahwahnee Hotel for dinner. Either that or I found them in the bar. For that matter, the annual Bracebridge dinner was originally choreographed by Ansel Adams. None of it is necessary; all of it draws people into the park who have no interest in the natural setting. All of it profits the concessionaire. And environmentalists subscribe to it, too. As John McPhee wrote years ago with respect to the Sierra Club's executive director, David Brower, development Brower had known in his youth he accepted. It was new development that he opposed. And indeed, David Brower and Ansel Adams agreed that their beloved Ahwahnee Hotel was not the problem in Yosemite Valley. Too many people were.

In other words, too many people other than themselves. Even when admitting that their presence in the valley contributed to the overcrowding, the point is that they asked others to consider leaving first. This is to explain why the campaign against privatization is so difficult. The only way out of the conundrum is for everyone to agree that the problem is inclusive; that, as Garrett Hardin pointed out years ago, the tragedy of the commons applies to all.

History offers that the time has arrived for a new reality in the management of the public lands, in which technology fights technology, as it were, rather than people fighting each other. Historically, the railroads came closest to avoiding expediency while protecting the values of preservation. Innately, every passenger train exacted discipline, both within the public lands and from without. Although crossing thousands of miles of landscape, no one could pull off the road. There were no broken beer bottles at the overlooks, no painting graffiti across the cliffs. Choosing a right-of-way, railroad executives thought ahead, hoping to sell the American landscape. Construction looked to a future when millions of tourists, using railroads, would want an unblemished landscape as their diversion. If the national parks were beautiful, but the land outside them compromised, expectation would be destroyed.

Inside the national parks, as well, the first great developers were the railroads. The point is that because every passenger was already their captive, there was no need to harass and importune visitors from the roadside. With the automobile, that protective influence was radically changed. What had previously been gateway communities lost out to corridors of development. A corridor, as distinct from a gateway, importuned the motorist from miles away. Visiting Grand Canyon in 1980, I recall billboards advertising McDonald's at the park entrance as far away as New Mexico. I believe that is still the case. Billboards, tourist traps, and gas stations line Highway 64 north from Williams. It is a distance to the canyon of 65 miles. Traveling by train to the national parks allowed none of that. The trains went straight to the gateways, through scenery still undefiled, and once arriving transferred passengers to community staging where every tourist was still controlled.

By itself, privatization is not the issue here; the issue is the absence of visitor discipline. The power of the automobile is to arm privatization with a whole host of obnoxious arguments. Take away the automobile, and privatization is dead, at least, that clamoring to pockmark the public lands with development. How would the visitors get there? In Europe, which is highly developed, they save what remains of their pristine landscapes by demanding that visitors arrive by train. It is not wilderness but it is not obnoxious. The technology, demanding a community experience, reins in what is frivolous and irresponsible.

True, we would not want for the American wilderness the absolute access that is Europe. But a dose of their discipline would be a good thing. It is the insidious side of the privatization argument—the removal of government discipline—driving the defenders of the public lands to the wall. In Yellowstone, for example, it is not the right of access, but rather the *how* of access, that frustrates preservation. More people enjoying the park in winter would be a wonderful thing. We need only restore the historical discipline, using snow coaches instead of snowmobiles. Technically, that is what the railroads did. Visitors came to Gardiner and West Yellowstone on the trains, where they simply exchanged one form of public conveyance for another. It was the word "public" in public transportation asking visitors whether they were serious about seeing the park, asking what they were willing to give up. Are you willing to exchange privacy for discipline, ensuring that these lands will be protected forever?

Only public transportation asks that question innately. Inevitably, automobiles and snowmobiles never ask it. If the railroads of the past were better stewards, it is because they had to be. The technology reined in what was mindless, whether development or privatization. As an example, it was not the railroads of Yellowstone that built in 1970 the gargantuan parking lot surrounding Old Faithful Inn, especially not the parking lot directly in front of it—visible straight across the geyser basin. Now the visitor, looking back at the inn, sees first that mass of cars. The railroads' vision for the inn was tasteful. Properly, it should appear to rise from its surroundings. The parking lot later sprawled in front of the inn was evidence of the railroads' retreat. As they retreated, community gave way to privatization, not only with regard to fees, but more important with regard to stewardship. It was the railroads needing to sell visiting the park as something visitors did in common. It was the automobile telling visitors they need not think of anyone, or anything. Yellowstone was just for them.

As compelling proof of this distinction, consider what happens when a park moves to preserve its community values; in Glacier National Park, for example, the rebuilding of its historic red buses. All 33 of them are back on the road, thanks to a partnership including Glacier Park Inc., the National Park Foundation, the Ford Motor Company, and several others. Historically, it was these buses, meeting the trains, that gave all the parks their community ambiance. Only in Glacier have they survived as working buses, not merely museum artifacts. Imagine if Glacier had lost them (as its train itself today is threatened). Imagine if no park served to remind us how public transportation encourages a spirit of preservation.

Does it matter if someone profits? Not if how they profit demands good stewardship. There is where we need to go. By itself, simply to eliminate the temptation to privatize goods and services will not eliminate that deeper problem. The Park Service can miss it, too, and has, simply by widening and straightening park roads just because Detroit is building bigger cars.

A comparable rediscovery of community is occurring in Yellowstone. Xanterra, its principal concessionaire, now agrees with the need for change. The company sponsors Heritage Days, for example, through which it has pledged the restoration of Yellowstone's historic motor stages. Granted, the Park Service insists they should be restored, as well, but Heritage Days is the company's idea. Xanterra is the first to agree with the critics of privatization that the movement to privatize everything is inappropriate. The wonder of the national parks is that they belong to all of us, and Xanterra invites its speakers to say just that.

This is to remind us once again that the issue is not so neat. There are responsible concessionaires, and some downright good ones, just as government can be irresponsible. There are concessionaires who wisely counsel the industry that a market free-for-all will destroy the golden goose. It is a reminder from whom those concessionaires descended—the railroads, who knew better than anyone that the discriminating visitor would not stand for a common experience.

Ultimately, the real issue is the culture, our penchant as Americans for commercializing everything. Tasteful development in the national parks we accepted long ago. Even John Muir was capable of seeing that some facilities in the parks were necessary. Thus, he praised the coming of the railroad to Grand Canyon as "little more disturbing than the hooting of an owl in the lonely woods." The point is that it was a railroad, not a parking lot. The ambiance of the canyon still prevailed. Every visitor was locked into a conveyance demanding responsibility, minus a gauntlet of development along the way.

As America has strayed from that discipline, so commercial interests have strayed, as well. The park experience they know best is turnover. They would like to sell the public lands just like they do hamburgers. They would like to own the public lands so that they could be sold. For these interests, the automobile is all-important; get people in, and get them out. Turn contemplation into recreation. The frenetic pace of American privatization had its origins along the road. It is no wonder that in talking about privatization, its adherents speak to a discipline that is false, one in which the marketplace, rather than community, determines what is best for the public lands.

Our final concern should be for the other institution succumbing to that argument—our colleges and universities. Once the bulwark of the public lands, they, too, have increasingly adopted the argument that everything should pay its way. Accordingly, university presidencies are drawing up to a million dollars. Many football coaches earn easily twice that. Professors are asked to bring in greater research funds and to provide inventions that can be patented. Programs and courses that cannot pay their way are dropped, or given over to part-time faculty. Senior faculty accused of "traditional" research are generally not replaced.

Even the best ideas need reinforcement, teaching them constantly to the young. These days, however, in place of the teaching of public service, universities increasingly teach the marketplace. Computer science, communications, and business replace history and biology as legitimate majors. If a student wants to take biology, the proper term is "biotech." If a student even thinks of majoring in history or literature, administrators call it a waste of time.

The public lands, the University of the Wilderness, cannot survive without tradition. A respect for public service is at their core. One therefore suspects, even where it cannot be proved, that the power behind the privatization movement is also the failure of higher education. If young people are not taught to believe in public service, how can they believe in the public lands?

Until these issues, too, are addressed and resolved, the privatization movement will only keep gaining strength. History proves that what saved the public lands in the first place was a belief beyond the marketplace. That comes from within society; it grows within the heart. In the past, Americans have known that the value of the public lands is something no marketplace can fully honor. If that respect is breaking down, there are many places we need look for answers. Meanwhile, we should never doubt that the search is necessary, for Wallace Stegner was nobly right. We cease looking for the core of the problem at the peril of the best idea we ever had.

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Entrepreneurism in America's State Parks

Ney C. Landrum

ALTHOUGH GENERALLY OVERSHADOWED by the better-known *national* parks, the state parks of America are nevertheless far more important today as providers of public outdoor recreational opportunities in this country. With almost 6,000 separate units, embracing some 14 million acres of land and water, the state parks offer an almost endless variety of recreational experiences within relatively easy reach of every American. It was to promote this close-to-home distribution of attractive smaller parks, in fact, that led the first national parks director, Stephen T. Mather, to push for a strong, nationwide state park movement in the 1920s, thinking that success in this endeavor would surely ease the growing pressure on him to create sub-standard national parks in those many areas of the country lacking sufficiently spectacular or truly nationally significant park resources.

That a successful state park movement did evolve over the ensuing half-century is now historical fact. But the wide diversity of state park phi1osophies and management approaches in use today reflects the many fundamental differences among the states themselves, and makes it difficult to treat "America's state parks" as a single, homogeneous class. For instance, there is still no unanimous agreement as to the essential purpose a state park should serve, or even how the term "state park" should be defined. Although occasional efforts were made in the early years of the movement to codify state park principles and standardize certain policies and practices, they were far from successful. In fact, there is probably less uniformity among the state park programs today than there was fifty years ago, in mid-20th century.

Obviously, the amorphous nature of the subject matter complicates attempts to look for norms or standards for any aspect of state park management. In the face of such diversity, it is inadvisable to attempt to differentiate between subjective "rights" and "wrongs." About all we can reasonably do is to identify trends and patterns as they emerge, and seek to analyze and evaluate them in terms of their efficacy and appropriateness in a general sense. This is certainly true for the more controversial areas of state park management—and possibly one of the most controversial of all is the place of "entrepreneurism," involving commercialization and/or privatization, in state park operations.

As generally understood, "commercialization" and "privatization" are distinctly different, although often related, concepts. Commercialization pertains to the introduction of money-making enterprises into a park, regardless of who operates them. Privatization, on the other hand, has to do with turning over park facilities and functions—whether money-making or not—to private entities for handling. Both practices have been a regular part of the state park scene for many years, and it is safe to say that differences of opinion occur not so much over the acceptability of such practices per se as over the degree to which, and the circumstances in which, they are used.

The ability to derive revenues from state park operations has been a strong motivating force from the very beginning. When California undertook to open a part of the Yosemite Valley in 1866 for public recreational use (in what is usually regarded as the very first state park initiative), it sought to finance the operation through a variety of on-site entrepreneurial measures. Years later, Stephen Mather introduced the concept into the national parks with fancy resort accommodations built by private concessionaires at Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone and elsewhere. Successes there created a powerful precedent, and the idea for both plusher park developments and the involvement of private enterprise caught on, gradually gaining momentum in the state parks as well.

Many states saw entrepreneurism as the only means by which they could finance their parks, but problems of "too much" or "too unsuitable" soon became apparent. Even Indiana's Richard Lieber, a giant among the early state park champions, although a strong advocate for financial self-sufficiency nonetheless warned about the "destructive hand of commercialism" in state parks. The trend toward state "resort parks" and similar tourist-oriented state park facilities that picked up steam in the post-World War II era troubled some astute observers. In 1955, National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth lectured state park directors at length about the dangers of over-commercialism, concluding: "I call this to your attention as a grave warning."

Back then, the state park movement was still in its formative adolescence under the waning influence of a floundering organization called the National Conference on State Parks (NCSP), in which the National Park Service was also heavily involved. In an idealistic attempt to introduce some consensus quality standards into a rapidly disintegrating state park discipline, the NCSP established first a "vigilance committee" to look for "incongruous" state park developments, and then a joint committee to propose a policy "relating to development, use, and operation of state parks." As might be expected, a "one size fits all" approach proved fruitless in this case also, and, despite NCSP's good intentions to provide some helpful guidance, the individual states continued to pursue their own preferred course.

How much and what kinds of state park commercialism to allow are matters that each state has to determine for itself. Thus, states such as Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia have developed extensive resort park facilities, while others such as Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, and Wisconsin have pursued a more low-key approach. Most states have a mix, perhaps weighted more toward one end or the other. Like beauty, an appropriate level of commercial development in a state park lies in the eye of the beholder. Many of us have strong views on the matter, but I personally feel that the real determinant by which such decisions must be made lies in the purpose the state parks are designed to serve. Unfortunately, this creates a circular problem, bringing us back to the equally perplexing question of why we have state parks in the first place—to which the answer again must inevitably be that each state must decide for itself.

"Commercialism" is not a term that the

states are likely to use in describing revenue-generating measures employed in their state parks. Still, every state park system (although certainly not every state park) relies on these measures to help offset the cost of operating the parks. Certain of these measures (entrance fees, camping fees, etc.) will not be seen as commercial because they are such an integral part of the park operation. Others (gift shops, equipment rentals, vending machines, etc.) similarly will likely be regarded as "visitor services" rather than commercial activities. When money-making enterprises go beyond these more traditional, even essential, measures, however—with the express purpose simply of increasing revenue (more elaborate retail shops, full-scale restaurants, convention facilities, etc.)—then they may properly may be regarded as purely commercial.

Unfortunately, there is no simple or fair way to either measure or evaluate the degree of commercialism in America's state parks, In the final analysis, the park users themselves are probably the best judges of such things. Questions of possible resource damage and deterioration aside, whether or not a park is "too commercialized" is essentially an aesthetic consideration. Even so, some sense of commercial activity in state park systems may be gained from certain statistical data published by the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) in its "Annual Information Exchange." These data, especially the amounts of revenue generated from different park-related sources, can be most helpful in determining apparent trends in each state.

After an experimental exercise in compiling state park statistics for the year 1975, the NASPD inaugurated the project on an annual basis starting in 1979. Although the returns from the early surveys were incomplete and lacking in consistency and accuracy, they continued to improve over the years so that the reported information is now reasonably reliable and will be used for purposes of the following analysis.

For the year 1984, the total revenue generated from all park-related sources amounted to some $265 million, representing about 38% of operating expenditures (the cost-recovery rate) for the fifty state park systems. By 1994, total revenues had increased to $532 million (up 101%), and cost-recovery to almost 45%. For the latest reporting year, 2004, total park-related revenues had climbed to almost $814 million (up another 53% over 1994). The cost-recovery rate, however, remained about the same, at 46%, because the aggregate state parks operating expenditures had increased almost as fast (up 48%) as revenues during the same decade. Looking at the entire twenty-year span, 1984–2004, all park-related revenues increased by 207% and concession revenues alone by 174%.

Although the above figures clearly indicate that America's state parks are becoming increasingly proficient at generating revenue, they tell only a small, and probably misleading, part of the story. True, a lot more money is being collected, but some of it is due to a concurrent, although fluctuating, increase in the number of state park users. Over the same twenty-year period, the average number of day visitors increased by almost 13%, although the average number of overnight visitors actually declined somewhat. More users, combined with periodic hikes in user fees, account for increases in park admission revenues of 190%, and in overnight facility rentals of 165%, over the two-decade span. The fact that concession revenues also jumped by a like amount (up 174%) during this period indicates that privately operated enterprises were at least keeping pace (and no doubt reflects a greater reliance on privatization generally, which will be discussed below).

Because comparable figures are not available for earlier years, it is difficult to illustrate long-term growth and change in many types of revenue-producing facilities in the state parks. Overnight facilities constitute a major exception, however. For example, between 1984 and 2004 the aggregate number of improved campsites increased by 30% (from 119,432 to 155,359), cabins and cottages by 33% (from 4,802 to 6,409), and lodge rooms by 72% (from 3,978 to 6,836). Considering the relatively modest increases in visitation—particularly for overnight visitors—cited above, it would appear that the growing supply of park facilities is getting well ahead of the demand.

Other high-end money-making facilities in state parks have also shown significant increases during the shorter time for which they have been reported. From 1994 to 2004, for example, restaurants increased from 159 to 230, golf courses from 106 to 126, marinas from 254 to 307, stables from 74 to 99, and ski slopes from 32 to 75. Although the scale and quality of these types of facilities will vary considerably, their growing presence in state parks suggests a tendency in some states to cater to a more affluent park clientele, no doubt with the primary intent of producing greater revenues.

Although it cannot be documented with total specificity, it would seem that the trend toward state park commercialization that concerned Conrad Wirth and others a half-century ago is still underway. Clearly, many of the facilities and programs in the state parks today are designed as much (if not more) to produce revenue as to satisfy public recreation needs. There are valid reasons for this, of course, and the main one is the constant pressure most state park systems feel to become more financially self-supporting. Starting with the recession triggered by the OPEC oil embargo in the early 1970s, the state parks—probably far more than most other government programs—have had to fend for themselves to make ends meet. Having demonstrated through necessity that they could indeed bear more of their own operating costs, they have been expected, even required, to do as well or better ever since. This may explain much of the questionable commercialization of the state parks in recent decades, but it does not necessarily excuse it. As noted earlier, however, it must remain for the using public in each state to make the call on where or when to draw the line.

While the degree of state park commercialization may or may not be seen as a prevalent concern by itself, it is very likely to become more so when private interests get involved. Privatization has long been an accepted corollary of commercialization, going back to the concession operations in many of the earliest state and national parks. But, along with the term itself, "privatization" as it is generally thought of today is largely a practice of fairly recent origin. Like so many other aspects of state park operations, though, there is no clear or consistent understanding or use of the term among the fifty states, and that fact further complicates efforts to assess the results of privatization enterprises in the state parks.

For purposes of a recent survey[1] of state park administrators on this subject, I proposed the following working definition for "privatization" as used in a state park context: *The transfer of responsibility for selected state park functions or activities from the state parks agency to a private party or entity by contract, lease, or other formal agreement.* While almost all of the states accepted this definition, it was clear from the responses that their interpretations still differed considerably. Many states seem to reserve this term for use only on major transactions, up to and including (and, sometimes, exclusively) the transfer of complete turn-key park operations, but excluding most of the traditional, limited-purpose concession activities such as retail sales, equipment rentals and the like. Another term, "outsourcing," is now widely used to refer to the contracting out of routine park functions such as garbage collection and mowing. In fact, this may well be a useful and valid distinction for purposes of the present discussion, because, while privatizing profit-making operations such as restaurants and lodges would surely fall also within the definition of "commercialization," picking up trash and pruning bushes would not.

Even allowing for the inconsistencies in application and use of the terminology, however, it is still possible to derive from available information a fairly good overview of current state park practices involving the participation of private enterprise. Almost all state park systems are currently resorting to the private sector for implementing some part of their programs. In most cases, these arrangements are for such purposes as providing food services; operating day-use facilities such as marinas, golf courses and horse stables; and handling retail sales and rentals. At what might be considered the other extreme, however, a disturbing (to me, anyway) number of states report turning over entire parks for operation by private entrepreneurs. If this is seen as a permanent disposition, it raises the obvious question of whether these parks will retain the public-service orientation and sensitive resource management essential to the state park philosophy—or, perhaps more basic, why they are still regarded as *state* parks anyway.

Although it would seem clear from contemporary news stories that privatization is a growing trend among state governments generally, most of the states responding to my survey consider that privatization in state parks has increased only slightly or remained fairly static over the past twenty-five years. This is reassuring, because the very nature of state parks, with their inherent susceptibility to commercialization, would suggest that they are a public program less suitable than most others for adaptation to private methods. The use of private expertise and, especially, private capital can be very helpful in many government applications, but for programs like state parks it is supremely important to recognize the critical difference between the profit-making motivation of private enterprise and the public service motivation of the state parks agency.

Of particular concern is the tendency in some states to force privatization on the state parks for what must be seen as primarily political reasons. Although such practices have caused serious problems at times, the state park administrators tend to be more pragmatic (and discreet) in citing their purposes for privatization. Three main reasons stand out: greater economy, greater efficiency, and necessity, in that a desired project or program could not have been undertaken otherwise. Interestingly, neither generating additional revenue nor facilitating private enterprise (as through a partnership arrangement) was ranked very high. On the surface anyway, the above feedback would suggest that outright commercialism is *not* a major motivation for privatization in America's state parks.

If privatization seems to have been accepted as a suitable means of accomplishing state park goals, however, it is still regarded by many with a wary, if not openly skeptical, eye. A sizeable majority of the states rate their experiences with privatization as very, or at least somewhat, satisfactory, but about a fourth are less than pleased. Problems, real or potential, have been recognized, of which the principal one, far and away, is unsatisfactory contractors or lessees. Also noted were concerns over park resources degradation and loss of park identity due to privatized operations; loss of control, visitor dissatisfaction, and overcommercialization were viewed as lesser problems.

The apparent trends toward continuing commercialization and privatization, whether directly related to each other or not, pose potential problems for the future of America's state parks. So much depends on the primary purpose the state is trying to serve through its parks program. If satisfying its public through various forms of active recreation, largely unrelated to a natural park environment, is the goal, then additional park facilities, possibly constructed, managed, and operated with some degree of private involvement, may well prove conducive. On the other hand, if the state parks are seen as the means of providing an essentially natural setting for close-to-home, resource-based recreation—for which there is no reasonable alternative available in the private sector—then superfluous development and the introduction of profit-making enterprises will surely be counterproductive.

There is no single paradigm for an ideal state park system in America. At present, each state is pursuing its own course as it sees fit, guided by different goals and motivations. All have accomplished great things for the people they serve, and all have made some mistakes. As they now contemplate the future direction they will take in a rapidly changing world, it is more important than ever that they have a clear idea of the kind of state park system they want to leave for posterity. Determining an appropriate degree of commercialization—whether much, little, or none—and the extent to which privatization can be helpful and productive in the process will have a critically important bearing on the shape that future state park systems will take.

Acknowledgments

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Endnote

1. An informal e-mail survey of the nation's fifty state park directors on the subject of "privatization in state parks" was conducted by the National Association of State Park Directors on January 25, 2005. The purpose of the survey was to develop a general sense

of current attitudes and recent experiences in the area of "privatization." Twenty-five states, representing a broad geographical distribution, responded by the requested return date of February 7. Information from the survey was compiled, analyzed, and interpreted by the author.

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Beyond the Public Park Paradigm

Sylvia LeRoy

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS ENRICH THE QUALITY OF LIFE of Canadians, providing many valuable recreational and environmental amenities. From the majestic grandeur of Canada's first national parks in the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia and Alberta, to the remote beauty of the newest Arctic parks, these areas are symbols of the diversity of the Canadian landscape, and the challenges to and opportunities of its people. These parks have also become powerful symbols of Canada's commitment to the environment and its conservation.

This commitment is evident in the steady growth of Canada's network of public parks and protected areas. Between 1989 and 2003, the area of land permanently protected through legislation to prohibit logging, mining, hydro-electric, oil and gas, and other large-scale developments has grown 178% (see Figure 1). These protected areas add up to nearly 82 million hectares, or 8.4% of Canada's total land mass. Parks Canada manages just over one-third of this total.

This growth gained new momentum with the federal government's 2002 action plan to create ten new national parks and five new marine conservation areas, and to expand the size of three existing parks, by the end of 2008. Three of these new parks have since been established, increasing the size of the national park system by another 30,533 square kilometers.[1]

While the immediate reaction of environmentally conscious citizens might be to celebrate these developments, there is growing recognition that government ownership and regulation is failing our parks. Canada's auditor general recently looked at the situation and found that Canada's parks and historic sites are indeed threatened, not from natural stressors or a lack of legislation, but from government mismanagement and neglect (OAG 2003). Twenty percent of the heritage buildings managed by Parks Canada have been lost in one generation and two-thirds of cultural assets are in fair or poor condition (Parks Canada, 2004a: 10). This steady deterioration represents a tragic loss to the people of Canada who have placed their trust and their tax dollars in government hands to manage and protect these heritage resources.

This government failure suggests it may be time to move beyond the traditional public park paradigm to insulate protected areas against their vulnerability to the political process. This can be achieved through the diversification of income and decentralization of park management and service provision to independent agencies, and other private and non-profit entities. These reforms, judged against a standard of accountability, equity, and efficiency, will create the incentives and flexibility needed to make best use of resources available to protect our parks.

The politics of public parks

The vulnerability of government-run protected areas can be attributed to what former director of the U.S. National Park Service James Ridenour has called "park barrel politics." As Ridenour has observed, the push to add new park units to the federal estate was driven by the U.S. Congress, "which has treated the National Park Service as if it were an economic development agency, rather than the protector and conservator of the nation's finest resources" (Ridenour 1997; see also Ridenour 1994). Because politicians tend to gain more environmental brownie points from announcing the establishment of new parks than overseeing behind-the-scenes repairs and upkeep, parks in both the United States and Canada have expanded at the expense of existing ones (Anderson and Leal 2001; Doern and Conway 1994; OAG 1983).

This is especially problematic when, as Parks Canada Chief Executive Officer Alan Latourelle observed last year, "The most fundamental operational issue facing Parks Canada is also the least glamorous one" (Parks Canada 2004a: 5). Translated into the political arena, this means that basic maintenance and conservation priorities continue to take a back seat to more "glamorous" initiatives such as the establishment of new marine conservation areas, parks, or historic sites. As David Anderson, then the federal minister responsible for Canada's

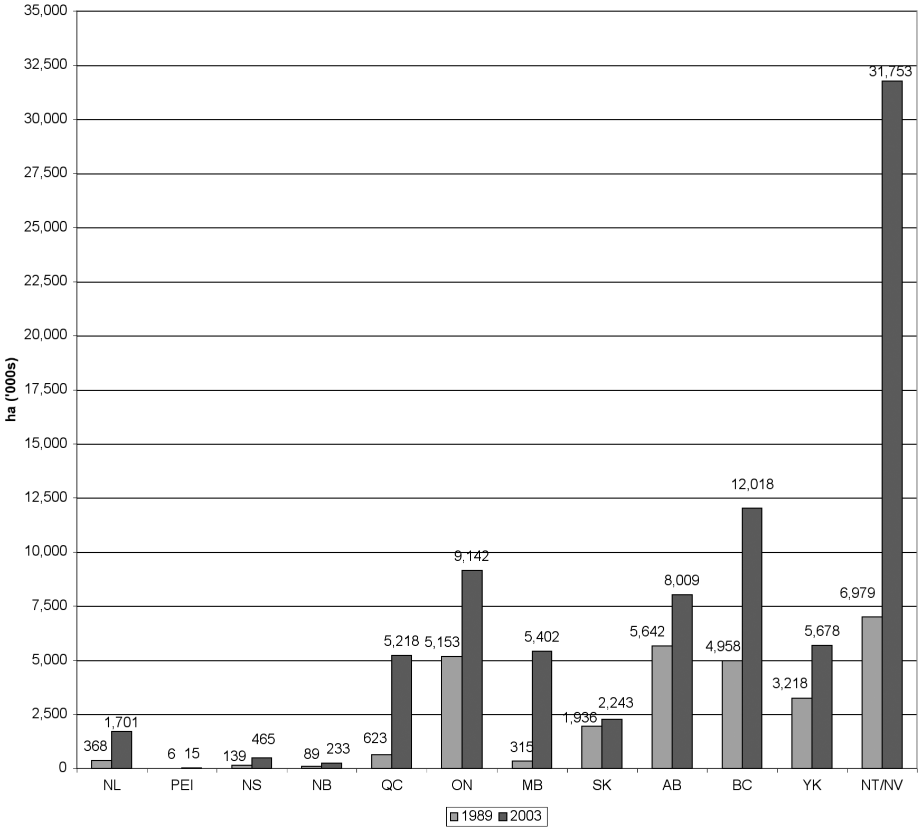


Figure 1. Total area protected in Canada, 1989 and 2003.

national parks, told the *Vancouver Sun* in June 2004, "My feeling is we should grab it [new properties] even if we do not have money in the budget to maintain it the way we would like. I am not going to stop acquiring properties even though I am short on maintenance money, because I know maintenance money is going to come in eventually" (Hogben 2004).

Parks Canada's budgetary history suggests that Anderson's confidence in the appropriations process is misplaced, and recent events confirm it. New public investments announced in the 2003 and 2005 federal budgets[2] still leaves Parks Canada short the $140 million needed annually to restore and replace its asset base (Parks Canada 2004b: 44).

Income diversification

As long as public parks depend on government appropriations for the majority of their income, their fate, including their ecological health and the safety of basic infrastructure, is ultimately beyond the control of park managers. While numerous possibilities exist, the most obvious way to diversify income towards non-government sources is through user fees. Indeed, as government appropriations have decreased and visitation to parks has increased, there has been a global trend for park systems to rely increasingly on user fees both to manage the number of visitors and raise scarce revenue (see C. R. Brown 2001).

The provision of services also becomes more efficient, innovative, and responsive to the public when parks depend on internally generated revenue for significant portions of their operational budget, because managers have new incentives to keep visitors happy and encourage repeat use. While public parks have long charged far less than visitors are willing to pay to enjoy the recreational and educational opportunities they provide, a reliance on user fees can also encourage more realistic pricing within parks (Anderson and Leal 2001; Leal and Fretwell 1997)

The pricing and methods of collecting user fees are best kept as local as possible, reflecting the reality that people place different values on visits to parks, depending on such variables as the location and quality of the park, the time of year, the day of week, etc. (Hanson 2001). Not only can such differential pricing generate greater revenues, it can serve as a park management tool, helping to disperse congestion and limit traffic at ecologically sensitive sites, encouraging visitation to underutilized sites (C. Brown 2001; O'Toole 1999; Ibrahim and Cordes 1993).

Equity

User fees ensure a more equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of maintaining parks and recreation areas, as non-users are no longer being taxed for a service they don't use (Manning et al. 1984). Given that those living in higher-income brackets have more money and leisure time to travel, and thus visit protected areas more, this subsidization raises ethical as well as economic concerns. User fees internalize the costs of parks, imposing costs directly on users rather than taxpayers who may rarely (or never) have the opportunity to enjoy them (C. Brown 2001).

Despite this benefit, concerns have been raised that fees will prevent low-income citizens from accessing public parks. Recent research suggests that such concerns are unfounded. While some survey evidence suggests that access fees can limit outdoor recreational use by low-income families

(More and Stevens 2000), these surveys use responses to hypothetical questions that may differ from actual behavior. Other studies have found that where low-income families have been priced out of outdoor recreation, it is generally due to the high costs of traveling to national parks and forests, not user fees (Grewell 2004b).

Even if high user fees may discourage visitation by low-income individuals who live near public parks, such equity concerns are better addressed through means other than universal subsidies. As J. Bishop Grewell of the Property and Environment Research Center (PERC), an environmental think tank based in Bozeman, Montana, has noted, "recreation policy may not be the best avenue for addressing welfare concerns. Because poor people use the parks less, they might like to see the tax dollars spent elsewhere than on public lands" (Grewell 2004a: 8). Indeed, in light of the fact that higher-income people generally use the parks more than the poor, addressing such welfare concerns through parks policy is actually regressive. Targeted programs, such as privately sponsored vouchers or coupons, or free and discount days, are more appropriate ways to address these equity concerns. Parks Canada, for instance, provides free access to the parks on Canada Day.

Accountability

The introduction of user fees must be accompanied by proper administrative and accountability mechanisms. Unless this revenue is protected from competing claims, public support for otherwise sensible user fees will quickly wane (Swope et al. 2001: 12). To put it another way, the public must see tangible benefits from user fees at the parks they are paying for.

This accountability and transparency can be achieved by decentralizing park management, giving local managers authority to retain and reinvest internally generated revenue into visitor services and facilities. As Terry Anderson and Holly Fretwell of PERC have observed, many of the problems in government-run parks have not arisen not because of, but in spite of, the best intentions of park managers. Indeed, "their ability to manage environmental assets is severely constrained because they are not free to consider the benefits that might come from shifting both budget priorities and uses of some park land" (Anderson and Fretwell 1999: 5).

Given more autonomy and accountability for ensuring resources are wisely invested, park managers may consider the development of new revenue generation mechanisms, such as concessionaire contracts or the establishment of new visitor services and recreational opportunities.[3] Following the example of the National Audubon Society, consideration should also be given to turning a small portion of land in some parks to multiple use: commodity production that can generate revenues to enhance and preserve more ecologically sensitive areas (DeAlessi 2005: 20; Anderson and Leal 2001: 84–85; Baden and Stroup 1981: 28–36).[4]

Parks Canada assumed new autonomy in the late 1990s, when it was transformed into an independent agency with new authority to retain and reinvest all park-generated revenue on a non-lapsing basis. That was a significant development. With new incentives for the agency to increase the revenue generated from its products and services, and to link revenue to real costs, revenue generated from entrance and recreation fees alone has more than doubled (see

Figures 2–4).

Unfortunately, while Parks Canada is required by its revenue policy to redirect internally generated revenues into park and visitor services, the agency's rapidly expanding mission and mandate has been used to justify rechannelling this revenue, "partially to fund the development and operation of new parks and sites" (Parks Canada, 2000: 13-3). In Jasper, one of only two national parks that come close the self-sufficiency,[5] fees are being used to offset Parks Canada's general operating budget, paying for research and the salaries for parks wardens and interpreters rather than going to repair infrastructure and maintain visitor services (Walker 2004). Clearly new resources and efficiencies are still needed.

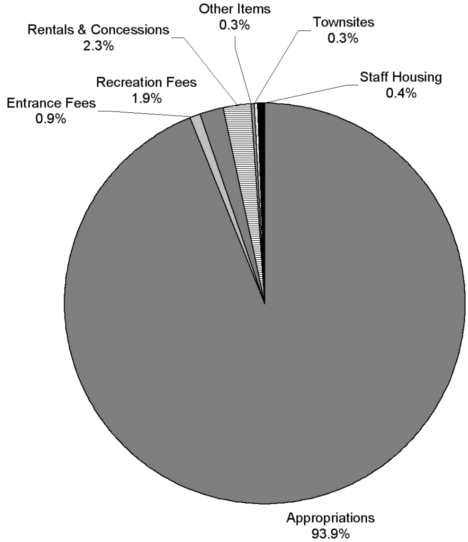
Efficiency

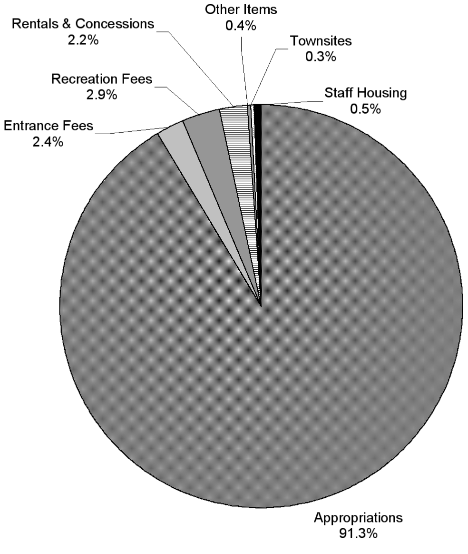
Other privatization techniques, such as outsourcing services previously provided in-house, can also help generate efficiencies needed to maintain our parks and protected areas over the long-term. By introducing competition into the provision of park services, from custodial work, fee collection, security service, to the entire operations of individual parks, costs can be lowered while improving the levels of service provided

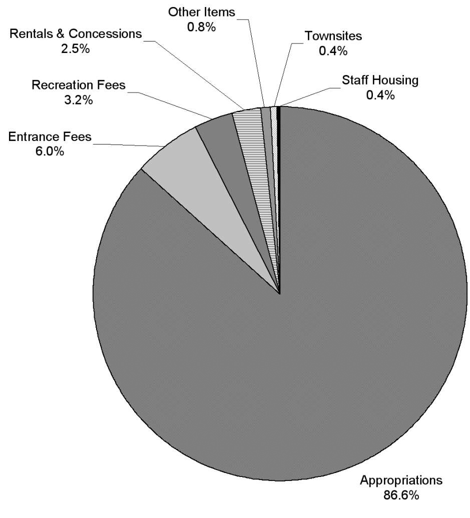
Figure 2 (right). Parks Canada income sources, 1983–1984.

Figure 3 (lower left). Parks Canada income sources, 1993–1994.

Figure 4 (lower right). Parks Canada income sources, 2003.







and encouraging parks managers to focus on core services (Hanson 2000). While a government bureaucracy has little incentive to keep costs down, competitive private firms are driven to keep costs down in order to survive and produce a profit. For public parks, these "profits" can be reinvested into services, facilities, and ecological concerns.

One model for achieving efficiencies while retaining the institutional knowledge and expertise of public park employees is the employee takeover (ETO) policy initiated by Parks Canada in the mid-1990s. This policy let employees establish their own companies and then bid for their jobs against private contractors. This policy gave entrepreneurial-minded employees the opportunity to own and profit from their own business, with the public retaining full ownership and ultimate control of the parks. The three-year contracts, subject to extensive environmental and heritage conditions and requirements, would be for the provision of services only, involving no fixed investments and no revenue sharing. Despite the potential millions in cost savings, public-sector unions and environmental groups mobilized against it and the ETO process was abandoned (for further discussion see Bruce 2001: 118–119).

The fears of environmental groups and unions were unfounded. Indeed, the involvement of private-service contractors and providers has been the norm in many Canadian provinces since the early 1990s (Hanson 2000). Outsourcing in British Columbia's parks, beginning in the late 1980s, resulted in significant cost savings and high visitor satisfaction ratings. Alberta has also relied heavily on private-sector providers for the operation of campgrounds since the late 1990s. Since 1996, Ontario's outsourcing of activities such as janitorial services, grounds maintenance, and enforcement services, and even the entire operations of small recreational parks, has resulted in better service and greater revenues, with cost recovery on operating and capital expenditures increasing from 45% to 70%. Newfoundland went even further, contracting out the management of 21 of its 34 parks. During the very first season under private management, 13 operators at newly privatized parks had made capital improvements (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 1997).

Private Initiatives

Trends in private land stewardship provide further evidence that it is no longer necessary to rely on government to meet valued conservation goals. In particular, private non-profit land trusts and conservancies have achieved considerable success by recognizing that conservation goals can best be advanced through a system of well-enforced property rights that give private landowners the incentives to provide both environmental and recreational amenities. Short of buying tracts of land outright, these groups work cooperatively with landowners to establish conservation easements in which landowners agree to impose permanent restrictions on activities that might threaten the environmental value of the land.

Over the past five years the number of land trusts known to be operating in Canada has more than doubled, from 60 to 125. While the amount of land protected by these non-profit groups may seem small in comparison to the massive expanses under the stewardship of federal and provincial governments, the geographic location of these properties is significant. For instance, in Atlantic Canada, private stewardship groups were responsible for creating over 70% of new protected areas between 1987 and 1996 (Statistics Canada 2000). At least 26% of all "ecogifts" made between 1995 and 2003 included wetland, among Canada's most threatened habitats (Barstead 2004).[6]

Unfortunately, government conservation projects can actually work against these private initiatives. By subsidizing environmental and recreational amenities, government can actually crowd out private individuals or non-profit groups who seek to make private conservation areas self-sustaining (Dennis 1981). When public parks tend to charge below-market costs for everything from park entrance to camping to hunting and fishing opportunities, private property owners have little incentive to devote more land to activities other than traditional commodity production for which a market is established and assured (Anderson and Leal 1988).[7]

Fiduciary trusts

Rather than competing against them, policy-makers should learn from these models of private stewardship, many of which are protected by the common law doctrine of trust, defined broadly as "a fiduciary relationship in which one person or organization holds or manages property for the exclusive benefit of another" (Fairfax and Guenzler 2001). As first proposed by economist John Baden and political scientist Richard Stroup (1982), management of public land can be devolved to independent "wilderness endowment boards" made up of a mixture of government representatives, stakeholders representing environmental, resource, and other community interests, as well as experts in wildlife, forestry, and water management.

Appointed to staggered terms, these boards can be charged with a fiduciary responsibility to manage a park in perpetuity, according to clearly defined goals. Established with an initial endowment and provided a set budget for a limited number of years, the trust is obligated to assume self-sufficiency by raising sufficient revenues to cover costs. Non-profit "friends" groups, registered to accept tax-deductible donations, can provide important financial, volunteer, outreach, and educational support, while playing an important role in monitoring and enforcing the rules of the trust. U.S. federal experiments with trustee management at San Francisco's Presidio national park, the Valles Caldera National Preserve, as well as proposals to establish trusts at the Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument and the Upper Missouri River Corridor, provide concrete examples of how to put these private management principles into action (Anderson and Fretwell 1999; Fairfax and O'Toole 2002; Yablonski 2004).

Conclusion

Mention "park" and "private" in the same sentence and the image frequently conjured is one of paradise paved. This stems from an assumption that government ownership and control is needed to protect nature and wildlife areas that the market will fail to provide, or will provide only in insufficient quantities or at prices beyond the reach of most consumers (see for example, Manning and More 2002). The deteriorating state of many public parks, however, suggests that the government has failed to live up to this protective mandate. The growing success of private conservation initiatives shows how realistic market pricing and non-profit or private management models can help create the incentives needed to secure the health of our parks and other protected areas for future generations.

Endnotes

1. These new parks include Gulf Islands National Park in British Columbia (established May 2003), Ukkusiksalik (Wager Bay) National Park in Nunavut (established August 2003), and Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve in Labrador (established January 2005).
2. The February 2005 federal budget committed $269 million in new funding for national parks, including $209 million earmarked for capital infrastructure. While hailed by CEO Latourelle as the biggest budgetary increase in Parks Canada's history (Winks 2005), once the amortization expenses associated with recapitalizing assets is accounted for, the $209 million infrastructure investment has a budgetary impact of just $39 million (Government of Canada 2005). Scheduled to be phased in over five years, Parks Canada will see just $4 million over the next two years, by which point the next federal election (with new election promises that could override the current commitment) is expected.
3. This is particularly important for remote and rarely visited parks that may have difficulty supporting themselves solely through user fees.
4. While opposed to oil and gas development in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge and other public wilderness areas, the Audubon Society have allowed carefully controlled and regulated oil and gas development in their privately owned Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary since the 1980s. This has generated more than $25 million for the group to invest in other conservation projects.
5. Banff is the only national park in which internally generated revenue exceeds expenses. In Jasper, less than 80% of operating expenses are covered by internally generated revenues. The Kootenay and Yoho field unit (incorporating both Rocky Mountain national parks) come next in terms of revenue generation, with less than 40% of expenses covered by internally-generated revenues.
6. "Ecogifts" of ecologically sensitive land are afforded special tax treatment under Canada's Income Tax Act.
7. This is exacerbated by government subsidization of forestry and agriculture that also encourages property owners to stick with traditional commodity production.

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Competitive Sourcing in Our National Parks

Geoffrey F. Segal

REASON FOUNDATION IS A PUBLIC POLICY THINK TANK that promotes choice and competition. Reason produces rigorous, peer-reviewed research and directly engages the policy process, seeking strategies that emphasize cooperation, flexibility, local knowledge, and results. Through practical and innovative approaches to complex problems, Reason seeks to change the way people think about issues, and promotes policies that allow and encourage individuals and voluntary institutions to flourish.

It is widely thought that competitive sourcing is the same as privatization. This is nothing more than a myth. Competitive sourcing is nothing more than a process to determine the most efficient and effective "source" to deliver services. Not only are government employees given the opportunity to bid on the competitions, they win an overwhelming majority of them.

In addition, regardless of who wins the competition the government maintains control and oversight of operations. Furthermore, the result of the competition sets a higher bar, making government root out its inefficient and ineffective practices. This "working leaner" results in service improvement and savings—over $2.6 billion in the last two years alone! Decisions to move forward with a competition are founded purely on good management principles that date back to the Eisenhower administration.

The following is based on written testimony presented by the author in 2003 to the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on National Parks.

Recently the management of the National Park Service (NPS) has been under a microscope. A series of financial lapses and a multi-billion dollar backlog of maintenance and other work signal weak standards and general mismanagement. For example, "in 1997, the NPS inspector general reported that officials at Yosemite used taxpayer money to build 19 staff homes for $584,000 each—and in 2001, the General Accounting Office (GAO) acknowledged recent NPS efforts to overcome this troubled legacy but concluded that efforts had fallen short in several significant areas."[1]

Additionally, park users themselves have noticed the poor condition of many of our national parks. In a recent question-and-answer session with Interior Secretary Gale Norton,[2] two separate questions were posed to her regarding the condition of national parks or the facilities that service the parks:

- *Commenter from Washington, D.C.:* "The last time I visited several well-known national parks in the West, the roads were in very poor shape with potholes, no shoulders for bicyclists, hard-

to-read signs, and inadequate places to pull over to see park features. Is fixing the roads in the parks part of the backlog your report talks about?"
- *Commenter from New York, N.Y.*: "Our national parks are in a bad state, with backlogs and dilapidated facilities."

These reports and observations cannot go unnoticed. Our national parks are the hallmark of what makes America a great nation. For too long, however, they have suffered from mismanagement as maintenance and much-needed upgrades and additions have gone unfinished. The President's Management Agenda (PMA) is a set of initiatives designed to improve the management of federal agencies by adopting performance-based criteria for decision-making and action. Competition or competitive sourcing is a major component of the PMA, which simply means a systematic effort to have commercial activities in the federal government periodically go through a process of competition.

The competitive sourcing initiative forces agencies to put their fingers on their own pulse. It provides a framework by which agencies examine whether they have the right skill sets, technologies, and organization structure to provide Americans the best possible service—service that is effective and efficient. Through the initiative, agencies review certain tasks and activities, evaluating whether they can re-engineer the work to improve service quality, and contrasting the status quo and the re-engineered option with what a private firm, or, potentially, even what a state or local government might charge to perform the same work. The bottom line is that these evaluations are used to determine and provide the best value to citizens.

Competitive sourcing has two oft-overlooked related benefits. First, it allows agencies to refocus on core functions and mission-critical activities. Second, it helps them address their human capital management. Essentially, it enables federal managers to rethink the structure of their workforce.

The federal government human capital management challenges have been well documented—while not as severe as originally thought, the problem continues to persist. Competitive sourcing provides a unique opportunity to agencies in managing the structure of the workforce. Put simply, incorporating competitive sourcing into the broader context of human capital challenges creates linkages and improves flexibility. Agencies could, as needed, move existing staff between agencies or within the agency to activities considered core or mission-critical. Competitive sourcing is a means of tapping new sources of human capital to meet current service needs. Indeed, competitive sourcing is fundamentally about accessing new pools of talent.

Essentially, competitive sourcing is a tool that redeploys human capital. A common misconception about competitive sourcing is that it leads to layoffs and to loss of pay and benefits for workers. But a long line of research shows that in fact the majority of employees are hired by contractors or shift to other jobs in government while only 5–7% are laid off.[3] In fact, competition leads one portion of existing human capital to join with the new human capital the contractor brings to the table, and either or both may be utilized in new ways to meet the goals of the government agency. Private contractors are more able to cross-train and develop workers to meet human capital needs.[4] At the same time, the government agency can redeploy many workers who did not switch employment to the private contractor and can retrain and reposition them to meet other human capital challenges. Agencies already do have tools that have assisted them with human capital issues in the past, and these remain promising tools for the future—especially with moving resources and personnel around. The Office of Personnel Management mandates that agencies prepare both a career transition assistance plan (CTAP) and interagency career transition assistance plan (ICTAP) when a reduction in force (RIF) [i.e., a layoff] is expected or when an activity is being competitively sourced. These programs give managers an additional tool to fill needs and strategically focus on service delivery.

Competitive sourcing creates three opportunities for meeting human capital challenges. First, it is a means of bringing in private-sector human capital to meet government service needs. Second, if competitive sourcing displaces some government workers, they can be redeployed and retrained to meet yet other human capital challenges. Third, it changes the way existing human capital is utilized.

With this said, competitive sourcing is not new to NPS. In fact, in 1998 NPS was ordered to contract with private architectural-engineering firms for 90% of its design work and required that all construction oversight be handled by private firms. Additionally, House Report 105-163 directed the NPS "to continue to increase its contracting of commercial activities, with a goal of divesting itself of such activities by the end of fiscal year 1999." Furthermore, the report stated that "when services or products of equal quality and cost are available from the private sector, the [NPS] should use the private sector."

Additionally, the NPS parent department has used competitive sourcing very systematically and effectively. NPS can learn and use this approach. For example, from the start, the Department of the Interior worked with the unions and kept costs down. Furthermore, transition strategies were identified for affected employees. And while more than 1,800 positions have been subjected to competition, not a single employee was left without a job. In fact, the employee bid has won more times than the private bidder. Additionally, in an effort to mitigate impacts in one area, competitions have been balanced; they have been targeted to different locations and different pay grades.

So what does all this mean? How can NPS benefit from implementing a competitive sourcing plan? There is overwhelming evidence that competitive sourcing saves significant money.[5] While studies show that the average savings are 30%, let us assume that this is off by a margin of 50% and that savings are truly only 15%. Of 16,000 NPS employees, only 2,200 positions have been identified as commercial in nature. Subjecting only 20% of those positions to competition would result in savings of $6.6 million in the first year alone (assuming that NPS spends $100,000 on the average position, which is total NPS spending on a per-FTE [full-time equivalent—that is, a full-time position] basis). These savings may seem small, but this represents only NPS's competitive sourcing efforts. The savings are much, much higher if you incorporate the entire Department of Interior competitive sourcing plan.

With that said, though, these savings translate into the treatment of over 40,000 *additional* acres of public lands deemed in danger of catastrophic wildfire; or $6.6 million dollars of *additional* maintenance, reducing the backlog plaguing our national parks; or allowing for more funds to be transferred into cleaning *additional* acres of wetlands or degraded lands in our nation's parks; or best yet, allowing for *free admission* to popular national parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, Everglades, or the Statue of Liberty.

If this committee wants to assume that direct federal provision is the most efficient, it must fully understand what the tradeoff is, and the costs associated with it. In this case, competitive sourcing provides the opportunity for NPS to better achieve its agency's mission and goals: enhancing and ensuring environmental protection (wetland and degraded land cleanup); providing for public enjoyment of recreational facilities (maintenance of facilities); and ensuring public safety (wildland fire program). Again, even if we're wrong about the 30% and savings are only 15%, this is better for the American taxpayer.

Some opponents of competitive sourcing insist that our national parks are special, and that they should be shielded from competition. However, several states and provinces in Canada have long used competitive sourcing and the private sector to provide services in their respective park systems. In fact, according to the Council of State Governments, parks departments that were surveyed "were more likely than other [executive] agencies to expand [competitive sourcing] in the past five years."[6] Reasons for seeking competitive sourcing were reduced costs, additional personnel, and greater expertise. Respondents also expect the trend to continue for the next five years, with almost three-quarters of the respondents stating that they expect to use competitive sourcing "more frequently in the coming years, and most others will maintain current levels."[7]

Of those agencies that had subjected services to competition, "a large portion … are saving more than 15 percent of their budgets through competitive sourcing."[8] This evidence further justifies the claims of *at least* 15% savings from competitive sourcing. Many services that would be competitively sourced by NPS already had been by the states. Those services include construction, maintenance and janitorial services, operation of individual parks, custodial services, security services, vehicle maintenance, and recreational programs and services.

While several states and many cities in the United States have successfully used competitive sourcing and privatization at state and local parks, some of the most interesting examples are efforts of Canadian provincial park systems. Note that Canada's park systems have faced budget pressures even more severe than those plaguing park systems in the United States. Following are some examples from both countries.

Alaska. Beginning in the 1990s, Alaska State Parks began contracting out the operation of a small number of campgrounds.[9] Currently the department contracts out seven small and isolated parks. Because of their isolation, the parks were costly (relative to revenues) for the department to maintain. Contract lengths are short, running from one to five years. In return for meeting maintenance standards, operators keep the camping fees and have their commercial use permit fee waived. Indicative of the department's satisfaction with contracting out, Alaska Parks is currently proceeding with a plan to contract out the operation of a "top-flight" park, Eagle River.

British Columbia. In 1988, B.C. Parks began using private-sector contractors to operate its parks; by 1992, the department contracted out 100% of park maintenance and operations. In fiscal year 1998, visitor satisfaction was high: 81% of visitors rated park facilities and services as "excellent" or "above average." The department has also realized substantial savings, estimated at 20% on average.[10]

Alberta. In 1997, Alberta decided to expand its already extensive use of private-sector operators for its park and recreational facilities. During earlier budget reductions, the agency used competitive sourcing to withstand cuts, while at the same time actually increasing the size of its recreation and protected areas network. Utilizing a new management strategy that is eerily similar to the NPS core goals (preservation, heritage appreciation, outdoor recreation and tourism), despite seeing its budget reduced by $11 million over a four-year period and another $6 million two years later the department added 34 undeveloped sites to the network over a 25-month period beginning in March 1995. This was primarily achieved through the use of competitive sourcing.

The department enlisted private operators in those program areas where they are firmly established. Doing so helps free department resources from routine operational and maintenance duties, allowing them to focus more on planning and managing protected landscapes and resources inventory, delivering heritage appreciation and environmental education, managing contracts and partnerships, and coordinating volunteer efforts.[11]

Despite the benefits of competitive sourcing there remain skepticism and objections to the initiatives. Some of the more common objections include the following.

NPS is inherently governmental, and should be shielded from competition. Ultimately NPS will determine what activities within the agency are commercial in nature, what could be subjected to competition, and what actually will be competitively sourced. It will determine this based upon the FAIR (Federal Activities Inventory Reform) Act and an analysis of its workforce without compromising the core mission of agency. Prohibiting NPS from studying its workforce and determining where efficiencies can be achieved will only hamstring the agency and prevent it from achieving its goals.

Competitive sourcing also enables the agency to better focus on its mission. The agency can and should focus resources on mission-critical activities and utilize contractors where possible, especially for service positions such as lifeguards, janitors, maintenance workers, computer technicians, and ticket takers.

NPS diversity will suffer. For starters, competitions can be targeted at locations that don't have diversity issues. Two other issues come to mind too; first, contractors that win competitions will rely on local labor markets to fill positions. Thus, diversity goals will likely be met regardless of who is providing the service. Secondly, NPS can use competitive sourcing to further its diversity goals by identifying competitions and contractors that will advance its policy. Additionally, diversity concerns assume that the contractors will violate civil rights laws or that minority workers cannot compete with whites and must be sheltered by an undemanding civil service code.

No cost savings will be achieved. The Department of Defense (DoD) has the greatest amount of experience in competitive sourcing of all U.S. agencies. Between

1978 and 1994 over 3,500 competitions were initiated by DoD involving 145,000 personnel. The competitions resulted in an estimated annual savings of $1.46 billion (fiscal year 1996 dollars).[12] Had the DoD competitively sourced the entire inventory of eligible positions— over 13,000 functions employing over 380,000 personnel—competitions would have generated $7.58 billion in annual savings.[13]

The data show an average savings of 31% of the baseline cost,[14] and that a majority of competitions remained in-house. However, it also shows that DoD strategically used resources in the most effective and productive manner by subjecting positions to competition. DoD was able to focus more on core functions after resources were freed up from outsourcing. Even if forecasts of savings are wrong by a margin of 50% (i.e., savings only equal 15%), those are still significant savings. As taxpayers, we should not automatically assume that federal employees are as efficient as they could be. Without even the threat of competition, agencies can grow stale and inefficient, as evidenced in 2002. That year, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) decided to use competition in response to poor performance by the Government Printing Office (GPO) and opened the job of printing the fiscal 2004 federal budget to competitive bidding. Simply indicating that the agency would be required to compete, i.e., OMB no longer assumed that it was as efficient as it could be, the GPO turned in a bid that was almost 24% lower than its price from the previous year. That was $100,000 a year that GPO could have saved taxpayers any time it chose, but it never chose to do so until it was forced to compete.

There will be negative impact on rural communities. There are real concerns that competitions will lead to work being taken out of local communities, especially rural ones. However, the projects NPS will be competitively sourcing are mostly small competitions where the work cannot be transferred away from the locations. Put simply, maintenance activities cannot be removed from the locations. Additionally, large companies such as Bechtel will not be competing for these jobs. If the in-house team does not win the competition, the winners are actually likely to come from the local communities serving the location. Thus, economic activity will increase, not decrease. Additionally, private companies pay taxes while government doesn't, creating additional economic activity for local rural communities.

The American taxpayer and park visitors deserve the best services possible. Competitive sourcing gives NPS an opportunity to improve its efficiency, tackle its massive maintenance backlog, and focus its resources and energy on its core functions. Ultimately, competitive sourcing can improve the quality and efficiency of our national park system—in many regards the crown jewel of America. While there are associated upfront costs, the demonstrated savings are significant and competitions pay for themselves many times over.

Competitive sourcing gives NPS a valuable opportunity to focus on the agency's mission and goals of enhancing environmental protection, ensuring the availability and enjoyment of recreational facilities, and providing for public safety. Again, the goal should be about improving the service that is provided to the American taxpayer, both in terms of quality of service, but also in terms of cost. Can we assume that federal employees are the most efficient and effective given the backlog of maintenance work and past mismanagement issues? We must fully understand what the tradeoff and resulting costs are in stifling the NPS competitive sourcing initiative. In this case, it is mandating inefficient management and lesser-quality parks for the American taxpayer.

Endnotes

1. Ronald D. Utt, "House Appropriators Undermine the President's Competitive Contracting Program," Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum no. 890, 7 July 2003.
2. Webcast on WashingtonPost.com.
3. Robin Johnson, *Privatization and Layoffs: The Real Story*, Reason Public Policy Institute E-brief no. 112, (Los Angeles: Reason Foundation, 2001); on-line at www.rppi.org/ebrief112.html. Moreover, research by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) shows that as many employees saw increases in pay and benefits as saw cuts after going to work for contractors. General Accounting Office, *DoD Competitive Sourcing: Effects of A-76 Studies on Federal Employees' Employment, Pay, and Benefits Vary*, GAO 01-388 (Washington, D.C.: GAO, 2001).
4. Research shows that privatization tends to lead to more investment in education and human capital development in workers. See Mike Wright, Robert E. Hoskisson, Igor Filatotchev, and Trevor Buck, "Revitalizing Privatized Russian Enterprises," *Academy of Management Executive* 12:2 (19980, 74–85; and Yuming Fu and Stuart Gabriel, "Location, Market Segmentation, and Returns to Human Capital: The Privatization of China's Labor Markets," paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association, Boston, January 2000.
5. The General Accounting Office and the Center for Naval Analysis have found significant savings, averaging 30%, from competitive sourcing.
6. Keon Chi and Cindy Jasper, *Private Practices: A Review of Privatization in State Government* (Lexington, Ky.: Council of State Governments, 1998), 40–41.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. The information that follows is from Pete Panarese, chief of operations, Alaska State Parks; and from a phone conversation with Jeff Hanson, Washington Policy Center, September 7, 1999.
10. Jeff Hanson, "Privatization Opportunities for Washington State Parks," Washington Policy Center brief, January 2000; on-line at www.wips.org/ConOutPrivatization/PBHansonCOStateParksPrivatize.html.
11. Alberta Environmental Protection, Natural Resources Service, "Completing the Puzzle: Building a Recreation and Protected Areas Network for the Next Century," executive summary, May 1997, 14–15. On-line at www.gov.ab.ca/env/parks/strategy/summary.html. See also Hanson, "Privatization Opportunities for Washington State Parks."
12. Christopher M. Snyder, Robert P. Trost, and R. Derek Trunkey, "Reducing Government Spending with Privatization Competitions: A Study of the Department of Defense Experience," George Washington University Working Paper, 2000.

13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

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The Effects of Neo-Conservatism on Park Science, Management, and Administration: Examples and a Discussion

John Shultis

Introduction

A GROWING NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SCIENCE IS CULTURALLY MEDIATED, affected by the hegemonic structures and powers that exist in Western society. For example, Proctor (1991) suggests that societies' overt actions and policies advance the interests of certain special-interest groups over others, intruding into even so-called "pure" science through consciously choosing which topics are studied and how the results are interpreted. Explicit examples related to protected areas are provided by Chase (1986) and Wilkinson (1998), who describe in troubling detail how park scientists and managers were asked, among other requests, to obscure research results and make public statements contrary to their professional judgment. The latter author concluded that science is forever a hostage to political meddling (see also Behan 1997).

But there are also less visible effects of politics; often politics exercises its power not on but *through* dominant institutional structures, priorities, and practices. Almost invisibly, this latter type of influence implicitly and systematically legitimizes hegemonic institutions and practices, making it difficult for the status quo to be questioned or changed (Harding 1992). Yet it seems difficult for park managers and scientists to acknowledge that resource management issues are inherently based on values, and are thus both directly and indirectly influenced by political ideologies (McCool and Stankey 2003; Rohde 2004).

The purpose of this paper is to challenge park scientists, managers, and administrators to acknowledge the influence of political ideology on park issues. More specifically, I wish to describe and analyze the impact of one particular political ideology—neo-conservatism —on protected areas. After defining and reviewing the importance of neo-conservative thought in contemporary Western nations, I identify common policies and practices of neo-conservatives, focusing on economic policies associated with fiscal conservatism, and their impact on park planning and management. Examples from Ontario, British Columbia, New Zealand, and the United States are used to illuminate how fiscally conservative policies affect park research, management, and administration. Finally, the shared histories and characteristics of these case studies are reviewed.

The rise of neo-conservatism

Following the horrors of World Wars I and II, Western nations enjoyed a considerable and sustained increase in their residents' standard of living, disposable income, leisure and vacation time, and consumption patterns. Keynesian economics relied on an expansionist welfare state to create and maintain this post-war prosperity, and citizens became accustomed to increasing levels of government intervention (i.e., spending) in areas of economic and social policy (e.g., health care and unemployment).

By the 1970s, this sustained economic growth had stagnated, with inflationary pressures and increased unemployment beginning to erase the gains in economic growth and discretionary incomes. At first, government responded to these problems by increasing spending, as this had been an effective policy in the past. However, the world economic system had changed: with increased globalization, capital became more internationally mobile, new labor markets in developing nations were operating, and nation-states could no longer sustain completely independent fiscal policies. High inflation led to high interest rates, which meant nations had to use a growing proportion of their national incomes to service the debts caused by this increased government intervention. The spiraling taxation required to support increased government spending became a central concern:

> These government responses to the fiscal crisis triggered intense hostility toward taxation and fuelled the belief that a failure to restrain government expenditures would, inevitably, require even more taxes. Consequently, cutbacks to government expenditures began to be implemented, first for programs designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged, but eventually also for universally accessible social programs (Harrison and Johnston 1996: 163).

Thus, due to structural changes in economic and social conditions in the 1970s, neo-conservatism began to rise in many Western nations. Margaret Thatcher (first elected in 1979) and Ronald Reagan (elected in 1980) are seen as the major leaders espousing the doctrines of neo-conservatism in the West. They, like most neo-conservatives, used an amalgam of classical economic liberalism (i.e., fiscal conservatism) and moral conservatism to establish their economic and social doctrines. Rather than using the traditional Keynesian policies of government intervention and regulation (i.e., the use of "big government" through taxation), the neo-conservatives championed "small government," decreased individual and corporate taxes, and increasing reliance on the free market and individual choice to drive economic growth (Green 1987).

Just as Keynesian policies infiltrated various political parties earlier in the twentieth century, these neo-conservative fiscal policies began to spread throughout the political spectrum. That is, while neo-conservative fiscal policies began at the right end of the political spectrum, most political parties—left, center, and right—began to adopt these economic policies (see Gandesha 2000). As a result, fiscal conservatism very quickly diffused throughout Western nations from the early 1980s.

The impact of neo-conservative policies on park agencies

As noted above, the Keynesian welfare state had used an increasing amount of government funding (and taxation) to control social problems, including the spiraling demand for municipal, regional, and national parks. Parks and protected areas were created and developed in response to the boom in outdoor recreation and increased leisure and discretionary income during these years of sustained economic growth. When conservative fiscal policies were established, spending on environmental issues and ministries did not escape the considerable budget cuts and downsizing that dominated this agenda.

In 1995, Mike Harris in Ontario became the first neo-conservative provincial premier elected in Canada. One review of the decline of the Ontario Ministry of Environment concluded that "the neo-conservative ideology of Mike Harris' Conservative government accounts for the major retrenchment of [the ministry in] the late 1990s" (Krajnc 2000: 111). Operating expenses at the ministry fell by 68% between 1991 and 1998, while ministry staff were cut by 40% between 1990 and 1997 (Krajnc 2000; O'Connor 2002). This reduction in staff and funding, together with the elimination of programs, privatization and devolution of services and activities, and the move towards industry self-regulation of environmental practices all compromised the ability of the ministry to provide in-house scientific expertise, set environmental standards, and monitor and enforce environmental problems (Waterstone 1997; Krajnc 2000).

These cuts also affected public safety. Justice Dennis O'Connor (2002) noted that these budget cuts were both directly and indirectly connected to the Walkerton tragedy, in which seven people died and over 2,300 were infected from drinking contaminated water in a small Ontario town. Similarly, budget cuts to the Department of Conservation in New Zealand were to blame in part for the death of 14 college students, after an unsafe viewing platform collapsed in the Cave Creek area of Paparoa National Park. Judge Graeme Noble, who authored the report of the Commission of Inquiry on this event, concluded that the victims "were all let down by faults in the process of government departmental reforms…. In my opinion, it is up to governments to ensure that departments charged with carrying out statutory functions for the benefit of the community are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to do so" (Noble 1995: 93).

A similar series of budget cuts unfolded in the province of British Columbia, Canada. While governments doubled the size and number of protected areas in B.C. from approximately 6% to 12% of the provincial land base, severe cuts were made to the relevant ministries. In addition, the provincial government disassembled B.C. Parks as a separate government agency; park management is now simply one thread within the Environmental Stewardship division of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. Between 2001 and 2005, the operating expenditures for the Environmental Stewardship division fell from CDN$83.5 million to $50.8 million (a 40% decrease), and staff numbers decreased 31% from 1,298 to 897 (Recreation Stewardship Panel 2002). This was in addition to substantial cuts made in the 1990s.

As in Ontario, the B.C. government incorporated neo-conservative values in protected areas, primarily through the creation of a "business approach" to agency administration and the use of increased and new user fees to help offset funds lost in budget cuts. The province's new vision for park management reflected neo-conservative doctrines by cutting ministry operating budgets and staff, focusing on potential revenue sources, increasing existing user fees and adding new fees, and referencing the use of partnerships to introduce private-sector philosophies into park management (Recreation Stewardship Panel 2002).

In the United States, similar forces were at work from the beginning of Ronald Reagan's first term in 1980. After years of budget and staff cuts, many park agencies cut maintenance and replacement of park facilities (e.g., roads, trails, and water treatment plants). Desperate for funding (Hill 1997), most park agencies and environmental groups welcomed the establishment of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (RFDP) in 1996 as a means of improving the recreation infrastructure within parks. Over 300 sites within the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are now allowed to collect fees for entrance and/or goods and services, and retain the majority (80%) of these fees at the site. These fees are used almost exclusively to fund use-related functions of the parks (Luloff et al. 2000).

Although there was considerable, broad support for the RFDP when introduced, opposition to the program has significantly increased, and much research has attempted to assess the impact of these fees (see Puttkammer 2001). While most research—primarily funded by the land management agencies—has focused on surveying user perceptions of the fees, a more critical research agenda has begun to assess the potential effects of this fee project (More 2002). There are concerns that monies collected from the user fees (the Forest Service alone collected almost US$124 million during the period 1996–2000) will, *inter alia,* lead to: (1) continued decreases in government allocation to park agencies, (2) a "double taxation" problem (both taxes and user fees pay for these areas), (3) agencies focusing their attention on revenue generation and the use function rather than the preservation function of parks, (4) displacement, particularly among low-income users, (5) commodification of outdoor recreation experiences, and (6) additional ecological and social impacts from increasing amounts of users and new forms of recreation (Martin 1999; Bengston and Fan 2000; Puttkammer 2001; More 2002; Anderson and Freimund 2004).

The direction taken by the above governments has been adopted by a number of countries and jurisdictions, most of which have used the so-called business or corporate approach to park administration and management in response to chronic underfunding of park agencies (e.g., Searle 2000; van Sickle and Eagles 1998; Buckley 2003; Ostergren et al. 2005). This approach is a direct result of the growth in neo-conservatism in numerous Western governments. That is, budget cuts and the business model reflect the primary foci of fiscal conservatism outlined earlier: (1) cuts to government expenditures and staff numbers to compensate for decreased taxation; (2) resultant outsourcing of scientific and other planning and management activities; (3) incorporating private-sector principles (e.g., competition, partnerships with the private sector, and revenue generation) within the public sector; and (4) a reliance on user fees to offset decreased budgets.

Implications of neo-conservatism for park science, management, and administration

Political ideology affects science and

decision-making in numerous ways: some are explicit, others implicit (Harding 1992). Explicit examples include providing research funds for topics specifically matching and supporting ideology (or, conversely, withholding funds for research challenging ideological approaches); choosing individuals or organizations known to have similar political ideologies to conceptualize, conduct, and interpret research; ignoring research findings that do not support existing or future management actions; and interpreting research to fit current political ideology. These and other covert politicizing of science and management occur at any point of the political continuum, from left to right.

Political power is also exercised in less visible and explicit ways, as encultured science works through hegemonic forces such as political ideology. The examples provided from Ontario, British Columbia, New Zealand, and the United States in this paper demonstrate that neo-conservative policies have had significant economic and social impacts. Downsizing in both the private and public sector has been shown to lead to various unintended consequences, including problems with staff morale, increased workloads, loss of institutional memory, and the loss of needed knowledge and skills (consultants often must be hired to replace fired workers) (e.g., Mishra et al. 1998; Marks 2002). In relation to protected areas, government reorganization of environmental and park-related agencies since the 1970s has been remarkably consistent: 30–50% decreases in government allocations and staff numbers have been common, and this readjustment has led to, *inter alia*: (1) decreased staff morale; (2) inadequate staffing to fulfill all statutory requirements, leading to safety and liability issues; (3) an increased emphasis on revenue generation (particularly through user fees) and commercial activities in protected areas; (4) a decreased ability to conduct necessary data collection, enforcement, and monitoring activities in parks; (5) increased amounts of public–private partnerships; and (6) greater overall administrative and management attention towards the use function of parks.

The rise of neo-conservatism has been the major force in park agencies around the world adopting a "business approach" to park administration and management, thus paving the way for an increased reliance on revenue generation to help compensate for significant budget cuts and the resultant issues noted above. Recreation activity-based special-interest groups have recognized this increased vulnerability of park agencies and have used this opportunity to emphasize the use function of protected areas, as user fees are the most frequent and efficient means of generating revenue in protected areas. These approaches and methods were not chosen at random: rather, they each reflect the ideology and philosophy of neo-conservatism. Other options are available, but these options do not reflect the political ideology *du jour*, and so are routinely rejected.

Conclusion

A common series of events has occurred in many parks and park systems throughout the world, particularly within Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. First, park agencies (like many other social agencies) had been underfunded for a considerable amount of time. Park managers were forced to cut back maintenance and research: most parks and park systems were unable to maintain the infrastructure needed to deal with rapidly increasing recreation and tourism, and did not have the capacity to fund or undertake the scientific research necessary to manage parks.

When the relatively sudden shift from a Keynesian to a neo-conservative economic and political system occurred, beginning in the early 1980s, park agencies were extremely vulnerable to the additional budget and staff cuts that resulted from this new fiscal policy and political ideology. Park agency budgets and personnel were further reduced, often by 30–50% or more, often within a five- to ten-year period.

Among other responses (e.g., divesting or closing individual parks), the primary response was a significant increase in revenue generation. Revenue generation, and the overall adoption of a business model for government agencies, was at the heart of neo-conservatism, and park agencies around the world were quickly transformed to fit this new model. User fees were relied upon to contribute the vast majority of revenue, and many park agencies have moved from generating approximately 15% of their total budget to levels approaching 40–50%. It is unclear what affect this increased reliance on user fees will have upon parks and park agencies, though it seems likely that parks will find it difficult to wean themselves from such critical funding sources. And their success in generating revenue makes it less likely that government appropriations will increase in the near future, especially as the public supports user fees in protected areas (Ostergren et al. 2003).

More recently, because of the safety and liability issues that have arisen through this chronic understaffing and underfunding, the increased recognition that many parks and park systems cannot meet their statutory obligations, and increased government spending in social issues, some countries have seen small increases in park agency funding (e.g., New Zealand and Canada). Yet these small budget increases do not begin to compensate for past budget cuts, and still leave park systems unable to meet most or even all statutory obligations. Park-based research and monitoring of social and ecological conditions remain particularly problematic.

There is no question that park agencies—from the municipal to federal levels—have become increasingly reliant on commercial activities and more vulnerable to increased privatization in the last 30 years (Crompton 1998). What is often lacking, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Anderson and Freimund 2004), is a focused attempt by agencies and independent researchers to empirically and critically assess the short-, medium-, and long-term implications of increased commercial activity in protected areas. As previously noted, government agencies are often reluctant to study or fund research that may be critical of existing political ideologies and their associated policies, and researchers must be careful not to be too critical if they wish to maintain relations with these agencies (More 2002). As a result, the impacts of neo-conservatism may remain hidden and invisible for the near future.

In this paper, I have suggested that the rise of neo-conservatism and the concomitant adoption of fiscal conservatism by a wide range of political parties in the West have been at the heart of the increased commercialization of park science, management, and administration. It behooves park advocates to better understand the principles of neo-conservatism and more critically assess its impacts on protected areas.

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Forces Underlying the Emergence of Privatization in Parks and Recreation (Executive Summary)

John L. Crompton

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DEBATES ON PRIVATIZATION USUALLY REVOLVE around issues such as the relative cost of services, personnel displacements, service equity, and effects on service quality. These are important concerns, but are often only the visible manifestation of much broader issues. It is suggested that four macro forces drive privatization and, when viewed together, these forces constitute a coherent framework. If participants in privatization controversies step back and use this framework as the basis for reviewing the "big picture," it may reposition their perspective, which may help to reconcile polarized viewpoints and build consensus on appropriate actions.

The initial force often is a shortage of tax funds, since this causes many park and recreation agencies to move away from the direct provision model of service delivery, because of its relatively high cost, inherent personnel inflexibility, and the constraining influence of bureaucratic procedures and regulations.

This pragmatic concern may be reinforced by political agendas from both ends of the political spectrum. Three philosophical perspectives may arise in a privatization debate that are usually associated with the conservative right wing of the political spectrum. Pragmatists seek a more effective government and see privatization as a means to that end. Commercial interests seek to obtain more business by taking over some of an agency's financing, production, or operating roles. For ideologues, privatization is a political agenda aimed at ensuring that government plays a smaller role compared to private institutions. From the perspective of populists on the left liberal wing of the political spectrum, privatization is a means of achieving a better society through giving people greater power to satisfy their common needs, while diminishing that of large public bureaucracies.

A third force undergirding privatization is a recognition of the inefficiencies associated with monopolistic service delivery. Monopolies are notoriously inefficient because they lack the incentive to be responsive to clienteles' demands that competition provides. Hence, they are aggressively resisted and forbidden by law in the private sector. However, in many communities a park and recreation agency is a monopoly supplier of many services.

Privatization is seen as a means of inducing competition into public agency monopoly situations.

The final force is an awareness of the distinction between a park and recreation agency recognizing a need for a service to be provided, and the agency producing it. These are two separate decisions. Under the direct provider model, agencies produce services they believe should be provided, but there is increasing recognition that alternative production options may offer superior alternatives. Acceptance of this position shifts park and recreation agencies from being sellers of services to being facilitators or buyers of services.

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A New Tragedy for the Commons: The Threat of Privatization to National Parks (and Other Public Lands)

Bill Wade

> *They hang the man and flog the woman*
> *That steal the goose from off the common,*
> *But let the greater villain loose*
> *That steals the common from the goose.*
> — English folk poem, ca. 1764

In 1968, Garrett Hardin authored a provocative article called "The Tragedy of the Commons."[1] In this piece, he used the example of a pasture, open to all, and wherein each herdsman would try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. As rational beings, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain, asking himself, "What is the utility *to me* of adding one more animal to my herd?" This utility has one negative and one positive component. Hardin explains:

> 1. The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly +1.
> 2. The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of –1.
>
> Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another.... But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.

Hardin goes on to say, "The National Parks present another instance of the working out of the tragedy of the commons. At present, they are open to all, without limit. The parks themselves are limited in extent—there is only one Yosemite Valley—whereas population seems to grow without limit. The values that visitors seek in the parks are steadily eroded. Plainly, we must soon cease to treat the parks as commons or they will be of no value to anyone."

> What shall we do? We have several options. We might sell them off as private property. We might keep them as public property, but allocate the right to enter them. The allocation might be on the basis of wealth, by the use of an auction system. It might be on the basis of merit, as defined by some agreed upon standards. It might be by lottery. Or it might be on a first-come, first-served basis, administered to long queues. These, I think, are all objectionable. But we must choose—or acquiesce in the destruction of the commons that we call our National Parks.

Hardin's concepts focus on the issue of individual exploitation—reciprocity and altruism being subordinated in favor of self-interest. An assumption follows: that the government operates in the best interests of the people as a whole and therefore has the responsibility to control individual exploitation and to set rules whereby the commonwealth is protected.

Protection of the commons we call the national park system originated as early as 1832 with the set-aside of Hot Springs in Arkansas. Protection became more formalized in the late 1800s with the creation of a number of national parks in the West. Finally, in 1916, the National Park Service Act (39 Stat. 535) established the agency and specified its mission, "which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Subsequently, in the General Authorities Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 825), Congress amended the National Park Service (NPS) mission by specifying that areas in the system are "united through their interrelated purposes and resources into one national park system as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage … preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States…." And in the Redwood Act of 1978 (92 Stat. 163), Congress further amended the NPS mission by specifying that "protection [of the parks] … shall be conducted in light of the high public value and integrity of the National Park System and shall not be exercised in derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established…."

While issues of "carrying capacities" still persist, a new, more serious form of exploitation has become an increasing threat to the values and purposes of the national park system in recent years. This threat is privatization, or more specifically, commercialization. In fact, this threat has accelerated over the past four years. In view of the explicitly stated and enduring mission of NPS, it is especially disturbing that a major source of this new exploitation is the government itself, and in particular, the Department of the Interior (DOI), the department with the affirmative responsibility to carry out the legislated mission of NPS.

Some forms of private enterprise have been present in national parks almost since their inception. The need to accommodate visitors through short-term leases for building purposes was recognized by Congress when it established Yellowstone National

Park in 1872. When he was appointed the first director of NPS in 1916, Stephen Mather, an industrialist, recognized the need to eliminate the chaos of competition that had evolved during the previous several decades. He established a licensed prime concessionaire in each park—a recognition that private interests could provide certain visitor services more appropriately and effectively than could the government. These concessions were carefully overseen and thoroughly regulated monopolies. Instead of turning private enterprise loose to pursue its own interests as it pleased, in these arrangements government safeguarded the public interest through regulation. Many of these concessions used to be "mom and pop" operations, often managed by people who supported the values and purposes of the parks in which they operated. Unfortunately, over the years and with government approval, most of the concessions have evolved to where they are now operated by large, conglomerate business interests with more of an eye on profit than on perpetuation of resources and enlightenment of visitors.

But there is a major difference between commercial activity permitted for the public interest, and the "privatization" that is being promoted by a small faction of calculating extremists who are pushing their interests forward in small, insidious, and steady increments. During the past four years the political leaders of the DOI (and the NPS) have made a concerted effort to promote "partnerships," to "contract out" certain NPS functions, to increase opportunities for private, commercial interests to become involved in park activities and to expand recreational (especially motorized) uses in NPS areas—promoting what they call the "proper balance between public access and resource protection."

There is no question that declining budgets in the national parks have provoked increasing pressure to privatize. This seems to be playing right into the hands of those in Congress, DOI, and NPS who are currently leading the privatization movement. Some even suggest that "starving the NPS budget" is intentional, designed to make it more justifiable to increase reliance on private interests to manage the nation's heritage.

The current Park Service director, Fran Mainella, came into the job heavily promoting "partnerships" and has moved the partnership agenda to the front of the list of priorities for park managers, even to the extent that this agenda often overshadows the protection of park resources.

Partnerships, such as "friends groups," park-specific foundations and institutes, and other similar supporters have been around for decades. They began to come to the forefront when Congress chartered the National Park Foundation in 1967 to "encourage [and accept and administer] private gifts of real and personal property of any income therefrom … for the benefit of, or in connection with, the National Park Service, its activities, or its services…." Typically, these are professionally organized businesses that operate on the sound principal that charity must supplement federal funds, not replace them. They have traditionally provided NPS with funds that provide a "margin of excellence." However, many are now realizing that there is an increasing reliance on philanthropic funding to carry out even basic operational needs in parks. Supporters are beginning to see such donations as a form of double taxation—once to pay for parks through the Internal Revenue Service and a second time via a charitable gift to compensate for the offset of decreased appropriations for parks.

Another disturbing factor related to these kinds of partnerships is the extent to which those who contribute heavily to support national parks expect or are promised some benefit as a result. Concerns have been raised about inappropriate "advertising" on parklands by contributors, and even about the possibility of contributors having inappropriate influence on policy related to the management of national parks. These are real problems that pose a threat to the values and management of the national park system.

In another form of privatizing, DOI Secretary Gale Norton and Director Mainella have aggressively pursued the Administration's "competitive sourcing" initiative, despite widespread opposition in Congress and repeated warnings from park officials that additional competitive sourcing—the NPS already outsources concessions, with annual revenues of $800 million, public health, and some visitor information operations—would seriously compromise the Park Service's ability to perform its three core functions: protect resources, provide for high-quality visitor services, and maintain productive relations with surrounding communities. Required outsourcing studies are expensive, coming in at an astounding $3,000 per position, or more. These expenditures do little or nothing to further the mission of the National Park Service, and instead diminish already reduced park operational budgets. The studies create employee anxiety and sap morale. Moreover, the Administration's continuing push to implement the competitive sourcing initiative is targeting not just maintenance but resources management and research employees as well.

Outsourcing focuses on whether a particular job can be done more economically by a non-governmental entity, but fails to place any value on the expertise and institutional knowledge of Park Service professionals, such as archaeologists and paleontologists who are responsible for preserving Civil War battlefields, prehistoric ruins and artifacts, dinosaur bones, fossils and other relics of American history. Moreover, outsourcing fails to take into account the multidisciplinary nature of many positions in parks. Often, maintenance employees are part of a park's firefighting (structural and wildland) and search and rescue teams, are qualified as emergency medical personnel, and provide a valuable service to visitors by interpreting the resources and providing information. It is hard to imagine being able to write a contract with a private vendor to provide all of these needed functions in parks. As a result, shifting worker duties to private industry can actually increase costs over retaining Park Service employees because of the loss in productivity and training time, not to mention the loss of educational benefits to visitors. Privatizing jobs would also further open national park management to private influence, rather than retaining direct government oversight and at least the veneer of objectivity when weighing the public interest.

Recent attempts to outsource some of the Park Service's critical functions, including biological science and archaeological survey and assessment activities, and replace NPS workers with low-bid private contractors, is of particular concern. The scientists and resources management specialists are the people who furnish park managers with the resource information upon which they depend to make wise decisions. The quality of the information is enriched by the institutional knowledge, gained by years of experience that these NPS specialists possess. Private contractors would not be able to duplicate this expertise.

Voluntarism is also being exploited. Voluntarism has traditionally been viewed as a valuable, "free" way for NPS to augment its staffing. Included in its benefits is an increased understanding of NPS resources and values by those who volunteer. However, it is now increasingly rare for a visitor to enter a national park visitor center and find a uniformed national park ranger. The use of volunteers and "friends" of parks has, for years, been extraordinarily helpful to the national parks. When originally conceived, the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) initiative was intended to augment, not supplant, the services provided by NPS employees. In fact, the NPS policies for VIPs still make that distinction. It is clear, however, that volunteers now are no longer supplementing the work of uniformed, full-time employees; they are replacing them through programs such as Take Pride in America and Volunteers in Parks. In many parks, the volunteers have increasingly become the front-line people most often providing visitor services, including interpretive and educational programs. Park interpreters receive special training to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities to deliver these kinds of services to park visitors. While no one questions their motivation, volunteers are not necessarily as well trained, which may clearly affect the quality of interpretive and educational programs. Volunteers are also increasingly performing resources management work, the very heart of the NPS mission. This is not supplemental work. It is crucial to the long-term protection of the resource values for which America's parks were established.

Perhaps the most menacing form of privatizing is that of increasing preferential treatment for special interests in the management and use of national parks. Two examples illustrate this trend. One is the greater tolerance for, if not insistence on, allowing increased motorized recreational uses in parks, in some cases even despite scientific data and recommendations and majority public opinion arguing against such uses. Snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park and off-highway vehicles in bird nesting areas at Cape Hatteras National Seashore are current cases in point. These increases in industrial recreation not only evolve from the ideology of the political leaders of the DOI and NPS, but often are initiated and strongly supported by the American Recreation Coalition. ARC includes more than 100 private-sector organizations representing the vested interests of nearly every segment of the nation's $400 billion outdoor recreation industry; the majority has ties to motorized forms of recreation. Key DOI and NPS leaders are nearly always on hand at ARC (and some member) meetings and events and have been frequent recipients of "awards" from ARC. Since 1985, ARC has been involved in supporting presidential inaugural activities. By its own admission, this year ARC stepped up the intensity of its participation and its contributions. Its motives are not exclusively patriotic in nature.

The second example of preferential treatment is the promotion of the belief that a narrow population of citizens should have a greater say in how a national park is managed than the rest of the nation. In the Yellowstone snowmobile situation, both a local judge and DOI leaders have taken the position that the local economic interests of communities adjacent to the park should be given greater consideration than the interests of citizens from elsewhere. Moreover, a bill passed in the U.S. House of Representatives during the last session, and vigorously supported by the National Alliance of Gateway Communities and the tourism industry, appears to be an attempt to subvert the public's role in park planning by giving interests in so-called gateway communities—communities at or near park boundaries—unprecedented and disproportionate influence over the planning and decision-making processes in the adjacent parks. These examples of preferential treatment work to dilute the "national" in national parks—relegating them more to the status of state, regional, or local parks.

One of the hallmarks of American democracy has been the concept of public funding of programs that are in the public interest. The public funding of the protection of the national park system, which has traditionally been financed through government appropriations, is an example of this concept. An individual taxpayer has (in theory, at least) more influence over the way money is spent by government entities than he or she does over the way money is spent by private entities. Thus, privatization works against the interests of individual taxpayers, but certainly in favor of commercial or special interests.

The rationale hyped for privatization is that it costs less. While direct costs may appear to be lower, when added with the indirect costs of administering the contracts, auditing their work and expenditures and compliance, the costs may well be higher than the cost of the government doing the work. Moreover, when factors such as loss of flexibility, continuity, and institutional memory are considered, the "costs" are even higher.

The fact is that privatization is driven less by any realistic expectation of savings to the taxpayer than by raw political ideology.

Moving the national parks from the public to the private arena opens them to the world of risk, and increases the probability that the idea of parks, as we know it and generations before us intended it, can fail. Are we as a society willing to accept that? Moreover, generational equity has always been a valid principle applied to expansion of the national park system. Each generation, speaking through its elected representatives, adds the areas that it believes deserve protection in perpetuity. Do the leaders in this generation have the right to second-guess the decisions and expectations from previous generations in what constitutes the national park system and how it ought to be managed?

Every citizen in this nation should be troubled about the creeping shift toward private and corporate control of the management of our national parks, a magnificent example of the American commons. The shift is incremental and is motivated by the desire of powerful political forces in our country to deprive public institutions of their ability to manage public resources and to deliver these resources into the hands of interests who can profit from their management. As the noted environmental writer, Michael Frome, has stated: "[P]ublic parks are like art galleries, museums and libraries, meant to enrich society by enlightening and elevating individuals who come to them. There is no way to place a dollar value on a 'park experience' or a 'wilderness experience' and yet the simple act of visiting the natural world has become a commercial transaction. Worst of all, the agencies in charge, the National Park Service and Forest Service, make 'partnerships' with profit-driven entrepreneurs bent on introducing motorized forms of recreation and commercializing wilderness."[2]

David Bollier, author, policy strategist, and activist, says, "A reckoning of what belongs to the American people is a first step to recovering control of common assets and protecting them for public purposes. When we argue for the American commons, we assert the right to public control over public resources…. The idea that human beings share a moral and civic inheritance that cannot be alienated, commodified, or sold is part of an American tradition that has its roots in the Declaration of Independence.... The silent theft of our shared assets and civic inheritance need not continue. But first we must recognize the commons as such, name it, and understand the rich possibilities for reclaiming our common wealth."[3]

Former NPS Director Roger Kennedy recently said, "The American people wanted to save these places [the parks], not because they brought money. We knew they would cost money. We saved them because they were worth money. They are precious. That is why we preserve them."[4] We owe the previous generations of Americans who have built our national park system a huge debt. And we owe our children and grandchildren the opportunity to experience these heritage areas. We cannot repay that debt or pass on the parks unimpaired by pursuing policies that place national parks in danger. These parks belong to every American—past, present and future.

Endnotes

1. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968), 1243–1248.
2. Michael Frome, *Greenspeak: Fifty Years of Environmental Muckraking and Advocacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002).
3. David Bollier, *Reclaiming the Commons* (Boston: Boston Review, 2002).
4. Roger G. Kennedy, "With Common Voice for Common Ground," speech presented in Flagstaff, Arizona, 1996.

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The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and Beyond

Scott Silver

The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program represents a major milestone in the evolution of public land management. It brings into question the purposes for which national parks and federally managed lands exist and creates radically altered opportunities for thinking about how to fund this nation's land management agencies. Fee-Demo, as this program is commonly known, forces us to question whether outdoor recreation is a "pubic good" that should be looked upon as a birthright available equally to all Americans. Fee-Demo, many believe, represents a dramatic transitional step that threatens to forever alter, in undesirable ways, the look and feel of America's public lands and our relationships to those lands.

To understand Fee-Demo, it is necessary to know something about how this important legislation became the law of the land. For practical purposes, Fee-Demo's history begins with the formation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) in the early 1960s. The ORRRC report, released in 1962, officially acknowledged that recreation and tourism on America's federally managed public lands were activities of burgeoning personal and economic importance. The report led to the passage of legislation that would better provide for the supply and management of recreational opportunities on public lands. Perhaps the most significant law that resulted from the ORRRC is the Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) Act of 1965, and the most significant provision of that law with respect to any discussion of Fee-Demo was contained in 16 U.S. Code 460*l*(6a). That provision authorized the charging of certain limited recreation user, access, and entrance fees on federally managed public lands and expressly prohibited the charging of all others. Revenues generated under the 16USC460*l*(6a) authority were to be deposited into a special LWCF account and were unavailable for direct use by land managers.

From 1965 until Fee-Demo was authorized in 1996 as a rider to the Department of the Interior appropriations bill, recreation fees were controlled by the provisions of 16USC460*l*(6a). Fee-Demo temporarily superceded them. With the passage of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) in 2004 as a rider to the omnibus appropriations bill, Fee-Demo was revoked and the 16USC460*l*(6a) provisions were permanently repealed. The primary purpose of both Fee-Demo and FLREA was the repeal of the 16USC460*l*(6a) provisions, or so this author would contend. Repeal of this provision would not only permit land managers to collect fees for a wider range of products, goods, and services, repeal would also permit land managers to retain the fees they collect. By providing this alternative funding mechanism, Congress was free to slash allocated funding and to force land managers to become reliant upon user fees, concessionaire fees, public–private partnerships, volunteerism, and other funding.

The first attempt to repeal the provisions of 16USC460*l*(6a) dates to 1982 when the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) called for cutting appropriated budgets for each of the federal land management agencies by an immediate 25% while granting agencies new authority to charge, collect, and retain recreation user fees. The concept was intended to imbue an entrepreneurial spirit within the bureaucracy and to provide land managers with a mechanism for replacing federal funding with direct payment derived from park and forest visitors. The bill called for the eventual phasing out of appropriated recreation-related funding and a near complete shift to user fees.

While presiding over a Senate hearing on June 27, 1985 (Senate Hearing 99-303), Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) said of this legislation, "The direct offset from a maintenance budget of fees collected is close to one of the most idiotic concepts I've heard in a long time." In his testimony, Senator James McClure (R-ID) said, "I am certain that by now everyone has seen the April 15 gray covered document entitled Senate/Administration Deficit Reduction plan. It compares the National Park System with Disneyland and the San Diego Zoo. That would certainly come as a surprise to Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, and Stephen Mather. OMB will probably next propose that we put golden arches in Canyonlands."

The second attempt to pass recreation user-fee legislation occurred in 1992 with the introduction of S. 2505 (102nd Congress). The bill called for repealing the 16USC460*l*(6a) provisions, instead authorizing a multi-agency "America the Beautiful Passport," and granting the agencies broad powers to enter into challenge cost-sharing partnerships with any "State or local government, public or private agency, organization, institution, corporation, individual or other legal entity."

It is worth noting that upon retiring from the Senate in 1995, Wallop founded Frontiers of Freedom, a think tank dedicated to defending constitutional rights and promoting a limited government agenda. One year earlier, the Cato Institute published *Privatizing the Planet,* which asserts that "privately owned resources have been better protected than their politically managed counterparts" and concludes that "the air, the water, most species of mammals and fish and public lands have no private owners, [therefore] they have few effective protectors and defenders." Wallop's support of recreation user fees should, and must, be understood in this light, and thus a further discussion of this viewpoint, in direct reference to Fee-Demo, is in order.

Numerous pro-privatization think tanks have expressed strong support for recreation user fees. Extremists seek to halt all funding of the national parks and public lands in order to create incentives to ensure that these lands become self-funding at a minimum, and preferably profitable. These views would have land managers commodify each aspect of the land under their control. Managers would then sell or lease rights to those commodity values and keep locally all monies received.

For example, a particular forest or park might contain potentially marketable trees, minerals, water, and opportunities for recreation and tourism. Each of these potential products would be marketized and the power of the market would be permitted to determine which uses prevail and dominate. The need for recreation user fees under this system is straightforward. The ability to charge fees permits the commodification of recreation and provides the mechanism that allows recreation to become competitive with alternative land uses. It appears likely that the first two attempts to enact recreation user-fee legislation were heavily reflective of this thinking.

In 1996, a third recreation user-fee bill was introduced, H.R. 2107 (105th Congress). That proposal proved no more popular than either of its predecessors and was never so much as put to a vote. In the end, however, a vote proved unnecessary. The chair of the Interior Appropriations Committee simply inserted the key provisions of H.R. 2107 into the Interior appropriation bill. Fee-Demo became law without debate and largely unnoticed.

With the passage of Fee-Demo, the 16USC460*l*(6a) provisions were temporarily superceded and the four agencies covered by this legislation (National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) were, for the first time ever, able to charge, collect, and retain recreation fees for a wide range of recreational activities. With the passage of Fee-Demo, the proverbial genie was free at last.

The purpose of Fee-Demo

Some have claimed that the purpose for the "demonstration" was to give the public a chance to weigh in on the subject and to tell their elected officials, via federal agency comment cards, surveys, and other mechanisms, whether they supported the pay-to-play concept. In reality, the purpose of the "demonstration" was to give the federal land management agencies a chance to demonstrate to Congress that a wider range of recreation fees than had been authorized by the provisions of 16USC460*l*(6a) could be effectively charged and collected. Further purposes were to allow the agencies to demonstrate the merits associated with allowing fees to be retained and ultimately spent at the recreation sites where they were collected.

As originally authorized, Fee-Demo fees were promoted as genuine "use fees." In my home state of Oregon, almost every forest unit required payment of a separate and unique fee. The stated purpose of the fee was that those who use a particular site, for example a picnic area, pay a fee for that use of that area. The fee would be collected on site and after subtracting the costs of collection, overhead, and enforcement, whatever portion of the original payment remained would be reinvested into that recreation site. The visitor who paid a fee could reasonably expect that on some future visit, the restrooms would be cleaner or the picnic tables more plentiful than would have been the case had he or she not paid the fee.

The public was informed that these fees were intended to be supplemental to normal appropriated funding and to provide benefits above and beyond what would otherwise be possible.

As things happened, the original concepts drifted in dramatic ways between the introduction of Fee-Demo in 1996 and its transmogrification in 2004. For openers, strenuous objection was raised to the multiplicity of new fees being charged. Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR), became a frequent and outspoken critic of the program. On more than one occasion DeFazio told Congress of how as a visitor to the forests in his own district, he was required to pay a fee at one site and then, were he to drive a few miles to another recreation site, he would be required to pay another fee. Without exception, common wisdom came to say that the public hated being "nickeled and dimed" with a multiplicity of fees and so the original site-specific fees morphed into regional fees.

The Northwest Forest Pass was created to resolve this concern. For payment of a single annual or day-use fee, the holder of that pass could use nearly 1,500 recreation sites in Oregon and Washington. Similarly, the Adventure Pass was created and the holder of that pass could leave his or her vehicle unattended on any of four forests in Southern California. Vehicles that did not display the Adventure Pass were subject to ticketing and a fine of up to $100 could be levied. As enforcement was based upon ticketing vehicles and not individuals, those entering on foot or bicycle were free to continue to do so. Persons driving through these forests were permitted to do so as long as they did not get out of their vehicles.

With only relatively minor additional tweaks during the next seven years, the program was implemented more or less as described. The methods of enforcement varied from forest to forest and within some forests enforcement methods varied over time. The federal agencies were encouraged to be creative and to try new ideas. The purpose of the demonstration was to show what was possible, yet all the while efforts were made not to engender unnecessary opposition to a program that was created with considerable support from within agencies, the recreation industry, and the federal government. The expectation was that the program would be a success and that upon completion of the demonstration phase, a permanent fee program could be implemented which built upon the successes of the test phase and which avoided the pitfalls uncovered.

Yet something unexpected happened. Each year during the demonstration program, each of the four agencies involved was required to submit a report to Congress in which it itemized such things as revenues generated, costs of collection, rates of compliance, amount of revenues expended upon projects, and the like. What their reports showed were mixed results at best. Some agencies, notably the National Park Service, which has a long history of charging fees under the authority of 16USC460*l*(6a), seemed to have few major problems. Compliance was generally high, partly because national park visitors were accustomed to paying a fee and partly because most parks had discrete entry points at which fees could be efficiently charged and collected. Other agencies, especially the Forest Service, had serious problems—so serious that Congress was unwilling to permanently authorize the program. Instead, Congress would extend the demonstration for another year or two in order to give those lagging agencies additional time in which to demonstrate success. That never happened. But after nearly eight years, in the final hours before the fiscal year 2005 omnibus appropriations bill was voted upon, and over the strenuous objections of the four Senators most directly responsible for the public lands impacted by the program—Conrad Burns (R-MT), Pete Domenici (R-NM), Craig Thomas (R-WY), and Larry Craig (R-ID)—Fee-Demo moved to its next phase.

Were Fee-Demo a non-controversial

issue, a fair and accurate recounting of the historical facts would lead the reader directly to a firm understanding of the subject. Fee-Demo, however, became a highly controversial issue, with opposition coming from all directions. Over 300 recreation and conservation groups came out in formal opposition to the program. Cities, counties, and even entire states (New Hampshire, California, Oregon, and Colorado) passed resolutions and memorials in which opposition to the program was expressed to the land management agencies and to the president of the United States. Multiple bills were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to terminate the program, though no such bill was ever permitted a legislative hearing. It became clear to everyone connected with this issue that not only was Fee-Demo controversial, but that the reasons given for supporting or opposing the program varied dramatically, depending upon whom you asked.

The official explanation(s)

There is no single official explanation of the purpose for the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. Reminiscent of the evolving explanations for going to war in Iraq, there are many such explanations for Fee-Demo and those reasons have, over time, steadily changed. The original explanation was that user fees paid by visitors to specific recreation sites would provide future benefits localized at those sites. The concept was that Fee-Demo would be a true user fee and would supplement allocated funding.

More recent explanations have suggested that the fees would help maintain recreation facilities in light of on-going budget reductions, or that fees would be used to provide upgrades to facilities, or perhaps be used to provide the kinds of new recreational experiences that today's younger, action-oriented, thrill-seeking visitor demands. Additional arguments have, at times, suggested that it was simply the right thing to ask users to share in the cost of providing recreational resources for their enjoyment. The price of a day on public lands was often compared to the price of a movie and popcorn. Land managers have challenged park visitors to ask themselves, "Isn't a day on public lands worth as much as a day a Disneyland?" They've claimed that fees reduce vandalism, reduce littering, and encourage people to have greater respect for their public lands. There's also the value-added society argument that suggests the higher the fee, the greater the value perceived. All of these have, at one time or another, been put forth as the official explanation for why the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program exists.

The force behind the program

The ORRRC report recognized the growing importance of recreation and tourism on federally managed public lands and painted, in broad-brush strokes, a vision for how these interests could be better accommodated. As a follow-on to the ORRRC, Ronald Reagan formed the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors in 1985. That commission's report, published in 1987, created a more specific action plan for recreation infrastructure development while calling for greater reliance upon public–private partnerships, increased volunteerism, challenge cost-share agreements, outsourcing, concessionaire facilities, private reservation systems, Fee-Demo, and other innovative funding mechanisms.

Common arguments against Fee-Demo

Fee-Demo is most frequently said to be exclusionary and discriminatory in recognition of the fact that it disproportionately affects lower-income persons. Fee-Demo is a regressive tax that many have also referred to as "double taxation." Some say that the simple act of paying alters one's relationship to the land and adversely impacts one's experience and one's sense of responsibility to the resource. Others have pointed out that the act of paying changes one's expectation such that the more one pays, the more one expects. A few have pointed out that higher expectations necessitate the expenditure of additional money to meet those expectations and that an upward spiral of ever-higher fees results. The overwhelming majority fear that pay-to-play recreation will result in increased development of commercially oriented recreational products, goods, and services. Many see Fee-Demo as part of a larger privatization agenda. A handful recall Reagan's original purpose of replacing allocated funding with user fees. Almost everyone who is opposed to Fee-Demo quite simply feels in his or her gut that free access to wild nature is an American birthright.

Common arguments in support of Fee-Demo

Perhaps the most common argument is that those who use the resource should pay for it, while those who do not, should not. Some suggest that the ability to charge and locally retain fees provides market incentives that will ensure that customers receive the kinds of services for which they are willing to pay. A few have sought to use market pricing to reduce overuse of popular areas and to spread use to lesser-known areas and to off-peak periods. Free-market and Libertarian advocates support Fee-Demo for ideological reasons. Pragmatic conservationists support assigning economic value to recreation so that it can displace logging, mining, or other competitive uses of the lands. Interest groups with high requirements for developed recreation facilities support the concept of paying to play, so long as the fees they pay provide them with direct benefits. The Bush Administration is a particularly strong champion of Fee-Demo because the program helps to shrink government while promoting the vision of an "ownership society."

The Wild Wilderness view

I am the executive director of Wild Wilderness, a grassroots recreation and conservation organization that, since 1991, has sought to preserve, protect, and enhance opportunities for the enjoyment of low-impact, non-motorized recreation on America's public lands. Since 1997, Wild Wilderness has opposed the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and has looked upon Fee-Demo as the greatest single threat to the interests of those we represent.

When we and others who believe as we do look at the controversial issue of recreation user fees, we see a history of very intentional cuts to recreation budgets which, over time, have created a funding crisis for which a solution was described in detail in the report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. We see motorized and commercial recreation interests conspiring with free-market and Libertarian ideologues to radically redefine the meaning of outdoor recreation and to dramatically reinvent the way in which public lands are funded and managed. We see a concerted effort on the part of public resource managers and their private-sector partners to commercialize, privatize, and motorize America's great outdoors. We see the creation of an incentive system that will color the judgment of land managers and provide perverse incentives to pursue management decisions based upon bottom-line accounting. We see a de-democratization of the American commons wherein what once was wild and free will be neither of these things. What we see is the commodification of leisure.

Conclusions

The issue of charging recreation user fees for use of federally managed public land is neither simple nor straightforward. It has a history and it has engendered strong support and equally strong opposition. It is an issue that is as contentious today as when it was first proposed more than twenty years ago. By all indications, that reality will not change anytime soon.

Yet more important than Fee-Demo is the context in which this program exists. Opponents of Fee-Demo have long referred to it as "the nose of the camel in the tent." They have claimed that the overarching purpose of Fee-Demo was to bring the profit motive to the management of outdoor recreation on America's public lands, thus setting the stage for increased commercialization and privatization. If Fee-Demo is the nose, then the recently introduced legislation currently titled the "Federal Recreation Policy Act of 2005" should be viewed as the beast's torso. Formal introduction of that legislation will do much to put Fee-Demo into its proper context and reveal what lies beyond.

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