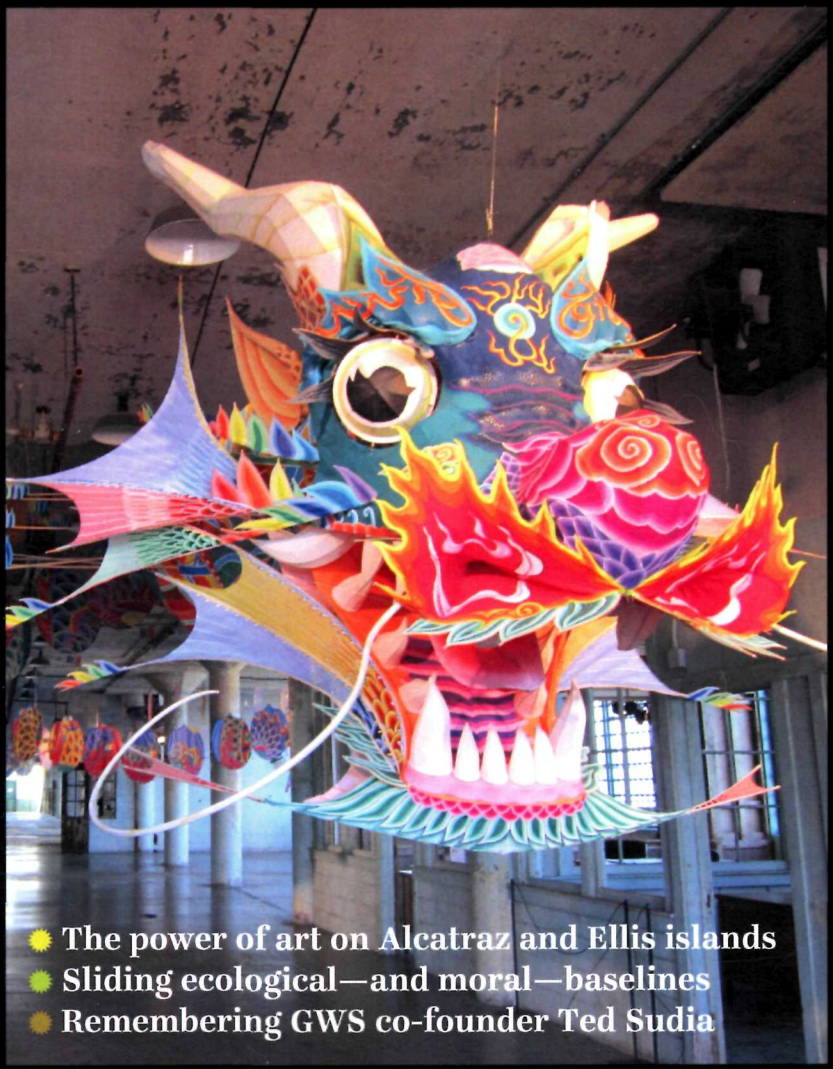

- The power of art on Alcatraz and Ellis islands
- Sliding ecological—and moral—baselines
- Remembering GWS co-founder Ted Sudia

# The George Wright Forum

The GWS Journal of Parks, Protected Areas & Cultural Sites
volume 32 number 2 • 2015


**Mission**

The George Wright Society promotes protected area stewardship by bringing practitioners together to share their expertise.

**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.



**Executive Office**

David Harmon, Executive Director / Co-editor, *The George Wright Forum*
Emily Dekker-Fiala, Conference Coordinator
Rebecca Conard, Co-editor, *The George Wright Forum*
P. O. Box 65 • Hancock, Michigan 49930-0065 USA
1-906-487-9722 • info@georgewright.org • www.georgewright.org



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**On the cover:** Detail of a recent installation by the acclaimed Chinese artist and free-speech activist Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz Island, part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The power of art to make us see things in a fresh light is discussed in this issue's "Letter from Woodstock." Photo by Rolf Diamant.

# SOCIETY NEWS, NOTES & MAIL

### Call for nominations, 2015 GWS Board of Directors election

Each year, two seats on the Board of Directors come up for election. This year, the seats are held by Ryan Sharp and Jerry Mitchell, both of whom are eligible for a second three-year term and have indicated that they will run for a second term. We are now accepting nominations of GWS members who would like to join the field of candidates. The term of office runs from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2018. Nominations are open through September 30, 2015.

The nomination procedure is as follows: members nominate candidates for possible inclusion on the ballot by sending the candidate's name to the Board's nominating committee. The committee then, in its discretion, determines the composition of the ballot from the field of potential candidates. Among the criteria the nominating committee considers when determining which potential candidates to include on the ballot are his/her skills and experience (and how those might complement the skills and experience of current Board members), the goal of adding to and/or maintaining the diversity on the Board, and the goal of maintaining a balance between various resource perspectives on the Board. It also is possible for members to place candidates directly on the ballot through petition; for details, contact the GWS office.

To be eligible, both the nominator and the potential candidate must be GWS members in good standing (it is permissible to nominate one's self). Potential candidates must be willing to travel to in-person Board meetings, which usually occur once a year; take part in Board conference calls, which occur several times per year; help prepare for and carry out the biennial conferences; and serve on Board committees and do other work associated with the Society. Travel costs and per diem to the annual Board meeting are paid for by the Society; otherwise there is no remuneration.

To propose someone for possible candidacy, send his or her name and complete contact details to: Nominating Committee, George Wright Society, P.O. Box 65, Hancock, MI 49930-0065 USA, or via email to info@georgewright.org. All potential candidates will be contacted by the nominating committee to get background information before the final ballot is determined. Again, the deadline for nominations is September 30, 2015.

### Armando Quintero joins GWS Board

Armando Quintero, the executive director of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI) at the University of California–Merced, has accepted an appointment to the Society's Board of Directors. SNRI focuses on agricultural production and the natural resource and recreation industries in the San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada. Quintero also is a gubernatorial appointee to the California Water Commission, and serves as an elected representative on the Marin Municipal Water District. Prior to being named executive director at SNRI, he was the institute's director of development and helped develop UC–Merced's National Parks Institute Executive Leadership Program. He also had a 20-year career with the National Park

Service in a variety of jobs, including international assignments in Belize, Guatemala, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Quintero will serve a term which lasts through 2017.

**Publication of park guidebook to benefit GWS**

GWS members Robert Manning, Rolf Diamant, Nora Mitchell, and David Harmon have collaborated to co-edit a forthcoming guide to America's national park system, the sales of which will benefit the Society. *A Thinking Person's Guide to America's National Parks* will be published in the spring of 2016 by George Braziller Publishers of New York. Illustrated with over 350 full-color photographs, the book is unique in taking a thematic approach to the parks, and by considering the affiliated areas and external programs of the National Park Service as an integral part of the national park system.

Twenty-three chapters cover topics that include sense of place, conservation history, recreation, education, biodiversity, natural resource management, scientific research, wilderness, Indigenous peoples, civic engagement, the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, technology, cultural landscapes, museum collections, urban parks, community conservation, partnerships, international cooperation, ecosystem services, sustainability, and engagement with people of color.

Many GWS members contributed to the effort, either as authors, photographers, or background researchers. The book will be available through Barnes & Noble and other booksellers as well as through Web retailers and park bookstores.

# The NPS Franchise: A Better Way to Protect Our Heritage

*Holly Fretwell*

As the National Park Service (NPS) nears its centennial, it is time to find better ways to protect and conserve the national park units for future generations. To properly honor our parks in their hundredth year, any celebration should include reform. Decades of neglect have left the national parks crumbling in disrepair. Rundown infrastructure; encroaching non-native invasive species; unarchived artifacts; poor air quality; dilapidated roads, trails, and public transportation; and overcrowding plague units in the system. While the agency struggles to make ends meet, the size of the agency, the acreage under its control, and number of units it manages continue to grow. Instead of continually adding more acreage for the agency to steward, what if NPS offered a franchise for entrepreneurs to run new park sites that were deemed of national significance? The land and structures would remain in private hands but be given "national park" stature.

## Improved methods

Don't misunderstand. This is not the April Fool's joke depicting McDonald's Golden Arches National Park or the Nike swoosh on Yosemite's Half Dome.[1] It is quite the opposite. This is a serious strategy to add value to the NPS brand and protect new areas without spreading the NPS budget any thinner. Franchising opportunities would allow individuals advocating for a new park area to drive the management of that park. Rather than hand newly protected areas to a struggling federal agency, conservationists could take responsibility to ensure its protection. A close look at America's federal land agencies reveals that they don't have the

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budgets, flexibility, or even—at times—the proper incentives to be the great resource stewards we would like.[2]

A National Park Service franchise provides a new method to motivate increased protection for additional park areas by those who care most about the resources. With the centennial spotlight on "America's best idea," we have a unique opportunity to demonstrate better ways to ensure America's national parks are worthy for the next 100 years.

## A host of challenges

As it enters its second century, NPS faces a host of challenges. In 2014, the budget of the National Park Service was $2.6 billion. The maintenance backlog is four times that, at $11.5 billion and growing.[3] According to the National Parks Conservation Association (NCPA), about one-third of the shortfall is for "critical systems" that are essential for park function. Without upgrades, many park water and sewer systems are at risk.[4] A water pipe failure in Grand Canyon National Park during the spring of 2014 cost $25,000 for a quick fix to keep water flowing, but is estimated to cost about $200 million to replace.[5] Yellowstone also has antiquated water and wastewater facilities where past failures have caused environmental degradation.[6] Sewer system upgrades in Yosemite and Grand Teton are necessary to prevent raw sewage from spilling into nearby rivers. Deteriorating electrical cables have caused failures in Gateway National Recreation Area and in Glacier's historic hotels.[7] Roads are crumbling in many parks. They are patched rather than restored for longevity. Only 10% of park roads are considered to be in better than "fair" condition. At least 28 bridges in the system are "structurally deficient," and more than one-third of park trails are in "poor" or "seriously deficient" condition.[8]

Cultural heritage resources that the parks are set aside to protect are also at risk. Only 40% of park historic structures are considered to be in "good" or better condition and they need continual maintenance to remain that way.[9] Exterior walls are weakening on historic structures such as Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial in Ohio, the Vanderbilt Mansion in New York, and the cellhouse in Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California.[10] Weather, unmonitored visitation, and leaky roofs are degrading cultural artifacts. Many of the artifacts and museum collections have never been catalogued. According to James Nations, an ecological anthropologist and NPCA member, "We've got stuff, and we don't even know what we've got, and we don't have places to store it. We're missing opportunities to tell the story of America through our national parks."[11]

Even though the NPS maintenance backlog is four times the annual discretionary budget, rather than focus funding on maintaining what NPS already has, the system continues to grow. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), passed in 1965, provides up to $900 million annually for preservation and recreation projects, though its average funding is closer to $100 million. Much of this funding goes to federal land acquisition. None of the federal allocation can be used for resource management and maintenance. In addition, the Antiquities Act gives the president authority to proclaim national monuments that are often added to the national park system. The continual expansion of park units and acreage without corresponding funding is what former NPS Director James Ridenour called "thinning

the blood." It is important to consider new areas worthy of protection. Without sufficient funding and management priorities, however, NPS can't care for what it already has.

### The political impact

The political incentive is to add new units to the system instead of caring for those that exist. Supporting new NPS areas is like a vote for the environment—it is a politically appealing stance. New park creation provides visible benefits that are heightened with ribbon-cutting ceremonies. The additional costs to manage the new units are hidden behind the curtain of time. Politicians are praised for this perceived "protection." Yet, applause is rarely given for spending to maintain and protect through day-to-day management or reducing deferred maintenance—that is, until a crisis occurs. When sewage is overflowing into the headwaters of the Yellowstone River or pipes break in the Grand Canyon, Congress makes an emergency budget allocation and is celebrated for saving the day.

Presidents, too, benefit from park creation. An informal "parks of the presidents club" ranks presidents by the number of NPS units they have created and the acres of land they have administratively set aside for protection. Such ratings pay no heed to how those resources are actually cared for.[12]

How much is enough when you can't manage what you've got? The national park system has grown from 25.7 million acres and about 200 units in 1960 to 84.5 million acres and 407 units in 2015. Seven new parks were added under the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act and nine parks were expanded. The growth came with no additional funding for operations or maintenance—more "thinning the blood." The estimated management cost of adding the 120,000 new acres to the park system is $75 million over the next five years.[13]

It is unclear if these sites would be considered worthy of "national park" stature if each had to stand on its own merit through either operational self-sufficiency or required management appropriations. Only when the full costs of operations and maintenance are considered are the tradeoffs for park inclusion realized. As it stands, the choice to designate more parkland is a political one. The costs are buried, as NPS managers decide how to allocate limited funds across additional NPS units. It is a game of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Without additional funding for the additional NPS units, thinning the blood is the result.

Consider a family that has trouble paying their home mortgage and upkeep. Few would advise the family to take on the liability of a second home, but that is exactly what is happening in NPS.

It is true that the NPS budget is a pittance compared with the overall federal budget. The $2.6 billion NPS annual budget is a large sum of money, but it is only about one-fifteenth of 1% of the total federal budget. Expecting Congress to continually dole out more money for day-to-day maintenance to maintain these national landscapes, however, is not realistic. Given the huge budget deficit and growing national concerns over deficit reduction, health care, infrastructure, and education, there is little political will for increased park funding. Whether Congress should or could allocate the funds to improve our national parks is not the question. History demonstrates that politicians are not allocating sufficient funds to meet

park management priorities and reduce the backlog. We must find a better way to ensure well-stewarded parks for the future.

Recall the political incentives: politicians seeking re-election vie to demonstrate visible benefits, such as new park units, with hidden or deferred costs. When Congress holds the purse strings, appropriations often direct funding toward politically attractive projects over resource needs and chief management concerns. Until park funding is reformed, politics is part and parcel of NPS growth and spending priorities.

### Covering costs

As much as Americans claim to love their national parks, not enough of us voluntarily fork out more money or time to make up the lack in political funding. There is a disconnect between what the American public pays and what it costs to run the parks.

There are better ways to manage the national parks and get the incentives right. Collecting reasonable user fees, retaining fees onsite, and generally running the parks more like a business streamlines financial resources towards areas that managers and visitors prioritize and encourages cost containment as long as unspent resources can be retained onsite for future use. Retaining park revenues in the park links management priorities to visitor desires. Managers more directly connect the benefits provided with the costs of provision. The authority to use revenues earned onsite and the direct communication with visitors sends signals to resource managers about visitor priorities. Generating and retaining revenues within the unit where collected increases managerial autonomy and reduces the political influence.

The Fee Demonstration Program that passed in 1996 and was extended by the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 is one example of better aligning the incentives between park managers and visitors. The act allows 80% of park fee revenues to be retained onsite. The act was set to expire in 2014 but has been extended until September 2016. Even so, most parks don't charge entrance fees and those that do collect a tiny fraction of total operating costs.[14]

Numerous parks have increased user and entrance fees for the 2015 summer season after seeking public input and Washington approval. Even with the higher fees, a visit to destination parks like Grand Canyon and Yellowstone costs $30 for a seven-day vehicle permit, or just over $1 per person per day for a family of four. That is still a small price to pay compared with other recreation activities. A family night out to the movies costs more, not to mention a visit to Disneyland or other theme parks whose cost reaches upwards of $100 per person per day. The current low fees to enter units of the national park system typically make up a small portion of the total park visit expense. It has been estimated that the entry fee is less than 2% of park visit costs for visitors to Yellowstone and Yosemite.[15] The bulk of the expenditures when visiting destination parks go to lodging, travel, and food. Higher fees have little effect on visitation to most parks.[16]

It makes sense for parks to collect and retain fees. The fees help pay to maintain visitor facilities and provide a feedback mechanism for park managers to understand visitor needs and desires. Even modest fees (though sometimes large fee increases) could cover the operat-

ing costs of some destination parks. About $5 per person per day could cover operations in Grand Canyon National Park, as would just over $10 in Yellowstone.[17]

No doubt, there are some NPS units that do not have sufficient visitation to pay their way. Parks that are difficult to access may protect critical habitats and species but have little visitation. Many Alaskan parks are examples where per-person entry fees would have to reach into hundreds, even thousands of dollars for operational self-sufficiency.[18] Given the multitude of park types under NPS jurisdiction, there is no single best method to manage all units of the system.

Nonetheless, the perception that Congress does or will appropriate budgets in a manner sufficient to cover the costs of protecting America's national parks is erroneous. Park funding ends up being a subsidy from all taxpayers to park visitors, who are, on average, wealthier than the average American—a regressive tax, if you will.[19] And political inclinations get in the way of sufficient budgets and efficient spending on park management priorities.

### New methods to manage new parks

As NPS moves into its second century, it is time to think outside the box. In fact, new ideas are necessary to ensure the parks of today are maintained and that potential future parks have a place. NPS cannot spend the next 100 years acquiring more acreage, resources, and structures and effectively manage them on a shoestring budget that gets pulled thinner and thinner with each new park proclamation and political priority.

It is time for a new strategy to get out from under the burden of park politics and let park constituents create and maintain new park areas. Following the successful charter schools model, why not allow proponents of new parks a method to get under the NPS umbrella without requiring full federal management? Similar to a charter, interested parties could design and create a new park. Operating more like a franchise, the private proponent, whether it be a non-profit organization, business, or individual, would maintain ownership and manage the unit. Consider an NPS franchise model for expanding protected areas through independently managed national parks.

NPS, as franchisor, would provide a license for other entities to do business under the NPS name. In doing so it also would provide the franchisee use of the brand and general support. A franchise is a relationship between franchisor (NPS) and franchisee (the new park unit owner). A franchise is about leveraging a reputation and maintaining and supporting the brand value. Who better to support the value of the national park system brand than those that have a great interest and stake in the areas they propose for inclusion?

There would, no doubt, still be a political component to specifying park franchise requirements. Just as the restaurant chain Dunkin' Donuts requires a drive-thru and high-visibility location with easy ingress and egress, to be a franchise NPS would define the necessary parameters.[20] Rather than spend resources on political lobbying, interested parties would invest in creating a business plan that is in line with NPS franchise requirements.

To be a franchise park, the unit would have to be self-sufficient. NPS and the franchisee would negotiate brand use and service fees. Most franchisors require a one-time initiation fee and continuing fees, or royalties that cover the costs of brand management and enforc-

ing standards. Maintaining a high-quality park unit would be aligned with the franchisee's interest to stay in business, whether funds are acquired through user fees, partnerships, or donations.

There are multiple ways a unit could be financially independent and even supportive of NPS for the services it provides. Many private landowners and nonprofit organizations already steward nationally significant places. In those that rely on user fees and donations, reputation matters for success. They must demonstrate consistent conservation while realizing the tradeoffs of various uses. This provides a type of permanency relevant to changing needs, conditions, and social desires. Consider the following examples that demonstrate ways an NPS franchise unit could be managed.

- The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association has managed and maintained George Washington's Mount Vernon home for 160 years. They accept no government funding. Entry fees, concession revenues, and donations cover the cost to protect, maintain, and restore the estate of our first president.[21]
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) manages over one million acres within the United States; some through easements and partnerships, others through ownership. Some of these areas are portions of or adjacent to national parks and other public lands. TNC owns 1,000 acres of Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, for example, and manages it in partnership with the National Park Service. TNC generates about half of its funding through donations and membership dues and another 20% comes from investment income.[22]
- The American Prairie Reserve (APR) is a private, non-profit organization with a mission to create a prairie-based wildlife reserve in eastern Montana. The preserve is intended to protect unique habitat and provide recreation access on 3.5 million acres of public and private prairie land. APR plans to acquire about 500,000 private acres and manage them together with the scattered public parcels in the area. Currently the reserve consists of more than 305,000 acres of both deeded private and leased public land. The reserve is funded mostly from individual private donations.[23]
- Many parks already use partnerships and friends groups for day-to-day management and maintenance funding. Friends groups raise money for capital maintenance and infrastructure projects. They run concessions, help advertise, manage facilities, and help protect and restore natural resources. Friends group members volunteer for work crews to repair trails, act as interpretive guides, and operate visitor centers.
- As already occurs in some national parks, historic structures could be leased to help pay for their upkeep.

Compared with the organizations listed above, park franchisees would be at an advantage, as the NPS brand would provide these new units leverage for funding. The brand demonstrates national park-worthiness. A franchise model demonstrates that supporters value a new park unit enough to take responsibility to ensure its management and protection. Rather than new parks being a political statement, with little to no accounting for the costs of park management, newly franchised parks would be grassroots creations with a realistic

understanding of park costs and benefits. A franchise model would give new park advocates a bigger stake in park management. Preservation groups that push for NPS to expand its boundaries and include new units are likely to best know the value and therefore would be most effective at protecting and fundraising for these sites.

## The bottom line

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to park management. An NPS franchise will not suit all park types equally well. It could provide some new park units with the flexibility required to manage for onsite priorities, the protection and funding leverage provided by the NPS brand, and the incentives to manage in accordance with visitor desires at low cost. Franchising new parks requires supporters and politicians to consider the full cost of park operations. Because franchise parks would not rely on political funding, they would not "thin the blood" of the national park system.

What really must be done to help our existing and future national parks is to replace the centralized, one-size-fits-all model reliant on congressional appropriations and subject to Congress' control with a variety of management methods that allow flexibility to adapt to changing knowledge and interests and align the incentives for park managers with the desired outcomes of protection and visitor use. Let's make the NPS centennial a celebration of park areas by allowing new ways to improve the stewardship of America's parks for today and tomorrow.

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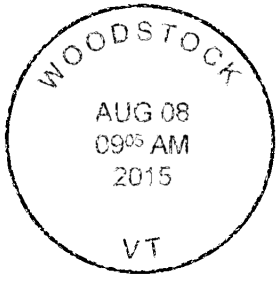
**Holly Fretwell** is a research fellow at the Property and Environment Research Center (PERC) in Bozeman, Montana, and a member of the faculty of economics at Montana State University. Among many publications on public lands, she is author of *Who is Minding the Federal Estate: Political Management of America's Public Lands.* The conception of an NPS franchise was developed while participating in a 2014 PERC workshop titled "The National Park Service at 100: Back to the Future of America's National Parks."




# Letter from Woodstock

**Rolf Diamant**

## Fresh Eyes on Alcatraz and Ellis Islands

The playwright Peter Weiss once wrote, "The important thing is to … turn yourself inside out and see the whole world with fresh eyes." After attending the George Wright Society biennial conference this April in Oakland, California, I took a trip across the Bay to one the most heavily visited destinations in the national park system, Alcatraz Island, to see the much-talked-about installation by the contemporary Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei. To be honest, I had not set foot on Alcatraz for more than a decade despite numerous visits to the San Francisco Bay Area to see and write about new and interesting developments at the Presidio, Crissy Field, and other parts of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. I assumed nothing much had changed on "The Rock."

This spring's visit to Alcatraz literally stopped me in my tracks. Anyone seeing "@ Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz" will never think about Alcatraz and national parks in quite the same way again. Ai Weiwei is an internationally recognized artist who, until very recently, was prevented by the Chinese government from traveling outside of the country. Ai, whose views and artwork are critical of human rights in China, was secretly detained and imprisoned in 2011 for 81 days. In this collaboration with the San Francisco-based For-Site Foundation (http://www.for-site.org/project/ai-weiwei-alcatraz/), Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and the National Park Service, Ai drew in part on his own experience to use the venue and ethos of the notorious former prison to highlight the plight of 76 prisoners of conscience from around the world.

The elaborate sculptures, audio, and mixed-media works of art were installed in areas on Alcatraz that are usually off-limits to visitors though not far from the normal tour route.[1] In a former industrial space, the faces of each of the 76 prisoners, identified with the help of

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*Author's photograph*

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, were displayed in an expansive floor mosaic fabricated out of Legos. These floor images were keyed to a nearby catalogue explaining the circumstances of each prisoner's incarceration. In the A Block, part of the old military prison, you could also sit in individual cells and listen through headphones to songs, poetry, and letters written by these prisoners of conscience. The installation ends in a dining area where you were invited, if you chose, to sit down at a table and write a personal message on a pre-addressed postcard to one of the detainees featured in the exhibition. Almost 90,000 of these cards were written and sent to prisoners of conscience around the world, an impactful example of civic engagement on behalf of people who are denied the most basic form of civic engagement—freedom of expression.

Barley a month after "@Large" closed on Alcatraz, a six-part mural exhibition on American immigration, "Our American Narrative Continues," was installed on Ellis Island, part of Statue of Liberty National Monument. Created by a group of New York City teenage artists, the murals explore the personal side of the immigrant experience and the efficacy of the "American Dream" today:

> Ultimately, viewers of the panels are invited to question how the treasured notion of the American Dream, where once hard work gave the promise of personal achievement and success, has given way to one rife with challenges, obstacles, and barriers to success for new immigrants.[2]

*National Park Service / Kevin Daley*

The mural exhibition is a cooperative project of the community arts organization, Groundswell, and the National Park Service with support from numerous foundations and the mayor and city of New York. Groundswell describes itself as being "dedicated to community public art [that] brings together youth, artists, and community partners, to make public art that advances social change, for a more just and equitable world." The 23 teenage artists who participated in the Ellis Island mural exhibition worked with lead artist Danielle McDonald to create the wall-size acrylic-on-plywood murals. During the course of their eight-month project, the student artists conducted research at the Ellis Island Museum of Immigration History and immersed themselves in the current national debate on immigration reform. "The Groundswell murals provide a valuable opportunity," observed John Piltzecker, superintendent of Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, "that gives voice to the modern immigrant journey."

In a larger context, both "@Large" and "Our American Narrative Continues" are examining the basic contours of freedom in the 21st century: the vital connection between freedom and human rights, and the equally vital connection between freedom and unrestricted movement and migration. It is hard to think of more thought-provoking venues for this essential dialogue on the meaning of freedom than Alcatraz and Ellis islands. These exhibitions also bring into clearer focus the under-imagined and frequently untapped potential of parks to become venues for global dialogues of great consequence. For these reasons, and before too much time passes and the exhibitions begin to fade from memory, I

would like to conclude this eleventh Letter From Woodstock with a few observations on the success of both of these art installations and what might be learned from them.

***Dare to think big.*** There were many reasons why projects such as these might never get off the ground, particularly given their topical and provocative subject matter. Yet, with both exhibits, strong leadership, capable partners, and good friends, as well as powerful thematic connections to the parks, helped overcome every obstacle. In the case of "@Large," a substantial private fundraising effort was successfully mounted to pay for the exhibition's fabrication, shipping, and the painstaking installation.

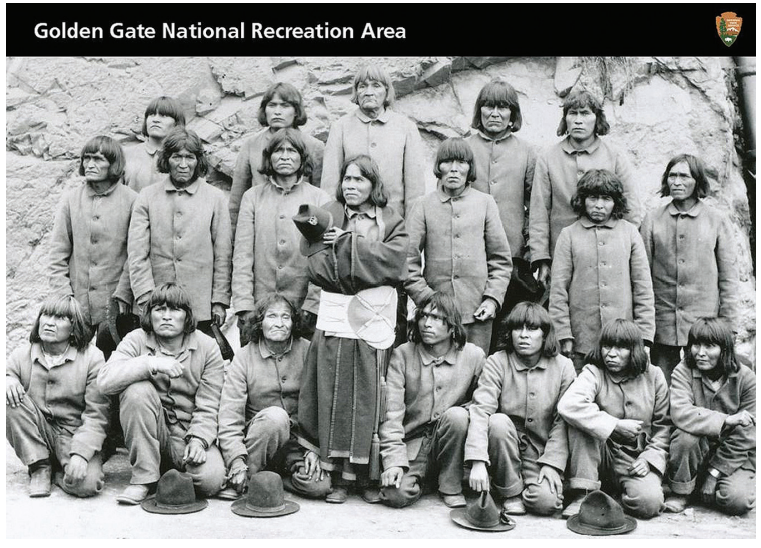
***Leadership matters.*** Cheryl Haines, executive director of the For-Site Foundation; Frank Dean, Golden Gate National Recreation Area superintendent (who has since moved on to lead the Yosemite Conservancy); and Greg Moore, chief executive officer and president of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, all played outsized roles in the success of "@Large." Piltzecker deserves similar credit for bringing "Our American Narrative Continues" to Ellis Island. They all managed to work though a great deal of administrative and logisitical complexity, but most importantly they were able to work with very different partner organizations, getting them to pull in the same direction.

***Be open to new perspectives.*** The Organization of American Historians' report *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*[3] urges park interpretation to "recognize that meanings change over time and respond to not only new information, but new audiences, new questions, new approaches … and new perspectives." For example, art students who served as exhibition guides on Alcatraz contributed to the energy, diversity, and overall knowledge of the staff. This cross-fertilization of interests adds to the depth and vitality of any park.

In the case of Alcatraz, many Bay Area residents, drawn by "@Large," came out to the island for the first time and many previous visitors returned for the first time in years. Out-of-town visitors on the regular Alcatraz tour also chose to see the Ai Weiwei installation as well. All told, almost 900,000 people bought tickets for the exhibition. People who specifically came out to Alcatraz for the exhibition, like myself, enjoyed features on the island they hadn't anticipated seeing, including the restored historic gardens and many new exhibits and videos—a reminder to keep Alcatraz on their list of places to keep coming back to. In the course of mounting the exhibition greater attention was also focused on Alcatraz's own, less-known history of incarcerating prisoners of conscience when it was a military prison. The photograph shows a group of northern Arizona Hopis imprisoned on Alcatraz for "seditious conduct" in 1895 after resisting efforts to "Americanize" their children in government schools. As Frank Dean and Greg Moore eloquently wrote in their preface to the exhibition catalogue:

> Take a moment to reflect on those prisoners who have been hidden in the shadows of history, who have not been glamorized by Hollywood or pop culture, and who had their freedoms revoked for beliefs contrary to the political climate of the era.[4]

***Ask more from our parks.*** Parks and protected areas should challenge us physically and intellectually. There will always be those who seek to reduce the role of parks to their lowest




*National Park Service*

common denominator in the name of some misguided sense of mission purity, fiscal austerity, or deep-seated ideological antagonism to public lands and institutions. But as the Ai Weiwei installation and the Groundswell murals demonstrate, parks can provide unexpected and vital benefits to our cultural life and democratic discourse. In doing so parks will broaden their audiences and become more engaging and relevant places. As we have seen on Alcatraz and Ellis islands, an openness to embrace these exhibitions and other forms of artistic expression and a willingness to "see the world with fresh eyes" enables the parks themselves to once again be seen by the public with "fresh eyes" as well.

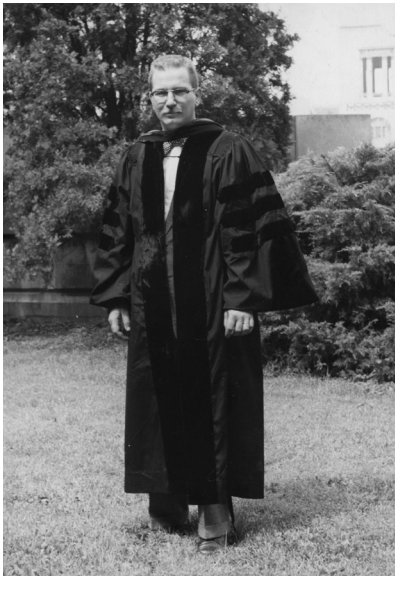
**Endnotes**

1. For a more thorough description of the installation, see www.for-site.org/project/ai-weiwei-alcatraz/.
2. National Park Service, "As nation debates immigration policy, youth artists illustrate nation's rich immigration history," news release, May 11, 2015; online at www.nps.gov/elis/learn/news/youth-artists-illustrate-nations-rich-immigration-history.htm.
3. See Letter from Woodstock no. 2, "Keeping on the Path," *The George Wright Forum*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2012), pp. 201–203.
4. *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2014) pp. 9–13.

# Remembering Ted Sudia, Co-founder of the George Wright Society

Ted Sudia, who rose to the position of chief scientist with the National Park Service (NPS), died at the age of 89 on April 15, 2015, at his home in Pittsburgh. Ted was a key figure in the history of the George Wright Society, having co-founded (along with Robert M. Linn) our organization in 1980. He was one of the most influential of the Society's leaders during its earliest years.

Theodore William Sudia was born on October 10, 1925, in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, the youngest of the eight children of Paraskeva and Frank Sudia. A lifelong supporter of the Boy Scouts, Ted received the Eagle Scout Award in 1938. He served in the US Navy during World War II as a radar operator on a minesweeper in the Pacific. After graduating from Kent State University in Ohio, he received his master's and doctorate from Ohio State University in plant ecology/plant physiology. Among other positions, Ted was a professor at Winona State Teachers' College and at St. Mary's College in Minnesota and then professor at the University in Minnesota, as well as working at the American Institute for Biological Sciences. He then joined the federal government, where he had a 25-year career with NPS that ended with his retirement in 1995.



In the Park Service, many of those who worked under him saw Ted as a mentor and a friend, "a brilliant and visionary leader of the National Park Service Science program," "a visionary, way ahead of the rest," a "staunch defender of applying scientific principles to the understanding and management of the world's natural resources, especially those managed by the U.S. National Park Service." At the same time, his forceful personality and fast thinking could frustrate

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people who disagreed with him, but no one questioned his passion or his ability to generate new ideas, which, as one colleague recalled ,"flowed like water from him."

Ted's accomplishments with the National Park Service were many. Here is a partial list:

- With his endorsement, NPS funded a 1975 study by The Nature Conservancy on how to bolster natural area preservation efforts nationwide. This was followed by a three-volume cataloguing of ongoing natural area preservation activity at the federal, state, and private levels. Ted and staff drafted legislation to bolster natural area preservation nationwide.
- He helped start what is now the INFINITY Science Center, a NASA facility in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. This was part of a first attempt to make a cadre of scientists available to the parks as consultants. He also had NPS staff seeking out satellite imagery for potential use in managing national parks, and was one of the first to press for biological inventories of the parks, reform of collecting permits, and a scientific photograph library.
- Ted oversaw the production by staff members of the 1980 *State of the Parks Report,* a remarkably candid analysis of the problems facing the parks. It has turned out to be a classic in the government environmental literature.

- After extensive planning and thought, he organized the NPS science program into eight divisions: natural resources, social science, natural history, research evaluation, air and water resources, appropriate technology, science information, and environmental education. These topics are an indication of what Ted thought most important and represent the culmination of his thinking on how science in the Park Service should be carried out.
- He got NPS Director Ronald Walker to approve a science policy, making it a bedrock of NPS activity.
- He oversaw the writing of a research grade manual outlining NPS policy in this area.
- Ted was a strong and persuasive advocate of NPS involvement in international science activities. With his support, the agency worked with the US Agency for International Development to produce publications on management and sustainable use of arid lands, coastal zones, humid tropics, case studies, project designs and guidelines, and a *Natural Resources Technical Bulletin*. This helped USAID in its increasing involvement with natural resource management and conservation at a time when that organi-

zation had very few personnel involved in this field.

- Ted supported the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee by arranging for a colleague to serve as its first chairperson.
- He was on the cutting edge of thinking and writing about urban ecosystems, and wrote a series of pamphlets on the subject. He even had one staff person investigate the possibility of using urban rooftops in Washington, DC, and elsewhere as breeding areas for rare species.
- He suggested that NPS put all its old planning studies online for the public to use; this was part of the impetus for the large collection of NPS-related materials that is now available on the Web.
- Against considerable political opposition, Ted supported the publication in 1984 by the Department of the Interior/NPS of Margery Oldfield's *The Value of Conserving Genetic Resources.* The book is now considered a classic in the genetic resources conservation field.
- Ted was a long-time supporter of and advisor to the well-respected journal *Park Science* and helped ensure its continuation during times when politics threatened to undermine it.

In 1980, he and Bob Linn created the George Wright Society in response to what they saw as a critical need for an independent professional association to advocate for the application of the best knowledge and scholarship from relevant areas of the sciences and humanities on behalf of parks, protected areas, and cultural sites around the world. Ted served on the initial GWS Board of Directors from 1980 through 1982 and helped imbue his adventurous intellect into the Society's "DNA."

Here is an example from a paper he wrote for *The George Wright Forum* in 1982, titled "Domestic Tranquility and the National Park System: A Context for Human Ecology." In it, he develops an argument that links the creation of national parks in America with several of the nation's foundational ideas, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution:

> Taken together, then, we have four penetrating concepts, with the highest of ethical and moral considerations: the "pursuit of happiness" concept from the Declaration of Independence; "domestic tranquility" from the Preamble to the Constitution; the "wilderness pleasuring ground" maintained in its natural state, in the [1872] Yellowstone legislation; and "parks maintained unimpaired for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations" from the National Park [Service] Act of 1916. Taking all four together we have the basis for the establishment, growth, enhancement, protection, and preservation of the National Heritage.
>
> Insofar as our national growth and development have been true to these concepts, they have been an outgrowth of the very genetics—the "seed instructions"—laid down by the founding fathers at the nation's conception and birth.
>
> The concepts nest, ecologically. Pursuit of happiness relates to individuals, domestic tranquility relates to communities, and the pleasuring grounds in their natural state relates to the environment. Governments are instituted among men to establish unalienable rights, in viable communities, guided by an environmental ethic.

Ted was exceptional in making these kinds of connections, and in his ability to see emerging trends and imagine how they might be applicable to the protection of parks, protected areas, and cultural sites. He was involved in other publishing projects as well. For example, to provide an outlet for his many ideas that spanned science, philosophy, and government, Ted initiated a mini-journal called "We the People."

In recognition of his vision and many accomplishments, in 2002 Ted was named co-winner of the Society's highest award, the George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence.

Ted was preceded in death by his wife, Cecelia Elson Sudia; a daughter, Norah Sudia Davies; and by several siblings. He is survived by a son, Frank Sudia; a daughter, Rachael Sudia (Keith) Boivin; a sister, Dorothy Evancho; and by many grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

# When the Sacred Encounters Economic Development in Mountains

*Lawrence S. Hamilton*

## Introduction

Special places of religious, cultural, or iconic value may be forests, groves, caves, springs, wells, or water bodies, as well as mountains. Here I deal particularly with mountains as protected places with sacred or iconic value. While there are many physical definitions of what constitutes a mountain, (e.g., Kapos et al. 2000), the "Oh, WOW!" emotional reaction upon viewing one from the lowlands is a somewhat intangible, but important, defining criterion. Mountains have inspired humans since first ancestral contact. Sometimes this has been expressed through awe or fear, and sometimes through reverence and religious significance. Mountain names conjure up deep feelings among both traditional peoples and moderns: Olympus, Everest/Sagarmatha, Chimborazo, Elbrus, Tongariro, Ti'a Shan, Nanda Devi, Matterhorn, Fuji, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Shasta. See *Sacred Mountains of the World* (Bernbaum 1990) for many others. Are these very special wild places, these mountains revered by so many millions of people, safe from damaging development? Not by a long shot! Metaphysical values usually do help, however. Here are a few of the many examples of mixed success.

Several years ago at a George Wright Society meeting, I had the privilege of hearing a presentation on the conflict between the sacred and profane at Devils Tower National Monument. This prompted me to get involved in the controversy at the San Francisco Peaks in Arizona. I hoped my work with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas, and my focus on mountains worldwide as long-time chair of the commission's working group on mountain protected areas, might be helpful. Working with the Navajo, who revere the San Francisco Peaks, has been a wondrous experience. Frustration with politics, short-term profit focus, bureaucracy, and a ponderous legal system have been my disappointments.

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### The sacred San Francisco Peaks

Rising from the usually dry, high plateau of the American Southwest, three volcanic peaks of around 11,000 feet thrust skyward just north of the city of Flagstaff, Arizona (Figure 1). Their sharpness of outline in the clear air gives them a supernatural appearance and enables them to be seen from great distances. This complex, the San Francisco Peaks, is sacred to most of the Native American peoples of this region, being significant to 22 tribes, and holy to 13 tribes, including the Navajo (Dine'), Hopi, Havasupai, Hualapai, Zuni, Acoma, White Mountain Apache, and Yavapai-Apache. To the Navajo, the peaks are the sacred mountain of the west, a key boundary marker, abode of the Holy People. To the Hopi, it is the home of the Kachina spirits who bring vital rains to the dry-farmed source of food. To other tribal nations, the holy massif has qualities of spiritual nourishment, providing a rare source of medicinal and ceremonial plants, and is central to cultural identity.

The peaks, as the Hopi believe, do "capture" water in the form of both rain and snow due to the orographic effect of this free-standing massif, nourishing surrounding farm and ranching lands with streams, springs, and groundwater aquifers. The nearby city of Flagstaff is dependent on this mountain water. It is indeed a special place in a vast natural landscape and spiritscape.

The San Francisco Peaks are part of the Coconino National Forest. Under the US Forest Service policy of "multiple use," the peaks have received a small, rustic ski development (Arizona Snowbowl), a pumice mine (White Vulcan Mine), some timber harvesting, and general outdoor recreation. The tribes have for many years pressed the agency to designate the peaks as a traditional cultural property (TCP), but no action has been taken. In 2000, Native Americans and environmentalists won a victory over proposed expansion of the pumice mine, on the basis of sacrilege to the holy mountain (stone-washed jeans versus sacredness). The mine was closed in 2002 and the US Department of Interior bought out the mining rights, closing and restoring the site.

Late in 2002, however, another threat to the sanctity of the peaks arose with a proposed major expansion and infrastructure development of the Snowbowl, which had been suffer-

**Figure 1.** San Francisco Peaks, Arizona, USA. Photo courtesy of Brady Smith, US Forest Service.

ing from declining snow cover and hence profits (only four days of skiing were logged in 2001–2002). To counter unreliable snowfall, it was proposed to use Flagstaff's reclaimed wastewater to make artificial snow. To the tribes, this would be an extremely sacrilegious action. Thirteen tribes united in a "Save The Peaks Coalition" and were joined by several environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), especially the Sierra Club.

In April 2005, the Forest Service announced its "finding" in favor of the expansion proposal, in spite of two years of negotiation with and petitions from the coalition. The Navajo Nation and the Sierra Club in August 2005 brought a legal appeal against the Forest Service decision. There followed a series of appeals, judgments, and counterappeals that continue today (see Appendix).

In the winter of 2013–2014, the Arizona Snowbowl became the world's first ski area to have skiing on snow made almost entirely of municipal sewage effluent. (Official signs are posted which caution "Do Not Eat the Snow".)

In the USA, there is some protection for sacred sites under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, but the last judgment of the court in the case of the peaks was that "the diminishment of spiritual fulfillment,—serious though it may be—is not a 'substantial burden' on the free exercise of religion" (Ninth Circuit Court 2008). There is also a Registry of Traditional Cultural Properties, emanating from the National Registry of Historic Places. The process of registration is fairly lengthy and complex, especially in regard to boundary delineation. The San Francisco Peaks have not been designated a TCP in spite of repeated proposals to the Forest Service. Last year, President Obama did create a Sacred Sites Panel, but so far it has taken no action on the peaks. There is now a Navajo appeal to the Interamerican Human Rights Commission, which could go to the International Court of Justice.

In the San Francisco Peaks, the secular and profane have so far triumphed over the sacred. But the battle is not over!

### Some other battles won or lost

To the early Greeks, their loftiest peak, **Mount Olympus,** was the primary home of the thirteen Gods. The mountain's power to inspire and create awe has persisted through the ages to modern times, and indeed the fame and mythical value of Olympus have spread throughout the world. It was declared a national park in 1938. In 1981, the area was enlarged and became a UNESCO biosphere reserve.

In 1989, a proposal arose for a major ski center and road in the protected east side core zone. Mountain Wilderness–Greece, *Nature and Ecology* magazine, and World Wildlife Fund–Greece brought pressure on the government to oppose the development, and marshaled both national protest and global protest from the multitudes who regard this as a world icon. It is widely believed that this outpouring of opposition resulted in halting the proposal (Kostas Tsipiris, pers. comm., 2010). A new presidential decree for Olympus National Park was formulated. Public opposition, the bad economic situation in Greece, plus unreliable snow from climate warming have probably protected Olympus for the near future.

**Mount Kailash** in Tibet is the most sacred mountain in Asia (Figure 2). It is held sacred by Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and Bons (over a billion people) (Bernbaum 1990; Ber-

nbaum, pers. comm.). The ultimate in merit is a pilgrimage to the mountain (very arduous itself) and then a circumambulation of 32 miles. Climbers' boots have been prohibited from despoiling the mountaintop. The celebrated mountaineer Reinhold Messner attempted summitting Kailas in 1985, but self-aborted when its sanctity was strongly pointed out. Similarly, a proposed Spanish expedition in 2001 was stopped by public outcry, including from the Dalai Lama.

**Figure 2.** Mount Kailash, Tibet. Photo courtesy of Edwin Bernbaum.

In an effort to boost tourism, in 2003 the Chinese Government proposed building an airport 155 miles from Kailash, and a road to the area, including a road around the mountain for vehicles (thus allowing people to "circumambulate" in the comfort of their cars).The resounding protest against the desecration of this special pilgrimage site from civil society in many countries has effectively stopped this plan for the present, though a road to the site is still being considered. There is a recent agreement among China, Nepal, and India that includes the mountain and a nearby sacred lake, Lake Manasarova, in a Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (ICIMOD 2012). It is hoped that this may afford greater secular protection. A World Heritage nomination is also being considered (Bernbaum, pers. comm.).

**Mount Sinai** in Egypt is the site where Moses is believed to have encountered God and received the Ten Commandments. It is sacred to Jews, to Islam, and to Christianity. It is a pilgrimage site for some 30,000 people each year. There are wild areas near the summit, containing over 400 species of plants (27 of them endemic), and ibex roam the slopes, protected by the sacredness of the mountain (Mansourian 2005b). Notwithstanding religious and biodiversity values, in 1990 the Egyptian government proposed an amazing tourism development of hotels, villas, and a shopping/services center, along with a cable car to avoid the arduous 2.5-hour climb to the summit, where a restaurant would be built. It was estimated that tourism numbers might rise to 565,000 per year. Public outcry over the "Disneyfication" of the holy site led to the cancellation of this economic development scheme, with protests arising from Jews, Christians and Muslims. In 2002, it was designated as a World Heritage site (for cultural values and protecting associated wildlands). A win for metaphysical values!

To many a present-day Scot, the **Cairngorms** are a wild domain held in fierce awe and delight. It was officially designated a national park in 2003. In 2008, a proposal for a funicular to the summit and a restaurant became part of the regional economic development package. In spite of strong protest from the Scottish and British rambling and mountaineering

community (and many other mountain lovers) both were built. But, in a compromise, the restaurant and the funicular access to it has been sited 100 rugged vertical meters below the summit (Malcolm Payne, pers. comm.). Funicular visitors are not permitted access to the higher areas. This effectively safeguards the summit area and the high-elevation wilderness from throngs of tourists coming by funicular. It must be accessed on foot, as of yore. Sometimes compromise is the only solution possible for our special places, but it takes the passion of persons who have been smitten by the awesome experience of the mountain to fight for conservation, in the face of what is billed as "sustainable development."

**Peak Wilderness Park** in Sri Lanka is also known as **Adam's Peak** and **Sri Pada** (Figure 3). Many Christians and Muslims believe that this is the site where the Eden-expelled Adam landed on Earth. He was obliged to stand on one foot for a thousand years, and this ordeal left a sacred (Sri) footprint (Pada) on a large summit boulder (now protected by a wooden shelter). Buddhists believe that this print was left by the Buddha, while Hindus think it is that of Lord Shiva (Mansourian 2005a). At 7,359 feet, this striking pyramidal mountain has for thousands of years been a rugged pilgrimage site.

Aside from the pilgrimage route, this area is Sri Lanka's most untrammeled wilderness, with intact forest cover ranging from lowland rainforest to high-elevation cloud forest. It is an important source of water and a sanctuary for wildlife. Despite being rich in forest resources, in gemstones, and potential for farming and exotic tree plantations in lower elevations, it seems clear that spiritual values plus designation of the area as a wilderness park have minimized resource development and damage (especially from mining and tourism).

**Tongariro National Park** in New Zealand consists of three sacred mountain peaks: Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, and Tongariro (Figure 4). It was and is revered and feared (as an active volcano) by the Maori people—a place of "tapu." It is ancestor and source of "mana" to the regional tribes. Following the Maori/British Wars and new land laws favoring acquisition

**Figure 3.** Sri Pada, or "Adam's Peak," in Peak Wilderness Park, Sri Lanka. Photo courtesy of Bourgeois, Wikimedia Commons.

**Figure 4.** Mount Ngauruhoe in Tongariro National Park, New Zealand. Photo courtesy of O2, Wikimedia Commons.

by colonists with attendant logging and clearing of forest, concern arose over the fate of this place of power and sanctity. In 1887, Paramount Chief Te Heuheu Tukino lV dealt with this dilemma by giving the land to the Crown (Queen Victoria) to protect forever on behalf of his people. It thereupon became New Zealand's first national park (Potton 1995).

While limited recreational use (hiking, skiing, and nature studies) is permitted by the management agency, no other adverse development is allowed. Special interior sacred places are given total protection. In 1990 the national park was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a natural site, and three years later it was also listed for its cultural values. The conserved area now covers some 194,270 acres. It would be a breach of trust and law, and a violation of World Heritage standards, to expand the ski area or to permit mining.

This approach to preventing loss of wild nature and spirituality worked because the land at the time was controlled by the Maori people, who insisted that the spiritual values be honored. Happily, a vast majority of "new" New Zealanders now also cherish and support this protected area and take pride in its designation as a World Heritage site.

**Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park** in Australia is a classic case of conflict between indigenous spiritual values and tourism promoted by a colonizing culture. It is revered by Australian Aboriginal people, especially by the local Anangu community (Anonymous 2008). Mount Uluru is an amazing red monolith that became a favorite photographic and climbing site for tourists. It and Mount Olga (Tjuta) were named as a national park in 1958 and tourism began in earnest. Greater governmental recognition of cultural values has finally led to restitution of ownership to the Anangu in 1985. It was leased back to the government for management purposes, with understanding that cultural values were to be respected, and Anangu are on the management board. It then received listing as a World Heritage site in 1987. In spite of an agreement to close the mountain to climbing when climbers dropped to

below 20% of park visitors (and this has happened as of July 2013), Parks Australia has not closed off climbing. Years of petitioning finally did result in the traditional owners receiving their sacred site back. However, all problems have not been prevented or resolved, even with the advantage of secular protection through World Heritage site designation.

### Lessons learned

Can sacred or high cultural values protect mountains from having their wild nature destroyed by development? As seen in these example case studies, the answer is not simple: win some, lose some. Even governmental designation as protected areas of some kind has not been an effective extra mantle of protection. Sites with metaphysical values often also have enormous natural values. IUCN, along with the Rigoberta Mencha Tum Foundation, has initiated a project called "Conservation of Biodiversity-Rich Sacred Natural Sites of Indigenous Peoples" (Oviedo and Jenrenaud 2007). In developed countries there are well organized conservation NGOs that can bring civil-society pressures on decision-makers to at least bring intangible values into the decision process. This is often quite effectively organized and carried out for popular scenic and recreational places such as Yosemite and Mont Blanc, but less so when sacred values of indigenous peoples are involved. Where were they for the San Francisco Peaks? What suggestions can be made? A partial list follows:

- Recognition is needed in the law that sites of proven sacred significance to the original (aboriginal) owners merit protection from development that destroys or damages these values, even in the name of development and "progress." Apparently, according to the courts, we do not have this in the United States.
- Designation as a secular, formal protected area by the government. For instance, the special spiritual significance provides opportunity for designation as a cultural landscape preserve (Category V in the IUCN protected area classification). Peru has recently designated a Vilcanato Spiritual Park, having the official label of a Community Conservation Area. Because such special sites are mountainous, they usually have high biodiversity and scenic values that often qualify them as well for national park (Category II) status, or as a natural monument (Category III), or even a national heritage area. Such recognition and labels erect barriers to harmful development, and slow down the permitting process, allowing opposition to get organized.
- However, once established as a protected area, recreational values of mountains may result in conflicts, as is seen in several case studies. Appropriate zoning that protects sacred places or provides exclusive access should be part of the management plan. This may include pilgrimage management or sightseeing restrictions.
- If managed by an agency that does not reflect the belief system of the people themselves, proper and consultation-based interpretation of cultural values must be the scenario.
- Since special cultural skills are needed in managing the land and associated resources, management staff should be selected from local people and they should be given special training involving Elder Traditionalists.
- An excellent set of guidelines for planning and managing mountain protected areas with

high cultural values can be found in Hamilton and McMillan (2004). A set of general guidelines is provided in Wild and McLeod 2008.

- An international conservation overlay, such as UNESCO biosphere reserve designation, can more easily marshal worldwide support. The ultimate in secular protection by governments is designation as a World Heritage site, if the area meets the outstanding universal value standards set by the World Heritage Convention.
- Listing these special places in some kind of a register (UNESCO? IUCN? National government?). Too often the claim for the sanctity of a site comes after a development is well into the planning stage and even into the action stage. Having them already listed creates an "official" barrier that has to be at least recognized by proponents of damaging development.

The major impediment to creating a register is the secrecy aspect of many sacred sites, whose custodians fear the loss of significance if "outsiders" who do not share the same values know of them. They may abuse this knowledge, exploiting it as the sacred place becomes a spectacle or a tourist magnet (as happened at Uluru). Registering also implies some loss of control over sites that have been protected for years by indigenous group spiritual leaders. I believe however that such listing becomes ever more imperative as younger indigenous people or younger adherents to nature-based spirituality drift from tradition and become less passionate about these sacred sites. Moreover, virtual reality of wild protected places via computer is becoming more the experience of these special places, and this erodes the passion and belief in sacred sites on the ground. As a first step, let's start such a register, either a national one or a global one through UNESCO!

### Appendix: Legal/court actions in the San Francisco Peaks controversy

The 2005 appeal of the US Forest Service decision by the Navajo and Sierra Club was denied in Arizona District Court, which apparently felt that the economic interest of Arizona Snowbowl Resorts had priority over the beliefs of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans. This decision was appealed to a federal Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco in September 2006. In March 2007, this higher court reversed the lower court's ruling in favor of the Navajo Nation. But, in 2008 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals revisited and reversed the decision, upholding the lower court's ruling in favor of the ski resort. The US Supreme Court denied an appeal to further hear the case.

In 2009, the Save the Peaks Coalition and nine plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against the US Forest Service on the basis that the reclaimed wastewater was not tested for endocrine disruptors. This case was lost in the lower court and in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals by the plaintiffs, allowing the ski resort to use the endocrine-laden wastewater to be made into artificial snow. In the spring of 2013 the Arizona Court of Appeals overturned a 2011 ruling by a former Coconino County Superior Court judge allowing the Hopi tribe to challenge the city of Flagstaff's water contract with Snowbowl.

The battle continues seemingly without end. A good analysis of the various legal rulings up to 2009 is given by Hutt (2009), along with some other cases where Native American

cultural sites went through the courts. And Stumpff (2013) has an excellent, very detailed account and analysis of the issues and court battles that have been carried out over the years, and are still in process, to decide who speaks for the San Francisco Peaks.

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**Lawrence S. Hamilton,** International Union for Conservation of Nature, 342 Bittersweet Lane, Charlotte, VT 05445; silverfox@gmavt.net

# From Conflict to Resolution in the Two Big-Y Parks: Ending 20 Years of Controversy in Yellowstone and Yosemite

*Michael J. Yochim*

Something odd happened when the National Park Service (NPS) finalized its latest environmental impact statement on winter use in Yellowstone National Park: no one threatened litigation or filed suit against the agency's plan. With one exception, the previous six plans had all been litigated and remanded to the agency.[1] But in 2013, as the agency issued the latest record of decision and completed the rule-making process, an unusual silence prevailed. Instead, some of the former litigants quietly changed their websites to support the new plan, and the absence of litigation has continued.[2]

The same thing happened in Yosemite National Park, whose managers have been grappling with limits to use and developments in Yosemite Valley since the late 1990s. Just as in Yellowstone, NPS there has issued a series of plans intended to provide comprehensive direction for the world-famous valley, with all of them until the 2014 plan ending up in court and being tossed out by federal judges.[3] As of this writing, though, no one had contested this latest plan, and the agency had begun implementing it.

Why was the agency finally successful with these plans, in contrast to the earlier ones? What did it do to put these hotly contested issues to bed? What changed to make former litigants come out in support of these plans? This article attempts to answer these questions, drawing upon the recollections of the agency staff directing these efforts as well as the literature about contemporary NPS policy-making. After brief histories of both controversies, the article will present a series of reasons that enabled the agency to succeed where it had failed before.

## Background: Two debates grounded in Organic Act tensions

Both issues revolve around questions fundamental to the NPS mission, so both of them are

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rooted in long-running debates. In the case of snowmobiles in Yellowstone, the debate—about what forms of recreation (especially winter recreation) are appropriate in national parks—began in the 1930s, when surrounding communities began 35 years of requests for park managers to plow Yellowstone's roads year-round. With the appearance of the snowmobile in the 1960s, park managers decided not to plow but rather to welcome visitors on oversnow vehicles. Such visitation grew rapidly, creating unforeseen air and noise pollution, along with wildlife harassment. By the 1990s, these problems motivated an interest group to file suit against the agency, alleging non-compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal laws. Settling out of court with an agreement to write an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the matter, NPS eventually found itself regularly producing EISs (five total) or environmental assessments (EAs; three total), almost every one of which was litigated by environmental groups or snowmobile advocates (often both). Most of the NPS decisions rooted in these documents mirrored the party leanings of the president in the White House at that time, and most of the judicial decisions mirrored the leaning of the deciding judge. Despite (and sometimes because of) the political fracas, the agency succeeded over the last 20 years in converting the free-for-all that prevailed in the 1990s into a well-managed, orderly model of winter tourism, with the previous problems largely gone. The final EIS, completed in February 2013, cemented these policy changes into place, with numerous small changes intended to make this decision a compromise acceptable to all stakeholders.[4]

Events in Yosemite eerily paralleled those in Yellowstone. Again, the fundamental issue was the tensions within the Organic Act, although the debate in Yosemite was more about development within Yosemite Valley and overall visitor numbers than about the appropriateness of certain forms of recreation. As with Yellowstone, the debate began long ago and gained center stage in the late 1990s with a lawsuit that became the first of many. The Yosemite lawsuits found traction in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) and its requirements both that river resources be protected and also that overall user numbers be specified. The Merced River, flowing through the heart of Yosemite Valley, had been added to the wild and scenic rivers inventory in 1987, but the NPS had not prepared a management plan for it, as also mandated by WSRA. Consequently, to settle the first lawsuit (filed in 1997), NPS agreed to prepare such a plan. Completed in 2000, the agency quickly wound up defending it and its supplement (finished in 2005) in court, both times losing at the appellate court level. Entering into settlement discussions with the plaintiffs after the second unsuccessful appeal, the agency reached an agreement in 2009 to prepare a third management plan and EIS: the Merced River Plan (MRP). The MRP, 3,000 pages long, was finalized one year after the Yellowstone plan, in February 2014. It provides comprehensive direction for the protection and enhancement of the Merced River and its unique values, as well as specifics on the user capacity of the river corridor and how that will be enforced.[5]

## Toward resolution: Factors of success

Where once the agency faced off against litigants in several different courts, these more recent policy-making endeavors saw the agency being supported, at least modestly, by the former

litigants. Making this transformation possible were many different factors, beginning with the different political climate that arrived with President Obama's election in 2008. That change was felt most acutely in Yellowstone, which had seen two secretaries of the interior (Bruce Babbitt and Gale Norton) take a strong interest in—but different positions on—the winter use dilemma there (Babbitt favoring snowcoaches and Norton, snowmobiles).While Norton resigned in 2005, her pro-snowmobile direction remained through the end of President George W. Bush's presidency. Ken Salazar, Obama's first interior secretary, took a more hands-off approach to national park policy-making, desiring mainly that any public lands controversy be settled for the benefit of the American public. This change in atmosphere allowed the new Yellowstone superintendent, Dan Wenk, and his staff to seek a solution that was acceptable to both snowmobile fans and detractors. In Yosemite, the change in political climate had less of an influence, though the administration's problem-solving approach still allowed that park's superintendent, Don Neubacher (also new to that park) to pursue a plan that was amenable to most stakeholders. Both parks benefited, then, from a political climate that supported conflict resolution.[6]

New superintendents—and key members of their staffs—also contributed to the success of these planning efforts. It is no secret that arriving personnel can bring fresh perspectives and insights to their new appointments, and both planning efforts benefited accordingly. Neubacher was himself a former planner familiar with controversy, so he was able to direct the MRP effort toward a solution that was likely to stand. Wenk, meanwhile, brought new insights to the snowmobile issue that forced stakeholders to reexamine their positions with an eye toward resolution. Both superintendents, moreover, had key positions on their staffs occupied by persons new to the controversies—the management assistant in Yellowstone and the chief of planning in Yosemite—both of whom took the time to develop personal relationships with key stakeholders. The trust that developed in those relationships helped all to work toward mutually agreeable solutions.[7]

Those solutions, as one might expect, were compromises that solved the major problems while addressing the primary concerns of the stakeholders. Yellowstone's winter use plan, rather than adopting a complete ban on snowmobiles (as proposed in the 2000 EIS, but never implemented) or continuing with high numbers of them (as proposed in the 2003 EIS, but also never implemented), will allow a modest number of the vehicles into the park. All of them will have to be led by trained guides (to prevent wildlife harassment), utilize best available technology (to minimize air and noise pollution), and be grouped (also to minimize noise pollution). These restrictions addressed the major resource concerns, while additional provisions to allow more snowmobiles during busy times of the winter and to allow some non-commercially guided trips into the park, addressed the primary concerns of snowmobile fans. Similarly, encouraging further improvements in snowmobile and snowcoach technologies helped address a major concern of environmentalists. Yosemite's MRP, meanwhile, required significant ecological restoration of the riverbanks and nearby meadows as well as the removal of several unnecessary and unsightly buildings from Yosemite Valley. In addition to thereby tackling the long-festering question of what level of development was appropriate in the valley, the plan also addressed the same question about recreation: not only were most

existing forms to continue, but some additional boating was as well. Significantly, the plan diverged from the park's 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) in proposing to allow private vehicle use to continue in the valley, thereby addressing long-simmering resentment from some stakeholders about the GMP's proposed ban on private automobile use. Park managers also revised the plan midstream to allow ice skating to continue and to restore parts of a popular campground destroyed in an earlier flood. Both plans, then, accomplished important resource objectives while addressing stakeholder concerns. They were compromises, not radical departures from the status quo as proposed in earlier plans in both parks. Incremental these approaches may have been, but the plans set real limits, accomplished needed resource protection, and have yet to be litigated.[8]

As compromises, neither plan radically changed existing access into the parks. As noted, the MRP repudiated the most far-reaching aspect of Yosemite's 1980 GMP: its proposal to eliminate automobiles from Yosemite Valley. In silent recognition that this tremendous restriction of access to the park would not fly—indeed, NPS had not come close to implementing it, even 34 years after the GMP was published—the MRP specifically discarded this unpopular idea. Instead, the MRP embraced private automobile use, limiting it only to the number of vehicles at one time that the valley's roads and parking lots could handle after the traffic problems were addressed. That number—bringing as many as 18,710 people at any one point in time into the valley—would accommodate existing traffic levels on all but the busiest days. Similarly, Yellowstone's winter use plan largely left existing access intact, modifying the rules somewhat to accommodate a modest increase in visitation during traditionally busy times (like Christmas week) and to allow four non-commercially-guided groups per day. Both plans, then, preserved or enhanced existing access, significantly increasing the likelihood that the public would accept the plans.[9]

Similarly, by keeping visitation at or above existing levels, the perception that gateway economies would be harmed was not present, as it was in the public response to earlier planning efforts. By failing to revise the GMP goal regarding automobile access to Yosemite Valley, the earlier versions of the MRP left intact the perception that attainment of that goal would reduce visitation and, therefore, gateway economies. In Yellowstone, previous plans had in fact damaged gateway community economies, so the ability to increase visitation during busy times of the winter would actually boost those economies. For these reasons (although none of the interviewees mentioned it), this closely watched barometer of the public welfare did not become the touchstone of controversy seen in earlier planning efforts in both parks.[10]

The incremental approach to the development of new plans brought the agency allies (as previously mentioned) from both sides of the fence dividing the previous litigants. Agency personnel in both parks took the time to seriously engage the concerned public, listen to them, and alter their policy proposals to address public concerns while still achieving agency goals. For example, Yosemite planners took five years—almost five times as long as either previous plan—to complete this MRP, an amount of time that gave agency personnel time to build first-name relationships with the primary stakeholders. The much more rushed time frames of the previous planning efforts made this important part of successful planning impossible. Similarly, when Yellowstone officials realized that the 2011 EIS still left many

stakeholder concerns unaddressed, they kicked off yet another planning effort to address those concerns, rather than finalizing the EIS with another rule-making effort and facing likely litigation again. Again and again, interviewees stressed the importance of their efforts to genuinely listen to the public (especially the key players), develop a relationship of trust with them, and substantively address their concerns. Staff in both parks, then, turned likely litigants into allies, helping the agency in the court of public opinion—and preventing litigation or continued planning limbo.[11]

Importantly, both plans drew upon a robust research and resource monitoring information base, most of which was a product of the earlier planning efforts. NPS in Yellowstone had been monitoring air quality, the winter soundscape, and wildlife–visitor interactions for more than a decade; that information was complemented by a number of NPS-commissioned research studies into various facets of the issue. Furthermore, park managers had subjected this knowledge base to an independent review that affirmed its comprehensiveness and impartiality. This knowledge base not only provided a solid foundation for the final winter use plan, but it also enabled park managers to turn discussions with their stakeholders away from emotion-based platforms to more dispassionate searches for solutions that addressed resource impacts (some of those solutions themselves consisted of more research, which NPS funded). In Yosemite, park staff began the planning effort by assembling a similarly substantial research and monitoring information base and then targeting a sizeable research effort at the gaps therein. As in Yellowstone, park managers subjected this new research to peer review, shared the research findings with their stakeholders, and then based many of the final plan actions on the resource problems identified by the research. The plans from both parks, then, were based on robust research and monitoring information bases (more robust than earlier planning efforts) that additionally provided a factual grounding for discussions with stakeholders.[12]

In those discussions and in their other public communications, Yellowstone managers consistently used a concept new to that issue: "transportation events," which were explained to be the experience of standing alongside the road when either a snowcoach (a van or small bus equipped to travel on unplowed roads) or a group of snowmobiles (led by a guide on a snowmobile) passed. The number of visitors in a snowcoach was about equal to the number in a guided snowmobile group, so the transportation event concept forced stakeholders to think of the per capita resource impacts of visitors employing the two modes of travel. The park's planners regularly framed their discussions in this manner, arguing that the resource impacts of the transportation event should be blind to the mode of travel. Gradually, they succeeded in moving the discussion from the earlier snowmobile versus snowcoach zero-sum game debates to a less emotional discussion of how best to reduce resource impacts while addressing other stakeholder concerns. Combined with the willingness to listen and seek mutually agreeable solutions (mentioned earlier), this issue framing significantly helped create the positive atmosphere necessary to resolve the controversy. In prior versions of the winter use plan, park personnel had rarely attempted to frame the issue in their public communications. Such voids are commonly filled by the press in attention-grabbing—not NPS-supporting—ways, such as by making claims of an infringement of access.[13]

Thanks to these measures—employing new staff, seriously listening to the concerns of stakeholders and gaining their support, developing compromises and plans that addressed resource issues while preserving existing access and local economies, basing those plans on robust science bases, and framing their discussions to emphasize resource concerns—opposition from key politicians disappeared, replaced with actual support. In Yellowstone's case, whereas elected and appointed officials from both sides of the aisle had previously tried to determine the outcome (through legislation or directives), park managers now found themselves seeing their final plan supported by the governors of Wyoming and Montana as well as Senator Mike Enzi (R–WY). In Yosemite's case, Tom McClintock (R–CA), the fiery US House member representing the area around the park, actually issued a statement endorsing the final plan when he saw that most of his constituents' concerns with the draft plan had been addressed. Previous versions of the planning effort had brought criticism from George Radanovich (R–CA), McClintock's predecessor. For both parks then, bipartisan political support (or at least a lack of opposition) was a desired outcome of the steps they had taken, an important factor in the success of the two plans, and something not seen in the previous planning efforts.[14]

Implicit in these efforts is that, in both parks, the agency took the time necessary to get it right. Yellowstone's effort took two and a half years, with Yosemite's effort taking twice as long. By taking such lengths of time, managers in both parks demonstrated that they were taking their task seriously. That message was particularly clear when Yellowstone managers kicked off a supplemental EIS process and when Yosemite managers requested extensions of their court-mediated deadline. Having ample time specifically allowed managers in both parks to identify the key stakeholders and build trust with them, address their concerns appropriately, produce comprehensive and legally sufficient documents, and defuse political opposition. Each of these points was discussed previously, but it bears repeating that effective policy-making takes time. Indeed, the prior histories of these issues in both parks repeatedly illustrates that rushed policy-making processes are legally vulnerable. Simply put, outputs are only as good as their inputs (or, you get what you pay for).[15]

A final factor in the success of both plans—but not one to cultivate—was fatigue. Managers in both parks felt that their stakeholders, after almost 20 years of court battles and frustrations, were tired of arguing and therefore more amenable to compromise. NPS staff, paid to undergo policy-making processes time and again, may indeed have worn out the adversaries. While there may be an element of truth in this assertion, the final plans in both parks successfully addressed the fundamental resource problems prompting those stakeholders to sue in the first place. Yellowstone's winter air is clean, its soundscape quiet, and its wildlife migrating naturally. Yosemite's Merced River and its special values are protected, with a real visitor capacity specified; and visitors can easily enjoy the world treasures in both parks.[16]

## Discussion: Two conflicts resolved

Table 1 summarizes factors that allowed NPS to successfully resolve these two long-running controversies. Clearly, the staffs of both parks navigated complex policy-making minefields to attain their successes. While the list in Table 1certainly provides some guidance for managers

**Table 1.** Factors accounting for success of recent Yellowstone winter use and Yosemite Merced River planning efforts.

| Reason | Yellowstone winter use | Yosemite Merced River Plan |
|---|---|---|
| Political climate: Salazar's hands-off policy encouraged conflict resolution | Yes: prior administrations issued verbal directives that alienated some stakeholders | Yes: though Bush administration had little interest in this issue, hands-off policy helped some |
| New personnel: new staff brought new insights and approaches | Yes: both superintendent and management assistant | Yes: both superintendent and chief of planning |
| Incremental approach: NPS proposal was not a revolution but did address key concerns | Yes: final decision not too different from prior one, though all concerns addressed | Yes: final visitor numbers similar to before, but ecological and traffic problems addressed |
| Access: NPS proposal either enhanced access or left existing access alone | Yes: compared with 318 snowmobiles allowed, new rules allowed modestly more, but especially at Christmas; non-commercial guiding also improved access | Yes, mostly: NPS repudiated GMP intent to ban cars, fixed traffic problems, allowed existing visitation to continue except on busiest days |
| Economy: NPS proposal either enhanced economy or had little effect | Yes: higher numbers modestly improved economy | Yes: MRP would have little effect |
| Allies: NPS really reached out and took public concerns seriously, which garnered new allies | Yes: NPS did a supplemental EIS to seriously address lingering stakeholder concerns | Yes: NPS seriously considered stakeholder concerns, revising draft proposal to address many of them |
| Science: NPS had robust monitoring and research base backing up its decision | Yes, NPS had a decade or more of research and monitoring that informed conversations with stakeholders and informed its plan | Yes: NPS had several years of monitoring information and began planning effort with large research thrust to fill gaps in knowledge; these informed its plan |
| Framing: NPS (re)framed the issue to support its proposal | Yes: NPS repeatedly used "transportation events" concept, which forced stakeholders to consider resource impacts | No: NPS did not consistently use any certain kind of framing |
| Political support: NPS had overt support or at least a lack of opposition | Yes: NPS had support from MT & WY governors and WY Senator Enzi | Yes: after NPS addressed McClintock's concerns he dropped his opposition |
| Adequate time: NPS took enough time to address all concerns and produce solid NEPA document (generally 4+ years). | Yes: although NPS only took from 2011 to 2013 to produce the final plan, it built on the earlier one, which also took three years; NPS also made key decision not to finalize 2011 EIS and instead do a supplemental EIS | Yes: NPS took from 2009 to 2014, including multiple extensions of court deadline |
| Fatigue: agency wore out its opponents | Yes: issue had been hot since 1997 | Yes: issue had been hot since 1997 |

caught in other policy-making controversies, having all these factors aligned is no guarantee of success. Furthermore, not all of the factors are within the control of NPS managers, or even desirable. For example, park managers can do little to influence the political climate, and they certainly do not want to tire out their stakeholders. Replacing staff members is also not always possible or desirable; many classes of government positions are protected, and NPS may at times benefit more from the trust or popular esteem of some leaders than from the insights of new staff. The same is true of the incremental approach; many stakeholders would view the reintroduction of a top predator, for example, as a major action, no matter how many conditions are attached. Public perceptions may also turn an otherwise favorable factor against the agency; as managers of earlier planning efforts in both parks found out, even if a change in transportation modes would actually provide more access, the public perception that a preferred or existing form of access would be harmed drove the final action.

Nonetheless, the list in Table 1provides timely guidance to those attempting to resolve similar policy-making controversies today. That two so enduring, highly visible, and fractious controversies were resolved in such a similar manner strongly suggests that there are important keys to success herein. Those keys—the factors listed in Table 1—are the same as the frameworks of success outlined in two recent books about contemporary NPS policy-making: *Repairing Paradise: The Restoration of Nature in America's National Park* by Washington University political scientist William R. Lowry (published in 2009), and my own 2013 book, *Protecting Yellowstone: Science and the Politics of National Park Management.* Those two works utilized different research methods but produced very similar results: to enjoy policy-making success, NPS managers need to align all, or almost all, of the factors over which they have control and that are desirable (in Table 1, everything but political climate, new personnel, and fatigue, and with the other previously discussed caveats).[17]

Of course, it is not always possible to align all the factors in favor of policy-making success. Managers may be forced to undergo a planning project when the political climate is not favorable, when a court-ordered deadline makes it impossible to take the time necessary to build alliances, in the absence of sufficient monitoring and research information, or without an easy way to frame the debate to support their ideal policy proposal. In such cases, park managers have little choice but to do their best under the circumstances. Sometimes, they will succeed despite the difficulties. At other times, though, they may suffer setbacks and have to engage in repeated planning processes. However, those instances are not defeats so long as the planning processes foster an increase in our research and monitoring base as well as an enriched understanding of the task to be accomplished. By taking the long view when put in such situations, managers can set the stage for eventual policy-making success. Given the fact that we are approaching NPS's centennial and that the national parks are sometimes described as America's best idea, we are already good at taking the long view. At the least, then, this look back may add some structure or validity to what we already know. It is to be hoped, though, it will help us do our job even better, so that we enter the second century of one of the country's most esteemed agencies even better equipped to leave our parks unimpaired, for the enjoyment of future generations.

## Endnotes

1. My first book, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile: Locking Horns over National Park Use* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009) provides a comprehensive history of this controversy. The reader is advised that NPS employed me to write this book and to work on the winter use issue from 2004 to 2009, though I had very little influence on any of the agency's winter use decisions. The 2013 plan is National Park Service, *Yellowstone National Park Winter Use Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (Yellowstone National Park, WY: NPS, 2013; hereafter, NPS, 2013 WUP).
2. For example, the mission of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition on this issue changed from "To phase out snowmobiles in Yellowstone in favor of cleaner, quieter, more efficient snowcoaches…" in October 2012 (http://www.greateryellowstone.org/issues/lands/Feature.php?id=40, accessed Oct. 25, 2012) to the statement, "To protect Yellowstone's wildlife, air quality, and natural soundscapes…" with no mention of vehicle preference, in March 2013 (same web address, accessed March 7, 2013).
3. The only two accounts of the Yosemite controversy are the third chapter in William R. Lowry's *Repairing Paradise: The Restoration of Nature in America's National Parks* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), and John Cathcart-Rake, "The Friends of Yosemite Saga: The Challenges of Addressing the Merced River's User Capacities," *Environmental Law* 39:3, June 2009. The 2014 plan is National Park Service, *Merced Wild and Scenic River Final Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Yosemite National Park, CA: NPS, 2014; hereafter, NPS, 2014 MRP). The reader is advised that NPS employed me to work on the Merced River Plan issue from 2009 to 2014, although (again) I had little influence into the agency's ultimate decision.
4. Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*; Michael J. Yochim, *Protecting Yellowstone: Science and the Politics of National Park Management* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 135–150; NPS, 2013 WUP; and Dan Wenk and Wade Vagias, interview by author, Mammoth Hot Springs, WY, July 17, 2013.
5. On the history of public debate about development and recreation in Yosemite Valley, see Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). On the planning and litigation history, see Cathcart-Rake, "The Friends of Yosemite Saga," and NPS, 2014 MRP, 2-7 to 2-8.
6. Wenk and Vagias interview, July 17, 2014; Don Neubacher, interview by author, Yosemite Valley, CA, July 3, 2014; and Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*, 164–191.
7. On Yellowstone, Wenk and Vagias interview, July 17, 2014, and Dan Wenk and Wade Vagias, interview by Jo Arney of University of Wisconsin–La Crosse, March 10, 2014, Mammoth Hot Springs, WY, superintendent's office files, NPS, Yellowstone National Park. On Yosemite, Neubacher interview, as well as my personal experience working for Neubacher and Chief of Planning Kathleen Morse.
8. NPS, 2013 WUP, 57–65; and NPS, 2014 MRP (details of the final plan from pp. 8-197 to 8-234, changes between draft and final from pp. 9-1004 to 9-1008, and amendments to the 1980 GMP from Appendix A). On incremental change, see Bryan D. Jones and

Frank R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

9. Yosemite information from NPS, 2014 MRP (details of the final plan from pp. 8-197 to 8-234, and amendments to the 1980 GMP from Appendix A); Neubacher interview; and Lowry, *Repairing Paradise*, chapter 3. Yellowstone information from both Wenk and Vagias interviews and NPS, 2013 WUP, 57–65.
10. Yosemite information from Lowry, *Repairing Paradise*, chapter 3; Yosemite Valley Plan Oversight Hearings before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, 107th Congress, March 27, 2001, 95; and Ryan Dougherty, "Plan for Yosemite Valley Heating Up," *National Parks* 77:7, July 2003, 10. Yellowstone information from Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*, 169.
11. Neubacher interview; and both Wenk and Vagias interviews.
12. Most of the Yellowstone studies are at http://www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/winter_monitoring.htm, accessed August 13, 2014 (the 2009 "summary report" is the independent review), with most of the Yosemite studies at http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp_documents.htm, accessed August 5, 2014. Both Wenk and Vagias interviews and the Neubacher interview also informed this paragraph, as did my professional experiences overseeing parts of the research efforts in both parks.
13. Both Wenk and Vagias interviews. Such issue framing was not consistently used in the Yosemite issue.
14. Wenk and Vagias interview, July 17, 2014, and http://mcclintock.house.gov/2014/02/merced-river-plan.shtml, accessed July 9, 2014.
15. Neubacher interview, and both Wenk and Vagias interviews. Yosemite planners also sought external legal review of their planning documents, and revised or structured those documents accordingly (Neubacher interview).
16. Neubacher interview; Wenk and Vagias interview, July 17, 2014.
17. Lowry chose one controversy from each of four national parks (including, as mentioned earlier, the MRP issue) while I examined every controversy (six, total) from Yellowstone meeting three pre-defined criteria. Because we both examined wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone, we examined a combined total of nine NPS policy debates. With the updated analyses in this article, we now have 11 NPS policy-making debates supporting this framework. Note that while Lowry's book was available while I was writing mine, I had already outlined my major results and argument when I learned of his book (actually, when I became aware of his book, I almost abandoned mine, but resumed the project when Lowry himself, recognizing the strength of our convergent results, urged me to complete it).

**Michael J. Yochim,** 91 East Lake Road, Fenton, MO 63026; mjyochim@uwalumni.com

# Place and Proximity: A Spatial Analysis of Visitors' Place Attachment at Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska

*Shawn K. Davis and Karina C. Mullen*

## Introduction

Climate change is important to every human being as it has the potential to drastically affect places that are important to us, including national parks. In 2011, over 280 million people visited America's national parks to experience these places to see some of the greatest swaths of preserved area in the world as well as historic and natural landscapes that can be found nowhere else on our planet (National Park Service 2012). We continually observe changes in natural processes as the climate shifts and understanding how our beloved parks are changing can deliver a powerful message to national park visitors everywhere. Through front-line interpreters or online webinars, avenues can be created through which visitors are engaged and empowered to help protect the places they love.

The data used in this study comes from the Place-Based Climate Change Education Partnership (CCEP); a National Science Foundation-funded project. The purpose of this nationwide, collaborative effort was to scope out the communication challenges, opportunities, and needs among national park and national wildlife refuge staff when discussing climate change impacts on America's public lands (Schweizer, Davis, and Thompson 2013). This study focuses on Kenai Fjords National Park because of its iconic landscapes and visible impacts of climate change.

The environmental effects of global climate change can be observed in polar regions through changing snow and ice packs, altered seasonal changes, changing wildlife and vegetation patterns, and the depletion of permafrost (IPCC 2007). These environmental changes are influencing people that inhabit these places, impacting their social and cultural identities. Research has shown that people in these areas feel that the place and the wilderness it can represent are important to who they are and should be protected for future generations (Kaltenborn 1998).

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Place attachment is an integral part of how people define themselves (Hess, Malilay, and Parkinson 2008). Where people live, work, and recreate creates a foundation for who they perceive themselves to be and can have profound influence on behavior (Raymond and Brown 2011). In previous research, Alaskans have identified their communities as "relatively distinct spatial areas that reflect local values, attitudes and lifestyles" (Brown et al. 2002).

The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to display social science research is a relatively new field (although cybercartography is making great strides in this area; Taylor 2003); thus, little has been published relating place attachment and spatial representation. Maps are important tools that can help us understand large-scale social patterns and how they relate with the greater landscape (Longley et al. 2005). Several studies have assessed the connection of place with climate change and spatial analyses (Brown, Reed, and Harris 2002; Raymond and Brown 2011), however, most of this research has focused primarily on how to measure and include values and place attachment in landscape planning processes (Brown 2007).

This study further explores how emotional response to national parks can be mapped across the United States. Building upon Norton and Hannon's (1997) theory of geographic discounting—the further a person lives from a place, the less likely they are to have a strong attachment to it—the purpose of this study is to (1) test the relationship between proximity of visitors' homes to the park and their level of place attachment to the park; and (2) measure the related influence of place attachment on visitors' perceptions of climate change impacts. This research is valuable for national park employees, including interpretive rangers and visitor program managers in providing support for the creation and implementation of educational materials on climate change for visitors who desire the information.

## Literature review

***Climate change communication.*** Citizens are exposed to many messages about climate change on a daily basis, yet studies show a declining trend in public understanding of human-caused climate change (Vitousek et al. 1997; Stern 2007; Maibach, Roser-Renouf, and Leiserowitz 2009; Leiserowitz, Maibach, and Roser-Renouf 2010; Leiserowitz, Smith, and Marlon 2010; Leiserowitz et al. 2011). Global climate change can be an intimidating topic for park visitors to think about, particularly for the majority of visitors who are on a vacation and simply want to enjoy the beauty of the place. When creating educational materials for this demographic, a fine line must be walked between pessimism and reality so the positive experience of being in the park is what is remembered (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009).

People are more likely to accept information regarding climate change from messengers who they perceive to be trustworthy, such as well-known scientists or friends and family (Leiserowitz et al. 2010). Environmental organizations and governmental operations such as the National Park Service are another source of trustworthy scientific information (Michaud 2007; Leiserowitz et al. 2010). National parks are a venue in which visitors can be engaged in a climate change discussion with rangers and others whom they perceive as trustworthy sources of information.

There are many barriers to effectively communicating about climate change, one of which is that the changes we will see are not easily predicted. Uncertainty leads to doubt and mistrust among people who do not fully understand the impacts or the mechanisms by which these changes are occurring (Budesco, Broomell, and Por 2009; Fischoff 2011). It is difficult to attribute isolated events to climate change because of the interconnected nature of other changes such as seasonal events and natural cycles in our larger global system. Due to its northern latitude and exaggerated warming effects, Kenai Fjords National Park gives a representation of landscape-based changes which are clearly visible in our lifetime.

Researchers have recently uncovered essential aspects of effective climate change communication on public lands such as national parks. Schweizer and colleagues (2009) developed nine key messages and ten key principles for communicating about climate change, including themes of adaptation and human impact on the land, relevance to the audience's lives, and the proposition that each person can make a difference. Additionally, they advise messages be tailored to the audience, delivered by a credible messenger, and be empowering, site-specific, and connected to the audience's core values (Schweizer et al. 2009). Supporting these recommendations, national parks can deliver messages from credible messengers such as experts in climate science or interpretive rangers using the surrounding landscape, which can make the messages more accessible and relevant to the audience.

Recent studies have examined peoples' perceptions of climate change based on their education, political affiliation, ethnicity, age, gender and where they live (Leiserowitz and Akerlof 2010; Leiserowitz et al. 2011; McCright et al. 2010). Several studies have come from researchers at Yale and George Mason universities using survey data to assess US citizens' knowledge of climate change and classify them into the "Six Americas," a segmentation model that is gaining popularity among those looking to communicate more effectively about climate change (Maibach et al. 2009).

Researchers have also investigated the level of concern regarding climate change around the globe and peoples' willingness to make personal changes to support sustainability (Bord et al. 1998; Botzen and van den Bergh 2009). Among the regions studied, Canada, Europe, and South America were most concerned about climate change; however the research showed that most people, including US citizens, would only make small changes toward mitigating climate change. A change in lifestyle cannot be expected based on current perceptions of climate change causes and effects (Bord et al. 1998).

Studies on effective methods of communicating climate change have revealed unexpected responses to practices the media typically use. O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) explain how the media's use of sensational language may actually elicit ambivalent behavior toward climate change. In their study participants were asked to select photographs they perceived would be effective in communicating climate change: first to others in a large-scale advertisement, followed by images that they themselves would respond to. The results showed that although people chose fearful images such as natural disasters to portray climate change in a media campaign, they personally stated those images would not be effective in convincing them to change their behavior to be more sustainable. Instead, pictures of riding a bike, gar-

dening, composting, and turning off the lights when not in use resonated with the majority of the individuals (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009).

***Place attachment.*** In Tuan's (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, he differentiates between "space" and "place"; "space" is simply a location, devoid of personal meaning, whereas "place" has a special significance to an individual because that person has had a meaningful experience there. Place attachment is defined in environmental psychology as an emotional or cognitive connection between a person and a particular place (Altman and Low 1992).

The concept of place attachment and the impacts of climate change are not isolated and have been shown to profoundly influence the behavior of tourists (Dawson, Havitz, and Scott 2011) and others. For example, the collision of these two forces was witnessed in the people who were displaced after Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, Louisiana. The heart of New Orleans was flooded and destroyed by this natural disaster. However, as soon as they could, residents moved back to their homes, despite knowing that another hurricane, as large as or larger than Katrina, is likely to strike at some point (Burby 2006). These people knowingly returned to danger and destruction because it is their home, a part of who they are and where they feel they belong. "People's ties to a place are deep, as is their fealty to traditions that facilitate survival there. Historically, for many societies, this adherence to tradition has complicated adaptation to environmental change" (Hess et al. 2008: 468).

The concept of vulnerability is an inherent part of planning for future climate changes. Vulnerability has been defined by the IPCC as "the extent to which climate change may damage or harm a system; it depends not only on a system's sensitivity but also on its ability to adapt to new climatic conditions" (Watson et al. 1996: 3). In a study by Hess et al. (2008), health risks from potential climate change events were compared with their influence on social and mental consequences in affected communities. Place attachment is an integral aspect of creating a feeling of community which leads to good mental health:

> ... the sense of belonging, which is necessary for psychological well-being, depends on strong, well-developed relationships with nurturing places. A major corollary of this proposition is that disturbance in these essential place relationships leads to psychological disorder (Fullilove 1996: 1518).

Stedman suggests that if a place particularly important to a person is threatened, they will participate in actions to protect it (2003). Regardless of perception of anthropogenic climate change, people are inextricably connected to the places they are familiar with, identify with, and of which they have fond memories (Portier et al. 2010). As illustrated in Kaltenborn's (1998) study, people who find the places they love affected by climate change want to help mitigate the impacts that are causing those changes.

***Hypotheses.*** Black and Liljeblad state that "of social ecology, we need to understand the creation and dynamics of human relationships to physical space—place—at multiple spatial and temporal scales from the individual to greater society" (2006: 1). As noted above, the purpose of the present study is to (1) test the relationship between proximity of visitors' homes to the park and their level of place attachment to the park; and (2) measure the related

influence of place attachment on visitors' perceptions of climate change impacts. Based on previous research, we developed the following hypotheses:

- ***H1.*** As distance between the park and visitors' homes increases, place attachment will decrease.
- ***H2.*** As visitor place attachment increases, propensity to notice changes in the landscape caused by climate change will also increase.
- ***H3.*** As visitor place attachment increases, desire to learn about changes in the landscape caused by climate change will also increase.
- ***H4.*** As visitor place attachment increases, belief that climate change will harm the park will also increase.

## Methods

Using survey data collected in the summer of 2011 by the Place-Based CCEP, the researchers identified by zip codes where Kenai Fjords National Park visitors live. Locations were paired with their responses to questions asking how attached to the park they felt and if they had noticed any effects of climate change at the park during their visits. By comparing visitor responses to the survey with their spatial distribution across the United States, visitors' proximity to the park and level of place attachment were mapped. Data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science 19 (SPSS) and ArcMap10 to visualize where visitors live in relation to the park. Using a distance function, the researchers determined how far away from the park visitors live then compared this information with their responses to questions about sense of place on the survey. From these results, we were able to show how proximity to the park is related to visitors' attachment to it.

***Surveys.*** In June 2011, the Place-Based CCEP research team administered a total of 493 on-site surveys at Kenai Fjords National Park. Survey sites included the Exit Glacier trailheads and the Exit Glacier Nature Center. The surveys were administered via Apple iPads using the iSURVEY app (for a complete description of this methodology see Davis, Thompson, and Schweizer 2012). The survey contained questions regarding visitors' perceptions of climate change, specific climate change impacts, and attachment to the park. The response rate for the sample was 68% and reflects the total population of visitors at a 95% confidence level with a $\pm$4% margin of error using a 50/50 split.

The following demographic characteristics were gathered from respondents: age, gender, education, ethnicity, political affiliation, and frequency of visits. Most visitors surveyed were in the age brackets of 26–35 (20%) and 46–55 (20%). Of the visitors surveyed, there was a nearly equal number of males and females (approximately 50% each). Many respondents had completed a graduate or professional degree (40%). Most visitors surveyed self-identified as white or Caucasian (82%) as well as Republican (24%; Table 1). On average, visitors surveyed have visited the park one time (70%). No statistical differences were found between any of the demographic variables and distances or place attachment data.

Three place-specific, visitor-self-reported climate change variables were included in this study. These variables consisted of (1) "I would like to learn more about climate change in

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of participants.

| Characteristic | *N* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Age in years at time of survey (N=466) | | |
| 10–17 | 35 | 8 |
| 18–25 | 43 | 9 |
| 26–35 | 94 | 20 |
| 36–45 | 71 | 15 |
| 46–55 | 94 | 20 |
| 56–65 | 86 | 19 |
| 66–75 | 37 | 8 |
| 76–85 | 5 | 1 |
| 86–95 | 1 | 1 |
| Gender (N=493) | | |
| Male | 231 | 50 |
| Female | 236 | 50 |
| Highest education level completed (N=471) | | |
| Less than high school | 16 | 3 |
| Some high school | 17 | 4 |
| High school graduate | 30 | 6 |
| Some college | 58 | 12 |
| Two-year college degree | 27 | 6 |
| Four-year college degree | 134 | 29 |
| Graduate or professional degree | 189 | 40 |
| Ethnicity (N=469) | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 7 | 2 |
| Asian | 25 | 5 |
| Black or African American | 4 | 1 |
| White or Caucasian | 384 | 82 |
| Other | 28 | 6 |
| Political Affiliation | | |
| Republican | 108 | 24 |
| Democrat | 104 | 23 |
| Independent | 77 | 17 |
| No affiliation | 97 | 21 |
| Other | 72 | 16 |

this park"; (2) "I believe that some of the effects of climate change can be seen at this park"; and (3) "I believe that climate change will harm this park a great deal." Visitors were asked to indicate how much they agreed with each statement on a five-point scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. A correlation analysis was conducted with these variables and the place attachment concept.

***Place attachment.*** The researchers created a place attachment concept by analyzing the reliability of four separate place attachment variables in SPSS 19. These variables include (1) "This park is very special to me"; (2) "I identify strongly with this park"; (3) "I am very attached to this park"; and (4) "This park means a lot to me" (Williams and Vaske 2003). Visitors were asked to identify how much they agreed with these statements using a five-point scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. The resulting Cronbach's alpha score was used to determine if the variables formed a reliable scale. The SPSS data table of visitor attributes was exported as a comma separated value (CSV) table and then imported into ArcMap10. Once the visitor attributes were given geographical reference points, (see "Distance," below) the place attachment variables could be spatially represented on a map of the United States. The place attachment scores were reclassified into five color-coded values ranging from green =strong attachment to red = weak attachment.

***Distance.*** Distance was calculated within ArcMap10. National zip code data were retrieved from the US Census Bureau Tiger site and joined to a table of visitor attributes that also contained visitor zip codes. Cases with missing zip code data were removed from the analysis, greatly reducing the sample size ($n$ = 242). The researchers followed a process similar to Brown's (2007) work in which respondent characteristics were combined with landscape values. By merging the two files, the researchers gave the visitor zip codes a geographic reference point which could then be displayed on a map of the United States. Latitude and longitude for the Exit Glacier Visitor Center in the park were extracted from Google Earth 6. These measures were converted into a table and imported into ArcMap10. After conversion into $x$ and $y$ coordinates, the data were placed on the United States map via a shapefile. The researchers used the point distance tool in ArcMap10 to calculate the distances between the visitor center and all zip code centroids (Theobald 2007). The resulting distances were joined to the table of visitor attributes. The distance variables were reclassified into five outwardly radiating distance bands using natural breaks.

Place attachment and distance. Distance measures along with other visitor attributes in the table were exported in a CSV table and imported back into SPSS 19. Average place attachment scores were calculated for each distance band. Researchers used a one-way ANOVA to calculate mean differences for each distance band. Additionally, the researchers employed a spatial regression model in ArcMap10 to test the influence of distance on place attachment.

## Results

The reliability analysis indicates that the four place attachment variables combine to create a single concept of place attachment (Cronbach's alpha = .88, Table 2). The overall average response to the place attachment concept for the entire dataset was one of moderate place at-

| **Table 2.** Reliability analysis of place attachment varaibles ($n$ = 493). | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variables** | **Cronbach's alpha** | **Item total correlation** | ***M*** | **SD** |
| Place attachment variable | .88 | | | |
| This park is very special to me | | .72 | 1.76 | .74 |
| I identify strongly with this park | | .76 | 2.16 | .84 |
| I am very attached to this park | | .75 | 2.37 | .80 |
| This park means a lot to me | | .76 | 2.12 | .81 |
| Note: Items were measured using a five-point scale where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree. | | | | |

tachment. ($M$ = 2.09, SD = .69). The place attachment concept was measured on a five-point scale (1 = strong attachment, 5 = weak attachment).

The visitor place attachment data were combined with spatial zip code data allowing for spatial representation of the place attachment variables. No pattern in the data emerged visually (Figure 1) or via spatial regression modeling.

The researchers created five distance bands expanding out from the Exit Glacier Visitor Center in Kenai Fjords National Park using natural breaks in the visitor-reported zip code data (Figure 2).

The place attachment data were segmented using the distance bands to detect patterns in the place attachment data related to distance from Exit Glacier Visitor Center within Kenai Fjords National Park. All distance bands indicate a moderate amount of place attachment ($M$ < 2.3, SD < .84 in all cases). A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test the mean differences in place attachment scores for each distance band. However, the results were not significant, indicating that there was no difference in place attachment between any of the five bands.

Three visitor-self-reported climate change variables were correlated with the place attachment concept. The variable "I believe that climate change will harm this park" had a statistically significant though minimal correlation with the place attachment concept ($r$ = .13, $p$ < .01; Table 3). The variables "I believe that some of the effects of climate change can already be seen at this park" and "I would like to learn about climate change at this park" had a significant minimal correlation with the place attachment concept ($r$ > .20, $p$ < .001 in both cases). All three visitor-self-reported climate change variables substantially correlated with each other ($r$ > .46, $p$ < .001 in all cases).

## Discussion

Although the place attachment variables formed a reliable scale for that concept, there was no evidence to support our hypothesis that visitors who live closer to Kenai Fjords National Park would have a stronger place attachment value. This finding is also seen in Brown et al.'s (2002) study. It is possible that Kenai Fjords, by nature of being geographically detached from the continental United States, may have skewed the data by being a particularly difficult

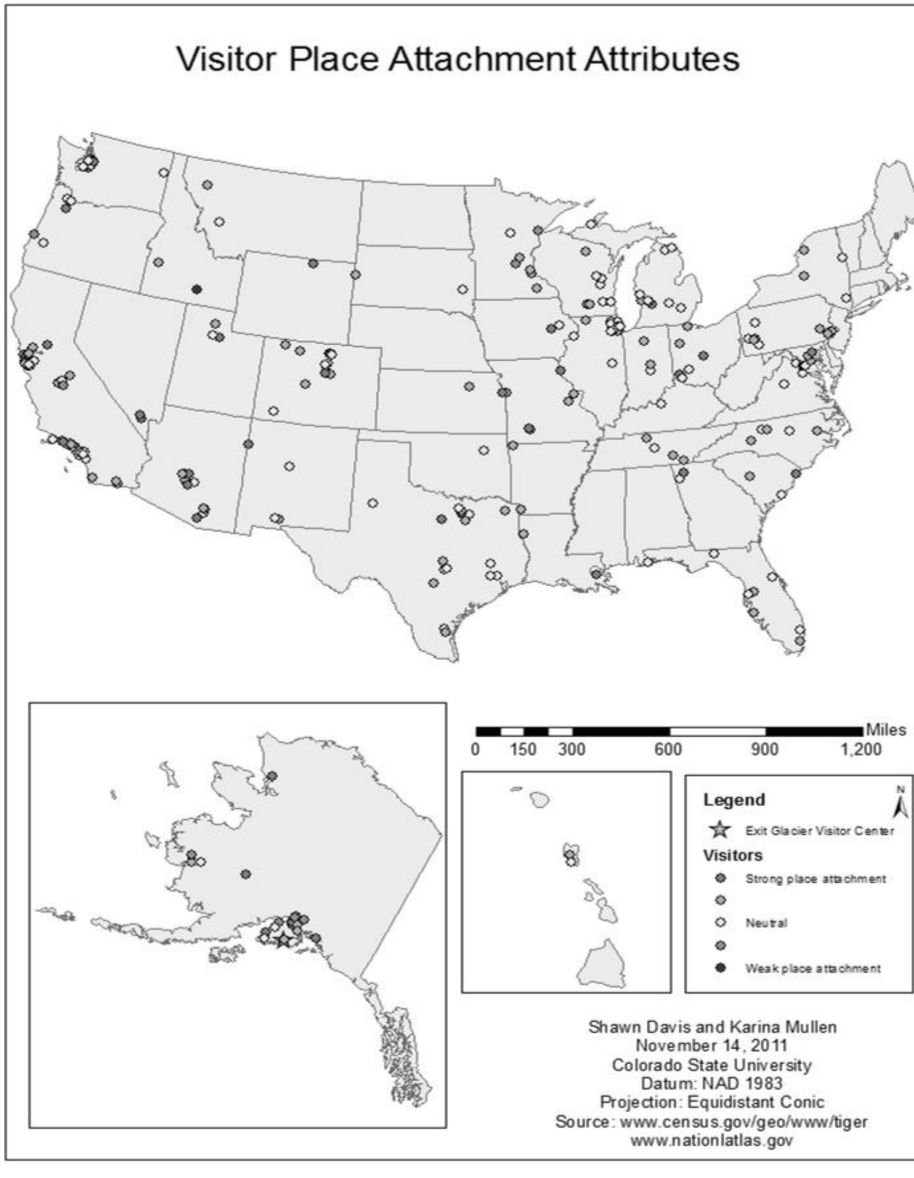


**Figure 1.** Visitor place attachment attributes.

park to reach. However, perhaps the type of place under study has a stronger influence to attachment than mere proximity. National parks possess some of the most iconic and pristine landscapes in the United States. Visitors find them unique and want them to be preserved for tangible or intrinsic reasons, regardless of their proximity to these places (Lockwood 1999). Thus, place of residence may not be a factor in visitor-reported place attachment variables.

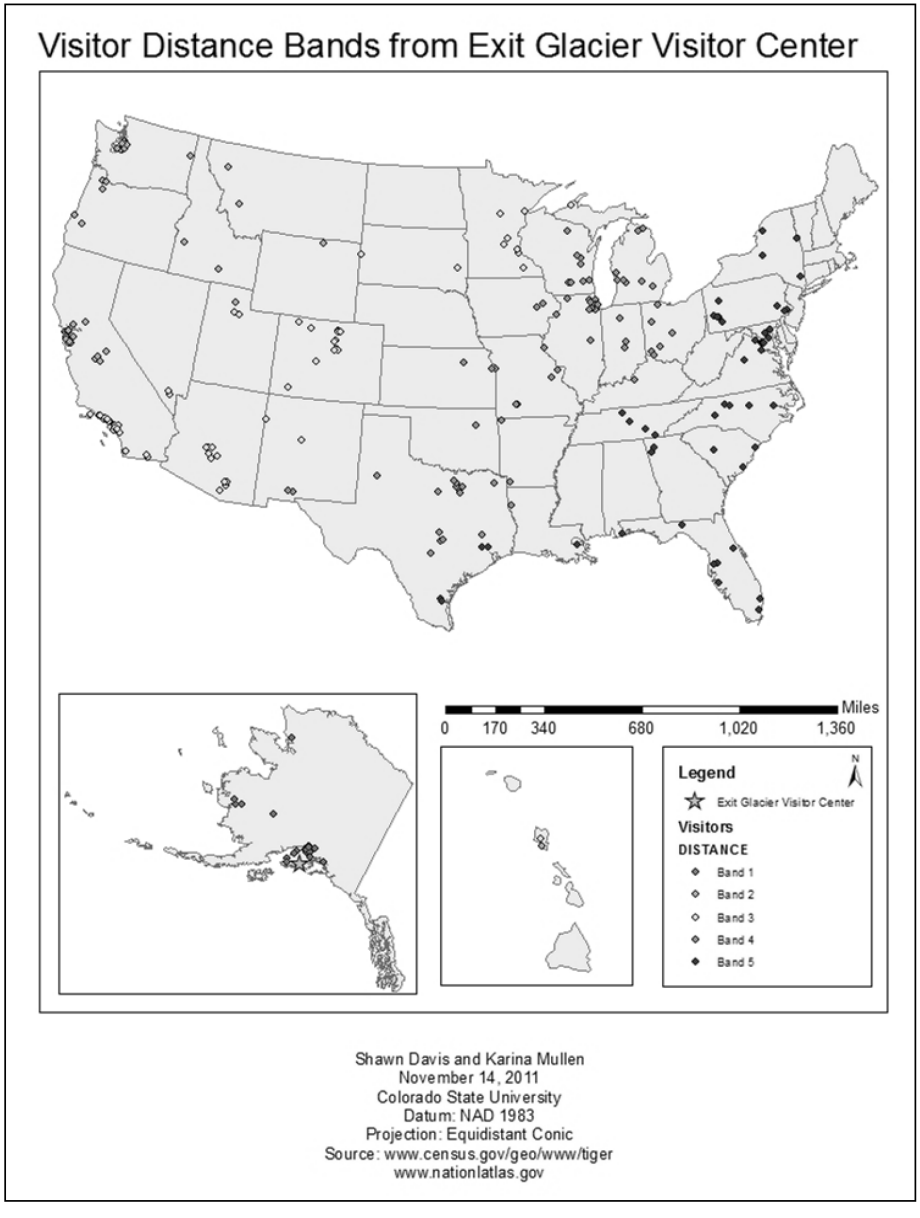


**Figure 2.** Visitor distance bands from Exit Glacier Visitor Center.

Additionally, the surveys were administered on-site, which also has the potential to affect responses. Visitors completed the survey while in Kenai Fjords National Park and therefore were more likely to respond as feeling attached to the park while surrounded by ancient snow-capped peaks carved by the fingers of glaciers over millions of years. A social desirability bias could also have skewed results by visitors wanting to appear as if they care more deep-

**Table 3.** Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of place attachment with place-dependent climate change variables ($n$ = 493).

| Variables | *M* | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. PA | 2.09 | .69 | – | | | |
| 2. LCCH | 2.52 | .89 | .26** | – | | |
| 3. SCCH | 1.94 | .87 | .20** | .50** | – | |
| 4. CHHP | 1.79 | 1.09 | .13* | .46** | .50** | – |

Note: PA = Place Attachment Concept; LCCH = I would like to learn about climate change at this park; SCCH = I believe that some of the effects of climate change can already be seen at this park; CCHP = I believe that climate change will harm this park or refuge a great deal.

* $p < 0.1$. ** $p < .001$

ly about the park while the researchers were present. Our results may have been different if we had used a mail survey and included respondents who had never visited the park before, the comparison of which may be an opportunity for future research.

Another consideration for the lack of continuity in geographic discounting is that it is a difficult concept to measure. "Complex cultural and physical variables" cloud a simple analysis of place attachment and geographic location (Brown et al. 2002: 70). Indeed, Norton and Hannon (1997) also concede that this type of research establishes the point that place attachment and geographic discounting are place-based in theory. The researchers suggest more qualitative means of assessing place attachment be used in the future, similar to the work by Kyle and Chick (2007). The work of Hammitt, Kyle, and Oh gives a more comprehensive view of future measures of place attachment (2009).

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were supported by the data. Results from the correlation show that the stronger the place attachment to Kenai Fjords National Park that a visitor reports, the more likely they believe climate change will harm the park. There were also correlations in visitors with a strong place attachment noticing more changes in the landscape. Though beyond the scope of this particular study, a strong correlation was discovered between visitors' ability to see changes in the landscape and their desire to learn more about climate change. Additionally, there was a strong correlation with their belief that climate change would harm the park. This finding gives support to educating about climate change in places where the impacts are clearly visible. As more national parks witness noticeable changes in their landscape, they become increasingly important as climate change educational tools. The extent and reasoning behind these changes only need to be made explicit through proper interpretation via skilled rangers within the parks. Exploring the connection between these variables and the potential for further educational opportunities should be the subject of further research.

These results show that the majority of Kenai Fjords visitors care about the park and therefore want to learn about how climate change is affecting it. Furthermore, this attachment is exhibited by visitors regardless of distance. One often-overlooked facet of climate change

is that impacts are globally diffuse; similarly, the mitigating solutions to this issue can be pursued worldwide. Due to the wide geographic range of visitors, education that shows how actions in other states or areas around the world can affect Exit Glacier in Kenai Fjords may be particularly well-suited to encourage climate change-mitigating behaviors in visitors. For example, interpretive rangers could provide education on how switching to sustainable energy options or turning the thermostat down in visitors' homes could contribute to preserving glaciers at Kenai Fjords. Opportunities abound for delivering conservation-minded messages to an audience that seems properly primed to receive them.


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**Shawn K. Davis,** Communication and Performance Studies, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI 49855; shawdavi@nmu.edu

**Karina C. Mullen,** Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523

# Protecting American Lands with Justice William O. Douglas

*Adam M. Sowards*

Take a year in America in the mid-twentieth century—say, 1939. Now, imagine yourself there with strong feelings about the natural world; perhaps you enjoy backpacking or river-rafting, hunting or fly-fishing. Much alarms you. With the permission of the local District or Regional Forester, logging companies build more roads into wild places and cut millions of acres on western public lands. Government bureaus and private power companies dam(n) rivers nationwide in a race to develop every last stretch of river, feed power to growing urban centers, and direct subsidized water into farmers' fields. New, synthetic chemicals—DDT most notoriously—pollute streams and lakes, kill trout, and make waterways unswimmable and undrinkable. The atmosphere, too, clouds over with unhealthy, even deadly, smog in places like Donora, Pennsylvania, and Los Angeles, California. Even some national parks face overdevelopment with more roads, more hotels, more cars. No wilderness area is nationally protected. No federal agency regulates pollution. And besides voting, as a US citizen you have few avenues available to you to express your concerns, register complaints, or offer alternatives.[1]

Take another year in the mid-to-late twentieth century, say, 1975. All of that has changed. To be sure, there is still logging and damming and polluting, but the institutional, legal, and political worlds have utterly transformed. Now, there is a national wilderness preservation system, an Environmental Protection Agency, and environmental impact statement and public hearing requirements from the National Environmental Policy Act. This revolution requires an explanation. I am convinced that the life of William O. Douglas (1898–1980), associate justice of the US Supreme Court, offers important clues about that transformation.[2] For protected lands—national parks, national forests, wilderness, even urban parks—Douglas served as a benchmark on the bench, a standard-bearer with a pulse on progress and a participant who could speak without peer to the public and politicians.

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Douglas sat on the US Supreme Court longer than any justice in history, from 1939 to 1975. He hailed from Yakima, Washington, of humble background, growing up with a brother, a sister, and a widowed mother. A sickly child, Douglas compensated by excelling in academics. However, longing to be—and be seen as—strong, he overcame his physical weakness, according to a story he frequently told, by hiking in the nearby Cascade Mountain foothills. He resolved to use the hills to build strength; Douglas explained, "First I tried to go up the hills without stopping. When I conquered that, I tried to go up without change of pace. When that was achieved, I practiced going up not only without a change of pace but whistling as I went." Such a story created a public image of Douglas as a strong individualist who could accomplish whatever he set out to. Other stories of 25- and 40-mile hikes and dangerous mountain climbing established him as a consummate outdoor figure, an image he crafted throughout his career and rooted in lived experience on trails and rivers across the land.[3]

When Douglas joined the court in the waning days of the Great Depression, he arrived at a time when protected lands did not garner much public policy attention. Douglas made his presence known in other ways on and off the court. Indeed, no one who paid attention to public life in the 1940s and 1950s could miss that Douglas courted publicity. His world travels and subsequent best-selling books, his appearance on the TV game show "What's My Line" and in various national media features, his controversial political statements both as part of and outside of his day job on the court—all of these activities and more demonstrated the justice's aptitude for getting attention.[4]

Even though the American wilderness movement set down strong roots in the interwar era, 15 years passed with Douglas on the Supreme Court before he began serious work related to environmental protection.[5] When he first started advocating in earnest about environmental matters, he entered a community not that well defined, not that large, not that well endowed, and, frankly, not that successful. Accordingly, one immediate goal had to be publicity. Douglas proved to be an ideal figure with his national reputation, political clout, and practiced eloquence.

Douglas launched his role in public environmental protest in typical iconoclastic fashion, on the editorial page of the *Washington Post*. The Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal story is Douglas's best-known contribution to the protected landscape of America. The National Park Service thought a highway along the canal would improve recreational opportunities, and the *Post* agreed it would "open up the greatest scenic asset in this area … to wider public enjoyment."[6]

Such a plan struck a nerve deep in Douglas. He wrote to the newspaper to describe why the C&O Canal deserved protection, not development. Drawing on religious imagery (common in American nature writing) of the canal as a "refuge" and "retreat," Douglas warned the *Post* editors that "[f]ishermen, hunters, hikers, campers, ornithologists, and others who like to get acquainted with nature first-hand and on their own are opposed to making a highway out of this sanctuary." Note here the expansive and diverse group of stakeholders—bird watchers and hunters, fishermen and hikers—bespeaking a broad conservationist coalition. Confident in the transformative power of walking in the woods, Douglas challenged the edi-

torial writer to walk along the entire canal. "I feel that if your editor did," the justice intoned, "he would return a new man and use the power of your great editorial page to help keep this sanctuary untouched."[7]

The gambit worked. Perhaps to save face publicly, *Post* editors accepted and soon newspapermen, renowned conservationists, and Justice Douglas ambled—rather quickly (between 21 and 29 miles a day)—the 189-mile length during a rainy week in late March 1954, creating something of a media event that transformed public opinion. The *Post* altered its position, but for decades Douglas did not let up and continued leading reunion hikes, making speeches, and writing articles. In 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower protected the canal as a national monument, which was but an intermediate step until Congress passed legislation signed in 1971 making it a national historical park. In 1975, just after Douglas's retirement, Congress dedicated the C&O Canal to Douglas, and two years later a commemorative bust of Douglas was unveiled in Georgetown. Protecting the C&O Canal marked an important point in American conservation history, and Justice Douglas's involvement was crucial. In effect, he legitimated a nascent wilderness movement struggling to gain respectability and be seen as something beyond just birdwatchers. Among other things, Douglas became well acquainted along the hike with leading conservationists, including Harvey Broome (a founder of the Wilderness Society), Olaus Murie (a president of the Wilderness Society), Howard Zahniser (the executive secretary of the Wilderness Society), and Sigurd Olson (president of the National Parks Association). Among them all developed a warm, mutual friendship. This friendship served the conservation movement well, for no one so visible in public life could match Douglas's commitment.[8]

But this prominent protest that ended in the nation's capital—and another one much like it on the opposite coast four years later—was but the tip of the iceberg.[9] Douglas's travel to international outbacks shifted to more American backcountry spots. Two books published in the early 1960s reported on these places—places Douglas believed needed protection, or better protection, from federal agencies. In writing these popular books, one of which was nominated for the National Book Award, Douglas helped educate and expose a large audience to conservation hotspots. They learned about Baboquivari in Arizona, where he felt awash in the "deep solitude of the universe." And about Maine, near the Canadian border, where, he thought, "the Allagash [River] can serve man by renewing his strength, by broadening his horizons, by teaching him that he is only a part of life far greater and richer than his own." Readers learned about Oregon's Hart Mountain and the cheatgrass invading the range and issues of predator control. They were taught about the national forest policy of multiple use in Wyoming's Wind River Mountains where, Douglas maintained, "'multiple' use was semantics for making cattlemen, sheepmen, lumbermen, miners the main beneficiaries.... On Piñon Ridge, I realized that the pretense of 'multiple' use as applied in this area ... was an awful wrong." Readers found out that on western rangelands federal agents poisoned mice and squirrels, but the poison also killed blackbirds and doves, and that meant the grasshoppers increased, so agents poisoned them too. "Man and his sprays may be the end of us yet," Douglas quoted Murie, his companion in those mountains, as saying. Majestic places, ecological lessons, management debacles—these Douglas introduced to Americans. He helped

prepare them to demand change when it was needed, as well as protection for these majestic places and other lands, at a time when too few knew either the issues or the places.[10]

So, when called, he went. Or, just as often, he went and then called others. On these sojourns were giants in American conservation. He traipsed through the Arctic Brooks Range in 1956, alongside biologists and wilderness advocates Olaus and Mardy Murie; at the time Olaus presided over the Wilderness Society. He hiked the Sierra Nevadas with the Sierra Club Executive Director David Brower. He hiked the Smoky Mountains with Wilderness Society co-founder Harvey Broome and canoed the Boundary Waters with soon-to-be Wilderness Society President Sigurd Olson. Douglas didn't only recreate with luminaries. He went to Santa Elena Canyon in the Big Bend country of Texas in 1965 with Jim Bowmer and Bob Burleson, lawyers and outdoor enthusiasts who invited him without prior personal connections and became lifelong friends.[11]

In one 1967 instance, Douglas and his wife, Cathleen Heffernan Douglas, led a "camp-in," as the local press dubbed it, near Darrington, Washington. The event was designed to protest a proposed Kennecott Copper open-pit mine in the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area. The conflict of Kennecott Copper and wilderness garnered national attention and opens John McPhee's classic *Encounters with the Archdruid*, describing Brower's efforts on wilderness's behalf. The Douglases and "a band of 150 adults, kids, dogs and an assortment of people wearing beards and beads" faced counter-protesters—even rumors of violence—as they came through a town with banners strung across the road reading, "Welcome Kennecott." Near the Sulphur Creek Campground, Douglas spoke to a crowd, and he dabbled in ethics and economics, philosophy and history, explaining that Kennecott's mine would be legal, "but just because something's legal doesn't necessarily mean it's right. We operate today on a dollar economy by leveling our frontier, but the frontier is just about gone." Rhetoric and circumstances like these were Douglas's special gift for American conservation—passionate, direct, and, most importantly, public.[12]

Time was running out for wilderness everywhere. In the 1950s, the US Forest Service began a reclassification process—a crisis to most conservationists—where the agency began reconsidering the status of certain areas in the national forests, opening some protected wild areas to road-building and timber-cutting. As the agency reclassified landscapes, it made them more vulnerable to extractive industry and foreclosed opportunities for wilderness status. This was the critical backdrop to Douglas's work. The places he visited and reported on in his *My Wilderness* books typically enjoyed some protection in a national forest, but as reclassification demonstrated, this protected status could be changed. Reclassification amounted to a major impetus for the Wilderness Act. Until 1964, land in some sort of wilderness status did not enjoy permanent protection; the Wilderness Act changed that. Before that, protection from threats often happened because of local people getting help from national figures or organizations. Douglas helped make this happen. His attention—in protests, on pages, from podiums—helped expand conservation's constituency, something critical at a time when nature represented a low political priority to most Americans.[13]

And so, as one who walked the hallways of national power and the ridges of high mountains with equal aplomb, Douglas served a powerful role not only in attracting attention but in

facilitating political connections. He articulated this strategy in *Ladies' Home Journal* in the summer of 1964, just months before the Wilderness Act overwhelmingly passed Congress. "We need Committees of Correspondence," he proclaimed,

> to coordinate the efforts of diverse groups to keep America beautiful and to preserve the few wilderness alcoves we have left. We used such committees in the days of our Revolution, and through them helped bolster the efforts of people everywhere in the common cause. Our common cause today is to preserve our country's natural beauty and keep our wilderness areas sacrosanct. The threats are everywhere.... Local groups need national assistance; and that means joining hands in an overall effort to keep our land bright and shining.

Notably for Douglas, the struggle for wilderness was comparable to the historic revolutionary struggle. His call for new Committees of Correspondence to coordinate local activists, who knew wilderness threats best, and national organizations, who knew lobbying best, announced an important, effective, and common strategy. Only together could conservationists stop wanton destruction of the nation's natural heritage.[14]

Throughout his career and around the country, Douglas formed and functioned in these informal Committees of Correspondence. His letters housed in the Library of Congress, dating from the heart of his activism, reveal engagements and exchanges with Lyndon and, perhaps more importantly, Lady Bird Johnson, cabinet secretaries such as Douglas McKay (Interior) and Stewart Udall (Interior), and members of Congress such as Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA) and Charles "Mac" Mathias (R-MD). And, of course, he forged connections with national conservationists along trails and rivers, with the leading figures in both the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, as well as local conservation groups.[15]

A brief story of his efforts in Oregon demonstrates both his connections and the cause and strategy for which he used them. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Forest Service planned a road and timber sale in the Minam River Canyon in Oregon's Wallowa Mountains. Over the next several years, Douglas shared pointed, strategic messages with Senators Wayne Morse (D-OR) and Richard Neuberger (D-OR), with national conservationists Brower and Zahniser, with local conservationists and residents, and with Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman and managers in the Washington, D.C., and Oregon offices of the Forest Service. In other words, he connected local and national activists with local and national leaders in the executive and legislative branches. And while doing so, he presented a consistent message: "With a road in there the wilderness will be ruined." Keeping roads out of wilderness had long focused activists, and so Douglas's point in his letters and a chapter in *My Wilderness* was not surprising.[16]

But more than the typical refrain about keeping roads out, Douglas called for public engagement. As he passionately put it, "Great issues of social security, power dams, reclamation, soil conservation, price controls, quotas for farmers, and the like are debated in Congress. Yet the issue of whether the people will be left a rich wilderness area or a dust bowl of stumps, serviced by roads, is left to the whim or caprice of a bureaucrat. If the Minam is to be ravished, if roads are to pierce this wilderness, the people should decide it after fair debate."

He wanted public hearings, for he was confident locals did not want the timber cutting on this part of the national forest. But at this time, no law or administrative procedure required such a hearing. "If it is to be protected," Douglas continued, "changes in the basic law governing national forests must be made. These sanctuaries need the mantle of protection that only an Act of Congress can give them."[17]

Here was the crux of Douglas's conservation politics: for too long federal agencies acted without input from or accountability to the public whose resources they were charged with managing. Through his Committees of Correspondence, his letters to and lunches with political and environmental leaders, his speeches, and books such as his 1965 *A Wilderness Bill of Rights*, Douglas clamored for public access to decision-making. His voice resounded with authority, from the highest court in the land to the highest mountain meadows. And there were achievements, specifically and generally, for protected status. The Minam River eventually became a Wild and Scenic River running through the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, while the Wilderness Act and the National Environmental Policy Act created avenues and requirements for public input on environmental matters. In this way, wilderness politics helped democratize protected lands management, a significant *political* achievement alongside the *conservation* accomplishments such legislation furnished.[18]

As Douglas raised attention and greased the political wheels for the Minam and countless other landscapes, he also consolidated and shared key ideas from various thinkers and traditions. In some ways, Douglas was at his best as a public intellectual, or, as others have called him, a "public philosopher" or "national teacher."[19] For instance, Douglas filled his first memoir, *Of Men and Mountains*, with more adventure (and campfire recipes) than lofty principles. But even so, he lauded the influence of mountains on people and nations: "A people who climb the ridges and sleep under the stars in high mountain meadows, who enter the forest and scale the peaks, who explore glaciers and walk ridges buried deep in snow—these people will give their country some of the indomitable spirit of the mountains."[20] Such sentiments linked Douglas to a long line of American intellectuals and political figures, such as historian Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt, who saw the nation's vitality rooted in its abundant land—its wilderness frontier. To Douglas and others before and after him of all political stripes, the United States was "nature's nation."[21]

For protected lands, Douglas was a publicizer, a political broker, and a public intellectual. These worked together, bound up in a person of extraordinary ambition and intelligence.[22] At the time he walked onto conservation's stage, few were watching. The conservation movement transformed in Douglas's lifetime, and the script (i.e., the rules) changed. Douglas did not, of course, *cause* all these changes. But he played crucial roles in effecting them. Several roles, actually; he was a bit of a shape-shifter for American conservation, becoming what the movement needed when and where it needed it. Here, he led a hike and gathered media attention. There, he wrote letters or shared a meal with members of Congress or the Cabinet to alert them to imminent harm to a river or forest. Now, he wrote a best-selling book celebrating natural, but endangered, places. Then, he issued a blistering opinion—dissenting most likely—charting an alternative to business as usual. Given the state of environmental protection

in 1939, an American dedicated to nature would have wanted someone who could articulate with eloquence nature's beauty and democracy's promise. She would have wanted someone who knew how government worked and how to nudge it along different pathways consistent with American principles. She would have wanted Bill Douglas on her side. I, for one, am glad he was there.

[*Ed. note*: This essay is adapted from remarks prepared for a seminar on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the appointment of William O. Douglas to the United States Supreme Court, Washington, D.C., May 16, 2014.]

## Endnotes

1. Studies of these conditions are widespread in environmental history and related fields. For some prominent examples, see Paul W. Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of National Forests since World War Two* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Kevin Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest: Creating Wilderness in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Mark W.T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (1994; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962); Devra Davis, *When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle Against Pollution* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Richard N.L. Andrews, *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves: A History of American Environmental Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
2. I have made a similar argument in *The Environmental Justice: William O. Douglas and American Conservation* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009); however, this essay reframes the argument somewhat and deploys unique examples and case studies.
3. For Douglas's early experiences, see Sowards, *The Environmental Justice*, chapter 1, and the following biographies: Bruce Allen Murphy, *Wild Bill: The Legend and Life of William O. Douglas* (New York: Random House, 2003); James F. Simon, *Independent Journey: The Life of William O. Douglas* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980); and memoirs: William O. Douglas, *Go East, Young Man: The Early Years—The Autobiography of William O. Douglas* (New York: Random House, 1974); William O. Douglas, *Of Men and Mountains* (1950; reprint, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990), quotation on p. 35.
4. Sample publications by and about him in this era include, William O. Douglas, *Beyond the High Himalayas* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), which earned him his first National Book Award nomination; William O. Douglas, *Russian Journey* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956); William O. Douglas, *West of the Indus* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958); Fred Rodell, "I'd Prefer Bill Douglas," *Nation* 174 (April 26, 1952), 400–402, urging Douglas to run for president; Politicus, "Justice Douglas—Headline Hunt-

er," *American Mercury* 83 (August 1956), 121–126. His appearance on "What's My Line" can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0u_DgK-TIDA (accessed October 31, 2014). In the 1940s and 1950s, Douglas's controversial statements often centered on questions of free speech and political liberty, which he extended even to communists in the midst of the Cold War—an unpopular stance. An excellent analysis of his positions is available in L.A. Powe, Jr., "Justice Douglas, the First Amendment, and the Protection of Rights," in *"He Shall Not Pass This Way Again": The Legacy of Justice William O. Douglas*, ed. Stephen L. Wasby (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 69–90.

5. Two important books demonstrate the importance of the interwar era to the wilderness movement: Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
6. "Potomac Parkway," *Washington Post*, January 3, 1954.
7. "Potomac Sanctuary," *Washington Post*, January 19, 1954.
8. For greater detail of the C&O Canal campaigns, see Sowards, *Environmental Justice*, 34–48, 102–110. See also, Mark Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 173–176. Stephen Fox called Douglas "the most prominent conservationist in public life" in the postwar era in *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 239.
9. In 1958, Douglas led a similar hike to protest a proposed road in Olympic National Park along the Pacific coast; see Sowards, *Environmental Justice*, 48–56.
10. William O. Douglas, *My Wilderness: The Pacific West* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960): 79 (Baboquivari), 262 (Allagash), 53–54 (Wind River Mountains), 51 (Murie quotation); William O. Douglas, *My Wilderness: East to Katahdin* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 65–74 (Hart Mountain).
11. Douglas, *My Wilderness: Pacific*, 9–31 (Muries), 185 (Brower); Douglas, *My Wilderness: East*, 156–180 (Broome), 99–125 (Olson). For Douglas in Texas, see William O. Douglas, *Farewell to Texas: A Vanishing Wilderness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); for Bowmer and Burleson's invitation, see Simon, *Independent Journey*, 327. Also, Margaret E. Murie, *Two in the Far North* (1957; reprint, Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books, 1997), 333–339. Correspondence between David Brower and Douglas describe arrangements for a High Sierra hike in September 1959 that Douglas used for a chapter in *My Wilderness*. See David Ross Brower Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California–Berkeley.
12. Maribeth Morris, "Protestors Crash Douglas Camp-In," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 6, 1967; Marjorie Jones, "Douglas Leads Glacier Peak Protest," *Seattle Times*, August 6, 1967. John McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 3–75.

13. On reclassification, see Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 152–169; Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*.
14. William O. Douglas, "America's Vanishing Wilderness," *Ladies' Home Journal* 81 (July 1964), 77.
15. T he finding aid of his papers is found at Library of Congress, "William O. Douglas Papers, 1801–1980," accessed November 3, 2014, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms002011. See Sowards, *Environmental Justice*, especially chapter 4 for his interactions with these correspondents.
16. Sutter, *Driven Wild*; Douglas *My Wilderness: Pacific*, 193–206. Quotation from William O. Douglas to Richard L. Neuberger, July 30, 1959, in William O. Douglas Papers, Correspondence, Box 360, Richard Neuberger (1947–1973), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The other correspondence is too numerous to list.
17. Douglas, *My Wilderness: Pacific*, 201.
18. William O. Douglas, *A Wilderness Bill of Rights* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965); current details on the Eagle Cap Wilderness and wild and scenic river status for the Minam River can be found on the national forest's website, US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, "Wallowa-Whitman National Forest," accessed November 4, 2014, http://fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman. The democratic elements of wilderness politics is a major theme in Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*; and James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013).
19. "Public intellectual" is my term in Sowards, *Environmental Justice*, introduction; "public philosopher" is Charles Reich's term, quoted in Stephen L. Wasby, "Introduction," in *"He Shall Note Pass This Way Again,"* xvi; "national teacher" is James F. Simon's term in *Independent Journey*, chapter 25.
20. Douglas, *Men and Mountains*, 328.
21. Perry Miller coined the phrase in *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), although the connection between nature and American character permeated thinkers in the late 19th century, exemplified by Roosevelt and Turner, and nicely explored in Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture*, ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6–65.
22. On the occasion of Douglas's death, his colleague Justice William Brennan, no intellectual slouch, remarked that Douglas was "the only true genius that I have ever known." "Justice Douglas: 'A Genuis,'" *Chicago Tribune*, January 26, 1980.

**Adam M. Sowards,** University of Idaho, Department of History, 875 Perimeter Drive, MS3175, Moscow, ID 83844-3175; asowards@uidaho.edu

# Bringing Cities to Nature at the 2015 George Wright Society Conference

*Lynn Wilson*

A NEW ENERGY IS EMERGING around the importance and relevance of connecting urban dwellers with nearby nature to realize a full range of human and environmental benefits. In this sense, there is a real willingness among park professionals and supporters to try new approaches, to learn from each other, and to forge a stronger relationship between cities and nature. This openness was reflected in the diversity of presentations on this subject at the recent 2015 George Wright Society conference in Oakland, California.

The George Wright Society (GWS) is an international nonprofit association composed of researchers, resource managers, educators, administrators, and activists working in parks, other types of protected areas, and cultural and historic sites. Founded in 1980, the goal of the GWS is to advance protected area stewardship by bringing practitioners together to share their expertise. One of the ways the GWS does this is by organizing a biennial interdisciplinary conference dedicated to advancing thought and practice in natural and cultural resource management, research, protection, and interpretation. The conference attracts practitioners from across the entire spectrum of disciplines and activities that are necessary for successful protected areas management.

From March 29 through April 3, 2015, the GWS held its 18th biennial conference in Oakland, California (GWS2015). Entitled "Engagement, Education & Expectations: The Future of Parks & Protected Areas," this year's conference attracted more than 700 participants representing land management agencies in the USA and Canada, affiliated nonprofit organizations, academia, recipients of the GWS Indigenous Participant Travel Grant Program and George Melendez Wright Student Travel Scholarships, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).

From my perspective, the GWS2015 conference was highly successful. Of particular interest to me was the strong emphasis on urban nature conservation and initiatives. This is an emerging direction for GWS conferences, which have traditionally focused more on federal land management agencies. Also, the conference's location in the San Francisco Bay

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Area was a big advantage because it enabled a number of local agencies and organizations to showcase the innovative work they are doing to conserve nature and connect diverse urban populations to that nature . This article (which originated as a blog on the Nature of Cities collective blog, www.thenatureofcities.com/) looks at some of the highlights of the GWS2015 conference from these two perspectives.

### The plenary sessions

The conference opened with an outstanding plenary session on "Parks as a Key to Preventive Healthcare: The Power of Partnerships between Park and Health Professionals" (available on YouTube). Led by Mariajose Alcantara and Fatima Colindres, interpretive park rangers at Golden Gate National Recreation Area; Raymond Baxter, Kaiser Permanente's senior vice president for Community Benefit, Research and Health Policy; Jonathan Jarvis, director of the US National Park Service; and Kristin Wheeler, program director at the Institute at the Golden Gate, the presentation showcased the innovative work being done in the Bay Area to improve health outcomes among people of all backgrounds and abilities by using local parks as a low- or no-cost preventative health choice. Although much work has been done in this regard through the Healthy Parks Healthy People movement, what is especially exciting in the Bay Area is how the medical profession has been embracing this concept through the Parks Prescription Program. The Parks Rx Program provides resources and support for medical doctors to prescribe spending time outdoors in nature as a way to improve health outcomes with the help of locally specific and culturally relevant outreach materials. Parks prescriptions are tracked, improvements to patient health monitored, and new users to parks in the community observed. This exciting approach builds on a partnership started in 2013 between more than a dozen Bay Area health departments and parks agencies from six Bay Area counties that sought to improve health outcomes for communities with high health needs.

The second GWS2015 plenary focused on a problem which seems to be growing with each new generation—that of the *sliding ecological baseline*. Presented by Kathleen Dean Moore, distinguished professor of philosophy emerita at Oregon State University, the talk, titled "Watching the World Go Away: Sliding Baselines, Diminished Expectations, and the Future of Protected Places" (available on YouTube), presented a sobering look at how unrelenting pressures on the natural world over many generations is also resulting in a *sliding moral baseline*—where, in the words of Moore, "we ask so little of ourselves, caught up in an astonishing disregard for the quietly vanishing creatures and landscapes. But who can grieve the loss of what they never knew?" This, in turn, shifts into a *sliding baseline of the imagination*, where Moore asks, "who can imagine a truly healthy ecosystem, who lives in a landscape of loss and no longer notices? Even our sense of possibility has been strip-mined." Through Moore's powerful, moving, lyrical, and yet hopeful words, she asks each of us to live as witnesses and activists, standing up for the earth and safeguarding our irreplaceable common natural heritage.

The final plenary session presented an opportunity for some of the North American leaders of the IUCN WCPA to come together after last November's decadal World Parks Congress (WPC) in Sydney, Australia, to talk about the major outcome of the conference—the

"Promise of Sydney"—and to transition attention to the world's largest conservation event, the upcoming World Conservation Congress (WCC), to be held for the first time ever in the United States in Honolulu, Hawaii, in September 2016. This major conservation event happens once every four years and will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the US National Park Service. During this plenary, Ernesto Enkerlin Hoeflich, chair of the WCPA, and Alan Latourelle, chief executive officer of Parks Canada Agency, both spoke eloquently about the future of parks and protected areas in North America, and they urged everyone to continue working towards the realization of the Promise of Sydney. They also spoke of the critical importance of a strong voice in support of parks and protected areas at the WCC. They noted that this can only happen if people get involved with helping to set the agenda for the WCC. These agenda-setting meetings are starting to take place around the world this year. A good way to connect to the WCC is by joining the WCPA and bringing your perspectives to the forefront of the discussions.

### From wilderness to city edge: the role of urban protected areas in metropolitan regions and protected area systems

Although it is not the intent of this article to review all the presentations that focused on urban nature at GWS2015, what follows are highlights of a few of the presentations that represent a global to local perspective of the role and growing importance of urban protected areas. The presentations focus on various aspects of urban protected areas, including human health, environmental protection, governance, public policy, changing values, strategic and land use planning, stewardship and partnerships, and changing demographics.

The session "Urban protected areas: A global perspective," chaired by Ted Trzyna, who leads WCPA's Urban Specialist Group, focused on the newly released (2014) IUCN volume *Urban Protected Areas*. This book is a significant contribution to the field of urban protected areas studies, providing context and concepts of urban nature protection and explaining their importance. According to Trzyna, "protected areas situated in or at the edge of metropolitan areas have a crucial role that sets them apart from other protected areas. They provide opportunities for large numbers of urban people to experience nature, including many people who may not be able to visit more remote places." He explained that regular contact with nature is good for people, and that urban people are crucial for nature conservation, nationally and globally, because of the support they provide for nature through their votes, donations, and their communications. And yet, he explained, people living in cities tend to have diminishing contact with nature. The *Urban Protected Areas* volume tries to address this through its 30 best practice guidelines that demonstrate how to promote, create, and improve urban protected areas, as well as improve the connections between urban protected areas and people, places, and institutions (Figure 1).

Mike Walton, senior manager of the Capital Regional District's Regional Parks Department in Victoria, British Columbia, made a presentation on "Near wilderness and its relevancy to our nations' park systems." Walton pointed out that in Canada and the United States, wilderness has long been a symbol of national identity, but that today, "meaningful wilderness can't be only distant and vast—it needs to be nearby and familiar" (Figure 2). He

**Figure 1.** One of the *Urban Protected Areas* profiles: Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco, California, USA.

stated that this challenges the foundation of what inspired nations to designate lands as wilderness areas. In this sense, nearby wilderness has the opportunity to connect people of all ages and abilities with the natural world, helping to improve mental and physical health, and creating engaged citizens who understand that "all things are connected" (Figure 3). However, competing interests and political priorities can conspire to divest people from parks and protected areas. The task is to make protected (wilderness) areas real for urban citizens, which can require shared power and decision-making.

Designing governance structures to achieve this requires difficult changes in the powers conferred upon park agencies. Walton's presentation contributed to the idea that near wilderness—its establishment and management—contributes to shared decision-making so that wilderness around the world might be protected.

I gave a presentation on "Achieving regional metropolitan area nature conservation: Ingredients for success." I talked about how urban areas are rapidly expanding as a growing percentage of the world's population is choosing to live in cities, and how this rapid expansion has resulted in significant negative environmental and human health impacts as formerly wild and natural areas have become fragmented, degraded, or developed. This process has resulted in a growing global recognition that focused attention needs to be paid to

**Figure 2.** Jeff Ward (l) and Mike Walton (r) surveying a regional park wilderness landscape near Victoria, British Columbia.

**Figure 3.** Where is wilderness today? For many, it is just outside our doors, within walking, running, or cycling distance.

nature conservation in urban areas. One aspect of this effort is to develop strategies and best practices for conserving nature in metropolitan environments. I posited that four key attributes have become evident as necessary ingredients for successful urban nature conservation:

- Presence of a regional vision for nature conservation;
- Political commitment to that vision;
- Organizational capacity to achieve the vision; and
- Consensus-building capacity to build support for the vision.

I then introduced the idea that the Collective Impact model was one successful approach to achieving these four attributes for regional nature conservation, especially as implemented by the members of the Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance (MGA). I highlighted two MGA members, Chicago Wilderness and the Intertwine Alliance (Portland, Oregon), for their truly significant achievements in creating outstanding regional protected areas systems and for successfully involving people with those areas. Chicago Wilderness is especially notable for their aspirational vision of protecting, connecting, and restoring 1.9 million acres of green space in and around the Chicago metropolitan area (Figure 4), while the Intertwine Alliance has excelled at building support for nature conservation and restoration by successfully tapping into the consciousness and self-image of Portland-area residents and visitors through innovative and fun marketing and branding strategies (Figure 5).

Annie Burke, deputy director of the Bay Area Open Space Council, gave a very interesting presentation on "The Bay Area's protected lands and changing demographics." A member of the MGA, the Bay Area Open Space Council is a network of 65 nongovernmental organizations and public agencies that conserve, steward, and connect people to the Bay


# The Chicago Wilderness Vision

*Our vision is to create a sustainable network of natural areas to provide critical homes for plant and animals, and vibrant open spaces for people.*

Chicago Wilderness is an alliance of more than 300 diverse organizations protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. We represent:

- A metro region spanning 38 counties, over 500 municipalities and more than 10 million people across parts of four states
- More than 545,000 acres of protected areas
- A potential network of 1.9 million acres of protected, restored or connected lands and waters
- More than $14 million in federal conservation funds, leveraged to $280 million over 17 years
- Over 500 conservation, sustainable development and environmental education projects funded

Chicago Wilderness

The Vision was created with support from the Illinois Department of Transportation and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, as well as the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation.

www.chicagowilderness.org

**Figure 4.** The Chicago Wilderness vision to protect 1.9 million acres of land connected to people and place.

Area's system of world-class parks, trails, and working lands. With nearly 1.4 million acres of protected land and 1 million acres of publicly accessible parks and trails—ranging from the 70,000 acres of wilderness around Mount Diablo, to the Presidio of San Francisco, to working ranches and the strawberry fields along the San Mateo coast—many opportunities exist for engaging city dwellers in the movement to protect these natural areas for the benefit of all.


**Figure 5.** The Intertwine Alliance has produced a number of outstanding communications pieces that build a strong public identity with the local environment and emphasize the accessibility and fun of being out in nature.

As Burke pointed out, "the Bay Area is a fascinating study in the connection of land and people. There's a long history of a strong environmental ethic in the region that is undergoing a major shift. As the demographics change, so are the people interested in protecting our natural areas." Burke's presentation highlighted several new leaders and innovative initiatives that are now contributing to the ongoing protection of "this biodiversity hotspot, world famous travel destination, and place we call home."

Jeff Ward, regional parks manager of planning, resource management, and development for the Capital Regional District (CRD) in Victoria, British Columbia, presented another view of regional nature conservation in his talk, "Planning for a system of regional protected areas in the Capital Region of British Columbia." Jeff explained that the CRD is the second-most-populated metropolitan area in British Columbia and is a very desirable place to live. The region's population is expected to increase over the next 25 years from 365,000 to 475,000. This increasing regional footprint is putting more pressure on existing protected areas and is resulting in the unrelenting conversion of natural area to settlement areas.

Ward explained that the idea of establishing a system of regional protected areas in the CRD dates back to the 1950s, and that through successive regional parks strategic planning initiatives, the CRD has addressed the need for establishing a connected system of protected areas in this growing metropolitan region. Through CRD Regional Parks, the region has taken action to plan for a system of protected areas and acquire land before it is lost forever. CRD Regional Parks currently manages 33 regional parks and trails on over 13,000 hectares on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, and the department has a land acquisition fund that generates approximately $3.4 million a year through 2019.

A significant initiative for CRD Regional Parks, as articulated in its strategic plan, is promoting the concept of "Nature Needs Half"—or the protection and management of at least

50% of the CRD's land base for the conservation of nature. This concept has been taken up by CRD regional planning in its provincially mandated regional growth strategy (renamed the Regional Sustainability Strategy), where a recent public poll found overwhelming support for the concept.

Ward's presentation also highlighted key lessons learned about protected area planning in a metropolitan region, which include:

- *Have a vision*: have a clear idea and "expression of purpose."
- *Be patient:* the system will develop over decades.
- *Planning matters:* it requires ongoing planning with community involvement.
- *Connect with your colleagues:* work across disciplines and with all levels of government and nongovernmental organizations.
- *Citizens experience and learn:* protected areas become part of their daily life.

Finally, Robert Doyle, general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) in Oakland, made a presentation on "Using park partnerships to keep parks relevant to urban communities." Doyle explained that the EBRPD is the USA's largest and oldest urban regional park system. Established in 1934 to buy and protect natural lands and provide a system of regional parks, the EBRPD now manages 118,000 acres in 65 diverse parks and operates a 1,200-mile trail system with an interconnected urban bike trail system. With an annual budget of over $200 million , it has 1,000 employees (it is one of the largest employers of youth in the Bay Area) and receives 22 million visitors a year.

The EBRPD completed its master plan update in 2013 and now has a renewed emphasis on natural resource protection through adaptive management, environmental education, outreach to underserved populations, youth engagement, public health, and access for everyone. Doyle emphasized that the EBRPD continues to prioritize open space protection, safe and well-maintained parks, and creative partnerships. He highlighted specific examples for remaining relevant to the populations the EBRPD serves in a changing urban and natural environment. These include:

- Public outreach through ethnic media and environmental and recreation programming;
- Unique partnerships for promoting healthy parks and healthy people;
- Adapting to climate change through urban shoreline restoration projects;
- Involvement in multi-agency endangered species habitat acquisitions;
- Management agreements with state and federal agencies; and
- Partnering with transportation agencies to create an urban bicycle system that serves both transportation and recreation.

## Summary

The GWS2015 conference offered a wide range of topics relating to urban and regional nature conservation, only some of which have been covered here. All of the conference presenters were engaged, knowledgeable, and eager to share their experiences and perspectives

on how to design, manage, and generate support for regional metropolitan area parks and protected areas. They emphasized the importance of such systems for the health and well-being of local residents and visitors, as well as contributing to broader social, economic, and environmental goals.

There was a definite call among many participants to become more active in promoting the value and necessity of nature protection, and to not back down on the need to protect significant environmental features and landscapes before they are lost to development pressures forever. The idea of protecting at least 50% of the global land base for the conservation of nature (Nature Needs Half) was repeatedly heard—this is in sharp contrast to the usual 12% to 15% protected area target that has been accepted by many governments around the world. There seems to be a sense of urgency and activism in the air that is growing stronger among participants who anticipate what is likely coming if we don't take strong action now to protect and connect people with nature, especially in our urban cores.

So, although I am surely talking to the already converted, I still encourage each of us to do what we can to actively defend, promote, and champion a greener future for our urban areas and for our planet. Perhaps consider supporting the George Wright Society and sharing your work at the next conference (GSW2017). Also, think about joining the WCPA and try to influence the agenda for the upcoming World Conservation Congress to include a strong emphasis on urban nature. And, think about actually participating in the WCC in Honolulu, Hawaii in 2016. These global events are often life-changing, and wouldn't it be great for a whole contingent of urban nature activists to be there? Together we could advance the incorporation of abundant and easily accessible nature into each of our cities as a solution to pressing global environmental and development challenges. I hope to see you there!

[*Ed. note:* Lynn Wilson serves on the George Wright Society Board of Directors.]

**Lynn Wilson,** Capital Regional District, Regional Parks Department, 490 Atkins Avenue, Victoria, BC V9B 2Z8 Canada; lwilson@crd.bc.ca

# Gullah Geechee Corridor's Management Plan is Meaningful to Many

*Ronald Daise*

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission's long-awaited management plan means many things to diverse groups. The 272-page document, with a CD of appendices, details the vision, mission, goals, and interpretive themes. All are meaningful, provocative, and timeless. The significance of this document, I believe, is captured in the words: "Gullah Geechee mean a lot!" Expressed in Gullah Geechee, the words must be spoken quickly and in one breath. No, subject and verb do not agree in number. Yes, the statement is triumphant. It resonates with the commission's vision: "An environment that celebrates the legacy and continuing contributions of Gullah Geechee people to our American heritage." It conveys, in part, that Gullah Geechee culture means many things; it is significant and should be celebrated.

The management plan identifies and has sparked discussions about numerous cultural resources and ways to utilize them to advance heritage tourism. This is being accomplished through partnerships for projects and programs with grassroots organizations and small community sites as well as large-scale businesses, governmental offices, and individuals. The corridor's implementation framework is "Tellin We Stories!" It is hoped that visitors will experience culture, crafts, celebrations, legacy, and rice heritage through authentic accounts provided and presented by Gullah Geechee people and community residents.

Partnerships must align with the corridor's three implementation tiers: education, documentation and preservation, and economic development. The Gullah Geechee's initial partnership with the B.N. Duke Scholars Program of Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, incorporated each of these. Fourteen rising sophomores served in a ten-week summer internship program in Horry and Georgetown counties of South Carolina. They, in part, assisted community organizations to create museum exhibits, conduct oral histories, document Gullah Geechee sites for tours, work with Gullah Geechee youths, and create a "Grand Strand Gullah Geechee Brochure."

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The six interpretive themes which potential partner sites may incorporate are: "Origins and Early Development"; "The Quest for Freedom, Equality, Education and Recognition"; "Global Connections"; "Cultural and Spiritual Expression"; "Gullah Geechee Language"; and "Connection with the Land." Ways in which partner sites can convey interpretive themes to visitors include educational programs, exhibits, interpretive signs, artwork, living history/live interpretation, performances, workshops, and lectures. Buildings, districts, neighborhoods, landscapes, restaurants, museums, welcome centers, and places of worship may apply as partner sites.

Partnership programs will contribute toward attaining the three implementation tiers through projects involving education, research, interpretation, business development, "explore the corridor," community outreach and training, environmental sustainability, cultural documentation, and preservation. Colleges or universities, performers or storytellers, festivals or special events, historians, tourism agencies or guides, or chambers of commerce may apply as partnership programs. Approved partner sites will receive official partner signs, and approved partners will be posted on the corridor's website. For more information about the corridor and partnership applications, visit www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org.

Great things are happening as interest and awareness grows. The commission participated on a float in the 2013 presidential inaugural parade in Washington, D.C. The South Carolina State Fair coordinated a "Gullah Geechee Day" on October 12, 2013, and the state of Georgia is proclaiming October as Gullah Geechee Awareness Month. The College of Charleston has provided the commission office space in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, and plans are to have an executive director on board in October. By fall, in each of the 27 counties within the corridor, highway wayfinding signs will be installed and informational banners and brochures will be placed at welcome centers, National Park Service (NPS) sites, US Fish & Wildlife Service sites, and historic sites.

The commission is grateful to Congressman James E. Clyburn for sponsorship of the legislation. He stated, "It took more than seven years of work to get the bill passed into law,

Basketmaking is an important part of Gullah Geechee cultural expression. Left: A maker at work (courtesy Charles Pinckney National Historic Site); right: A finished basket (courtesy Jud McCranie/Wikimedia Commons).

but today the commission is working hard on efforts to preserve and promote the nearly 400-year history of Gullah Geechee culture that is the core purpose of my initiative. The sites, sounds and tastes of Gullah Geechee culture have been slowly vanishing along the coasts of North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida."

For centuries, the words "Gullah" and "Geechee" were used as invectives that brought shame and embarrassment to many. The management plan includes an interpretation framework to raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the history of Gullah Geechee people, their contributions to the development of the United States, and connection to the African diaspora and other international cultures.

Produced as a collective effort by the commission and NPS since 2007, with developmental assistance from NPS Denver Service Center, the management plan is based soundly on feedback given by the public, stakeholders, prospective partners, and Gullah Geechee community and grassroots organizations. In fact, public engagement has been the driving force behind the management plan. Through feedback from 21 public scoping meetings throughout the corridor in 2009, this implementation theme was selected: "Enlighten and Empower Gullah Geechee People to Sustain the Culture."

With pride, the commission acknowledges that public engagement also paved the way for the corridor's development and thanks the following organizations that worked toward that end.

For its establishment in 1990, Charles Pinckney National Historic Site in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, gathered themes and stories that reinterpreted Gullah history in neighboring communities. Afterward, it extended outreach for similar reinterpretation to other sites throughout the South Carolina Lowcountry. The Gullah Consortium, a group of about 20 individuals from historic sites and Gullah Geechee community and grassroots organizations throughout the Lowcountry, formed in the late 1990s and continued with public scoping meetings about Gullah history and heritage in a larger and more comprehensive way.

In 2004, the National Trust for Historic Preservation designated the Gullah Geechee coast on its 2004 List of America's Most Endangered Historic Places. In that same period, NPS effectively engaged the public for the publication of its *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study and Final Environmental Impact Statement* in 2004. The document expanded the purview of Gullah and Geechee culture and heritage to the coastal communities of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina. Congressman Clyburn sponsored the bill for the corridor's establishment in 2005. It became law in 2006, and the management plan was approved by the office of the secretary of the interior in 2013.

Michael Allen, NPS community partnership specialist at Fort Sumter National Monument, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, has been involved with the corridor's journey before its inception. "My 13-year journey in the process of developing the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor," he said, "has been a labor of love. I am eternally grateful for the support of the National Park Service, Gullah Geechee communities and people, and the many stakeholders that have collaborated to create the only National Heritage Area in America that will forever preserve, protect, interpret, and sustain Gullah Geechee culture for future generations to experience."

The commission is pleased about the ongoing enthusiasm and is working to ensure the interest of youths. After all, the plans voiced in the management plan very soon will sustain their culture and that of their descendants. We want all to echo the sentiment: Gullah Geechee mean a lot!

**Ronald Daise,** Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, Brookgreen Gardens, P.O. Box 3368, Pawleys Island, SC 29585; rondaise09@gmail.com

# Saving the Old Wallville School

*Joe Flanagan*

For students in Calvert County, Maryland, a tiny structure that is nearly a century-and-a-half old affords a unique opportunity to understand the African American experience. The Old Wallville School, an 18x18-foot wood frame building, is the oldest known surviving one-room school in Calvert County. It is believed to have been built some time in the early 1880s and functioned until 1934, witness to a segregated nation and the plight of African Americans in their pursuit of education.

The one-room school is currently located near the Calvert Elementary School. But for 60 years it sat in a private yard where, until 1994, it sat forgotten and decaying. The fact that it has been restored and integrated into the local school curriculum as a learning platform for African American culture and history is testament to people taking possession of their history and using it to make a better future.

In late-19th-century Maryland—as in much of the rest of the country—African Americans had to struggle to get an education. They improvised, made do with what was available, used castoff supplies from white schools. The Old Wallville School was illustrative of the experience. It could accommodate 35 students, grades one through seven. Twelve double desks were fitted into the building with little room to spare. Smaller children sat three to a desk. If there were more students, the overflow sat on the floor and used flat-topped logs for a writing surface. Supplies were scarce. Textbooks were used. not new, and were often missing pages. The bathroom was an outhouse and the school's only source of heat was a wood stove that had to be lit well ahead of the start of the day. The teacher—who also served as principal, secretary, and custodian—started the school year with a roll book, a water bucket and dipper, a dustpan and broom, a box of chalk, hand-held chalkboards, and not much else.

In a 2005 paper, Kirsti Uunila, a historic preservation planner in Calvert County who was very much involved in the rehabilitation of the building, explained its origins and use: "The Old Wallville School … represents an early public school, a successor to the community-built and supported schools that appeared throughout the south after the Civil War, often constructed with the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau and regional and community part-

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ners—in Calvert the partners were almost always churches. African American education was not supported by Calvert County until near the end if the 19th century, and then not much. The Old Wallville School served African American children for miles around for at least 40 years. It was replaced by a newer, slightly larger one-room building in 1934."

The building began the transformation to its current use in 1994, when a collaborative effort was underway to develop a traveling display on the history of African American education in Calvert County. A retired teacher who had taught in the county's one-room schools led Uunila to the Old Wallville School, which had been moved from its original location and was then sitting in a private yard and being used for storage. Its future was uncertain because a new house was going to be built in close proximity and the construction permit called for the schoolhouse to be removed.

The property owner and the builder were local African Americans who knew both what the building was and what it represented. It was arranged with Calvert County permit reviewers to let the schoolhouse stand when the new house was built. But the arrangement was temporary. Zoning and other issues related to its location meant that it would eventually have to be moved.

At that point, an effort was made to reach out to community activists and encourage them to take on the school's restoration as an important part of African American heritage. Local media reported on the Old Wallville School and the attempt to save it—not just as an historic structure but as a powerful source of education and African American identity.

The informal group that had been advocating for the building formed Friends of the Old Wallville School, with a local attorney donating his time to compose its articles of incorporation. State Senator Roy Dyson submitted a $30,000 bond bill to the Maryland General Assembly, which was awarded. The bill required the friends group to match those funds. The plan was to move the building to the site of a church-affiliated youth center, where it would become part of the educational programming for the young people there.

But at that point, in the late 1990s, the people who were actively involved in the effort were relatively few and there were other demands on their time. And there were other obstacles. Writes Uunila, "With the long history of African American presence in Calvert, there is a lot of diversity among the geographically separated communities. And there are affiliations and enmities that affect the way they work together." The plan to relocate the school would move it out of the Wallville community and to another African American community whose residents did not go to the same churches or frequent the same social circles.

And there was the racialization of space. "There was resistance," Uunila writes, "to public support of a heritage resource in a black space, which the youth center property is.... The potential partners who resisted the first attempt to save the school included the county historical society, the Heritage Committee (which is appointed by the County Commissioners), tourism marketers, and finally, a statewide preservation organization, which cried poverty and turned down a request for a few thousand dollars to assist with stabilization and planning the move."

While the effort to rehabilitate the Old Wallville School flagged, the traveling display on African American education in Calvert County was completed. This led to a more ambitious

project—a regional exhibit created by the state-run Jefferson Patterson Park. "Strive Not to Equal, but to Excel: African American Schools during a Century of Segregation" was funded by a $174,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Its creators gathered a large quantity of oral histories, documents, and artifacts to tell the story of this particular aspect of African American history. The material helped form teacher guides and materials that are used today.

The bond intended to fund the rehabilitation of the Old Wallville School expired for lack of matching funds, and the friends group disbanded. Once again, the building's future looked uncertain. But the story of the African American struggle for education in segregated southern Maryland was getting more exposure. For Calvert County's 350th anniversary, the tourism office published a brochure that mentioned education as a critical touchstone of the African American experience. Also, a public archeology project revealed details about the lives of a local African American family of the late 19the century, including their effort to educate themselves and a connection to the Old Wallville School. So, while the drive to rehabilitate the school had all but stalled, the historic context that gave it importance was very much in the public consciousness.

As part of its effort to incorporate historic sites into the school curriculum, the Calvert County Historic Preservation Office presents summer in-service training for teachers. In 2004, as part of a course on the African American experience after the Civil War, teachers were offered a tour called "Landscape of Segregation." The Old Wallville School was part of the tour. The size of the building and the idea that as many as 35 children would have crammed inside it as the only option available had an effect on the visiting teachers.

They approached the Calvert County Heritage Committee with a request to save the building, which was met with approval. The committee formed a group, appropriating the name Friends of the Old Wallville School, re-established its articles of incorporation, and began raising funds. Now, Calvert County Public Schools were a partner in the effort. In 2006, workers and volunteers began disassembling the schoolhouse, taking salvageable pieces of it to the Calvert Elementary School, where it would be reconstructed.

Preservation Maryland gave $5,000 to the project. The Calvert County Heritage Committee and the recently certified Southern Maryland Heritage Area each donated $1,000. The aim was to restore the building as faithfully as possible to how it was when it was a functioning schoolhouse. To ensure authenticity, oral histories from former students and teachers were consulted. The project conformed to the secretary of interior's standards of rehabilitation.

Today, the Old Wallville School serves as far more than a historic curiosity. Rather, it is a living document of the African American experience. It bears witness to the resilience and resourcefulness of African Americans in the era of segregation. All fourth-graders in Calvert County participate in a day-long program on African American life from the turn of the century to 1930. They learn about education in the post-Civil War years, when there was no public school funding for blacks.

After emancipation, African Americans took the first tentative steps to educate themselves, which was often done in churches, since no schools were available to them. In Calvert

County of the 1880s, black communities began occupying buildings vacated by the white school system. The Old Wallville School was one of these. Through the educational curriculum designed around the schoolhouse, 21st-century students come face-to-face with what, to their ancestors, must have seemed a nearly insurmountable injustice. The schoolhouse acts as a catalyst for broader examination of race relations in the United States, from the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision supporting segregation, to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, to the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, to the eventual desegregation of American schools. According to Uunila, the experience allows students "to take on issues deeper than technology: moving from how far you had to walk, and keeping the fire going in the stove, to publicly discuss[ing] segregation and how the values that supported it affected everything else." The Old Wallville School's new incarnation as a teaching tool, says Uunila, "can enable conversation about the continuity of passing down black history that was lost for decades after desegregation."

One of the aspects of local African American culture that becomes clear through the Old Wallville School is the effectiveness of the social activism network that made education—and many other things—possible. This was particularly evident from the Depression years through the 1950s, when African American schools got little public funding. The same network has been instrumental in keeping memory of this experience alive. According to Barbara Stewart Mogel, administrator of the exhibit services program at Calvert County's Jefferson Patterson Park, it was crucial to producing the "Strive Not to Equal, but to Excel" traveling exhibit. Writing in *Primary Source*, the online newsletter of the Institute of Library and Museum Services, she states that the project "elicited memories and artifacts from people who had taught at or attended local public schools before integration. In this instance, every personal narrative was of equal value since each participant had experienced the subject matter—the segregated school system."

Preserving the Old Wallville School and using it as a teaching tool is a case of successful civic engagement. Uunila points out that her responsibilities as an anthropologist coincide with those of the Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning—that citizens must be involved in decisions that will affect them, that they should have ample opportunity to express their opinions and their concerns. This is not only true in the conventional sense of planning and zoning, but in matters of heritage, identity, and collective experience. While it may not be stated as such in county code or policy, this is an issue of social justice, the rescue and adaptive reuse of the Old Wallville School being a case in point. Projects such as this achieve what is most important in heritage tourism and education: encouraging public discussion, mending differences, learning from the past, and showing the way to a better future.

**Joe Flanagan,** National Park Service, 1201 Eye Street NW, Washington, DC 20005; joe_flanagan@nps.gov

# The Value of Parks in a Time of Sliding Baselines

**Kathleen Dean Moore**

## Introduction

Parks and other protected places are taking it in the chin, as global warming strengthens its grip on the land. Because they are often created to save vulnerable ecosystems, protected places are often hit hard and first—the high airy mountaintops, the steep forests, the coastal marshes and Arctic edges, the last refuges of specialized species, places of high drama and deeply felt significance.

The sorry context for these challenges is a planet that has lost 40% of its plant and animal abundance since 1970, according to World Wildlife Fund estimates. Moreover, entire species are vanishing at a rate between a thousand and ten thousand times higher than background rates of extinction. Even in parks and protected places around the world, we're seeing both the impoverishment and the homogenization of ecosystems.

I imagine that when the sun sets, those charged with protecting special places fall into bed, exhausted and despondent, because they are mostly losing this battle to save the diversity of what theologian Thomas Berry called the "most lyrical period in Earth's history." And yet, as the sun rises, people rise again to the challenge of protecting what is flourishing and beautiful. On the rotating planet, there's a great dawn chorus of committed people getting out of bed, rustling up coffee, and going off to do the good work of protecting places—their beauty and functionality and fullness of life.

Why? What is the special significance of national parks and other protected areas in this time of storms and extinction?

I will argue that in our radically anthropocentric culture and extractive economy, sliding ecological baselines have resulted in sliding moral baselines, sliding baselines of imagination, and finally sliding baselines of hope. It's a disastrous, ongoing slippage in evolutionary and human possibility. I will argue that protected places, our beloved parks, have the power to block all of these slides, every one. The protected places are demonstration projects that model a human relationship to the natural world that is marked by restraint, respect, and spiritual and evolutionary kinship. And so they offer hope in the possibility of human and cultur-

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al transformation. The park boundary, where the extractive economy ends and the ethos of honoring begins, is where the paradigm shift to a sustainable culture can begin.

## Sliding baselines

***The sliding ecological baseline.*** How many people alive today have ever seen *any* ecosystem in its full and glorious complexity? Most of us live in a stripped-down, dammed-up, paved-over, desperately impoverished landscape. Over time, this becomes the norm, the standard against which we measure gain and loss, gratitude and grief. This, of course, is the problem that ecologists call the *sliding (or shifting) ecological baseline.*

The ecological baseline slides when three elements are present:

1. An ecosystem that is to some degree simplified, damaged, ransacked, and/or replaced.
2. The collective failure of memory of what once was.
3. The establishment of the damaged place as the standard of "normal" or "natural."

Suddenly, the world slips a notch: diminished expectations, a shrunken sense of the possible. Like the unfolding process of grief, these losses end in a gradual acceptance that a diminished landscape is the norm––the way it must always be, as good as it is going to get.

***The sliding moral baseline.*** And then what happens? It's not just the landscape that is reduced, but our valuing of it. An ecological ethic is an ethos based on caring, and with each diminishment, we care less, until we couldn't care less at all. Will people care about the Arctic ice once the polar bears have gone south? What is the allure of oceans without singing whales? What is left of a marsh, when it is barren of blackbirds? Who but salvage loggers care about wildland, when it has burned to the ground? The danger is a sliding *moral* baseline:

Coast Range, Oregon. Photo courtesy of M.O. Stevens, Wikimedia Commons.

we ask so little of ourselves, caught up in an astonishing disregard for the quietly vanishing creatures and landscapes. But who can grieve the loss of what they never knew? The measure of our obligation slips another notch.

And who is holding the line? The environmental movement can tell us what we are against. But it often fails to remind us what we are for. Worse: Over the years, many environmental actions have accepted an ethic of regulation in place of what once was an ethic of aspiration and love. An *ethic of regulation* asks, How far can I go, how much can I wreck, before somebody fines me? An *ethic of aspiration* asks, How can we achieve a great fullness of our collective humanity in a landscape of completeness and complexity?

Consider the Endangered Species Act, what some consider to be a great moral leap forward. As I see it, the ESA establishes as the norm, the stingiest, the most miserly and grudging, the most last-ditch of all possible ways to respect the natural world. Because it takes effect only when animals are on the absolute brink of extinction, it abandons the ideal of glorious plenty—great herds of buffalo, swirling flocks of trumpeter swans, monarch butterflies by the millions, schools of silver salmon—the great abundance of lives, the wonder of their numbers. We eat away, eat away, eat away at species until their members are almost gone, and then we congratulate ourselves as acting morally for saving the stragglers. It's a dramatically reduced understanding of what "acting morally" might mean.

***Sliding baseline of the imagination.*** And then, almost unnoticed, comes the sliding baseline of the imagination. Who can imagine a truly healthy ecosystem, who lives in a landscape of loss? Children who have never seen an ancient forest climb onto a huge, crumbling, blood-red stump, look out through regular rows of 20-year-old Douglas-fir, and imagine they are in a forest. At that moment, another opening in the universe slams shut, another set of possibilities disappears forever.

Not knowing wild rivers, a dying child's request to the Make-a-Wish Foundation is to ride the Splash Mountain flume at Disneyland. Not knowing fields of wildflowers, a child gathers dandelions for her mother, and aren't they the most beautiful flowers that ever were?—on a planet that recently held 30,000 species of orchids. The simplification and homogenization of the imagination is even harder to bear when one stops to marvel at the extraordinary chance that we were born into a time of lavish and astonishing life. Thomas Berry again: "It's our generation that is witnessing the end of the era that we evolved in.... My generation has done what no previous generation could do, because they lacked the technological power, and what no future generation will be able to do, because the planet will never again be so beautiful or abundant." Which brings us to the sliding baseline of hope.

***The sliding baseline of hope.*** At the end of the Cretaceous period, perhaps 80% of all species vanished, including most dinosaurs and many of the small creatures of the seas. Evidence suggests that we are on track for an extinction event of equal power. The cause? A way of life, a constantly growing, all-consuming planetary culture driven by extractive industries that have few moral or legal constraints.

It's madness, the trades we make. Unless something stops us, we will keep on converting living creatures into dead commodities. We trade deep mossy forests for uselessly large homes. We trade a singing marsh for another Kmart parking lot. It's madness, this consump-

Dallas County, Iowa. Photo courtesy of Lynn Betts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

tion, this eating up. We trade fence rows and goose sloughs for yet more golf courses. We trade spotted owls for typing paper and old oaks for turning-lanes. The most terrible trade is the transmogrification of plants and animals into 50 million tons of human flesh, in the last forty years. The baseline of our hoping drops a notch.

But maybe it's worse than that. Maybe we are witness to the disappearance of the baseline entirely, *the extinction of the normal*. All the years, we humans have been lifted by the assurance that birds would go and birds would return, that storms would come in season and storms would blow back to sea again, that fish would scatter eggs before they died. In Oregon, the first rufous hummingbirds returned in late February when the blueberries bloomed at the coast. Tree swallows returned to their ponds in early March, to meet the mayflies.

It was a great day in the swamps in early April, when American bitterns and yellow-headed blackbirds swooped in, grumping and hollering.

The humans and the birds slept and woke by this, lived and died by this faith in inevitable, unfolding harmony, the expectation and the arrival, the call and the response, the question and the answer, the world's promise of absolution and return. The weather comes now and goes, and who can make sense of it? Last year, drought dried the grassfields where insects and mice would have grown abundant, and the peregrine falcons, skinny or starved, produced no young. Last year the swallows came back to Oregon before winter was finished, and there were no insects in the wind. What is the standard of normal now? Now, what can we hope for?

## Drawing the line

The planet reels under a pathology of greed and short-sightedness that is undermining our

very standards of ecosystem health, moral integrity, creative imagination, and hope itself. It is therefore a matter of no small significance that national parks and protected places are the very few places where all four of the sliding baselines are blocked. A protected landscape *draws the line*. And quite a line it is, this boundary between protected areas and areas that are without protection from the industrialized growth economy's war on the world.

***Blocking the sliding ecological baseline.*** It's true that thousands of species are irretrievably gone. It's true that the greenhouse gas pollution already in the atmosphere is going to cause climate changes that will alter ecosystems for millennia. Given that, what we *have* to do is the one thing we *can* do: We have to stop making it worse.

Like a fence, the boundaries of a protected area contain a landscape; but, more importantly, they exclude a landscape. A wilderness or other protected area is testimony to the human will to say, No: the industrial growth economy will not cross this line. Reckless disdain for the natural world has no place here. Here, the landscape is valued in itself, for its own sake, not for the profit that might be wrung from it. Fracking pads must stop short of this red-rock canyon. Oil wells must stop short of this Arctic mountain range. Water-sucking mines must stop short of this desert spring.

Within this boundary, we will not gouge Earth's ancient carbon from the ground. We will not bulldoze forests into burn piles. We will not pave meadows. Within these boundaries, not another mountaintop, not another rainforest, not another estuary, not another prairie, not another mighty river will be traded away for cash. These are not industry's to take or sell. They belong to the future of the everlasting Earth. Here is a vision of what a desert, a marshland,

Hoh Rainforest, Olympic National Park, Washington. Photo courtesy of R.G. McKenna / National Park Service.

a forest can be if we don't wreck it, for god's sake, if we allow it to grow in its full beauty and ecological richness.

***Blocking the sliding moral baseline.*** Parks and protected places are the one place you can go on this good Earth where you have little choice but to be your best self. It is simply against the law to be a greedy, reckless pig in the wilderness. It is simply against the law to steal or vandalize whatever you want in a national park. A sojourner is called to a kind of self-restraint that is rare in life—a generosity of spirit that takes only what is given and returns it in gratitude and care. This is a fact of great importance: a week in a protected area is proof that a human being is capable of being a good and decent citizen of the Earth.

The surprise is that when travelers cross a park boundary, they have the ability to slip from one level of being to another, from people surrounded and obsessed and dependent on multitudinous stuff torn from the Earth, to people whose greatest pleasures are simplicity and a close connection to something greater than they are, something older and more powerful. If there is not hope in this proof of the transmutability of human character, I don't know where it can be found.

***Blocking the sliding baseline of the imagination.*** The boundary of the national park is a fault line between two worldviews, two ways of answering the foundational questions of the human condition: What is the world? What is the place of humans in the world? How then shall we act? Outside the park boundary, the viciously *anthropo*-centric worldview rules. Inside the boundary, a new *eco*-centric worldview is imagining itself into existence.

The tectonic time and place where one worldview grinds against another is unstable and dangerous. We should expect this and be warned. Feeling the ground shiver under it, the old anthropocentric worldview struggles more and more violently for control. The old worldview becomes bigger and more complicated and insistent, even as its foundations shake. This is a profoundly insecure time. It's a time of bullies. No wonder that the boundaries of parks are contentious places, places of rifle-fire and lawyers.

At some unforeseeable time, the opposing forces build to a breaking point, and the ground leaps forward. The old story falls away and the new story emerges to take its place. Philosophers call it a "paradigm shift," this avulsion, this sudden lurch from one foundational understanding to another. No one can know where it begins: Copernicus' workshop in Poland. Selma, Alabama. Tiananmen Square. The Berlin Wall. The national parks.

The national parks? I think maybe so. The culture outside the park boundary has taken the old story of human dominion and exceptionalism to its extreme edge. A culture that prides itself on accumulating wealth instead of sharing it, a culture that gobbles up the fecundity of the planet instead of nurturing it, any economy of infinite extraction, will kill off the sources of its sustenance. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* of human greed, to crush and squeeze the last drop of oil from the rocks, to take everything until there is nothing left to take, to wring out the washrag to drink the spilled wine – and to claim that this is right, this is smart, this is worthy of us as rational beings. To persist in the taking until the life-supporting systems of the Earth are destroyed? Suddenly, this is revealed as inconceivable. Literally that, unthinkable. Unthinkable, because it can only make sense inside a system of thought that is now being challenged from every direction.

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Photo courtesy of Jeff Manuszak / National Park Service.

Inside the park boundary, a new worldview is taking shape, a story that matches what we now know about the way the world actually works, a story that validates what we most deeply value and answers the human yearning for connection to one another, to the astonishing Earth, and to an ongoing future. In many ways, it's the rediscovery of an ancient, ancestral story, now rooted in contemporary understandings of ecology and evolution. It's an ecological–ethical account of human kinship with a world that is interconnected, interdependent, finite, resilient, and beautiful. Like any worldview, it provides a measure of what is sensible and good.

The national parks and other protected places are demonstration projects, test-runs, of this new worldview. Here, people are invited to try out new lifeways of respect and restraint that work with, rather than against, the living, thriving Earth.

To be only one among many kindred creatures, to be called to restraint? Unimaginable? Well then, welcome to the national parks, where this exercise of the imagination is fully underway.

On a recent visit to the Galapagos Islands National Park in Ecuador, I was figuratively and literally put in my place among the wheeling lives. If I had ventured too close to a nest, a quick peck from a booby would have removed a divot from my calf, and a park ranger would have gently admonished me, "Stay on trail please." I was not in charge there. I had no right to rummage around or to take so much as a pebble, while the animals enjoyed full rights to live, to live freely, and to pursue happiness in their own lunatic ways. Before the day was out, a booby would walk right over my feet.

Never, but in this park, have I seen as complete a repudiation of the idea that human beings are separate from the rest of creation, that we are the pinnacle of creation, that we are in charge, that we are the point of the whole thing. Imagine this kinship. Imagine the joy.

***Blocking the sliding baseline of hope.*** This means that although we may not be able to *find* hope in a chaotically warming world, there's no question that we can *create* it. The hope of the future will be *active hope*, as Joanna Macy calls it, hope that grows in the actions that we take in defense of a thriving world. The answer to the sliding baseline of hope is to shore the baseline up again, seedling by seedling, acre by acre, from what is left to us.

This is a given: Even if park legislation can bar the entry of extractive industry, nothing can protect any area from the effects of global warming. Hope will come from slowing global warming, which is to say, reducing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Healthy forests and soils can sequester huge amounts of carbon. Obviously, the more healthy ecosystems, the better the chance. So the more intact wilderness, tangled banks, heavily breathing forests, greening jungles, tundra, and dense black soil are present on the planet, the more carbon dioxide they will suck from the air. To the extent that protected areas save intact ecosystems, and so save carbon sinks, they are a great hope for the choking world. A sane policy would rapidly expand protected land, not asking, is it pristine? Is it untrammeled? But asking only, does it breathe?

This also is given: With cascading extinctions, the world is going through a biological bottleneck as brutal as one might imagine God's fury in Noah's story. Whatever species make it through—that's what the world will be made of. Noah knew this, that what survived the

El Rosario Monarch Sanctuary, Angangueo, Michoacán, Mexico. Photo courtesy of hspauldi, Wikimedia Commons.

Discovering dirt, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, California. Photo courtesy of National Park Service.

Great Flood would repopulate the world, the lions and the elephants two by two. But he protested—I'm old, I'm tired, why me o Lord? The answer is, it's got to be everybody, each asking, what ark can I build, what habitat can I save, that will carry living things? This is the work of active hope—to protect, restore, grow, preserve, in every possible way to hold on to what the world still has, fishing it out of the sloshing waves and bringing it to safety.

The world needs "flotillas of Arks, uncountable," Portland author David Oates wrote. "Tiny handmade ones, and massive ones; science-arks like battleships, and garden-arks like rowboats, all set into the forward-river of time, to sail if possible through the narrow part of the hourglass of our era…. And then what? To touch, chancewise, on dry land. And start the world anew." In the work of creating the world anew, parks and protected places are the workplaces of hope.

So. What do protected places protect? The list is long—landscapes of power and beauty, cultural legacies, seedbanks of genetic information and evolutionary potential, plants and animals of dazzling variety, night skies splattered with stars, silence, experience of a world healthy and whole, the lives of frogs and the songs of birds, the lives, all the lives. Lizards. Astonished children. Connection to something larger than ourselves. But something more, maybe something overriding.

Protected places protect and nourish raw-boned possibility. Possibility—the creative urgency of life unfurling in the dark folds of the land, the fertility of the human imagination and the expansive embrace of the human heart—the possibility of human transformation. We don't have to live as the grieving emperors of a broken land. Protected places show us a

different vision of the role of humans on the planet, an ecological–ethical–indigenous account of the kinship of humans with all of creation, who share the same beginnings and will share the same fate.

In the protected places, we are called to practice the virtues of an eco-centric worldview. We are called to practice an ethic of restraint and precaution, to replace a destructive ethos of excess. We are called to practice an ethic of gratitude, to replace an ethos of grabbing. Humility, rather than blinding arrogance; a long view through space and time. Here, in protected places, we are given the chance to recover a sense of awe, knowing that, for reasons we will never understand, we are fully part of a fertile, life-supporting, breathtakingly beautiful planet. As protected places nurture flourishing ecosystems, they also nurture the fullness of human potential.

[*Ed. note:* This essay is based on the author's keynote address at the George Wright Society Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites in Oakland, California, March 2015.]

**Kathleen Dean Moore,** Oregon State University, Hovland Hall 200A, Corvallis, OR 97331; kdm@riverwalking.com


P.O. Box 65
Hancock, Michigan 49930-0065
USA

www.georgewright.org

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