

Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	vii
	<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
	Introduction	3
	1 An Auspicious Legacy	11
	2 Origins of Gridlock: The Reagan Years	45
3	Upheaval: The Environmental Movement in Transition	69
	4 An Intellectual Revolution	87
	5 Forests and Owls	127
6	Conservation on Trial: The Clinton Years	147

7	Land Conservation circa 2000	179
8	A Perilous Course: Twenty-First-Century Conservation	205
9	American Conservation: A Progress Report	245
	<i>Note on Sources</i>	269
	<i>Bibliography</i>	271
	<i>About the Author</i>	297
	<i>Index</i>	299

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

1

An Auspicious Legacy

The achievements of the conservation community prior to 1980 included a national park system second to none, a pioneering National Wilderness Preservation System, a variety of other protected lands, a complex body of rules governing their management, and general recognition that government was necessary to protect vulnerable plants and animals. Yet there were also significant omissions and what in retrospect appeared to be badly misguided policies. This mixed legacy was the result of decisions and activities that largely date from two periods of conservation activism, the years to the 1950s and a “golden age” of congressional initiatives, the 1960s and 1970s.

ORIGINS

American conservation originated at the end of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the increasingly visible degradation of the continent’s resources. The vast forests of Appalachia and the Great Lakes states had largely vanished between the 1870s and 1900, as had the bison herds of the Great Plains,

many species of freshwater fish, most wolves, bears, and other large carnivores, migratory birds, white-tailed deer, and wild turkeys. Nature was under siege and seemed about to succumb. What could be done? A commonsense answer was to preserve the best of what remained and to restrain, via laws and regulations, the uses of the public domain. Thus, many states began to regulate hunting and fishing and restrict the uses of rivers and lakes. More ambitious initiatives occurred in the West, where the federal government still owned most of the land. The first national park (Yellowstone) dated from 1872, and the great Sierra Nevada parks (Sequoia, Yosemite, and Kings Canyon) were added in 1890. The official rationale came later, in the National Park Act of 1916, the outgrowth of an extended battle over a proposed dam at Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite, which the park defenders lost. Perceiving the parks' vulnerability under existing law, they strongly promoted the 1916 act, which defined the national parks' mission as conserving "scenery," "natural and historical objects," and "wildlife" and managing them so they would be "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."¹ The legislation also created an administrative agency, the National Park Service, to uphold that charge.²

In the meantime Congress had given the president the power to designate "forest reserves," and by the turn of the century there were "reserves" totaling more than 30 million acres, mostly in rugged mountainous country and entirely in the West. The reserves were not exactly parks or nature preserves. At first their purpose, apart from conserving public water supplies and holding rapacious loggers at bay, was uncertain. Gradually, however, a kind of hybrid approach, combining public ownership and management with a variety of human uses, emerged. It became known, although not officially until 1960, as multiple use.

The most dramatic break with the past came with the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, who almost single-handedly made conservation a feature of progressive government. Roosevelt had a lifelong fascination with birds and was a respected ornithologist; he was well informed on wildlife issues generally and was a personal acquaintance of the leading naturalists of his time, including his uncle Richard Roosevelt, who was an expert on fish and water resources. He cultivated important political allies, including Representative John F. Lacey (R-IA) and Gifford Pinchot. The soft-spoken Lacey, a leader in the effort to preserve archaeological sites and wildlife,

immediately recognized Roosevelt's potential as a reformer and worked closely with him. In 1906 Lacey persuaded his colleagues to pass the Antiquities Act, which gave the president the power to unilaterally create national monuments, a power that Roosevelt instantly seized and used to the utmost.³

Pinchot had long been one of the president's closest friends and advisors. Scion of a wealthy Pennsylvania family, he had studied forestry in France and became the first professional forester in the United States. He made his family lands a model of scientific forestry, set up a forestry program at George Vanderbilt's vast estate near Ashville, North Carolina, and joined the federal government. A Roosevelt intimate by the mid-1890s, he became the head of the Interior Department's Division of Forestry in 1898 and, with Roosevelt's support, engineered its transfer from the hidebound Interior Department to the Agriculture Department, renamed as the US Forest Service. There Pinchot aggressively implemented his view of conservation based on national planning, sustainable forestry, watershed protection, and fire suppression, with the greatest emphasis on timber.⁴ Pinchot's maneuvering led to his dismissal in 1910, but he remained a political presence in Washington and in conservation circles for another thirty-five years.

With support in Congress and the federal bureaucracy, the pugnacious Roosevelt eagerly confronted western politicians and commercial interests (such as feather hunters, a scourge in Florida). Douglas Brinkley has recorded the details in his magisterial *Wilderness Warrior*. In Roosevelt's nearly eight years in office, he created eighteen monuments, fifty-one bird reservations, and four game reserves and was instrumental in the creation or enlargement of 150 national forests and six national parks, including Crater Lake in Oregon and Mesa Verde in Colorado.⁵ The thirty-two new national forests he authorized in March 1907 (just before Congress required congressional approval of new national forests) totaled 16 million acres. The Tongass National Forest, established a year later, embraced virtually all of southeast Alaska and became and remained, at 17 million acres, the largest of them all.

Yet Roosevelt's record was not unsullied, at least by later standards. He was always an enthusiastic hunter; championed the Reclamation Service, an Interior agency that proceeded to dam major rivers in the West; supported proposals to drain the Everglades in order to promote economic activity in South Florida; and ultimately sided with Pinchot in supporting the damming

of Hetch Hetchy. He also endorsed Pinchot's emphasis on regulated forestry and multiple use.

Many conservationists argued that Pinchot's utilitarian approach was too narrow. Some areas were so valuable because of their natural beauty, unique features, or irreplaceable resources that they should be off-limits to economic exploitation, whatever the mode of management. They found a champion in John Muir, the prominent essayist and naturalist who spent most of his adult lifetime promoting the wonders of the Sierra Nevada and southeast Alaska. In numerous books and essays Muir argued that such areas should be preserved for their aesthetic and spiritual values, and not just for their exotic or monumental features, as early national park proponents had argued.⁶ But Muir went further than most of his allies. "Why," he asked, "should man value himself as more than a small part of the one great unit of creation? . . . The universe would be incomplete without man; but it would also be incomplete without the smallest transmicroscopic creature."⁷

Muir and Pinchot were friends until the late 1890s, when the forester's growing prominence in the federal government and his emphasis on so-called "wise use" undermined their relationship. To many later writers their antagonism was symbolic of a larger division in the nascent conservation movement. The historian Stephen Fox has summarized: "The utilitarians were better organized and more intent, with money and livelihoods at stake. They had more political power. The preservationists, though more numerous, made up a relatively inchoate, nebulous bloc, lacking the goal of practical self interest."⁸ Yet the distinction can be overstated. Muir's followers opposed commodity production but favored tourism, often citing Switzerland as a model of how mountain scenery could be the basis of a healthy economy. The original motto of the Sierra Club, which Muir founded in 1892 to help protect the Sierra Nevada, was to "explore, enjoy and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast."⁹ For many years Sierra Club leaders were relatively nonchalant about road building in Yosemite and other parks. During the Hetch Hetchy controversy, Muir's followers insisted that the primary reason for their opposition was the dam's impact on human uses of the valley. No one proposed to close the parks to people or to eliminate the many services that visitors demanded.¹⁰

Most of the other conservation organizations of the pre-World War II years took a similarly relaxed approach to issues outside their immediate

areas of concern. The Izaak Walton League, a midwestern organization of hunters and anglers, devoted little attention to public policy issues; the Audubon societies, concentrated in the East, focused narrowly on birds and bird-watching; the Wilderness Society, organized in 1935 in reaction to the government's aggressive policy of road building on public lands, took a broader approach but made no effort to attract a mass membership. A myriad of local and regional groups, mostly devoted to wildlife and recreation, attracted outdoor enthusiasts and hobbyists.

During those years the Forest Service was the most important force in public land conservation. The Weeks Act of 1911 authorized land purchases by the Forest Service, supposedly to control flooding, and in the succeeding years the agency acquired new national forests in the East: fifteen in the 1910s and 1920s and twenty-two in the 1930s. These were mostly cutover lands in southern Appalachia, northern New England, and the upper Midwest. In those areas and in Alaska, the Forest Service became a de facto economic development agency.¹¹ Yet it is important not to read the agency's later history into that period. In the West, rangers devoted more time and energy to livestock grazing than to timber.¹² Before World War II timber harvests from public lands never amounted to more than 4 percent of the national total, and often much less, a reflection of abundant supplies on private lands and political pressures to restrict government competition. On one related issue, forest fires, the agency did take a resolute stand. Despite a tradition of "light burning" in some areas, it became increasingly committed to fire prevention and suppression. By the 1940s it was wholly committed and a model for other government agencies.¹³ By the 1960s the total acreage burned annually in wildland fires was typically less than one-fifth the average of the 1930s.¹⁴

Another factor shaping Forest Service policy was the foresters' conception of the agency as an elite organization with high professional standards and lofty aims. For much of the period it sought regulatory authority over private timber lands in order to deter "cut and run" logging. A 1933 agency publication insisted that "practically all of the major problems of American forestry center in or have grown out of private ownership."¹⁵ Forest Service personnel worked closely with conservation groups, which in turn viewed it as one of the most enlightened government agencies.¹⁶ Some of the prewar era's best-known conservationists, including Aldo Leopold, Robert Marshall, and Arthur Carhart, served in the Forest Service.

The other decisive influence was the Forest Service's rivalry with the National Park Service (NPS). Since the NPS had no authority to buy land until the 1960s, its parks had to be assembled from private land donations or carved out of the public domain, which meant, in many areas, Forest Service lands. There were major battles over the creation or expansion of Grand Canyon, Kings Canyon, Olympic, and Grand Teton parks, which the Forest Service lost, and over the expansion of Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone, which it won. To increase its appeal, the Forest Service developed campgrounds and other recreation areas and conducted a highly successful publicity campaign against forest fires. Beginning in 1924, it designated "primitive" areas that were off-limits to most economic activity. The first of these was in the Gila National Forest in New Mexico; the most impressive was the magnificent Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota. William Greeley, the chief of the Forest Service, wrote, in a lightly veiled reference to the NPS: "Let us add [to national parks] if that is where [the land] belongs; but curses on the man who bisects it with roads, plants it with hotels, and sends yellow busses streaking through it with sirens shrieking like souls in torment."¹⁷

Greeley's complaint was directed at NPS director Stephen Mather and his successors, who aggressively promoted tourism to expose visitors to the wonders of nature and, not coincidentally, to support the agency's demands for additional resources. Mather was particularly interested in creating parks near major eastern population centers. And, as he anticipated, the new national parks of the 1920s, Acadia (Maine), Shenandoah (Virginia), and Great Smoky Mountains (North Carolina, Tennessee), soon attracted more visitors than the iconic western parks. The agency's emphasis on accessibility and recreation encouraged travel, provided low-cost nature education, and built political support for park extensions. But it also led to excesses: a multitude of roads, lodges, and other concessions and at times a carnival atmosphere, epitomized by the infamous "fire fall" at Yosemite.

The Mather strategy paid off handsomely in the 1930s, when the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration embraced conservation as part of its economic recovery program. The NPS was given managerial responsibility for battlefields and government monuments, including much of Washington, DC. It acquired "national recreation areas," lands adjoining the new reservoirs that were appearing in the West, such as Lake Mead on the Colorado River; a host of new western monuments; new prominent parks, including

Olympic (Washington) and the Everglades (Florida); and, with the Civilian Conservation Corps, established or developed a host of state parks. Looking back thirty years later, parks expert F. Fraser Darling wrote that the years 1935–40 were “a peak of both achievement and enjoyment. Morale . . . was very high. . . . and there was a beginning of ecological awareness within the Park Service.”¹⁸

The other federal conservation agency, the Bureau of Biological Survey (BBS), established in 1905 as an Agriculture Department office, administered various wildlife programs, including a growing number of bird refuges. Although the BBS employed leading scientists in field work, it remained little known and largely unappreciated. By the mid-1920s it oversaw eighty refuges, including a handful devoted to “big game.” A 1916 treaty with Canada that protected migratory birds was the high point of its early history.¹⁹ The agency’s status changed in 1933 with the arrival of a new sympathetic president and administration. In 1934 Congress adopted legislation that established a “duck stamp,” a tax on hunters that assured a continuing source of funds. It also obtained relief funds to buy lands from drought-stricken farmers in the Midwest. An energetic young administrator, John Clark Salyer II, drove across the region, spotting likely acquisitions; in six weeks he identified 600,000 acres of prime waterfowl habitat.²⁰ In the Dakotas, BBS officials shrewdly extended their reach by purchasing conservation easements (development rights) rather than the land itself. This was apparently the first use of what would later become a widely used conservation strategy.²¹ In 1939 Interior secretary Harold Ickes engineered the transfer of the BBS to the Interior Department, where he merged it with the Bureau of Fisheries (formerly in the Commerce Department) to create the Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1934 BBS had administered 1.7 million acres in the forty-eight states and 4 million in Alaska. During the following six years it added almost 8 million acres in the states and a quarter million in Alaska. The expansion of the wildlife refuge system was Roosevelt’s “most enduring conservation achievement,” though most refuges encouraged hunting and in many cases agricultural or even industrial activities.²²

Yet throughout this period most of the agency’s resources were devoted to killing wolves, coyotes, mountain lions, bears, prairie dogs, and other animals that preyed on livestock or were otherwise troublesome to farmers and ranchers. BBS professionals scorned traditional state and county bounty

systems as haphazard and ineffective. As one administrator noted, the BBS “promised permanent relief, namely, actual extermination of the pests.”²³ By the late 1920s it had killed off virtually all wolves, had rid most areas in the West of grizzly bears, and was aggressively attacking coyotes and prairie dogs. It was so successful that it attracted a growing number of critics, scientists concerned about the extinction of predator species and a handful of landowners who realized that the wholesale elimination of predators inevitably led to an increase in the number of rodents and other genuine pests. BBS leaders responded with soothing assurances but no change in policy.

Despite the many government initiatives, more than half of all publicly owned lands, including most of the desert or semidesert lands of the intermountain West, remained in managerial limbo, neither park, national forest, nor refuge. Technically available to purchasers or homesteaders, in practice these lands were devoted to cattle and sheep grazing. In 1934 Congress passed the Taylor Grazing Act, which introduced a lease system administered by a new Interior agency, the Grazing Service. The Taylor Act helped to clarify the legal status of the land but did nothing to improve the fragile environment. The Grazing Service was weak, underfunded, and necessarily accommodating to ranchers; lease payments were low, rancher influence was high, and overgrazing was common. By the end of the decade the Grazing Service had become a notable example of agency “capture” by the industry it supposedly regulated. In the 1940s opposition to even modest increases in lease payments led to its collapse and left its successor, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), largely at the beck and call of the livestock industry. The first director of the BLM, Marion Clawson, sought to make it into a multiple-use agency modeled after the Forest Service, but readily acknowledged the challenges that lay ahead.²⁴ The BLM would remain the “underdog” of land management agencies.²⁵

By the post-World War II years, then, the federal conservation agencies emphasized a variety of utilitarian services. The Forest Service promoted timber production, grazing, and mining. The Park Service managed an ever growing road and highway system, hotels and restaurants, campgrounds, gift shops, and a myriad of other commercial establishments. The Fish and Wildlife Service accommodated farmers, ranchers, and hunters. In the meantime, most public lands (together with rivers, lakes, and oceans) remained outside the conservation system, unprotected and susceptible to a multitude of abuses.

State and local park systems, state forests, and other preserves had also proliferated, especially in the eastern and Pacific Coast states. Their overriding mission was public recreation, but a handful, large and strategically located, were also designated or de facto wildlife refuges.²⁶

A NEW ERA

If the depressed economy of the 1930s muted concerns about environmental degradation, the economic expansion that dated from the late 1930s and continued with only minor interludes for nearly forty years brought renewed attention to the dangers of air and water pollution as well as the unanticipated effects of new technologies, notably nuclear fallout and pesticide poisoning.²⁷ No less important were concerns about the reckless exploitation of natural resources: deteriorating parks and natural areas, deforestation, endangered wildlife, the accommodating policies of the conservation agencies toward commercial interests, urban sprawl, and many others. The “most revolutionary element of this new public consciousness,” writes Richard N.L. Andrews, was a sense of the environment “as a living system—a ‘web of life,’ or ecosystem.”²⁸ In their history of the era, G. Calvin MacKenzie and Robert Weisbrot argue that the initial political response came from above. “Congress outpaced public demands for federal protection,” they write. Major environmental initiatives came “from the highest levels of government.”²⁹ That may be an accurate description of the campaigns against air and water pollution and the haphazard use of toxic substances, but it is a misleading portrayal of the reinvigorated conservation crusade. More than a decade before the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, which seemingly marked the emergence of mass support for environmental legislation, conservation leaders had mobilized broad public support for parks, public forests, and a new approach to wilderness.³⁰

As early as the mid-1950s there had been signs of change. Spurred by the established conservation organizations, together with a growing number of new groups, a distinctive political force began to emerge. Joseph Voigt, a leader of the Izaak Walton League, the largest postwar conservation society, recalled “how small we were in numbers . . . [a] ragtag little army.”³¹ But the army quickly expanded. The number of organizations grew at least sixfold in the next twenty years, and the league, which consisted largely of traditional “sportsmen,” was

soon surpassed by its new and newly militant competitors.³² Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), one of the seminal works of the new environmentalism, documented the irresponsible behavior of chemical manufacturers and the fecklessness of federal and state officials, but it also noted the growing volume of protests—notably from the Audubon Society, in which Carson herself had been active for many years. Interior secretary Stewart Udall's *The Quiet Crisis*, published the following year, captured the new sensitivity among government officials. The word "conservation" now seemed too narrow and tainted by the "wise use" policies and commercial associations of the federal agencies. New and old groups alike embraced the term "environmental" to suggest their broad, seamless concerns and hostility to the status quo.

The first great battle of the postwar era went a long way toward redefining the conservation movement. In the late 1940s the Bureau of Reclamation proposed a series of dams on the Colorado River and its tributaries to provide water and hydropower for the growing cities of the region. The plan had the enthusiastic support of western development interests. Among the proposed dams was one at Echo Park on the Green River in remote northwestern Colorado. The dam would be inside Dinosaur National Monument, a Park Service unit, and would inundate the canyon and its fossil beds, the area's distinctive feature. The parallels with Hetch Hetchy were obvious, including the acquiescence of the NPS staff. The Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, and other conservation groups organized a nationwide protest campaign that emphasized the sanctity of the national parks. The protests persuaded congressional leaders to delete the Echo Park dam from the legislation in 1956, reaffirming the inviolability of national parks. In later years environmentalists often bemoaned the fact that the defense of Dinosaur led to a tactical decision not to oppose the much larger and more significant dam at Glen Canyon, just north of Grand Canyon.³³

In any event, the Echo Park campaign proved to be a turning point for the emerging environmental movement. It attracted a new generation of supporters and demonstrated how they could overcome influential and entrenched opponents. In orchestrating the campaign, the Sierra Club's new executive director, David Brower, demonstrated a flair for public relations that would soon make him the best-known environmental leader of that era. Henceforth there would always be a corps of activists that he and other leaders could mobilize for environmental causes.

In the years after the Echo Park battle, the Forest Service increasingly became the issue. The postwar housing boom had increased the demand for lumber, and the timber industry turned to the public forests. The Forest Service responded by dropping its long-standing goal of regulating the industry and became an enthusiastic and increasingly uncritical partner. During the 1950s the national forests' timber harvest tripled; between 1950 and 1960 the aggregate was twice the total of all the years from 1905 to 1950.³⁴ In 1962 the long-time chief of the Forest Service, Richard McArdle, who had engineered the "rapprochement" with industry, retired and was succeeded by Edward Cliff, an advocate of maximum timber production. Under Cliff the agency became increasingly single-minded: "get out the cut" became its mantra. To unhappy environmentalists as well as many agency veterans, the new policies represented a "profound shift in orientation," a disturbing indication that the Forest Service "had lost its essential integrity."³⁵ Areas that had been set aside for recreation or wilderness were reclassified, igniting numerous controversies: one notorious example, involving the French Pete Valley in central Oregon, was second only to the Echo Park dam proposal in galvanizing opponents.³⁶

No less provocative were qualitative changes in forestry practices, notably the widespread adoption of clear-cutting, which removed all of the trees in a given area and was often indistinguishable from the "cut-and-run" forestry of earlier years. The Forest Service promoted clear-cutting because young Douglas firs, the most commercially desirable trees, required open, sunny spaces. But clear-cutting was widely adopted in other settings as well because it simplified the work and permitted a higher degree of mechanization. The ecological costs were substantial. Clear-cutting not only removed the forest cover but damaged the forest floor, destroyed wildlife habitat, and produced dramatic visual blight. Erosion increased and the land became less fertile.³⁷ In the words of ecologist Nancy Langston, "short-term economic efficiency" often led to "long-term ecological disaster."³⁸

Perhaps the best measure of what had happened to the agency after World War II was the proliferation of below-cost timber sales. In the old-growth areas of Oregon and Washington timber sales were highly profitable to the agency; in the South, moderately profitable; everywhere else, they lost money. Why, critics asked, was the government subsidizing the timber industry when a full accounting, including erosion and habitat loss, would have

shown that even the “profits” from the Northwest forests were illusory? In the infamous case of Alaska’s Tongass National Forest, the Forest Service became subservient to the wood pulp industry. Logging was ecologically disastrous and harmful to the fishing industry, the area’s other principal activity; yet the Forest Service also lost millions.³⁹

As the Forest Service became increasingly devoted to timber production, it continued to proclaim its fidelity to the multiple-use ideal. In 1955 agency leaders persuaded Congress to give them the ability to regulate mining claims when “mining” was an obvious pretext for cutting timber. It then lobbied for multiple-use legislation to help deal with competing interests, fend off the more extreme demands of the timber industry, and compete with the NPS. Congress passed the Multiple Use—Sustained Yield Act in 1960, awkwardly restating the purposes of the national forests as “outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish.”⁴⁰

The timing of the act could not have been more ironic. The inconsistency between the agency’s embrace of multiple use and its commitment to “get out the cut” was hard to conceal and impossible to reconcile: David Clary has observed that the Multiple Use Act “asked an organization that was composed of people inclined to focus on one thing to think equally about several other things, even if at the expense of their principal object.”⁴¹ The evident hypocrisy of the Multiple Use Act aroused widespread criticism. To opponents, multiple use and the brand of conservation that it seemed to represent were only slightly different from the free-market forestry that had been a target of Roosevelt, Pinchot, and the other pioneers.

The NPS faced similar pressures. During World War II the agency had lost personnel and revenue; its headquarters was moved to Chicago and nearly all maintenance was postponed. Consequently, the parks were ill equipped to handle the dramatic increase in visitations that coincided with the return of prosperity. NPS director Conrad Wirth, who had a background in landscape architecture and recreation planning, saw opportunity in the onrush. He devised an ambitious plan of infrastructure improvements that he called Mission 66 (i.e., a plan to update and modernize the parks before the fiftieth anniversary of the national park system). New roads, visitor centers, and accommodations would make the parks accessible, convenient, and attractive, appealing to newly affluent travelers.⁴² Congress was agreeable and provided additional appropriations, beginning in 1956. Many park supporters

soon became critics. Amid all the construction Mission 66 did “comparatively little for the plants and animals” and “nothing at all for the ecological maintenance of the system.”⁴³ The “single most controversial project” was the upgrading of the Tioga Road, which bisected Yosemite park and opened much of the interior to auto traffic.⁴⁴ The road became a symbol, similar to the Colorado River dams and French Pete, of a bureaucracy that had lost its bearings. The Sierra Club, a longtime ally of the Park Service in California, now became a vigorous critic.⁴⁵ Wirth’s press releases, which emphasized the magnitude of the building program, did not help.

Environmentalists became still more vocal after Steward Udall became secretary of the Interior in 1961. Udall was alert to the growing environmental movement and to critics who portrayed the NPS as a glorified tourist bureau. Public outrage over the culling of the large elk population in Yellowstone Park provided an opportunity to introduce changes. Udall recruited A. Starker Leopold, a respected professor of zoology at the University of California (and son of Aldo Leopold, the pioneering forester and wildlife expert whose posthumous *A Sand County Almanac* would become the bible of the environmental movement), to head an investigating committee. An academic diplomat who successfully navigated the interstices between scientific research and public policy for more than two decades and who trained many of the wildlife biologists who would be instrumental in introducing greater ecological sensitivity to the Park Service, Leopold understood the scope of his assignment. His report, finished in early 1963, helped define the new environmental activism of the 1960s and 1970s and had a lasting impact on the Park Service.⁴⁶

Leopold began with a short section on the history of the Park Service and a long quotation from a report by the recent First World Conference on National Parks, summarizing the latest ideas on park management. Leopold then addressed the state of the Park Service in what would become the report’s best-known and most influential section. “As a primary goal,” he wrote, “we would recommend that the biotic associations with each park be maintained, or where necessary recreated, as nearly as possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man. A national park should represent a vignette of primitive America.”⁴⁷ In short, the NPS had wandered far from its goal of preserving the dramatic, “monumental” settings that it managed. Biotic associations, not roads, lodges,

souvenir shops, or even trails, should be the foremost concern. Leopold acknowledged that such a change of emphasis would have “stupendous” implications, particularly since a century or more of human activity meant that “the biotic associations in many of our parks are artifacts, pure and simple.” Restoration would be neither simple nor, in some cases, possible. Yet “a reasonable illustration of primitive America” might be feasible, provided that the Park Service proceeded with “skill, judgment, and ecological sensitivity” and adopted a “diversity of management procedures.” Leopold then endorsed what at the time were still relatively novel and often controversial policies: an emphasis on native plants and animals; the controlled use of fire; bans on insecticides and chemical treatments of vegetation; limits on road building, animal feeding, and other tourist-oriented activities; and removal of golf courses, ski lifts, marinas, and similar recreational facilities. The report strongly opposed hunting in parks and reviewed methods of controlling animal populations through natural predation. The Yellowstone situation was only discussed at the end in the commentary on animal populations. “Above all other policies,” Leopold concluded, “the maintenance of naturalness should prevail.”⁴⁸

The Leopold report was a critique of the contemporary Park Service and, by implication, the practice of conservation. The federal government had set aside some of the most notable scenery in North America, saved animals from extinction, and embraced regulated forestry. But the agencies charged with administering public lands had grown increasingly accommodating to economic interest groups and increasingly indifferent to the actual resources they managed. Leopold called them to account. Yet for all its apparent boldness, the report also reflected assumptions about nature and the North American environment that would come under increasing scrutiny in the following years. His association of “primitive America” and “naturalness” with the conditions existing when the land was “first visited by the white man” was widely criticized, both for neglecting the impact of indigenous Americans (a notable example of the “shifting baselines” problem) and its assumption of an unchanging natural order. The goal of creating “vignettes of primitive America” similarly reflected the idea of a relatively stable, predictable natural setting, captured in a phrase common at the time, the “balance of nature.”⁴⁹ Ecologists of the 1960s and afterward increasingly insisted that such assumptions were misleading, that storms, fires, droughts, and

other natural upheavals constantly created new and unanticipated combinations of plants and animals. One could not simply remove the golf courses, ski lifts, shops, and other extraneous facilities and restore what had existed. A more realistic goal was “historical integrity,” preserving the types of plants, animals, and ecological processes that had traditionally characterized an area.⁵⁰ These issues would emerge in the future. In the meantime, the Leopold report was enormously influential.

Prompted in part by Leopold’s conclusions, Udall soon replaced Wirth with George Hartzog, an activist and “political wheeler-dealer” (in the words of environmental journalist Michael Frome) who was eager to respond to another common complaint, that the park system was not growing fast enough to meet the needs of a growing, mobile population.⁵¹ “I had a simple credo,” Hartzog recalled, “take it now, warts and all.”⁵² Abandoning Wirth’s emphasis on recreational planning, he saw his assignment as a “race” against urban sprawl and rural industrialization. “Rounding out” the park system, a traditional theme among park advocates, became “rounding up.”⁵³ Working closely with congressional leaders, he championed new western parks as well as seashores, lakeshores, and urban national parks. During Hartzog’s tenure (1964–72), the Park Service added seventy-two units covering 3 million acres and did much of the planning for the anticipated Alaska parks.

Apart from the absolute number of new units, the hallmark of the Hartzog years was the varied character of the new parks. For decades the Park Service had emphasized areas of stunning natural beauty, which usually translated into snow-capped mountains or distinctive geological features. There were exceptions, but the emphasis on “quality” had long been a constant in the discussions of national park administrators and supporters.⁵⁴ By the time of Hartzog’s arrival, however, many park advocates had concluded that this emphasis was obsolete, if not wrong-headed. Congress characteristically embraced both sides of the debate. At the same time it authorized a half-dozen new parks with distinctive scenery, it also endorsed what President Richard Nixon would later call “parks to the people.” In 1961 it created Cape Cod National Seashore, largely because of the interest of President Kennedy. Point Reyes, California, and Padre Island, Texas, followed in 1962, and five others by 1972. Beginning in 1966 it authorized a series of midwestern lakeshores: Pictured Rocks, Michigan, and Indiana Dunes, Indiana, in 1966; Apostle Islands, Wisconsin, and Sleeping Bear Dunes, Michigan, in 1970. Six national recreation areas in or adjacent to

large cities were added in the early 1970s. In the late 1970s, thanks largely to Representative Philip Burton (D-CA), the pace accelerated, provoking jokes about “park barrel” bills. Burton’s goal supposedly was to locate a park unit in every congressional district.⁵⁵ In any case there was no pretense of a systematic effort to “round out” the park system with distinctive landscapes. An influential advocate was more important than the setting itself.

An increasingly important hurdle was the cost of park land. The western parks were created by transferring land from the Forest Service or BLM to the Park Service; additional facilities and employees would be required, but the acquisition cost was zero. The seashores and lakeshores were mostly privately owned, as were most lands in the eastern two-thirds of the country. Redwood National Park, in northern California, was by far the most costly of the new parks, especially after the initial purchase in 1968 had to be supplemented with adjacent forest lands to protect the redwoods. “Willing sellers ran the show,” concluded one group of historians.⁵⁶ Because of high land costs and a reluctance to force residents to leave, the seashores, lakeshores, and national recreation areas included many inholdings, privately owned lands inside park boundaries that totaled nearly 4.5 million acres by 1980.⁵⁷ Some of the new parks were “greenline” by design, depending on regulations and cooperation rather than fee purchases.

There were also important qualitative changes. The older parks featured a road system, extensive development around an outstanding natural attraction, perhaps another developed area, and one or more “gateway” communities. The newer rural parks were at least initially roadless, with minimal amenities and only minor recreational features. Canyonlands (1964), Guadalupe Mountains (1966), North Cascades (1968), and Voyageurs (1970) are examples of the more restrained approach. Geographer Thomas Vale has noted that the “reduced emphasis on recreational development . . . expressed a more general trend” of the park system.⁵⁸ Visitor services now competed with an effort to preserve as much of the natural landscape as possible.

Spurred by Leopold and his Berkeley colleague, Harold Biswell, an expert on forest and wildland fires, the Park Service also embraced a more positive view of forest fires. They had long been a feature of resource management at Everglades and several other eastern parks, but the breakthrough came at Sequoia and Kings Canyon, where lightning-caused fires were common and years of fire suppression had led to dangerous accumulations of dead trees

and woody plants. After 1965 park managers generally allowed backcountry fires to burn themselves out and experimented with prescribed burns. In 1968 the NPS explicitly endorsed the new approach, although it proceeded warily and did not even announce the change in policy to the public for another six years.⁵⁹ The new NPS policies, however, were a major victory for what fire historian Stephen J. Pyne has called the “fire counterculture.”⁶⁰ They marked yet another important break with the past.

CONGRESS LEADS

By the mid-1960s the environmental movement had become a powerful political force, with a growing cadre of lobbyists and extensive grassroots support. Civil rights campaigns and exposés of environmental abuses, such as *Silent Spring*, helped pave the way for an extraordinary series of environmental laws, which increased the regulatory responsibilities of the federal government and transformed the management of public lands. In the 1960s a group of western liberal senators, including Lee Metcalf (D-MT), Frank Church (D-ID), Clinton Anderson (D-NM), and Henry “Scoop” Jackson (D-WA), took the lead. In the 1970s, as western commodity producers mobilized against additional conservation legislation, the House of Representative played a larger role, especially after Morris Udall (D-AZ) became chair of the Interior Committee in 1973. Responding to public pressures, Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter were generally supportive, and Carter played a major role in the passage of ANILCA. This unusual combination marked this decade and a half as an uncommonly productive and atypical chapter in the history of American conservation.

Congress passed twenty-two major environmental laws between 1964 and 1980, half of which dealt with public lands and wildlife. Seven were of particular importance in the following years:

The Land and Water Conservation Act (1964) established a fund with revenues from offshore oil leases to finance land purchases by federal, state, and local governments. It facilitated the expansion of the national park system and later included money for historic preservation.

The Wilderness Act (1964) authorized Congress to designate “untrammelled” federal lands as part of a National Wilderness Preservation System, permanently excluding roads, structures, and commercial activities. Wilderness

became the highest form of land protection. Nine million acres of national forest land that the Forest Service had administratively classified in several wilderness categories became the foundation for the new system. The Forest Service, NPS, and FWS were to review their roadless lands in the following decade and recommend additions.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 1969) required federal agencies to prepare “environmental impact statements” for projects with environmental implications and invite public comment. Later judicial decisions required evaluations with explicit alternatives.

The Endangered Species Act (1973) was the capstone to a series of wildlife measures designed to protect endangered species and prevent extinctions. The FWS and the Commerce Department’s National Marine Fisheries Service were to maintain lists of “threatened” and “endangered” species, which required protective measures, and to designate “critical habitats” necessary for recovery. The law applied to private and public property but emphasized single species.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA, 1976), the long-delayed organic act for the Bureau of Land Management, gave it and the vast areas it administered in the West and Alaska a permanent role in public land management. It upgraded the low-status grazing service into a multiple-use agency and required wilderness reviews of all BLM lands.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA, 1976) required periodic detailed plans for each forest and invited public comments on the plans. It restricted clear-cutting in some situations and required protection of wildlife “diversity.” The act became fundamental to Forest Service operations.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA, 1980) authorized ten new national parks and enlarged three existing parks in Alaska. It also greatly expanded the wildlife refuge system, designated huge wilderness areas, and accelerated land transfers to Native corporations. The new parks and refuges were based largely on natural boundaries. Altogether 104 million acres were transferred from the BLM to other agencies. The legislation also included controversial provisions that subsidized logging in the Tongass National Forest and provided a mechanism for opening the new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

Other laws provided for the designation of rivers or parts of rivers as “wild and scenic,” limiting development and prohibiting dams (1968); authorized

a series of long-distance hiking trails (1968); and regulated strip mining and required the reclamation of mined areas (1977).⁶¹ Other regulatory measures, such as the federal water pollution control acts of 1965 and 1972, also influenced conservation policy.

The large majorities by which most of these measures passed were often misleading. Public opinion may have dictated the final votes, but that was after the most controversial proposals had been eliminated or diluted. Most conservation bills attracted strong and persistent opposition. Liberals, usually Democrats, typically sponsored the legislation; Republicans were the usual opponents. But party affiliation was less important than geography. Representatives and senators typically defended home state or hometown business interests, which meant that most opposition came from the West, notably the rural West. By the 1970s western liberals were well aware of the growing opposition to parks and especially wilderness legislation and became more cautious. Symptomatic of this change was the behavior of Senator Henry Jackson. As the powerful head of the Senate Interior Committee, he authored the National Environmental Policy Act and guided other measures through his committee. A decade later, in response to the concerns of Seattle business and labor interests, he repeatedly delayed the ANILCA legislation. The most influential Republican senator on conservation issues, Mark Hatfield (R-OR), was generally a friend of the environment but a vigorous opponent of restrictions on public land logging.

A critical political event during these years was the defeat of Wayne Aspinall (D-CO) in the 1972 Democratic primary by a coalition of environmentalists.⁶² Aspinall, the longtime chair of the House Interior Committee, was a vigorous defender of traditional western commodity interests. His defeat created an opening for Udall, a leader of the House liberals and an environmentalist. At the same time Philip Burton, the most influential congressional liberal, and John Seiberling (D-OH), a champion of parks and wilderness, joined the committee. This triumvirate made the Interior Committee a source of innovative environmental legislation for more than a decade.

The Wilderness Act had its origins in the mid-1950s as conservationists worried about rampant development, Mission 66, and the apparent transformation of the Forest Service. The agency's practice of setting aside roadless areas had slowed in the 1940s and was now gradually being reversed as it became increasingly preoccupied with timber cutting.⁶³ Howard Zahniser,

the executive director of the Wilderness Society, and other environmental leaders responded with a plan for a “wilderness preservation system” that would permanently restrict the Forest Service, the Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Zahniser, the principal author, defined wilderness as an “area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” The proposed law would apply to federally owned lands “without permanent improvements or human habitation” and where the “imprint of man’s work” was “substantially unnoticeable.” It preserved existing Forest Service wilderness areas and provided for additions from the national parks and wildlife refuges (BLM lands became eligible after 1976). In 1956 Zahniser persuaded Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-MN) to introduce the initial bill. The proposed legislation went through numerous revisions but made little progress until the early 1960s, when Senator Clinton Anderson (D-NM), the chair of the Senate Interior Committee, became its champion. Anderson secured passage of the Senate bill in 1961, but it remained stalled in the House Interior Committee. Aspinall’s price for approval was a series of weakening amendments: each addition to the wilderness system would require an act of Congress, and mining claims in wilderness areas would be allowed for another twenty years.⁶⁴ The final legislation made the 9.1 million acres of existing national forest wilderness the starting point for the new system and required the Forest Service, Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service to review their holdings over the next decade for possible additions. President Johnson signed the Wilderness Act on September 3, 1964, at the same time he signed the legislation creating the Land and Water Conservation Fund. More than any other measure, the Wilderness Act reflected the growing public antipathy toward the Forest Service and other federal agencies that had capitulated to commercial interests and the likely legacy of their policies, a rural landscape bereft of trees and other natural features.

One of Aspinall’s hurdles, the requirement of congressional action on each addition to the wilderness system, soon backfired on opponents. It effectively politicized the process of designating wilderness and became, in the words of political scientist Christopher Klyza, “the first successful challenge to the privilege of technocratic utilitarianism.”⁶⁵ By requiring demonstrations of public support, it gave environmental organizations a large, often critical role in drafting legislation and mobilizing public sentiment, and it ultimately

speeded the expansion of the system.⁶⁶ Many areas that the agencies never would have recommended now received serious consideration.

The Wilderness Act was dramatically unsuccessful in one regard: it had little or no impact on the Forest Service's ability to "get out the cut." Timber harvest totals remained at historically unprecedented levels through the mid-1970s, and the conflict between the agency and the environmental organizations intensified, with the Bitterroot National Forest in Idaho and Montana the single most important battleground.⁶⁷ In 1973 the Izaak Walton League scored a major victory when a judge ruled, in a suit involving West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest, that clear-cutting was not permitted under the agency's 1905 organic act. A similar decision in an Alaska suit the following year shocked the Forest Service and the timber industry. When their lobbyists asked Congress to overturn those decisions, environmentalists responded with legislation that severely limited clear-cutting and imposed other restrictions on the Forest Service. A final compromise, the National Forest Management Act (1976), legalized clear-cutting with some qualifications. It also required the Forest Service to protect wildlife and to prepare detailed plans for each forest and solicit public comment on those plans. The hearings, comment periods, and administrative appeals—with lawsuits a possibility—underlined the prevailing distrust of the agency and the multiple-use doctrine. The first seventy-five plans produced over 600 lawsuits.⁶⁸

The Fish and Wildlife Service also received greater scrutiny in the 1960s and 1970s. One obvious target was the predator control program. Responding to complaints from environmentalists, Secretary Udall in 1963 asked members of the Leopold committee to examine the program and make recommendations. The committee's 1964 report was as critical of the wildlife managers as it had been of the NPS but did not call for abolition of the program or suggest sweeping changes. Criticism of the agency continued to grow in the following years as the plight of endangered species received more attention, and it became a target of Representative John Dingell (D-MI), the emerging congressional expert on wildlife issues. In 1971 the secretary of the Interior appointed a new study committee. It repeated the criticisms of 1964 but this time called for an end to predator controls. Dingell proposed restrictive legislation, but before Congress could act, President Nixon, in a bid for public support, issued a sweeping executive order ending the control program except for rodents. The executive order temporarily halted the attacks on predators

and gave Congress an excuse not to act.⁶⁹ As a result, Presidents Ford and Reagan were able to backtrack, essentially canceling Nixon's order with little fanfare or publicity.

A parallel campaign to protect endangered species did lead to the passage of major legislation. A series of exposés on the fate of dolphins, seals, and whales, together with accumulating evidence of the glaring ineffectiveness of the International Whaling Commission, spurred Congress to adopt the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. The new law gave the federal government exclusive jurisdiction over marine mammals, divided enforcement between the Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service (whales, porpoises) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (polar bears, sea otters, manatees, walruses, etc.), and defined the objective of regulation as the "health and stability of the marine ecosystem." The law's provisions grew ever more complex in the following years as Congress attempted to reconcile the marine mammal law with the demands of the commercial fishing industry. A major controversy over the incidental killing of dolphins by fishing crews demonstrated the difficulty of treating each species separately.⁷⁰

In the meantime, Nixon's executive order on predator controls gave new impetus to the movement for a comprehensive endangered species act. The possible extinction of large, familiar animals, such as bison, grizzly bears, and bald eagles, had spurred several remedial measures in earlier years, but federal initiatives on behalf of endangered species (in contrast to the animal control effort) was sporadic and unsystematic. Secretary Udall made endangered species a priority and helped persuade Congress to adopt legislation applying to animals on public lands in 1966 and 1969. Environmentalists demanded a broader approach, similar to the Marine Mammal Act, and Nixon's endorsement in 1972 removed the last major obstacle. Legislation introduced by Representative Dingell and Senator Hatfield encountered virtually no opposition.⁷¹ The final votes, in July and December of 1973, were overwhelmingly favorable. Under the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service were to list threatened or endangered animals and plants and use the authority granted under the law to prevent their extinction. Citizens could sue to compel enforcement. The law was unusually broad and prescriptive and covered public and private land. Despite its sweeping language, many members of Congress supported it because they assumed it would have little practical effect.

In later years, as the law became more central to conservation campaigns, it was often criticized for its emphasis on single species. An equally serious problem, as many environmentalists had anticipated, was its reliance on the Fish and Wildlife Service (not to mention the Marine Fisheries Service, which was largely overlooked). Traditionally weak and underfunded, the Fish and Wildlife Service had little standing in the Washington bureaucratic world and little appetite for confronting powerful interest groups. Saving plants and animals from extinction would be a challenging assignment under the best of conditions. As enforcement efforts became more extensive and controversial, the agency gradually emerged from bureaucratic obscurity. In the 1990s, when the act arguably became the single most influential legacy of the legislative avalanche of the 1960s and 1970s, the Fish and Wildlife Service at last became a full-fledged partner of the other conservation agencies.

By the 1970s environmentalists had concluded that that the Bureau of Land Management also could play a meaningful role in preserving western landscapes. At that time, the BLM administered twice as many acres as the other agencies together, with most of its land in the lower forty-eight states devoted to grazing, under the highly permissive system established by the Taylor Grazing Act. The BLM role in Alaska was largely custodial. Nevertheless, the agency gradually became more assertive. In the 1950s and 1960s it conducted range surveys to determine the “carrying capacity” of the land. This seemingly modest initiative was “a local level manifestation of the professional maturation of the BLM” and had some impact on land utilization.⁷² Secretary Udall and his BLM directors accelerated this process by emphasizing “professional, scientific management.”⁷³ An important change came in 1974, when the National Resources Defense Council, one of the new activist organizations of the 1960s, successfully sued the BLM for violations of the National Environmental Policy Act. The court required the agency to prepare separate environmental impact statements for each of its 144 grazing districts. This process, which took more than a decade, resulted in substantial reductions in the number of animals on leased lands.⁷⁴ The 1974 decision marked “the beginning of modern rangeland management.”⁷⁵

Finally, in 1976, Congress completed the process of converting the BLM into a multiple-use agency with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The law provided for the permanent retention and management of BLM lands, affirmed the BLM’s managerial role and authority, and

committed it to multiple use. The law also ordered the BLM to review its lands for possible wilderness designations and created a large “desert conservation area” in southeastern California. Only the second such conservation area, the California Desert National Conservation Area symbolized the evolving character of the agency and its mission.⁷⁶ FLPMA did not address another controversial issue, grazing fees. Two years later, in another compromise measure, Congress adopted a rancher-sponsored formula that kept rates low but reemphasized the need to improve range quality, which meant further reductions in livestock numbers.⁷⁷

ANILCA

The capstone to the legislative achievements of the 1960s and 1970s was the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The Alaska lands act was avowedly preservationist and ecologically informed, designed in part to protect the habitat of wildlife characteristic of arctic and subarctic landscapes. It explicitly recognized the interests of the substantial Native population and emphasized the compatibility of conservation with local economic interests. ANILCA was the single best example of the effects of an activist Congress and the ability of environmentalists to mobilize the public. Opponents charged that it would “lock up” exploitable resources, which was both untrue and ironic; the lands with the most obvious potential were deliberately excluded from the legislation, and ANILCA provided the foundation for a new tourism-based economy. In the words of Dave Foreman, an outspoken critic of the Washington-oriented environmental organizations of that era, ANILCA “remains the highest point for visionary protected area designation.”⁷⁸

The roots of ANILCA went back more than a decade to the discovery of a huge and long-sought oil field off Alaska’s Arctic coast at Prudhoe Bay. The field was more than a thousand miles from the nearest refineries, and a proposal to build a pipeline 800 miles south to Prince William Sound, on the Pacific Coast, encountered strenuous objections from two groups: Alaska’s Natives, whose long-neglected land claims had received scant attention before the Prudhoe Bay discoveries, and environmentalists, who worried about the hazards of shipping oil through the treacherous sound and down the Pacific Coast. After extended debates, mostly over the amount of land and money to settle the Natives’ claims, Congress proved to be remarkably generous.⁷⁹

Eager to accommodate the petroleum industry and not far removed from the civil rights crusade of the 1960s, it passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. The law vacated the land claims, awarded a total of 44 million acres (12 percent of Alaska) and a billion dollars to a series of new Native corporations, reaffirmed the spirit of the civil rights movement, and removed the most important legal obstacles to the pipeline. Alaska historian Stephen Haycox has described ANCSA as “monumental, landmark legislation,” probably the “most generous settlement” of Native land claims in American history.⁸⁰ To mollify environmentalists as well as the federal conservation agencies, which had cast wistful looks at Alaska’s magnificent scenery and bountiful wildlife, Congress added Section 17d(2), authorizing the secretary of the Interior to reserve as much as 80 million acres of Alaska for possible national parks and wildlife refuges. Section 17d(2) had a five-year time limit. In the meantime, the passage of ANCSA set off an extended battle between environmentalists and the Nixon and Ford administrations over the exact route of the pipeline. The environmentalists held out for an overland route through Canada, but Congress again deferred to the industry, approving a pipeline to Valdez on Prince William Sound. Completed in 1977, the pipeline became “a paradigm of 1980’s greed.”⁸¹

That left the issue of new or expanded parks still unresolved. Alaska already had Glacier Bay, Mt. McKinley, and Katmai National Parks, Tongass and Chugach National Forests, and more than twenty wildlife refuges.⁸² But 200 million additional acres of federally owned land, embracing vast mountain ranges, large lakes, and free-flowing rivers, were wholly unprotected. Section 17(d)2 temporarily restricted the most aesthetically and ecologically desirable lands, but there was nothing to prevent Congress from designating 100 or 200 million acres of parks and refuges.

On the other hand, there was also no guarantee that Congress would do anything. The battle over the pipeline had resulted in a narrow victory for the oil industry and a strong aversion among congressional leaders to additional Alaska legislation. To many, the area was too remote and the hostility of local industrial interests too intense. Despite bipartisan support for environmental legislation, it appeared that five years would not be enough time and that a single omnibus bill would be impossible before the expiration of the 17d(2) withdrawals in 1978 (the terminal date, as the secretary of the Interior had made the final selections in 1973).

Two developments of 1976–77 radically altered the prospects for an Alaska lands act. The first was political: the election of President Jimmy Carter, who supported an Alaska settlement. The second was a decision by leaders of the environmental movement to mount a nationwide campaign for an Alaska bill. The pipeline act had revealed the limits of their influence; another defeat on Alaska lands would be devastating. The Alaska campaign was thus a high-stakes gamble even with the support of Carter and Morris Udall, who agreed to sponsor the legislation. By 1976 the leaders of Alaska's burgeoning environmental movement, with the assistance of local representatives of the Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, had identified the most desirable 17d(2) areas. But they also insisted that the proposed legislation include millions of acres of wilderness in the Tongass National Forest, a longtime goal of Alaska environmentalists. By early 1977 the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and Friends of the Earth had enlisted other national environmental organizations, plus dozens of related groups, in an Alaska Coalition and began to mount the most ambitious campaign of the decade. The coalition soon had organizations in most states and a Washington headquarters filled with youthful activists and headed by two Sierra Club staffers, Chuck Clusen and Doug Scott.⁸³

The bill that Udall introduced in 1977 provided for nearly 160 million acres of parks and wildlife refuges, with more than 100 million acres designated as wilderness. The most important features were the expansion of the three Alaskan national parks and the creation of ten other parks, monuments, and preserves, all administered by the NPS. To win the support of Alaska's Natives and fulfill the promise of ANCSA, the legislation provided for traditional subsistence activities (hunting, trapping, fishing, collecting edible plants) in the parks and the use of vehicles such as snowmobiles in some wilderness areas. No one would be able to argue that land conservation was achieved at the expense of racial minorities or the rural poor. Since Alaska's elected leaders opposed the legislation, success depended on demonstrating widespread popular support. During the spring and summer of 1977 a special House subcommittee on Alaska lands, chaired by Representative Seiberling, held a series of widely publicized hearings in western cities and in Alaska, most of which became rallies for the legislation. The opposition came mostly from the timber industry and focused on the Tongass wilderness provisions. This pattern continued as the House and then the Senate considered the bill.

With the backing of Udall and Seiberling, the House passed the bill by an overwhelming margin in May 1978. The Senate proved to be less enthusiastic, largely because Senator Jackson delayed action until the end of the congressional session and then unsuccessfully tried to orchestrate a last-minute deal. With the 17d(2) withdrawals about to expire and the state government prepared to press its land claims, Carter used his authority under the 1906 Antiquities Act to create 54 million acres of national monuments, essentially the proposed national parks.

Thanks to Carter, the bill's supporters had at least two more years to win Senate approval for a lands act. The Alaska Coalition continued its campaign, and Udall introduced a similar bill in the new Congress. The House passed Udall's bill, again by a large margin, and the Senate again stalled until the end of the session. As late as mid-July 1980, many insiders believed the bill would fail. The Senate finally acted just before the presidential election, adopting a weakened version of the Udall bill. If Carter had won, Udall would have insisted on additional concessions. But the victory of Ronald Reagan and the election of a Republican majority in the Senate meant that the only option was to accept the Senate bill. The House passed ANILCA on December 2.⁸⁴

Despite this imperfect ending, ANILCA generally reflected the plan that Alaska environmentalists had formulated five years earlier. The major park and refuge units remained intact, and the total acreage, 104 million, was generous compared with the 80 million acres reserved in ANCSA. The outpouring of public support had indeed proven decisive. The concessions were in the details of the legislation. ANILCA substantially reduced the amount of wilderness and added liberal provisions for public access and subsistence activities in protected areas. There were also two troubling additions to the bill that became sources of continuing controversies. The Alaska senators had won a mandate for a continued high level of logging in the Tongass and a generous government subsidy to the local timber industry. Together with a provision in ANCSA that allowed some Native corporations to select Tongass lands, this concession led to record levels of timber cutting in the following years, denuding many of the coastal islands. The second important concession was the treatment of the new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a vast reserve of 18 million acres in the northeast corner of the state. Although much of the refuge was designated as wilderness, a 1.5 million-acre area adjacent to the state-owned Prudhoe Bay oil field was placed in a separate

category, to be studied as a possible addition to the Prudhoe Bay field. The area could be opened to commercial drilling by an act of Congress.⁸⁵

ANILCA was thus the product of prolonged political maneuvering, extended negotiations, and the leadership of Udall, Carter, and others, but the indispensable ingredient had been the Alaska Coalition and the many groups and volunteers it represented. Similar collaborative efforts had been a hallmark of the environmental movement for many years and had repeatedly succeeded in forcing politicians to act. Yet the Alaska Coalition stood out, both for its size and the sophistication of its methods. Its success inspired envy and emulation. Opponents had tried unsuccessfully to create their own version of the Alaska Coalition, but they, and groups hostile to environmental legislation and regulation in general, found a public champion in Reagan, who had handily triumphed over Carter in November 1980. The increasingly militant opposition, symbolized by the campaigns against ANILCA and a parallel effort in the western states against the federal government and the Bureau of Land Management—the so-called sagebrush rebellion—ensured that there would be no easy victories in the foreseeable future.



In spite of its shortcomings, ANILCA was a fitting end to the legislative achievements of the previous decade and a half, during which land and wildlife conservation, in the form of new protected areas, restraints on managerial prerogatives, and restrictions on commercial activities was among the most important and most successful aspects of contemporary environmentalism. Activists could look back on those years with considerable satisfaction, regardless of what the future might hold. Yet even they had to admit that the new laws and regulations did not tell the whole story. The parks, refuges, and wilderness areas were highly concentrated in the West and in places notable mostly for their visual appeal. Lakes, rivers, and oceans had received comparatively little attention, and the effort to protect wildlife was of uncertain value. The campaign to reform the Forest Service had been only partially successful and had little impact on the agency's timber policies. ANILCA illustrated both the breadth of public support for conservation and the ability of entrenched interests to affect the outcome of political campaigns. The influence of such groups would play a far larger role in shaping the course of conservation activism in the following years.

NOTES

1. Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 130.
2. Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 98–104.
3. Douglas Brinkley, *Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 642–47.
4. Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000), 147–76.
5. Brinkley *Wilderness Warrior*, 828–30.
6. Runte, *National Parks*, chaps. 1–3; Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
7. John Muir, *Nature Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1997), 826.
8. Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 121; Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 141–45, 189–98.
9. Righter, *Battle over Hetch Hetchy*, 208.
10. *Ibid.*, 211.
11. Daniel Nelson, *A Passion for the Land: John F. Seiberling and the Environmental Movement* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2009), 23–31.
12. Samuel P. Hays, *War in the Woods: The Rise of Ecological Forestry in America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 27–30.
13. Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).
14. Mark Hudson, *Fire Management in the American West: Forest Policies and the Rise of Megafires* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 17.
15. Christopher McGrory Klyza, *Who Controls Public Lands? Mining, Forestry, and Grazing Policies, 1970–1990* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 18; Samuel P. Hays, *The American People and the National Forests: The First Century of the U.S. Forest Service* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 8.
16. Susan R. Schrepfer, “Establishing Administrative ‘Standing’: The Sierra Club and the Forest Service,” in *American Forests: Nature, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Char Miller (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997), 130–37.
17. Craig W. Allin, “Wilderness Preservation as a Bureaucratic Tool,” in *Federal Lands Policy*, ed. Philip O. Foss (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 132.

18. F. Fraser Darling and Noel D. Eichhorn, *Man and Nature in the National Parks*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1969), 26.
19. Thomas R. Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 38; Charles C. Chester, *Conservation across Borders: Biodiversity in an Interdependent World* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), 19–20.
20. Joe Roman, *Listed: Dispatches from America's Endangered Species Act* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 96–97; Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 194; Douglas Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016), 293–95.
21. Sally K. Fairfax et al., *Buying Nature: The Limits of Land Acquisition as a Conservation Strategy, 1780–2004* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 113.
22. Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 497; also Fairfax et al., *Buying Nature*, 116.
23. Michael J. Robinson, *Predatory Bureaucracy: The Extermination of Wolves and the Transformation of the West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 187.
24. William Voight Jr., *Public Grazing Lands: Use and Misuse by Industry and Government* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 299–303.
25. James R. Skillen, *The Nation's Largest Landlord: The Bureau of Land Management in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), xi.
26. See, e.g., Thomas R. Cox, *The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).
27. Mark V. Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 308–18; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States since 1945* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 8–20.
28. Richard N.L. Andrews, *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves: A History of American Environmental Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 202. Also Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 139–65.
29. G. Calvin MacKenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960's* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 217, 219.
30. Adam Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).
31. Voight, *Public Grazing Lands*, 102.
32. Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife*, 109.
33. Mark W.T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 51–285.
34. Charles F. Wilkinson, *Crossing the Next Meridian: Land, Water, and the Future of the West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1992), 137; Paul W. Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests since World War II* (Lincoln: University

of Nebraska Press, 1994), 131; Dennis Roth, "The National Forests and the Campaign for Wilderness Legislation," in *American Forests*, ed. Miller, 235.

35. Frederick H. Swanson, *The Bitterroot and Mr. Brandborg* (Provo: University of Utah Press, 2011), 252; also Hays, *American People*, 58; Hirt, *Conspiracy of Optimism*, 221.

36. Kevin M. Marsh, "'Save French Pete': Evolution of Wilderness Protests in Oregon," in *Natural Protest: Essays on the History of Environmentalism*, ed. Michael Egan and Jeff Crane (New York: Routledge, 2008), 228. For additional background, see Frederick H. Swanson, *Where Roads Will Never Reach: Wilderness and Its Visionaries in the Northern Rockies* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015).

37. Curt D. Meine, "The Oldest Task in Human History," in *A New Century for Natural Resources Management*, ed. Richard L. Knight and Sarah F. Bates (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1995), 28–29.

38. Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 292.

39. Lawrence Rakestraw, *A History of the Limited States Forest Service in Alaska*, Tongass Centennial Special Edition (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 2002); Daniel Nelson, *Northern Landscapes: The Struggle for Wilderness Alaska* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 2004), 28–30, 82–90.

40. Paul J. Culhane, *Public Lands Politics: Interest Group Influence on the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management* (Baltimore: Resources for the Future, 1981), 52–53.

41. David A. Clary, *Timber and the Forest Service* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 156.

42. Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 43, 123.

43. Jeanne Neinaber Clarke and Daniel McCool, *Staking Out the Terrain: Power Differentials among Natural Resource Management Agencies* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 51.

44. Carr, *Mission 66*, 257.

45. Michael P. Cohen *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892–1970* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 134–42.

46. George A. Cevasco and Richard P. Harmond, eds., *Modern American Environmentalists: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 250–55; Richard West Sellers, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 213–15; Hal K. Rothman, *Blazing Heritage: A History of Wildland Fire in the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 103.

47. Lary M. Dilsaver, *America's National Parks System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 239.

48. *Ibid.*, 240, 242.
49. John Kricher, *The Balance of Nature: Ecology's Enduring Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 159.
50. David N. Cole, Eric S. Higgins and Peter S. White, "History Fidelity: Maintaining Legacy and Connection to Heritage," in *Beyond Naturalness: Rethinking Park and Wilderness Stewardship in an Era of Rapid Change*, ed. David N. Cole and Laurie Yung (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010), 137.
51. Michael Frome, *Rebel on the Road and Why I Was Never Neutral* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 161.
52. George B. Hartzog Jr., *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell Limited, 1988), 205.
53. Kathy Mengak, *Reshaping Our National Parks and Their Guardians: The Legacy of George B. Hartzog, Jr.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 127.
54. Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 116–39; John C. Miles, *Guardians of the Parks: A History of the National Parks and Conservation Association* (Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis, 1995), 71–75.
55. John Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Philip Burton* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 345–71.
56. Fairfax et al., *Buying Nature*, 163–66.
57. Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1984), 250.
58. Thomas R. Vale, *The American Wilderness: Reflections on Nature Protection in the United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 113–15.
59. Rothman, *Blazing Heritage*, 124.
60. Stephen J. Pyne, *Between Two Fires: A Fire History of Contemporary America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 60.
61. Christopher McGrory Klyza and David Sousa, *America's Environmental Policy, 1990–2006: Beyond Gridlock* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 36–37.
62. Steven C. Schulte, *Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 272–79.
63. Chad P. Dawson and John C. Hendee, *Wilderness Management: Stewardship and Protection of Resources and Values*, 4th ed. (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2009), 91–92; Mark W.T. Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahnizer and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 152–55, 165–67, 194–95.
64. Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 186–209, 229–38; Schulte, *Wayne Aspinall*, 132–58; Dawson and Hendee, *Wilderness Management*, 196–97; Klyza, *Who Controls Public Lands*, 92.

65. Klyza, *Who Controls Public Lands?*, 92.
66. Doug Scott, *The Enduring Wilderness* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2004), 63–64; Kevin R. Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest: Creating Wilderness Areas in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 88–89, 94–96, 115–17.
67. Swanson, *The Bitterroot*, 158–242.
68. Peter Duinker, Gary Bull, and Bruce A. Shindler, “Sustainable Forestry in Canada and the United States: Developments and Prospects,” in *Two Paths Toward Sustainable Forests: Public Values in Canada and the United States*, ed. Bruce A. Shindler, Thomas M. Beckley, and Mary Carmel Finley (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 53.
69. Robinson, *Predatory Bureaucracy*, 316–20; Dunlap, *Saving America’s Wildlife*, 127–40.
70. Michael J. Bean and Melanie J. Rowland, *The Evolution of National Wildlife Law*, 3rd ed. (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 110–23.
71. Barrow, *Nature’s Ghosts*, 319–39; Charles C. Mann and Mark L. Plummer, *Noah’s Choice: The Future of Endangered Species* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 156–61.
72. Culhane, *Public Lands Politics*, 92.
73. Skillen, *Nation’s Largest Landlord*, 70.
74. R. McGregor Cawley, *Federal Land, Western Anger: The Sagebrush Rebellion and Environmental Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 51–52.
75. Wilkinson, *Crossing the Next Meridian*, 98.
76. Jeffrey O. Durrant, *Struggle Over Utah’s San Rafael Swell: Wilderness, National Conservation Areas, and National Monuments* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 72–73.
77. Wilkinson, *Crossing the Next Meridian*, 98–99; Klyza, *Who Controls Public Lands?*, 118–24.
78. Dave Foreman, *Rewilding North America: A Vision for Conservation in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004), 156.
79. Donald Craig Mitchell, *Take My Land, Take My Life: The Story of Congress’s Historic Settlement of Alaska Native Land Claims, 1960–1971* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2001).
80. Stephen Haycox, *Frigid Embrace: Politics, Economics, and Environment in Alaska* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), 97.
81. Sara Wheeler, *The Magnetic North: Notes from the Arctic Circle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 67.
82. See Roger Kaye, *Last Great Wilderness: The Campaign to Establish the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2006).

83. Nelson, *Northern Landscapes*, 169–85.

84. *Ibid.*, 185–248.

85. *Ibid.*, 245–46, 256–57.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION