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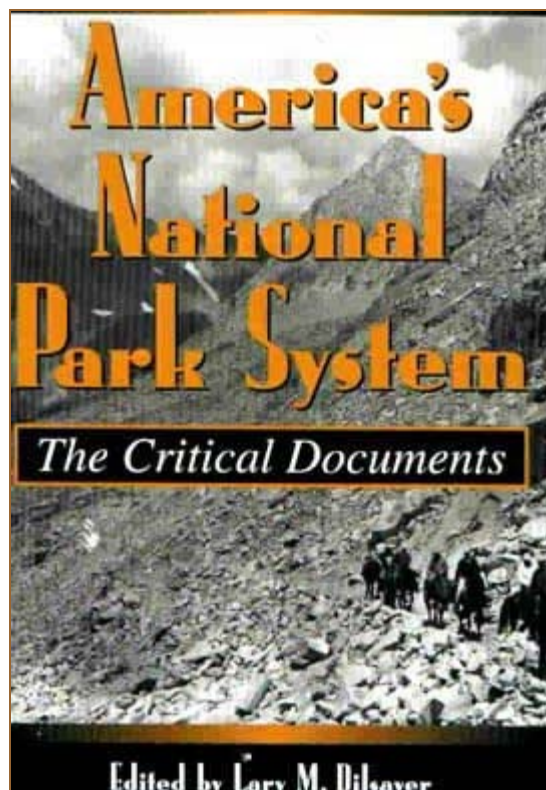
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America's National Park System: The Critical Documents

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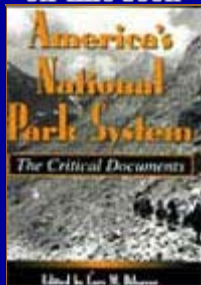
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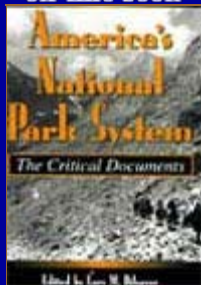
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America's National Park System: The Critical Documents



Introduction

INTRODUCTION The National Park System

The national park system of the United States is a complex aggregate of some 370 units falling into 20 separate categories. They represent, in principle, the finest America has to offer in scenery, historical and archaeological relics, and cultural definition. The system attempts to explain America's history, interpret its culture, represent and preserve its varied ecosystems, and provide, incidentally, for the recreation of its 250 million people. The parks have been justifiably called "the crown jewels" of America and "the best idea America ever had."

Officially, the purposes of the park system, and by inference its management policies, are best summed up in the 1916 act that established the National Park Service. In now familiar words to all who have studied the parks and their management, the new agency was charged "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The origin of the movement to create this system is shrouded in the early nineteenth century while the confusion of managing such a system for both preservation and recreation has been a frustrating puzzle since the beginning. An increasing scholarly attention to the history of the agency, its parks, and the culture of conservation has arisen in the past two decades among environmental historians, historical geographers, park scientists, and others interested in these most beloved and enigmatic of American treasures.

Two processes must be concurrently addressed to understand the park system. First, there is the growth of the system itself. Officially it began with the founding of Yellowstone National Park on March 1, 1872. Another eighteen years passed before a second park that would survive the nineteenth century was established. As the twentieth century approached, Congress begrudgingly took steps to conserve other resources by other means. However, after the creation of the Park Service, the haphazard, individual preservation efforts were paralleled by direct efforts to shape a meaningful system, much of this impetus provided by the initial director, Stephen Mather. The Park Service and the public have continued to shape the contents of the system through varied initiatives and sets of interacting or sometimes opposing beliefs.

A second process is the maturing framework of management policy for the parks. The 1916 Organic Act tersely outlined a seemingly contradictory set of preservation and recreation mandates. In subsequent decades new interpretations, changes in public and government attitudes, and the maturation of ecological science have added to the confusion.

Although both these processes have been linear and evolutionary, distinct periods can be identified. Prior to 1918, the major component categories of the system were created. National parks, monuments, and battlefields were established and historic and prehistoric relics protected. However, there was no "system" per se. Each component was administered separately by the secretaries of War, Agriculture, and the Interior, depending on their location

and purpose. The Organic Act brought order to at least the parks and monuments under the control of the Department of the Interior. In 1918, the secretary outlined a code of rules and policies that further defined management of the new park system.

From 1918 to 1932 the system and its parent agency matured, rose in public esteem, and fended off challenges to their existence and policies. A collection of motivated and able men, "Mather men," laid the foundations of National Park Service (NPS) image and operations. Studies of potential new areas coincided with establishment of system-wide policies. Yet these policies were based on relatively simple concepts of object preservation, the protection of individual trees, animals, or at best, scenes, with little knowledge of or attention to ecological complexity. Only at the beginning of the 1930s did concerns for scientific management become manifest in a series of policy statements about the biological resources of the system.

The 1930s brought a radical change and expansion of the national park system and its duties. Sweeping in with Franklin Roosevelt came a variety of government streamlining and public relief initiatives that would benefit and forever alter the parks. Two of the most profound occurred in 1933 with the reorganization of the federal executive branch which lumped all the parks, monuments, battlefields, and memorials under the Park Service's jurisdiction and the act that led to the Civilian Conservation Corps, a public works army of unemployed men, many of whom would transform the built environments of the parks. Indeed, while the Park Service wrestled with how and in which directions it should expand the system, some, both inside and outside the government, challenged the developmental mania that flush work budgets had brought.

All this came to a crashing end with the arrival of World War II. It heralded the onset of a grim and financially strapped postwar period. While park popularity and attendance continued to rise rapidly and damage from wartime neglect festered, funding hovered at prewar levels. At the same time, the growth of the system itself slowed and early political checks on hitherto unrestrained expansion appeared. Finally, the crisis of management forced such an outcry that a funding bonanza, Mission 66, ended the drought.

The ensuing decade of development radically transformed, again, the built environment of the park system. Before Mission 66 ended, however, questions of purpose and management priorities would also arise again. Spurred by the focus on construction and development that Mission 66 provided, and by advances in ecological science, many questioned how well the Park Service was doing at "preserving" the park system resources. Prodded by university scientists and conservation groups, the agency undertook a series of studies and policy formulations culminating in the Leopold and Robbins reports which redirected NPS goals to ecosystem preservation and scientific inquiry. Coincident with this redefinition of the traditional parks, attention to expanding the nation's recreation opportunities also rose, culminating in new studies of seashores, recreation areas, and parkways.

As Mission 66 wound down and long-term NPS employees tried to accommodate the concepts of the Leopold report, both the national park system and its managing agency continued to expand and diversify. Ecological preservation became the entrenched policy focus while new initiatives in both recreation and preservation led to exciting new categories in the park system. Among them were wild and scenic rivers and national trails. New recreation areas and seashore parks also appeared. The public itself developed an environmental consciousness and an intense interest in both using and saving the nation's parklands. By 1968, management had become so complex that three separate systems of administration seemed to be needed—one set each

for historical, natural, and recreational areas. A web of environmental legislation culminating in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) further protected the parks and constrained their planning and development.

The 1970s, if anything, seemed to intensify and accelerate both the processes of system expansion and management redefinition. Both the public and Congress seemed to take a heightened interest in shaping the system. The decade saw new charges to preserve archaeological and historic sites, novel urban recreation areas, expansion of a park purely for ecological integrity, and the doubling of the system size by the addition of huge units in Alaska. Despite these successes, the decade ended on an ominous note as a survey disclosed that the system, while ever larger and more popular, faced serious threats in nearly every unit.

Unfortunately, the decade of the 1980s heralded the onset of recession and government spending cuts even as threats to the parks multiplied. External development, issues of serious overcrowding, deterioration of infrastructure, and decay of Park Service morale rose nearly as quickly as did the popularity of and visitation to the parks. The 1980s saw less expansion and fewer changes in the system, but a flurry of reports at the end of the decade and the start of the 1990s demonstrated heightened public interest ignited by the Yellowstone fire of 1988 and the swollen ranks of conservation groups frustrated by administration challenges to existing environmental laws.

Today the national park system continues to face new threats and old problems. It has a hierarchy of policy controls that begin with the government-wide controls such as NEPA, then descends to the Organic Act, individual park founding legislation, NPS management policies which reflect and elaborate the above legislation, and finally individual park policies. The latter often reflect unwritten agency tradition of what a national park should be and how it should be run.

The purpose of this volume is to help explain this complex system and its ill-defined management culture by reproducing, in their original texts, the key documents that have shaped them. Laws that established and molded the system, policy statements, explanations of policy in action, self-evaluations, scientific studies, and the comments of outside observers from the scientific and conservation communities have all contributed to the composition of the park system and its current administration. Sixty-seven documents are presented in their entirety if possible or abbreviated to include only pertinent abstracts and recommendations if necessary. Six more exceptionally long but fundamental laws are summarized in the final section of the book. Most of the documents led directly to policy formulation or additions to the park system. A few are contemporary efforts to justify what policies were already in place or at least demonstrate the minds of park administrators of the time. Taken in total, these documents show most directly, in the original language, the evolution of the national park system, the National Park Service, and conservation in America through the early 1990s. It is hoped that this volume will assist park officers, scholars, and the interested general reader to understand how the parks and their problems of today have arisen from the policies and acts of the past.

Most of my thanks for the completion of this volume go to the National Park Service for giving me the opportunity to search its files and for its support during the research process. Many knowledgeable and enthusiastic NPS people helped in the identification and acquisition of these documents. Among the most important were Carol Aten, Larry Bancroft, Ed Bearss, Harry Butowsky, Gordon Chappell, John Dennis, Dennis Fenn, Dave Graber, William Gregg, David Jervis, Roger Kelly, J. Mike Lambe, Thomas Mulhern, Dave Nathanson, Tom Nichols, David Parsons, Tom Ritter, Jerry Rogers, and James

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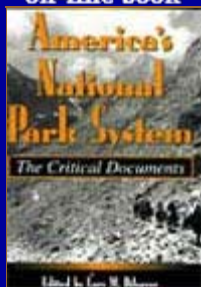
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America's National Park System: The Critical Documents



Chapter 1: The Early Years, 1864-1918

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The Early Years 1864-1918

The origins of the national park idea are the subject of considerable academic speculation. Suffice it to say, however, the concept did not originate over a Wyoming campfire. The processes that led up to national parks are more readily identified but also far more complex. From the arts and literature came the Romantic movement which encouraged the experience of mountains and wilderness. Authors like Henry David Thoreau and Washington Irving exhorted Americans to pursue nature even as the frontier rolled away from them. Landscape artists culminating with Thomas Moran and Albert Bierstadt presented awesome spectacles that received huge public interest.

The rise in attention to nature coincided with the search for identity and pride among American literati. When compared to Europe's thousands of years of history, its fabric of ancient structures and sites, its rich cultural legacy built on many centuries of interchange, the United States appeared a rude, uncultured backwater. Stung by caustic criticism and snobbery from Europe, Americans looked for elements in their own land to flaunt. In Yellowstone and Yosemite, and indeed the whole western wilderness, Americans had what they needed. America was new, rugged, spectacular, and could be proud of its splendor and its clean slate upon which to develop the human experience.

Yet another motive for national parks came from the American experience at Niagara Falls. The famous falls were America's paramount scenic wonder during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, local landowners had, in their frenzy to maximize profits, gone so far as to erect fences and charge viewers to look through holes at the spectacle. Tawdry concessions and souvenirs, filth, and squalor attended a visit to this most sublime of eastern American features. Clearly government control of such a feature to assure its availability to the public was in order.

The first movement to create a park came amidst the Civil War. Yosemite Valley had been first entered by Americans chasing a band of Indians in 1851. Within five years the situation at Niagara Falls began to repeat itself. Claims on the valley lands were filed and tolls charged. Haphazard tourism began even as the fame of the valley spread to a wondering and suspicious East. Concern for this amazing spectacle and its availability to all comers led Congress to withdraw the lands from alienation in 1864 and turn over the valley and a nearby grove of giant sequoias to the state of California as a public park. The state would continue to manage this first federal withdrawal for a park until 1906 when it was merged with Yosemite National Park.

Eight years later Congress established the world's first true national park. Instrumental in its creation was the Northern Pacific Railroad, beginning a fifty-year period during which railroads became the most profound influence on the establishment of these reserves and on the development of tourism in them. Where the Yosemite withdrawal consisted of a pair of relatively small areas, Yellowstone as an enormous tract of more than 3,400 square miles. The

creation of Yellowstone National Park marked the first serious challenge to the culture of land alienation and consumptive use in American history.

The Yellowstone withdrawal was so massive and to many land users apparently purposeless that it was another eighteen years before a second successful park was created. By the end of the century still only five national parks existed, three of them in California. However, Congress was not idle in its preservation efforts and in forming reserves that would later become part of the national park system. During the latter portion of the century antiquities of the Southwestern Indians became a source of interest and gain for many Americans.. Vandals and pot-hunters looted Anasazi and other sites, often destroying structures, not to mention the archaeological record, in their greedy haste. The earliest steps to protect an archaeological site came at Casa Grande Ruin in Arizona. Reacting to vandalism of this ancient adobe structure. Congress attached a rider to a civil appropriations bill in 1889 calling for the repair and protection of the first of what would become the national monuments.

A year later, a separate movement led to the establishment of the nation's first national battlefield park. Although some national cemeteries had been established even during the Civil War, no substantial protection had been provided to an entire battlefield. Initially, of course, the South saw no reason to preserve and celebrate its traumatic defeat. However, by the late 1880s, efforts to heal the nation's wounds and commemorate all who fought in the war led to various associations to protect major battlefields. At the behest of one such group Congress set aside in 1890 the Chickamauga and Chattanooga battlefields.

Finally, in 1906 the early spate of preservation efforts culminated with the Antiquities Act. The outgrowth of continued clamor for protection of archaeological sites, its chief impact came in section two where the president was given the power to unilaterally declare national monuments on federal lands in order to protect items of historic or scientific interest. The national park system today includes more than fifty national monuments deriving from this legislation (out of a total of more than seventy).

The establishment of the roots of the national park system was matched by a slower but no less important definition of management policies and priorities. In a consumptive society, these parks were novel and, to many, uncomfortable interruptions of business as usual. Much of the ground-laying of national park policy came from recommendations on the management of Yosemite Valley by eminent landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, creator of New York's Central Park. In his 1865 report to the governor of California, he laid the philosophical foundations of preservation for inspirational purposes and made explicit recommendations on such matters as concession operations, development, scientific protection, and interpretation.

Despite Olmsted's ideas, the pressure to use park resources in traditional consumptive ways was substantial, especially in the huge Yellowstone reserve. Acting to forestall hunting and trapping and further define the degree of protection afforded in a national park, Congress in 1894 passed the Yellowstone Game Protection Act.

By 1912 the parks were well established and reasonably safe from hunting, logging, and mining. Still, in a rapidly changing nation, uses of and threats to the parks evolved, and answers to new questions had to be found. By the turn of the century, automobiles had appeared in several national parks. However, no definitive policy had been established. Instead, reflecting perhaps the piecemeal management that preceded the 1916 Organic Act, auto use in each park was a separate issue. During 1912, Department of the Interior officials,

conservationists, and others met in Yosemite to discuss auto use in the valley. Their comments indicate the prevalent attitudes of the time—that all forms of access to parks should be encouraged;

that the primary concern is for the safety of drivers on the rough and twisting roads; and that no damage either to the park or to the park experience is expected from the admission of automobiles.

In 1916 came the most important document in this entire collection. For some years the parks were run as independent units lost in the bureaucratic maze of the Interior Department. In a concerted campaign by Robert Sterling Yard, future directors Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, the National Geographic Society, and many others, Congress was encouraged to establish a National Park Service, place all the existing parks under its management, and spell out the purposes for their preservation. The ensuing act, often known as the Organic Act, and its difficult charge to both preserve park resources and make them available to tourists, form the legal foundation stone of the system.

As a final management statement culminating this long and complex formative period, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane issued a detailed policy statement on management of the parks in 1918. Albright actually wrote the letter reflecting the ideas of Mather and others. The Lane letter addresses concession policy, priorities of protection, and many other issues not elaborated in the Organic Act. With these details of policy established and aired, Mather was set to consolidate and refine the national park system.

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[Yellowstone Game Protection Act, 1894](#)

[Olmsted Report on Management of Yosemite, 1865](#)

[Antiquities Act, 1906](#)

[Yellowstone Act, 1872](#)

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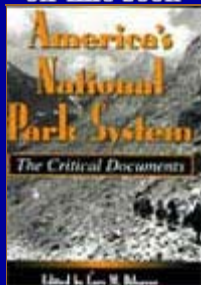
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2 Defining the System 1919-1932

2 Defining the System 1919-1932

During the period from 1919 to 1932, Director Stephen Mather, his assistant and successor, Horace Albright, and a cadre of handpicked superintendents consolidated the national park system and defined its operating policies. These "Mather men" would concentrate primarily on defining preservation priorities and molding the system according to definite ideas about its purpose. The national parks were for inspiration and education of the people, not, as many supposed, for recreation per se.

Several considerations had to be accommodated by Mather and his employees in devising these policies. First, the National Park Service was not a universally praised and supported idea nor were Sparks. Many believed that the U.S. Forest Service could easily, cheaply, and more ably administer these areas of scenic beauty. For a period, the parks' rationale for existence wavered in the minds of lawmakers. Second, Mather, Albright, and the others reflected the attitudes of the time regarding public access to the parks. It was implicit that any and all efforts be made to assure maximum use of the units by the public. It was both democratic and prudent to so promote use. Third, they believed that the existing parks were all so remote and of such limited access that only large-scale concession monopolies stood a chance of financially surviving and developing them. Finally, science was too underdeveloped to provide hard evidence against many popular wildlife management practices. It would be another decade before scientists would be heeded and then only for an interim.

As the National Park Service struggled to establish and define itself the first challenge appeared. In 1920 the Federal Power Act authorized construction of dams on federal lands. After the debacle at Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite National Park, this was an ominous threat. After a flurry of action by conservationists and others, however, Congress added an amendment in 1921 forbidding dams in national parks and monuments without its specific approval.

For the next several years, as the National Park Service moved toward the end of its first decade, it further detailed its policies and philosophy. In answer to criticism about potential overdevelopment, the superintendents of the various parks passed a resolution encouraging some development but rejecting "overdevelopment." Although undefined, there is in the latter term an understanding that some limits must be contemplated for park tourism. Three years later Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work continued the tradition of secretary's letters on national park management by restating and elaborating the policies of Secretary Franklin Lane. In some cases such as grazing and summer home leases, the Work letter took a stronger tone to reject abuses of earlier orders.

Three years later, in 1928, Congress specifically defined the matter of concession operations and privileges, addressed legally only obliquely in the Organic Act. That same year the National Park Service moved to develop a

rigid plan and staff to prevent or control forest fires in the parks. An address by U.S. Forest Service fire control expert Jay Price outlined the concepts of the time. Later that year the NPS appointed its first Fire Control Expert under the Branch of Forestry and devoted funds specifically to fire prevention programs.

In 1931, after a decade and a half, Director Horace Albright could reflect on many issues affecting the growing system of parks. Two issues in particular needed addressing. First, park planning, despite the adoption of a program for five-year plans in 1926, was haphazard and varied from park to park. In issuing an office order, Albright sought to streamline and make uniform the planning procedure. This represents a further attempt to cope with the parks as a system instead of as an amalgamation of independent units.

The second problem was the quality of care and preservation being voted to the natural resources of the parks. Early anthropocentric ideas had led to predator destruction, vista clearing of forests, introduction of exotics, and use of herbicides and pesticides in the parks. Often released through articles in popular or scholarly journals, Albright's policy pronouncements sought to correct or at least rationalize these early activities. Thus, in a policy memorandum the director specified forestry policy including such matters as fire control, incutting and fungal damage, hazard tree removal, and prevention of illicit cutting and pruning. In an article for the *Journal of Mammalogy*, Albright rejected predator destruction and promoted the parks as the homes of all species.

Coming on the heels of the "predator policy" letter was one of the most advanced and profound statements about the parks for this era. Wildlife scientist George Wright and a staff he hired and personally funded released a seminal work in 1932 entitled *Fauna of the National Parks*. Wright and his colleagues laid down the ground rules for scientific wildlife management and for the provision of further research to shape decision-making. It was a piece ahead of its time and for a while led to a Wildlife Division with Wright as its head. However, after his untimely death in 1936, many of his ideas were ignored until the Leopold report of 1963 resurrected them.

Although the majority of profound actions and decisions during this period reflected concern about management of the parks, the system continued to grow, and Mather and his aides gave much thought to how to shape that growth. Studies of potential new areas commenced early in the 1920s, and proposals were fielded from all over the nation. Investigation particularly centered on the eastern United States where most of the people and almost none of the parks resided. Still no significant statements or studies appeared. The only exception to this organizational inactivity came in an exchange between the War Department and Congress. In 1926, acting on congressional orders, the War Department issued a study of potential areas in the United States for inclusion in a system of national battlefields and memorials. It directed public and congressional attention to a number of these historic places and influenced the shaping of this part of the national park system.

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[Fire Prevention Plan for the National Parks, 1928](#)

[Superintendents' Resolution on Overdevelopment, 1922](#)

[National Park Service Predator Policy, 1931](#)

[Secretary Work's Letter on National Park](#)

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Policy, 1925	1931
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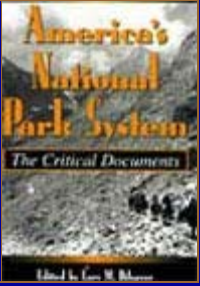
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Chapter 3: The New Deal Years: 1933 - 1941

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The New Deal Years 1933-1941

Through the 1920s, the young National Park Service cemented its support among the public, defined its management priorities, and established the philosophy that was to guide the agency for the next four decades. However, the steady sequence of development and expansion was shattered by the stock market crash of 1929 and ensuing Depression. Ironically, although it did have a negative effect on visitation, the economic crisis actually spawned the greatest booms in construction of visitor facilities, road and trail development, park planning, identification of new areas, and new initiatives for expansion of the system to ever occur.

With the arrival of the new administration under Franklin Roosevelt came a whirlwind of government changes. In that first year, 1933, two pieces of legislation profoundly impacted the parks. First came an act to relieve unemployment among the nation's young men. This act led to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a military-style program of public works conducted in large measure in and around national and state parks and forests. Over the next nine years the CCC constructed more infrastructure in the parks than in the entire history of the system to that time. Five-year plans were completed in a season and park superintendents, in charge of choosing jobs for these brigades of laborers, were able to achieve development only dreamed of a few years earlier.

The second action came with congressional attempts to streamline and reduce the costs of the federal government. The executive branch reorganized its departments and their duties. One result was that the National Park Service received all the national monuments, many from the U.S. Forest Service, and all the battlefields and memorials from the War Department. Thus the system with which we are now familiar began operation under a single agency. Over the remainder of the Depression years through 1941, three major processes characterized the national park system—the continued definition of natural resources policy, the development of infrastructure and resulting challenges to perceived overdevelopment, and the accelerated expansion of the system into new areas of preservation. In 1933 the spate of policy statements provided by Horace Albright a couple of years earlier rounded out with an article by the director on the importance of research in the national parks. It was admission of the inadequacy of scientific data for management purposes and the first of a long string of calls for more systematic research in park policy-making.

Three years later a loophole in the philosophical framework of fauna management was closed with issuance of Office Order No. 323 defining the fish policies of the National Park Service. Director Arno Cammerer, following the lead of his Wildlife Division, ordered the exclusion or removal of exotic species and the encouragement of native ones as his predecessor had done in the case of mammals.

While natural resource policies matured and their scientific basis was at least

temporarily encouraged, the construction of visitor infrastructure continued apace with CCC labor. Hundreds of miles of roads and trails opened hitherto wild backcountry and thousands of structures, from museums to employee houses and campground comfort stations, appeared across the system. By the middle of the decade conservationists and others were registering alarm at the scale and pace of development. The Emergency Conservation Committee released in 1936 a pamphlet entitled "Roads and More Roads in the National Parks and National Forests," in which this progress was challenged on the basis of its destruction of pristine wilderness. The author of the pamphlet and driving force behind the committee was Rosalie Edge. Her views were repeated in the publications of the Sierra Club, the National Parks Association, and other conservation groups. Clearly the time had come to challenge the Park Service's priorities, and increasing numbers of observers were ready to do so.

Within the agency as well, a variety of opinions existed on appropriate development. However, most NPS personnel practiced a philosophy which might best be called "atmosphere preservation." Spawned and maintained by landscape architects, it was an immature holistic approach to the environment that considered entire visual and experiential scenes and the inspiration they provided as the highest preservation targets. This philosophy and its attendant reaction to the extraordinary development under the CCC was best expressed by Superintendent John White in a 1936 speech to his fellow superintendents entitled "Atmosphere in the National Parks."

The final process of the period concerned the expansion of the park system. With reorganization of the executive branch, the National Park Service became much more focused on historic preservation. At the same time concern about preserving the nation's historic structures and sites led Congress to enact the Historic Sites Act of 1935. This far-reaching act ordered the NPS to survey historic and archaeologic sites, buildings, and objects, and take steps to identify and protect them or assist others in protecting them.

The following year, a decade of discussion and concern about the availability of recreation resources for the nation's burgeoning population surfaced in the form of the Park, Parkway, and Recreation Area Study Act of 1936. This charged the Park Service to conduct wide-ranging studies of potential additions to the park system specifically to provide recreation opportunities. Given the philosophy of the time on park purpose, this was a departure into new areas of operation for the agency. Much of the ensuing study concentrated on coastal areas and resulted the following year in the authorization of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. In 1941 the Park Service released its report on the park and recreation problem of the United States. Although the report strongly recommended that state and local governments bear the brunt of responsibility for recreation, reflecting the Mather philosophy, many of the current national seashores, lake-shores, parkways, and recreation areas were studied and proposed as a result of this 1936 act.

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[Organization of Executive Agencies, 1933](#)

[Research in the National Parks, 1933](#)

[Preservation of Historic Sites Act, 1935](#)

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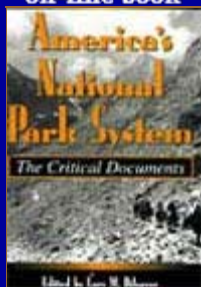
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Chapter 4: The Poverty Years: 1942 - 1956

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The Poverty Years 1942-1956

The bonanza of development, expansion, and reinterpretation that came to the national park system during the Depression years abruptly ended with Pearl Harbor. In a matter of weeks, federal work programs halted, funding dried up, and personnel began leaving for the military or wartime support industries. As in World War I, there were calls for use of park lands and resources to support the war effort. Pressure particularly focused on grazing, lumbering, and mining the great western parks. During the earlier conflict, grazing had been allowed, in part due to inadequate understanding of its ecological consequences but primarily because the fledgling Park Service felt politically incapable of blocking it.

By 1942, however, a mature national park system, beloved by the populace, handily rejected the requests for intrusion by consumptive users. In a major statement Director Newton Drury spelled out the reasons why, even in times of emergency, the park system should remain inviolate. Drawing upon letters from servicemen overseas he painted an image of the parks as icons for America to be preserved pure and unabused for their inspiration. This article represents one of the clearest statements of the NPS philosophy that preservation supersedes all extractive uses regardless of their monetary worth. The Park Service was able to resist such intrusions throughout World War II.

The war years gave the National Park Service time to reflect on the status and future of the parks, and those employees remaining in the system engaged in elaborate planning for the expected return to prosperity and development after the war. Many plans challenged the level of development already present in some parks. Reflecting on these questions in 1945, the National Parks Association released a declaration of policy entitled "National Primeval Park Standards." Its recommendations demonstrated the increasing division between the Park Service's ideas of management and those of the conservation groups.

The expansion of the park system became a volatile issue in Congress by 1950. Antagonism to parks creation and expansion focused especially in the West among the consumptive local users recently denied access during the war. One of the key fights of the period culminated in the expansion of Grand Teton National Park in 1950. In this enactment, Congress stipulated, under pressure from the Wyoming delegation, that no further parks or monuments be established in that state without specific congressional authorization. This is notable for its challenge to the Antiquities Act and demonstrative of the backlash by western locals against the expansion of the park system.

Three years later Congress acted again, this time by defining the national park system and emphasizing that all units were to be managed under the Organic Act of 1916. This answered the criticism of many that monuments, historic parks, etc., should not be as stringently protected and denied to consumptive users.

By that same year, 1953, the park system Congress so defined was in serious trouble. Years of wartime abandonment were followed by neglect and underfunding as Congress grappled with ominous international events. Annual maintenance of trails and facilities lagged, and many features fell into serious, even dangerous, disrepair. Agitation by the Park Service and conservation groups convinced a few congressmen but it took an article in a major American periodical by an eminent historian, Bernard DeVoto, to turn the trick. Adopting the psychological ploy of shock, DeVoto suggested closing the national parks until they could be properly and safely operated. To a public annually increasing its love affair with the parks, this was indeed an appalling revelation.

Despite the now clear need for action it took one final hurdle for the NPS to receive the funding it needed. Piecemeal project funding was too easily pared when budget problems appeared. What the parks needed was a massive, coordinated rescue plan with its own budget. That rescue plan became known as Mission 66. Starting in 1956 and projected to last a decade, Mission 66 would ultimately cost more than one billion dollars and would substantially increase or renew visitor facilities and access throughout the system. Director Conrad Wirth's exhortation to Dwight Eisenhower's cabinet spelled out the details and emphases of the plan which itself would come under fire before the decade concluded.

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[Let's Close the National Parks](#)

[National Primeval Park Standards, 1945](#)

[Act to Facilitate Management of the National Park System, 1953](#)

[Grand Teton National Parks, 1953](#)

[Mission 66 Proposal to the Eisenhower Cabinet, 1956](#)

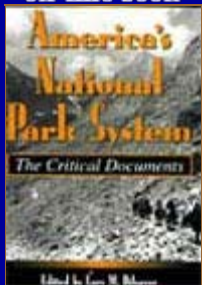
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Chapter 5: Questions of Resource Management: 1957 - 1963

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Questions of Resource Management 1957-1963

Mission 66 began in 1956 with great fanfare and optimism. However, within a few years this supposed panacea was mired in controversy, the result of changes in the conservation and science communities with which the National Park Service had not kept pace. The death of George Wright in 1936 had heralded the end of his Wildlife Division if not in name, then certainly in influence. Yet ecological science dramatically matured and diversified. Conservation groups began to take note by the early 1950s but the Park Service clung tenaciously to its concept of "atmosphere preservation" and to other ideals promoted decades earlier by Stephen Mather.

Over this short seven-year period, however, National Park Service management and philosophy would be challenged and ultimately overturned by a shocking series of reports and commentaries from scientists both within and outside the agency. At the same time, the search for additional recreation opportunities for the nation would be rekindled. Abandoned during World War II and the postwar funding crisis, the search for recreation areas, seashores, and state park sites led to a major government inquiry and new responsibilities for the Park Service.

It is often the case that one particular speech or article can catch an organization's attention when others have consistently failed. Throughout the decade of the 1950s pressure to reinvest the Wildlife Division with funds and influence and to manage the parks and monuments with attention to modern scientific data had increased. Yet it was a single speech by Stanley Cain at the Sixth Biennial Wilderness Conference that drove home the point. The eminent ecologist chastised the agency for "missing a bet" by not conducting a natural history research program and tailoring its management policies to reflect the findings. A transcript of the speech was widely circulated among NPS administrators with a note from an NPS scientist further exhorting his superiors.

The Cain speech gave impetus to a grudgingly developing research program which in turn led to two important in-house reports over the next several years. First prepared in 1960 and released service-wide three years later, *A Back Country Management Plan for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* was a document with far greater implications than its name might suggest. Always intended to be a blueprint for NPS backcountry planning, the Sequoia report began with a series of definitions and position statements about such issues as wilderness protection versus personal freedom, carrying capacities, population trends and wilderness use, and the ultimate aim of conservation.

In 1962, the agency produced a wildlife management report sometimes referred to as the Stagner report after its lead author. In the report, the authors propose a series of management principles which echo many of George Wright's from *Fauna of the National Parks* three decades earlier and anticipate

those of the Leopold report a year later.

As important as these reports were to altering NPS policy, the year 1963 was the turning point. Two complementary reports by outside committees confirmed the findings of Cain, Stagner, and others and radically transformed policy priorities. The chief document in this transformation was officially known as the *Report of the Advisory Board on Wildlife Management in the National Parks*. Unofficially it was called the Leopold report after its committee chairman. Established by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to comment on the problem of overgrazing by Yellowstone elk as well as other specific wildlife issues, the committee chose to go well beyond those tasks and define a basic management philosophy for the national parks. In a now familiar statement they suggested that the primary purpose of the parks was the maintenance or restoration of the biotic associations in each unit to the "condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man." After further discussion and specific examples, the report called for a permanent staff of scientists in each park to oversee these management priorities. When published, a letter from Secretary Udall endorsing it accompanied the report.

Yet another blue-ribbon group took up the allied question of research in the parks. Known as the Robbins report after its chairman, this document added fuel to the fires of change and corroborated the Leopold committee, Cain, and the scientific and conservation communities. Together these two reports resulted directly in the revival of both extensive scientific research in the parks as well as new management for "ecosystem preservation."

While this management revolution transpired, the business of coping with the recreation needs of the nation also rekindled. A series of studies conducted in the late 1950s again identified park, parkway, and seashore opportunities for preservation. Congress, however, took a further step by creating the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission to study the problem in a comprehensive way. Its report, issued in 1962, led to establishment of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (now absorbed into the National Park Service) as well as heightened responsibility for the National Park Service in planning a national recreation program and administering areas for that purpose.

The following year the Recreation Advisory Committee to the federal government further elaborated policy on national recreation areas. These units were to be primarily for outdoor recreation rather than natural or historic preservation. This clear mandate served notice on the Park Service of still greater diversity in its management responsibilities.

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[Advisory Board on Wildlife Management - Leopold Report, 1963](#)

[Sequoia-Kings Canyon Back Country Management Plan, 1960](#)

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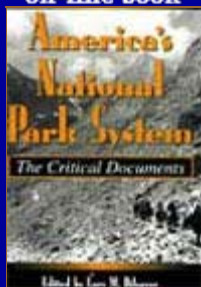
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Chapter 6: The Ecological Revolution: 1964 - 1969

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The Ecological Revolution 1964-1969

Adoption of the Leopold report's recommendations as well as continued pressure to diversify the system to include recreation as well as preservation strained a National Park Service already undergoing change and growth from Mission 66. In the next six years these two issues would demand continual adjustment and reinterpretation. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall signaled the new tone with his 1964 letter on national park management. In it the secretary reaffirmed the Leopold report as a guideline and differentiated the management prescriptions for natural, historic, and recreational areas. The latter was a tacit admission of the growing complexity of the agency's mission.

That complexity would increase over the next several years. A web of legislation further diversified the contents and duties of the system as well as the strictures it would be required to follow. First came the Wilderness Act of 1964 over the resistance of the Park Service. The agency had long argued that its application to parks was redundant because they were already managed for roadless preservation. In fact, the Wilderness Act, where implemented, added a legal buffer against the possibility of further projects like Tioga Road in Yosemite National Park.

The following year saw the addition of two more laws of profound importance. First came the landmark Land and Water Conservation Fund Act which established a fund for acquisition of new recreation lands either within or adjacent to existing park units or as new parks themselves. A portion of the money to be provided to the fund would come from fees charged at existing parks. Congress also chose that year to further define the always delicate policy of private enterprise in the parks with the Concession Policies Act of 1965. Although Mather's ideas of monopoly concessions with first rights of contract renewal were maintained, the new law reiterated the stipulation that concession operations be of minimum area and extent necessary and specified that the government could force a movement of such operations to another location upon payment of compensatory funds.

In 1966 the complicated duties of the National Park Service with regard to historical sites and structures would be magnified by passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. This authorized the Secretary of the Interior to create and maintain a national register of historic districts, sites, and structures and to establish programs of matching grants to states and to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Park Service became the coordinating agency for these activities and its director the executive director of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

In 1967 the Clean Air Act (summarized in the Appendix) laid another layer of protection on the parks but also demanded management compliance. Identified as areas of desired maximum air purity, the parks' airsheds would presumably be more tightly constrained in production of pollutants. The parks themselves would fall under this legislation however, necessitating additional planning in

the incipient fire program.

The following year, 1968, saw a flurry of important legislation and policy statements continuing the rapid evolution of the park system and its management program. Two laws, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Trails System Act, further diversified the units managed by the Park Service. The rivers act in particular has added extensively to the system and created long, sinuous areas with complicated management problems.

Secretary Udall's 1964 prescription for separate administrative policies for areas of natural, historic, and recreation protection became reality in 1968. Three handbooks specifying general policy purposes and specific prescriptions for common problems, and containing appendixes of related legislation and agency orders, sought to cope with the confusing myriad of duties and responsibilities the agency faced.

While this flurry of legislative and policy maneuvering occupied Washington, D.C., the parks continued to adjust to the Leopold report and its attendant infusion of scientists and natural resource programs. At Sequoia National Park decades of vigorous protection of giant sequoias from fire had halted reproduction of the species. Acting on the advice of one of Stanley Cain's students, the park administration experimented with controlled burns in 1964. The success of those trial burns led in 1968 to a policy for their continuation in the forest ecosystems of the park. This adoption of systematic provision of fire in a forest marked a substantive turning point in resource protection in the parks.

The final law of this busy period was perhaps the farthest reaching of all. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) forms the basic national charter for environmental protection. It ordered federal agencies to carry out their duties in such a way as to avoid or minimize environmental degradation. It required those agencies to conduct planning with studies of potential environmental impact for all development projects. The planning procedure, further, was to be open for public input. This latter provision was to have extraordinary results as conservation organizations in particular became powerful players at the required hearings. NEPA rounded out a short period during which the duties and ground rules of the NPS evolved with dizzying speed especially for old-time employees, hired at a time when the parks were distant, serene enclaves of natural landscape architecture.

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[Wilderness Act, 1964](#)

[Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, 1965](#)

[Concession Policies Act, 1965](#)

[National Historic Preservation Act, 1966](#)

[Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 1968](#)

[National Trails System Act, 1968](#)

[Administrative Policies for Recreation Areas, 1968](#)

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[Plan for Use of Fire in Ecosystem Management, 1968](#)

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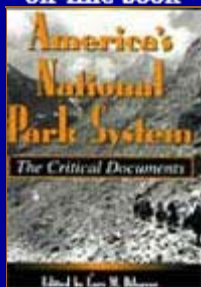
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Chapter 7: Transformation and Expansion, 1970-1980

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Transformation and Expansion 1970-1980

The changes set in motion by the Leopold report and the spate of legislative action that followed in the 1960s continued to expand and mature the national park system in the 1970s. The decade saw vast additions to the park system in part arising from a series of omnibus bills disparagingly called "park barrel legislation" by opponents. Also, a series of major environmental protection laws further defined the web of regulatory controls on federal activities including those in the national park system. Finally, specific legislation and policy evaluations pertaining to the national parks further defined the changing and threatened system.

The profile of park system functions further broadened in 1972 with the addition of the first two specifically urban recreation areas. Gateway National Recreation Area in the New York metropolitan zone brought the National Park Service into the nation's largest city with all the distinctive requirements and challenges of that environment. On the same day Congress authorized Golden Gate National Recreation Area in and around San Francisco. Management and protection of such areas would become radically different from that in the traditional parks of the old system.

Returning to the more classic, natural parks in 1978, Congress grappled with the problems of parks as natural islands encroached upon by adjacent activities. Redwood National Park, approved in 1968, protected the largest remaining stands of coastal redwoods primarily in the lower watershed of Redwood Creek. Logging outside the boundary, however, resulted in siltation deemed harmful to the park trees. In a controversial action, legislators expanded the park boundaries to encompass the remaining watershed and protect the endemic ecosystem. In the process they agreed to compensate those unemployed by the loss of logging jobs.

During the same year President Jimmy Carter addressed the preservation of lands in Alaska, the last great frontier of America and an area under increasing threat of consumptive use. As miners, loggers, and others maneuvered for the opportunities to exploit vast new areas, Carter hearkened back to Theodore Roosevelt in using the Antiquities Act to unilaterally proclaim seventeen huge national monuments (summarized in the Appendix). This was by no means the first time the act had been used as an emergency device for protecting wild lands, but it was certainly its most extensive use. Two years later in the waning days of his presidency, Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (see the Appendix). This sweeping legislation more than doubled the size of the national park system, anchoring the earlier monuments and many other lands as new parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, and wild and scenic rivers.

The vast expansion of the park system transpired amidst ever tighter federal environmental controls. In 1971 President Richard Nixon strengthened the process of historic preservation with Executive Order No. 11593 stipulating

steps to be taken in expanding and maintaining the National Register of Historic Places and in protecting threatened historic resources. Most of this document was subsequently written into the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980. And 1972 saw passage of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act (see the Appendix). The former established provisions to ensure clean water while the latter emphasized coordinated action between states and the federal government aimed at restoring and protecting coastal areas including the Great Lakes shoreline. A year later passage of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (see the Appendix) required federal agencies to modify their activities to ensure protection of endangered species of plants and animals. This provision would materially affect construction in the parks which often served as islands of endangered species amidst zones of agricultural or urban land use. Finally in 1979 Congress corrected more than seven decades of inadequate protection for archaeological sites and objects with passage of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. This law superseded the Antiquities Act as the prime legislative protection for federal archaeological sources by more fully defining them and establishing appropriate penalty provisions for their destruction or theft.

Attention to the status and management of the national park system also surfaced from a variety of sources during the decade. Owing the extensive diversification of responsibilities delivered to the Park Service in the previous decade, some attention was felt necessary to secure equal protection for all units. In 1970, just two years

after release of the separate handbooks for administration of natural, historic, and recreation areas, Congress passed the General Authorities Act. In it legislators specified that all units administered by the National Park Service were part of the same "system" and that they were to be managed according to the provisions of the Organic Act of 1916 and other related laws.

During the 1960s conservation organizations had vastly grown in both numbers and influence. Some had challenged the federal government's management of parks and had become integrally involved in efforts to authorize or enlarge parks. In 1972 one group, the Conservation Foundation, released its report, *Preservation of National Park Values*, promoting its blueprint of how parks should be managed to best preserve the resources they were charged to protect. In addressing issues from visitor and concessions policies to carrying capacity and the need for research, the conservation group publicized the agenda of one powerful clique of park users.

Finally, as the decade ended and the administration of Jimmy Carter neared its expected end, the National Park Service answered a congressional request to report on the state of the parks. The report, released in 1980, resulted from an extensive survey of park administrators throughout the system. What it concluded was disheartening. The parks suffered from a wide variety of threats ranging from internal ones like overcrowding, overbuilding, and insufficient personnel to foreboding external ones such as air and water pollution, accelerated development on park boundaries, and destruction of migratory park species on outside lands. The lists of specific, identified threats ran to dozens for some parks. Clearly the next decade would require extensive action to stem the problems and protect the nation's "crown jewels."

THE CRITICAL DOCUMENTS

[Act to Improve the Administration of the National](#)

[Redwood National Park](#)

[Park System \(General Authorities Act\), 1970](#)

[Expansion Act, 1978](#)

[Executive Order No: 11593: Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 1971](#)

[Archaeological Resources Protection Act, 1979](#)

[Gateway National Recreation Area Act, 1972](#)

[State of the Parks Report, 1980](#)

[Preservation of Park Values \(Conservation Foundation\), 1972](#)

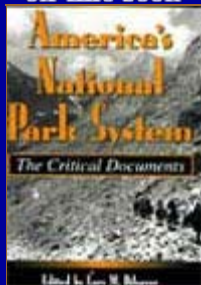
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Chapter 8: A System Threatened, 1981 - 1992

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A System Threatened 1981-1992

The period from 1963 to 1980 had seen major changes affecting the national park system. Indeed, one might have expected that vast expansion of the network of parks, monuments, etc., and increasingly biocentric management would continue indefinitely. However, 1981 saw the arrival of economic recession and altered priorities emanating from Washington. Over the next twelve years the national park system would suffer expanded visitation and heightened external threats coupled with serious underfunding and erosion of employee morale. Many aspects of NPS management would be challenged, and politicization of the directorship and erosion of its power promoted. The signal for change came early as a new Interior secretary, James Watt, tendered the traditional secretary's letter on national park system management. He spelled out administration policies that would curtail the system's growth and return to provision of visitor services and pleasures as a primary management goal.

Heightened public interest in touring the parks and in developing commercial and residential complexes on their borders exacerbated the problems noted in 1980. The General Accounting Office issued a report in 1987 that spelled out what park personnel knew — that the threats were not being addressed and that many problems had in fact worsened. It found instead that the parks were not being run consistent with the laws and executive orders established to protect them.

A year later saw the worst fire in national park system history. Approximately half of Yellowstone's acres burned, although the percentage of forest destroyed was a much lower figure. Daily from July through September the public watched in fascination and alarm as the nation's oldest park burned. In the end loud questions from politicians and visitors called into question two decades of fire management. An interagency report released in 1989, however, found the policy basically sound. Ecosystem management survived its toughest test.

In 1990, decades of archaeological business as usual suddenly ended with passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Hitherto, excavation of Indian graves and removal of human and ceremonial remains were forbidden. This act imposed further difficulties for museums, including those operated by the National Park Service, for it stipulated that Indian remains be returned to the direct or at least cultural descendants for reburial.

Finally 1992 saw the release of two more reports on the status of the national park system. One, *Science and the National Parks*, echoed the earlier Robbins report (1963) in finding the National Park Service wanting in its pursuit and use of scientific information. It called for far more attention to science as a basis for policy and management. The other report was the end result of a highly publicized and expensive conference on the status and needs of the national

parks for the twenty-first century. Called the Vail report for its meeting site, the document reiterated the concerns of the *State of the Parks Report* (1980) and the GAO report (1987). It reaffirmed most of their recommendations and the basic policies developed from the early 1960s through 1980. Although it is unlikely that either report will lead to significant policy changes, they indicate the persistence of longtime problems and of the basic formulas for their solution. It remains to be seen whether the recommendations of these two committees and those that preceded them will finally be adopted in full.

THE CRITICAL DOCUMENTS

[Secretary Watt's Letter on National Park Management, 1981](#)

[Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990](#)

[General Accounting Office Report on Threats to Parks, 1987](#)

[The Vail Agenda, 1992](#)

[Science and the National Parks, 1992](#)

[Interagency Final Report on Fire Management, 1989](#)

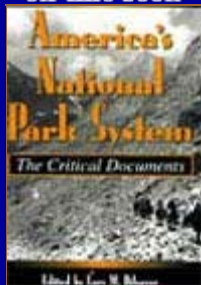
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ALASKA NATIONAL MONUMENT PROCLAMATIONS

**December 1, 1978 (Federal Register, Vol. 43, No. 234,
Tuesday, December 5, 1978)**

After several decades of sparse and careful usage of the Antiquities Act reflecting the unwillingness of Congress to allow the president to unilaterally shape conservation policy, Jimmy Carter took abrupt and sweeping action to preserve seventeen enormous and endangered areas of Alaska. Each individual monument proclamation repeated the following key statements after defining and justifying a particular area:

"Now, therefore, I, Jimmy Carter, President of the United States of America, by the authority vested in me by section 2 of the Act of June 8, 1906 (34 Stat. 225, 16 U.S.C. 431), do proclaim that there are hereby set apart and reserved as the [see list below] all lands, including submerged lands, and waters owned or controlled by the United States within the boundaries of the area described on the document entitled [Monument title], attached to and forming a part of this Proclamation.

"All lands, including submerged lands, and all waters within the boundaries of this Monument are hereby appropriated and withdrawn from entry, location, selection, sale or other disposition under the public land laws, other than exchange. There is also reserved all water necessary to the proper care and management of those objects protected by this Monument and for the proper administration of the Monument in accordance with applicable laws.

"The establishment of this Monument is subject to valid existing rights, including, but not limited to, valid selections under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and under or confirmed in the Alaska Statehood Act (48 U.S.C. Note preceding Section 21).

"Nothing in this Proclamation shall be deemed to revoke any existing withdrawal, reservation or appropriation, including any withdrawal under section 17 (d)(I) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1616 (d)(I)); however, the National Monument shall be the dominant reservation. Nothing in this Proclamation is intended to modify or revoke the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding dated September 1, 1972, entered into between the State of Alaska and the United States as part of the negotiated settlement of *Alaska v. Morton*, Civil No. A-48-72 (D. Alaska, Complaint filed April 10, 1972)."

Aside from vastly increasing park system acreage, these proclamations greatly expanded the use of the Antiquities Act to block resource exploitation and at least temporarily preserve areas until the slow legislative process could act.

The proclamations and areas are as follows:

Proclamation 4611 Admiralty Island National Monument

- Proclamation 4612 Aniakchak National Monument
- Proclamation 4613 Becharof National Monument
- Proclamation 4614 Bering Land Bridge National Monument
- Proclamation 4615 Cape Krusenstern National Monument
- Proclamation 4616 Denali National Monument
- Proclamation 4617 Gates of the Arctic National Monument
- Proclamation 4618 Enlarging the Glacier Bay National Monument
- Proclamation 4619 Enlarging the Katmai National Monument
- Proclamation 4620 Kenai Fjords National Monument
- Proclamation 4621 Kobuk Valley National Monument
- Proclamation 4622 Lake dark National Monument
- Proclamation 4623 Misty Fiords National Monument
- Proclamation 4624 Noatak National Monument
- Proclamation 4625 Wrangell-St. Elias National Monument
- Proclamation 4626 Yukon-Charley National Monument
- Proclamation 4627 Yukon Flats National Monument

CFR Title 3, 1978 Compilation, 69-104.

THE CRITICAL DOCUMENTS

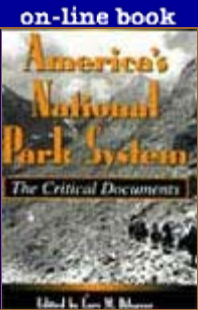
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| Alaska National Monument Proclamations, 1978 | Coastal Zone Management Act, 1972 |
| Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, 1980 | Endangered Species Act, 1973 |
| Clean Air Act, 1967 | Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 1972 |

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About the Editor

About the Editor

Lary Dilsaver is professor of historical geography at the University of South Alabama and consultant to the History Division of the National Park Service. Born and raised in California, he received a Ph.D. from Louisiana State University in 1982. He has co-authored *Challenge of the Big Trees: A Resource History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* and co-edited *The Mountainous West* and *The American Environment* (the latter published by Rowman and Littlefield). He has also written some two dozen articles and chapters on land use and management, conservation, and recreation. He and his wife, Robin, live in Spanish Fort, Alabama, adjacent to one of the last battlefields of the Civil War.

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