

Lecture #15-16: Wilderness and the Land Ethic

Suggested Readings:

Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 4th ed., 2001

Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience, 3rd ed., 1997.

Curt Meine, Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work, 1988; Susan L. Flader, Thinking Like a Mountain, 1974.

Louis Warren, The Hunter's Game, 1999; Karl Jacoby, Crimes against Nature, 2001.

Paul Sutter, Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Autos Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement, 2002.

Outline

I. Creating Parks

various origins for the idea of national parks and wilderness: back to 19th century

Frederic Law Olmsted's Central Park in NYC (cemetery predecessors): park as pastoral retreat within

bounds of city, lungs of city, place to recover community: recreation

cf monumentalism of Niagara Falls: "natural wonder" as America's best alternative to European culture, the Edenic landscape of God's creation, the romantic sublime

but Niagara already too crowded and modified for water power by 2nd half of 19th c

1864: US gives Yosemite to CA as state park at prompting of Olmsted; returned to US 1906

1870 Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition to Yellowstone: Cornelius Hedges' idea to set aside "a great

National Park"; he and Nathaniel P. Langford lobby extensively

aided by report of Ferdinand Hayden expedition, with illustrations by Thomas Moran and William Henry

Jackson: artist and photographer as promoters of image of romantic park

March 1, 1872, Grant signs bill making Yellowstone nation's 1st national park

Runte's "worthless lands" thesis: strongest argument for parks was no other good use

1894: Act to Protect the Birds and Animals of Yellowstone National Park" (game refuge)

II. Promoting Parks

long time before parks had clear bureaucratic management; initial mgmt by Army

difficulty of reaching: take RR to Montana, coach to Mammoth Hot Springs, tours from there

RRs logically became most important promoters of travel to parks: visit "Wonderland"

RRs affiliated with major hotels in parks, handled much of tourist movement: Old Faithful Inn at Yellowstone,

Northern Pacific RR, 1904; El Tovar at G. Canyon, run by Fred Harvey, 1905

Union Pacific & Northern Pacific linked to Yellowstone; Santa Fe to Grand Canyon, etc.

additional parks: 1890: Yosemite; 1899: Mt. Rainier; 1902: Crater Lake; 1906: Mesa Verde; 1910: Glacier;

1915: Rocky Mountain; 1916: Mount Lassen; 1919: Grand Canyon

massive promotional outpouring from RRs on behalf of parks along their lines; selling points included

sublime, playgrounds, recreation, romance, quaintness, Indians, etc.

arrival of tourist automobile (1st in Yellowstone 1915) liberated travellers from RR & hotels: onset of

camping, more highway-oriented mode of travel

1916: National Park Service Act creates administrative bureaucracy within parks, partly in response to

Hetchy Hetchy, with Stephen Tyng Mather (1867-1930) as first Director

NPS promoted parks as democratic playground for recreation in midst of natural wonders

sought to widen access through road construction, widespread publication efforts

III. Aldo Leopold and the Problem of Game Management

at same time, USFS seeking also to sell self as nation's playground, Sec. of Agriculture issuing vacation house permits at \$10-\$25 per year, widespread enthusiastic response

Arthur C. Carhart hired by Denver headquarters to plan vacation development at Trappers Lake, argued that no development at all would be better; lake set aside 1920

Carhart allied with Aldo Leopold, who argued for "special primitive area" as designation for Gila National Forest in New Mexico, to be roadless: escape car & industrial use

Leopold emerged as the major theoretician of wilderness in first half of 20th century

born Burlington IA, 1886 (died 1949), Yale BA 1908 and Forestry MA 1909, then on to Southwest to work for USFS doing forestry & game preservation, brief period with Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce to fight

for predator control

"disaster" of deer overpopulation on Kaibab Plateau in early 1920s leads Leopold to reverse position on predators, and to argue against eliminating them; data very problematic

Leopold would nonetheless argued that people should be "Thinking Like a Mountain": wolves as much as deer essential to health of ecological community, to prevent overpopulation

went on to become Professor of Wildlife Ecology at University of Wisconsin, first such position in country;

wrote classic textbook on Game Management in 1933; systematized state efforts at regulating hunt via game wardens, license fees, wildlife refuges, raising of pheasants, etc.

Izaak Walton League, founded 1922, would be play central role in national refugesystem

1934: first federal duck stamp, finances federal game refuge system, land acquisition; note also that wetlands for the first time start to be preserved, even though not "sublime" in original romantic sense
note curious role of wildlife manager in protecting wildlife species: managing wild populations for sake of protecting hunt, even to point of breeding certain species like pheasants (introduced 1881, first hunting season 1892, very popular game target); hunters' licensing fees fund management system, help finance refuges

1935, Leopold family acquired "The Shack", worn-out farm that they sought to restore; story of efforts contained in posthumous Sand County Almanac, along with defense of "land ethic"
exercise in private stewardship of ecosystem, manipulation of abandoned agricultural land to reproduce healthy biota, native vegetation, mixture of game and non-game species
humans as members of biotic community with ethical responsibility to maintain its health
Leopold dies of heart attack in brush fire, April 21, 1948; Sand County appears next year

IV. Preserving Wilderness: The Battle for Dinosaur

Leopold not alone. Bob Marshall, (1901-39) trained as forester, worked for USFS & BIA, among most successful New Deal proponents arguing for setting aside wilderness
1929-39, USFS L-20 regulation sets up wilderness, wild, and roadless areas, total rose from .4 to 14.2 million acres by 1939; new U-regulations after 1939 much more restrictive
private efforts too: Benton MacKaye's 1921 proposal for Appalachian Trail led to massive volunteer efforts, App. Trail Conference 1925, trail completed by 1937, much private
Marshall, MacKaye, Leopold joined Harvey Broome, Bernard Frank, and Robert Sterling Yard in 1935 to found Wilderness Society: elite, wealthy, well-connected, very effective
Paul Sutter argues that founders of Wilderness Society were principally concerned with impact of motorized recreation and road construction on roadless areas, with National Park Service as key offender
hence: campaign for wilderness in United States comes to focus on roadlessness
linkage of wealth to wilderness & park preservation persistent feature of movement
cf. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: helped or gave outright Acadia, Grand Tetons, Shenandoah, Great Smoky National Parks to nation, along with New Jersey Palisades
Governor Percival Baxter: purchased 202,000 acres to preserve Mt. Katahdin to state
in East, issue was acquiring or regulating private land; in West, setting aside government land
John Muir's Sierra Club largely an outing club in 1930s, but poised to become major player
David Brower (b. 1912) becomes editor of Bulletin 1946, executive director 1952
major fight of 1950s: proposed dam at Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument. Hetchy Hetchy all over again? Wallace Stegner edits 1955 This is Dinosaur to educate public
Brower's testimony demonstrated Bureau of Reclamation had miscalculated own data re loss to evaporation and aquifer; 1956, Congress declares no dams in parks
but note: defenders had accepted principle of dams elsewhere on river; also nuclear power

V. Promoting Wilderness: Toward the 1964 Act

1960: Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall's This is the American Earth becomes first volume in Brower's new Exhibit Format book series. landscape images make environmental case
Ansel Adams (1902-84) started photographing Sierra Nevada in late 1920s, soon emerged as country's most popular landscape photographer; Sierra Club board member 1934
question: "What is the price of exaltation?" 1964 book responds: In Wilderness is the Preservation of the World, photos by Eliot Porter, words by H. D. Thoreau
romantic nature as source of secular faith in crisis of modern world: recovering spiritual values
high cost of book series led to increasing resistance to Brower by Sierra Club board members
goal of late 1950s: legislative authority to preserve wilderness. First bill, 1957.
drafted by executive director of Wilderness Society, Howard Zahniser (1906-64), from editorial and journalistic background like Brower, tireless lobbyist, died just before act passed in 1964
Sept 3, 1964, Wilderness Act: "where earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain": 9.1 million acres initially

VI. Flooding the Sistine Chapel: Canyons of the Colorado

no time to celebrate. flood gates at Glen Canyon Dam close Jan 21, 1963, flood The Place No One Knew--
Sierra Club book published 1963 to lament loss of wilderness to dam
in response, fight against Marble Canyon and Bridge Canyon dams flooding Grand Canyon
June 9, 1966, Brower runs NYT ad, "Only You Can Save Grand Canyon"; next day, IRS revokes tax-exempt status of Sierra Club, leading by 1969 to Brower's ouster by Board
response, NYT ad: "Should We Also Flood the Sistine Chapel so Tourists can get Nearer the Ceiling?"
Feb 1, 1967, Sec. of Interior Stewart Udall reverses stand, rejects Grand Canyon dams and accepts Four Corners power plant on Navajo Reservation, eventually polluting air in canyon
wilderness: urban population seeking escape in conflict with its own material support system, leading inevitably to paradox of "wilderness management": Leopold's stewardship