

“Creative Conservation:”  
The Environmental Legacy of Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson,  
1963-1969



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# **ABSTRACT**

In May 2019, staff members of the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, headquartered at Johnson City, and the Center for Texas Public History at Texas State University met to discuss a partnership for historical research related to President Johnson's administrative role in conservation and environmentalism. Under the terms of the subsequent contract, graduate Public History students at Texas State University, working as a special projects class, identified, researched, and compiled information on eight distinct topical themes that provide greater insights into the larger context. Within the span of one semester, they conducted original research, and wrote and edited the following report, which is hereby presented to the National Park Service staff in fulfillment of the contract. Additionally, students compiled an extensive curriculum guide following the same general themes. That guide is separate from this published report and has been forwarded to park service personnel as a digital report.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Illustrations.....	III
Acknowledgements .....	IV
Personnel .....	V
LBJ & The Texas Hill Country.....	1
The Great Society Responds to the Environmental Crisis.....	25
Lady Bird Redefines Beauty.....	33
LBJ Expands the National Park Service .....	43
Conservation and Preservation.....	53
Task Force Mobilization.....	64
Agricultural Conservation.....	76
The Urban Environment and Civil Rights.....	81

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Figure 1. Texas State University Project Class standing in front of LBJ Park Sign

Figure 2. President Johnson posing with Yuki at the LBJ Ranch

Figure 3. The Chrysler building in 1953 during the smog crisis that killed 200 people

Figure 4. Lady Bird Johnson and guests on their way to plant flower bulbs

Figure 5. Conservation supporters at Redwood Park

Figure 6. President Johnson and Lady Bird at the signing of the Highway Beautification Act.

Figure 7. President Johnson meets with his administration to discuss the Detroit riots

Figure 8. Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson roping calves at the LBJ Ranch

Figure 9. LBJ and others at the signing of the Housing and Urban Development

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Derek L. Tanner and Rayanna Hoeft, Team Leaders

# PERSONNEL



**Figure 1. Texas State University Project Class standing in front of the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park sign. From left to right: Alexander Shane, Helen Johnson, Kyle Walker, Amanda Rock, Derek Tanner, Rayanna Hoeft, and Brooke Privette.**

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# 1. LBJ and the Texas Hill Country

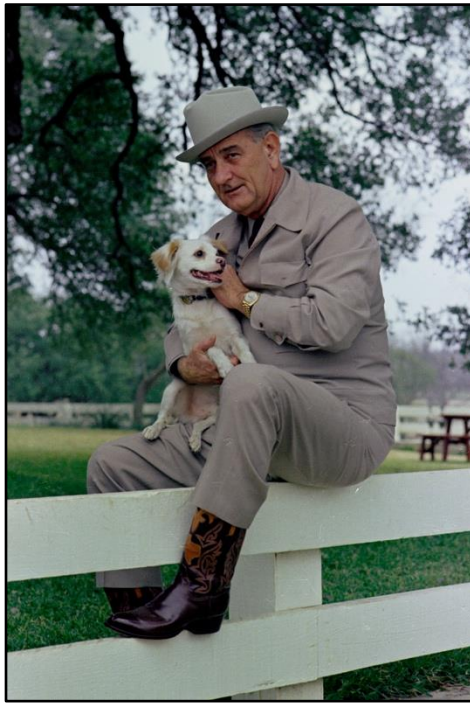


Figure 2: President Johnson posing with Yuki at the LBJ Ranch.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

No story of former U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson as an environmentalist would be complete without giving the audience a closer view of the state, region, and community in which he was born, raised, and where he ultimately spent the final years of his life. A person's life is frequently defined by the places in which they have not only grown up or been educated and worked but by those where their most vivid life experiences have been formed. Equally notable is that a person's life span from their moment of birth to their time of death, often without any direct intent of their own doing, can play out in strange but connected circles that may baffle both intimate and casual observers alike. Such is the case with the life of President Lyndon B. Johnson and the special place that shaped him most of any other, the Texas Hill Country.

On August 27, 1908, Lyndon Johnson drew his first breath and let out his first cry in a simple, dogtrot farmhouse on the banks of the Pedernales River where his newly-wedded parents, Sam and Rebekah Johnson, were living on a plot of land next to that of his paternal grandparents. On January 22, 1973, completing a long circle of history, Johnson drew his final breath in the master bedroom of his beloved ranch house along the Pedernales River and only a short walking distance from his birthplace. Between the dates of his birth and death, Lyndon Johnson would live in, work in, and travel to other places in Texas and the United States as his burgeoning career in national politics took him to elevated, new heights, particularly Washington, DC, where he lived and worked for thirty-eight years. However, the Texas Hill Country and the distinct communities within that region represented the most genuine sense of place that burned fiercely in Johnson's heart and soul. Indeed, it was the place to which he always returned time and again to draw physical and emotional sustenance from the land and its people while also motivating him to perform bigger and better actions to benefit not only the people of Texas, but people all across America and the world whom he felt were suffering.

The Texas Hill Country is a majestic, beautiful, wild, charmingly deceptive, and often unforgiving region made up of thin soil, rugged terrain, hardy trees, countless hills and valleys, granite cliffs, limestone ledges, and hundreds of spring-fed rivers and streams. With its harsh summer and winter temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and lack of arable farmland, the Texas Hill Country has historically been known to either make or break a person's body and character during its vast history of human occupation. In what some might consider an interesting but odd parallel, some of the same qualities that describe the landscape, lifestyle, and unique patterns of the Texas Hill Country have often been used to describe the character and behavior of Lyndon Johnson himself by the people closest to him and by outsiders who have studied his life and career. The raw expansiveness of the region and the unrelenting ruthlessness by which it has historically drawn



people in by its outward charm and distinct beauty before testing them to the maximum and roughly pushing them away all serve as strange parallels to certain aspects of Johnson's character and to the traits that helped make him not only a successful politician but an outstanding legislator and chief executive.

Throughout his long political career in Congress, the vice presidency, and finally, the American presidency itself, Lyndon Johnson strove to better the lives of his fellow Americans with one new program, initiative, and pen stroke at a time. In often massive flurries of legislation, especially while he was president, there was barely an area of American citizens' economic, physical, social, and cultural welfare, or "quality of life," that Johnson had not touched in some unique form during his career. This all showed up in close resemblance to the actions of his political idol and mentor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during the New Deal years of the 1930s, except on a broader, more intimate scale.

As a young, ambitious U.S. Congressman during the late 1930s and early 1940s, Lyndon Johnson strategically fought for and won great legislative victories in providing affordable electricity to many rural areas of Texas, with the most notable being his beloved Hill Country. This was a huge milestone in the lives of many rural Texans at the time that in small and big ways made their lives somewhat easier as time passed. Johnson put his savvy political skills to good use after his election to Congress and through his subsequent years in the Senate. He sought and received funding for the construction of a number of large, well-engineered dams and reservoirs along the lower Colorado River that helped with flood control, water retention, and provided cheap hydroelectricity to residents of Austin and the larger Hill Country. His efforts addressed a number of state issues, including flooding along major rivers during heavy rains, the virtual lack of natural lakes, and an ongoing problem with surface water reclamation in times of serious drought. The

most notable example that Johnson was instrumental in building was the huge Marshall Ford Dam (now Mansfield Dam) that created Lake Travis northwest of Austin.

Additionally, as a congressman, senator, and U.S. president, Lyndon Johnson never forgot his agricultural roots in the harsh, unforgiving Hill Country soil and weather patterns. Johnson was both vocal and legislatively active in promoting the rights and constant needs of farmers and ranchers first in Texas, and then on a broader, national scale. However, additional research would be necessary to indicate how Johnson voted on particular farm bills. In Texas, he rarely failed to listen to their most pressing concerns and sympathized with them when they expressed feelings of mistreatment or neglect at the hands of the state and federal governments. Being a proud Texas rancher himself, he proudly stood up for the rights of agricultural families and promoted major soil and water conservation measures, increased farming subsidies, and various methods used to enhance livestock production and protection.

President Johnson's roots in the Texas Hill Country ran deep enough that trying to escape them was all but impossible, even for a man who was so ambitious that his primary residence for decades was the swampy, congested, and noisy environment of Washington, DC. He lived in the elegant White House for more than five years but never considered it to be his home. Johnson's truest sense of place was always the Hill Country of his youth in which life still moved slower and simpler. It may have been an important factor in why he chose to purchase his aunt's and uncle's old ranch house and much of the surrounding acreage. While life as it revolved around Lyndon Johnson was often far from relaxing or serene for the family, friends, and associates surrounding him, he always found that the land and its people reinvigorated him with a renewed sense of wellbeing and purpose, especially as it related to helping others in need and caught in a "cycle of poverty" that he knew about all too well from his formative years.

To sum up President Johnson's own feelings about the Texas Hill Country in his retirement years, he stated in an oral history, "Here the sun seems to be a little brighter and the climate a little warmer, the air a little fresher and the people a little kinder and more interesting. It's dry country but there's always a breeze blowing and there is always sun here. We don't have dreariness. We don't have those dull, gray skies when you look up. Here we have birds singing, flowers growing, girls smiling...I've always found it possible and almost necessary to return to Texas. This country has always been a place where I could come and refill my cup, so to speak, and recharge myself for the more difficult days ahead. Here's where we come to rest our bones and collect our thoughts and to lay out our plans. I visit with my neighbors, talk to them and my friends. You would be surprised how much—how they can clear up a lot of the things that seem pretty foggy to you when you get here."

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## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 1936 Rural Electrification Act
- 1963 Clean Air Act
- 1964 Pesticide Control Bill
- Water Resources Research Act
- Wilderness Act
- 1965 Land and Water Conservation Fund Act
- Solid Waste Disposal Bill
- Water and Sanitation Systems in Rural Areas Bill
- Water Quality Act
- Water Resources Planning Act
- 1966 Clean Water Restoration Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Protection Act
- Historic Preservation Act
- 1967 Air Quality Act
- 1968 National Trails Act
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

When examining the life and legacy of President Lyndon B. Johnson with his ingrained roots in the Texas Hill Country, we can see the ways in which this proud, rugged, and beautiful region shaped him over time from birth to death and how his own environmental impact via major legislation and executive actions came to affect the land and people he cherished. As a result, we are able to explore multiple avenues for further scholarship.

One area of exploration could examine the effects that environmental deregulation and the eventual dismantling of most environmental components of the Great Society had on Texas and the Hill Country region during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as more business-friendly laws and practices experienced a resurgence in Texas and the greater South. Additionally, there could be further studies into how both Lyndon Johnson and the federal policies of the Great Society closely worked with and/or clashed against the policies, practices, and notable political leaders within the Texas state government, especially as it relates to Johnson's wielding of immense power in a

conservative state famously known for its deregulated business and environmental climate.

More intimate and perhaps limited in scope, there could be additional scholarship on agricultural and water conservation practices in specific Hill Country counties, such as Blanco, Gillespie, Llano, Hays, and Travis, during Lyndon Johnson's entire life span or solely during his years as a powerful political leader from 1949 to 1969. Lastly, with regard to water conservation and protection, some scholars may find it worthwhile to examine not only the significant role of surface water in the arid, landlocked Texas Hill Country, but the even more crucial role of underground springs and the Edwards Aquifer in this region during the twentieth century's long span of rapid industrialization, massive population growth, and increasingly troubling climate patterns that would negatively affect major sources of clean drinking water.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 4, 1965- Lyndon Baines Johnson**

*Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the Congress, my fellow Americans:*

On this Hill which was my home, I am stirred by old friendships.

Though total agreement between the Executive and the Congress is impossible, total respect is important.

I am proud to be among my colleagues of the Congress whose legacy to their trust is their loyalty to their Nation.

I am not unaware of the inner emotions of the new Members of this body tonight.

Twenty-eight years ago, I felt as you do now. You will soon learn that you are among men whose first love is their country, men who try each day to do as best they can what they believe is right.

We are entering the third century of the pursuit of American union.

Two hundred years ago, in 1765, nine assembled colonies first joined together to demand freedom from arbitrary power.

For the first century we struggled to hold together the first continental union of democracy in the history of man. One hundred years ago, in 1865, following a terrible test of blood and fire, the compact of union was finally sealed.

For a second century we labored to establish a unity of purpose and interest among the many groups which make up the American community.

That struggle has often brought pain and violence. It is not yet over. But we have achieved a unity of interest among our people that is unmatched in the history of freedom.

And so tonight, now, in 1965, we begin a new quest for union. We seek the unity of man with the world that he has built—with the knowledge that can save or destroy him—with the cities which can stimulate or stifle him—with the wealth and the machines which can enrich or menace his spirit.

We seek to establish a harmony between man and society which will allow each of us to enlarge the meaning of his life and all of us to elevate the quality of our civilization.

This is the search that we begin tonight.

## STATE OF THE WORLD

But the unity we seek cannot realize its full promise in isolation. For today the state of the Union depends, in large measure, upon the state of the world.

Our concern and interest, compassion and vigilance, extend to every corner of a dwindling planet.

Yet, it is not merely our concern but the concern of all free men. We will not, and we should not, assume that it is the task of Americans alone to settle all the conflicts of a torn and troubled world.

Let the foes of freedom take no comfort from this. For in concert with other nations, we shall help men defend their freedom.

Our first aim remains the safety and the well-being of our own country.

We are prepared to live as good neighbors with all, but we cannot be indifferent to acts designed to injure our interests, or our citizens, or our establishments abroad. The community of nations requires mutual respect. We shall extend it—and we shall expect it.

In our relations with the world we shall follow the example of Andrew Jackson who said: “I intend to ask for nothing that is not clearly right and to submit to nothing that is wrong.” And he promised, that “the honor of my country shall never be stained by an apology from me for the statement of truth or for the performance of duty.” That was this Nation’s policy in the 1830’s and that is this Nation’s policy in the 1960’s.

Our own freedom and growth have never been the final goal of the American dream.



We were never meant to be an oasis of liberty and abundance in a worldwide desert of disappointed dreams. Our Nation was created to help strike away the chains of ignorance and misery and tyranny wherever they keep man less than God means him to be.

We are moving toward that destiny, never more rapidly than we have moved in the last 4 years.

In this period we have built a military power strong enough to meet any threat and destroy any adversary. And that superiority will continue to grow so long as this office is mine—and you sit on Capitol Hill.

In this period no new nation has become Communist, and the unity of the Communist empire has begun to crumble.

In this period we have resolved in friendship our disputes with our neighbors of the hemisphere, and joined in an Alliance for Progress toward economic growth and political democracy.

In this period we have taken more steps toward peace—including the test ban treaty—than at any time since the cold war began.

In this period we have relentlessly pursued our advances toward the conquest of space.

Most important of all, in this period, the United States has reemerged into the fullness of its self-confidence and purpose. No longer are we called upon to get America moving. We are moving. No longer do we doubt our strength or resolution. We are strong and we have proven our resolve.

No longer can anyone wonder whether we are in the grip of historical decay. We know that history is ours to make. And if there is great danger, there is now also the excitement of great expectations.

## AMERICA AND THE COMMUNIST NATIONS

Yet we still live in a troubled and perilous world. There is no longer a single threat. There are many. They differ in intensity and in danger. They require different attitudes and different answers.

With the Soviet Union we seek peaceful understandings that can lessen the danger to freedom.

Last fall I asked the American people to choose that course.

I will carry forward their command.

If we are to live together in peace, we must come to know each other better.

I am sure that the American people would welcome a chance to listen to the Soviet leaders on our television—as I would like the Soviet people to hear our leaders on theirs.

I hope the new Soviet leaders can visit America so they can learn about our country at firsthand.

In Eastern Europe restless nations are slowly beginning to assert their identity. Your Government, assisted by the leaders in American labor and business, is now exploring ways to increase peaceful trade with these countries and with the Soviet Union. I will report our conclusions to the Congress.

In Asia, communism wears a more aggressive face.

We see that in Viet-Nam.

Why are we there?

We are there, first, because a friendly nation has asked us for help against the Communist aggression. Ten years ago our President pledged our help. Three Presidents have supported that pledge. We will not break it now.

Second, our own security is tied to the peace of Asia. Twice in one generation we have had to fight against aggression in the Far East. To ignore aggression now would only increase the danger of a much larger war.

Our goal is peace in southeast Asia. That will come only when aggressors leave their neighbors in peace.

What is at stake is the cause of freedom and in that cause America will never be found wanting.

## THE NON-COMMUNIST WORLD

But communism is not the only source of trouble and unrest. There are older and deeper sources—in the misery of nations and in man's irrepressible ambition for liberty and a better life.

With the free Republics of Latin America I have always felt—and my country has always felt—very special ties of interest and affection. It will be the purpose of my administration to strengthen these ties. Together we share and shape the destiny of the new world. In the coming year I hope to pay a visit to Latin America. And I will steadily enlarge our commitment to the Alliance for Progress as the instrument of our war against poverty and injustice in this hemisphere.

In the Atlantic community we continue to pursue our goal of 20 years—a Europe that is growing in strength, unity, and cooperation with America. A great unfinished task is the reunification of Germany through self-determination.

This European policy is not based on any abstract design. It is based on the realities of common interests and common values, common dangers and common expectations. These realities will continue to have their way—especially, I think, in our expanding trade and especially in our common defense.

Free Americans have shaped the policies of the United States. And because we know these realities, those policies have been, and will be, in the interest of Europe.

Free Europeans must shape the course of Europe. And, for the same reasons, that course has been, and will be, in our interest and in the interest of freedom.

I found this truth confirmed in my talks with European leaders in the last year. I hope to repay these visits to some of our friends in Europe this year.

In Africa and Asia we are witnessing the turbulent unfolding of new nations and continents.

We welcome them to the society of nations.

We are committed to help those seeking to strengthen their own independence, and to work most closely with those governments dedicated to the welfare of all of their people.

We seek not fidelity to an iron faith, but a diversity of belief as varied as man himself. We seek not to extend the power of America but the progress of humanity. We seek not to dominate others but to strengthen the freedom of all people.

I will seek new ways to use our knowledge to help deal with the explosion in world population and the growing scarcity in world resources.

Finally, we renew our commitment to the continued growth and the effectiveness of the United Nations. The frustrations of the United Nations are a product of the world that we live in, and not of the institution which gives them voice. It is far better to throw these differences open to the assembly of nations than to permit them to fester in silent danger.

These are some of the goals of the American Nation in the world in which we live.

For ourselves we seek neither praise nor blame, neither gratitude nor obedience.

We seek peace.

We seek freedom.

We seek to enrich the life of man.

For that is the world in which we will flourish and that is the world that we mean for all men to ultimately have.

#### TOWARD THE GREAT SOCIETY

World affairs will continue to call upon our energy and our courage.

But today we can turn increased attention to the character of American life.

We are in the midst of the greatest upward surge of economic well-being in the history of any nation.

Our flourishing progress has been marked by price stability that is unequalled in the world. Our balance of payments deficit has declined and the soundness of our dollar is unquestioned. I pledge to keep it that way and I urge business and labor to cooperate to that end.

We worked for two centuries to climb this peak of prosperity. But we are only at the beginning of the road to the Great Society. Ahead now is a summit where freedom from the wants of the body can help fulfill the needs of the spirit.

We built this Nation to serve its people.

We want to grow and build and create, but we want progress to be the servant and not the master of man.

We do not intend to live in the midst of abundance, isolated from neighbors and nature, confined by blighted cities and bleak suburbs, stunted by a poverty of learning and an emptiness of leisure.

The Great Society asks not how much, but how good; not only how to create wealth but how to use it; not only how fast we are going, but where we are headed.

It proposes as the first test for a nation: the quality of its people.

This kind of society will not flower spontaneously from swelling riches and surging power.

It will not be the gift of government or the creation of presidents. It will require of every American, for many generations, both faith in the destination and the fortitude to make the journey.

And like freedom itself, it will always be challenge and not fulfillment.

And tonight we accept that challenge.

#### A NATIONAL AGENDA

I propose that we begin a program in education to ensure every American child the fullest development of his mind and skills.

I propose that we begin a massive attack on crippling and killing diseases.

I propose that we launch a national effort to make the American city a better and a more stimulating place to live.

I propose that we increase the beauty of America and end the poisoning of our rivers and the air that we breathe.

I propose that we carry out a new program to develop regions of our country that are now suffering from distress and depression.

I propose that we make new efforts to control and prevent crime and delinquency.

I propose that we eliminate every remaining obstacle to the right and the opportunity to vote.

I propose that we honor and support the achievements of thought and the creations of art.

I propose that we make an all-out campaign against waste and inefficiency.

## THE TASK

Our basic task is threefold:

First, to keep our economy growing;

—to open for all Americans the opportunity that is now enjoyed by most Americans;

—and to improve the quality of life for all.

In the next 6 weeks I will submit special messages with detailed proposals for national action in each of these areas.

Tonight I would like just briefly to explain some of my major recommendations in the three main areas of national need.

### I. A GROWING ECONOMY

#### BASIC POLICIES

First, we must keep our Nation prosperous. We seek full employment opportunity for every American citizen. I will present a budget designed to move the economy forward. More money will be left in the hands of the consumer by a substantial cut in excise taxes. We will continue along the path toward a balanced budget in a balanced economy.

I confidently predict—what every economic sign tells us tonight—the continued flourishing of the American economy.

But we must remember that fear of a recession can contribute to the fact of a recession. The knowledge that our Government will, and can, move swiftly will strengthen the confidence of investors and business.

Congress can reinforce this confidence by insuring that its procedures permit rapid action on temporary income tax cuts. And special funds for job-creating public programs should be made available for immediate use if recession threatens.

Our continued prosperity demands continued price stability. Business, labor, and the consumer all have a high stake in keeping wages and prices within the framework of the guideposts that have already served the Nation so well.

Finding new markets abroad for our goods depends on the initiative of American business. But we stand ready—with credit and other help—to assist the flow of trade which will benefit the entire Nation.

#### ON THE FARMS

Our economy owes much to the efficiency of our farmers. We must continue to assure them the opportunity to earn a fair reward. I have instructed the Secretary of Agriculture to lead a major effort to find new approaches to reduce the heavy cost of our farm programs and to direct more of our effort to the small farmer who needs the help the most.

#### INCREASED PROSPERITY

We can help insure continued prosperity through:

—a regional recovery program to assist the development of stricken areas left behind by our national progress;

—further efforts to provide our workers with the skills demanded by modern technology, for the laboring-man is an indispensable force in the American system;

—the extension of the minimum wage to more than 2 million unprotected workers;

—the improvement and the modernization of the unemployment compensation system.

And as pledged in our 1960 and 1964 Democratic platforms, I will propose to Congress changes in the Taft-Hartley Act including section 14(b). I will do so hoping to reduce the conflicts that for several years have divided Americans in various States of our Union.

In a country that spans a continent modern transportation is vital to continued growth.

## TRANSPORTATION FOR GROWTH

I will recommend heavier reliance on competition in transportation and a new policy for our merchant marine.

I will ask for funds to study high-speed rail transportation between urban centers. We will begin with test projects between Washington and Boston. On high-speed trains, passengers could travel this distance in less than 4 hours.

## II. OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

Second, we must open opportunity to all our people.

Most Americans enjoy a good life. But far too many are still trapped in poverty and idleness and fear.

Let a just nation throw open to them the city of promise:

—to the elderly, by providing hospital care under social security and by raising benefit payments to those struggling to maintain the dignity of their later years;

—to the poor and the unfortunate, through doubling the war against poverty this year;

—to Negro Americans, through enforcement of the civil rights law and elimination of barriers to the right to vote;

—to those in other lands that are seeking the promise of America, through an immigration law based on the work a man can do and not where he was born or how he spells his name.



### III. TO ENRICH THE LIFE OF ALL

Our third goal is to improve the quality of American life.

#### THROUGH EDUCATION

We begin with learning.

Every child must have the best education that this Nation can provide.

Thomas Jefferson said that no nation can be both ignorant and free. Today no nation can be both ignorant and great.

In addition to our existing programs, I will recommend a new program for schools and students with a first year authorization of \$1,500 million.

It will help at every stage along the road to learning.

For the preschool years we will help needy children become aware of the excitement of learning.

For the primary and secondary school years we will aid public schools serving low-income families and assist students in both public and private schools.

For the college years we will provide scholarships to high school students of the greatest promise and the greatest need and we will guarantee low-interest loans to students continuing their college studies.

New laboratories and centers will help our schools—help them lift their standards of excellence and explore new methods of teaching. These centers will provide special training for those who need and those who deserve special treatment.

#### THROUGH BETTER HEALTH

Greatness requires not only an educated people but a healthy people.

Our goal is to match the achievements of our medicine to the afflictions of our people.

We already carry on a large program in this country. for research and health.

In addition, regional medical centers can provide the most advanced diagnosis and treatment for heart disease and cancer and stroke and other major diseases.

New support for medical and dental education will provide the trained people to apply our knowledge.

Community centers can help the mentally ill and improve health care for school-age children from poor families, including services for the mentally retarded.

## THROUGH IMPROVING THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

### The City

An educated and healthy people require surroundings in harmony with their hopes.

In our urban areas the central problem today is to protect and restore man's satisfaction in belonging to a community where he can find security and significance.

The first step is to break old patterns—to begin to think and work and plan for the development of the entire metropolitan areas. We will take this step with new programs of help for the basic community facilities and for neighborhood centers of health and recreation.

New and existing programs will be open to those cities which work together to develop unified long-range policies for metropolitan areas.

We must also make some very important changes in our housing programs if we are to pursue these same basic goals.

So a Department of Housing and Urban Development will be needed to spearhead this effort in our cities.

Every citizen has the right to feel secure in his home and on the streets of his community.

To help control crime, we will recommend programs:

—to train local law enforcement officers;

—to put the best techniques of modern science at their disposal;

—to discover the causes of crime and better ways to prevent it.

I will soon assemble a panel of outstanding experts of this Nation to search out answers to the national problem of crime and delinquency, and I welcome the recommendations and the constructive efforts of the Congress.

### The Beauty of America

For over three centuries the beauty of America has sustained our spirit and has enlarged our vision. We must act now to protect this heritage. In a fruitful new partnership with the States and the cities the next decade should be a conservation milestone. We must make a massive effort to save the countryside and to establish—as a green legacy for tomorrow—more large and small parks, more seashores and open spaces than have been created during any other period in our national history.

A new and substantial effort must be made to landscape highways to provide places of relaxation and recreation wherever our roads run,

Within our cities imaginative programs are needed to landscape streets and to transform open areas into places of beauty and recreation.

We will seek legal power to prevent pollution of our air and water before it happens. We will step up our effort to control harmful wastes, giving first priority to the cleanup of our most contaminated rivers. We will increase research to learn much more about the control of pollution.

We hope to make the Potomac a model of beauty here in the Capital, and preserve unspoiled stretches of some of our waterways with a Wild Rivers bill.

More ideas for a beautiful America will emerge from a White House Conference on Natural Beauty which I will soon call.

Art and Science

We must also recognize and encourage those who can be pathfinders for the Nation's imagination and understanding.

To help promote and honor creative achievements, I will propose a National Foundation on the Arts.

To develop knowledge which will enrich our lives and ensure our progress, I will recommend programs to encourage basic science, particularly in the universities—and to bring closer the day when the oceans will supply our growing need for fresh water.

#### IV. THE GOVERNMENT

For government to serve these goals it must be modern in structure, efficient in action, and ready for any emergency.

I am busy, currently, reviewing the structure of the entire executive branch of this Government. I hope to reshape it and to reorganize it to meet more effectively the tasks of the 20th century.

Wherever waste is found, I will eliminate it.

Last year we saved almost \$3,500 million by eliminating waste in the National Government.

And I intend to do better this year.

And very soon I will report to you on our progress and on new economies that your Government plans to make.

Even the best of government is subject to the worst of hazards.

I will propose laws to insure the necessary continuity of leadership should the President become disabled or die.

In addition, I will propose reforms in the electoral college—leaving undisturbed the vote by States—but making sure that no elector can substitute his will for that of the people.

Last year, in a sad moment, I came here and I spoke to you after 33 years of public service, practically all of them here on this Hill.

This year I speak after 1 year as President of the United States.

Many of you in this Chamber are among my oldest friends. We have shared many happy moments and many hours of work, and we have watched many Presidents together. Yet, only in the White House can you finally know the full weight of this Office.

The greatest burden is not running the huge operations of government—or meeting daily troubles, large and small—or even working with the Congress.

A President's hardest task is not to do what is right, but to know what is right.

Yet the Presidency brings no special gift of prophecy or foresight. You take an oath, you step into an office, and you must then help guide a great democracy.

The answer was waiting for me in the land where I was born.

It was once barren land. The angular hills were covered with scrub cedar and a few large live oaks. Little would grow in that harsh caliche soil of my country. And each spring the Pedernales River would flood our valley.

But men came and they worked and they endured and they built.

And tonight that country is abundant; abundant with fruit and cattle and goats and sheep, and there are pleasant homes and lakes and the floods are gone.

Why did men come to that once forbidding land?

Well, they were restless, of course, and they had to be moving on. But there was more than that. There was a dream—a dream of a place where a free man could build for himself, and raise his children to a better life—a dream of a continent to be conquered, a world to be won, a nation to be made.

Remembering this, I knew the answer.

A President does not shape a new and personal vision of America.

He collects it from the scattered hopes of the American past.

It existed when the first settlers saw the coast of a new world, and when the first pioneers moved westward.

It has guided us every step of the way.

It sustains every President. But it is also your inheritance and it belongs equally to all the people that we all serve.

It must be interpreted anew by each generation for its own needs; as I have tried, in part, to do tonight.

It shall lead us as we enter the third century of the search for “a more perfect union.”

This, then, is the state of the Union: Free and restless, growing and full of hope.

So it was in the beginning.

So it shall always be, while God is willing, and we are strong enough to keep the faith.

## 2. The Great Society Responds to the Environmental Crisis



Figure 3: The Chrysler building during the 1953 smog crisis that killed 200 people in New York City.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On May 22, 1964, President Johnson delivered his famous “Great Society” speech at the University of Michigan’s commencement ceremony. While the address is best known for Johnson’s endorsement of civil rights and his declaration of War on Poverty, the president also outlined how his vision of a Great Society would commit itself to the cause of environmental protection. Environmentalism was brought into the realm of political debate in the late 1950s as a response to growing concern from scientific experts and grassroots activists against pollution and environmental degradation. By the 1960s, the effects of environmental degradation were becoming more apparent on the landscape of the country. Severe smog epidemics plagued major

cities such as Los Angeles and New York; polluted rivers, such as the Cuyahoga River in Cincinnati, caught fire; urban sprawl and inner-city decay plagued metropolitan areas across the nation, and the disappearance of open spaces galvanized activists and politicians to demand government action.

After assuming the role of president in November of 1963, Lyndon Johnson continued the work of his predecessor in the emerging environmentalism movement that had begun under the previous administration. Kennedy's presidency was the first to take any direct initiative on environmental policy since Franklin D. Roosevelt, and during Johnson's time in office, the environmental movement would flourish. Johnson admired the conservation work of former presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt and was inspired by the conservation work brought about by the New Deal during his own early political career. As Johnson assumed office, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, appointed in 1961, would continue to play an important role as cheerleader of environmental conversation, instilling faith that the federal government could lead the country in the conservation battle, and thus shaping Johnson's own environmental views. Along with Kennedy's legacy and Udall's encouragement, Johnson was also influenced by his wife Lady Bird, who raised environmental issues to national attention and was most responsible for shaping his aesthetic sense. As president, Johnson made it a personal goal to accomplish more than his predecessors in the preservation of the nation's natural beauty in an effort to bring about his vision for a Great Society.

In his "Great Society" speech at the University of Michigan, Johnson called on the government and citizens to renew the people's contract with nature, reminding those in the audience that, "we have prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the



free, but America the beautiful.”<sup>1</sup> He also warned those in the audience that, “once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured.” Johnson noted that the challenge of the next half-century, “is whether we have the wisdom to use (the nation’s) wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of life of our American civilization.” The idea of “quality of life” played a key role in Johnson’s vision for a Great Society. Though mainly concerned with racial equality, the elimination of poverty and expanding access to education, environmentalism within the Great Society would also address the same issues facing the quality of life of Americans concerning pollution, degradation of the natural and urban environments, preservation of the nation’s natural beauty and increased access to nature for the benefit of current and future generations.

In his State of the Union address on January 4, 1965, Johnson once again emphasized the importance of nature in his agenda during his time in office proclaiming that, “for over three centuries, the beauty of America has sustained our spirit and enlarged our vision,” issuing a call for immediate action, “to protect this heritage.” His vision for a Great Society called for a new partnership with states and cities to create a conservation milestone in the proceeding decade, which would establish “a green legacy for tomorrow.”<sup>2</sup> In the address, Johnson called for the reigning in pollution of air and water resources. Better management of forests and of natural resources. The expansion of parks, both national and urban, as well as national trails. The preservation of natural environments, such as rivers, seashores, and wildlife refuges. The cleaning

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<sup>1</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," *The American Presidency Project*. 22 May, 1964. Accessed 11 Sept. 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

<sup>2</sup> Lyndon Johnson, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” *The American Presidency Project*, 4 January, 1965, Accessed 11 Sept. 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

and restoration of roadsides along the nation's highway system. Increased research to tackle these problems and better manage resources. And above all, a call for action not just from the federal level but the state and local level, as well as a call for action by individual citizens to participate in the Great Society. His rhetoric reflected his appreciation of nature and his continued faith in the power of human ingenuity to create a better future for the nation's environment.

While Johnson strived to encourage participation in his vision for a Great Society, his administration sought to set an example from which states, cities, and individuals could follow in preserving the nation's beauty and restoring the natural environment. During his time in office, Johnson worked to refocus and reorganize existing federal programs to efficiently address the issues of the environmental crisis and bring natural beauty and preservation to the foreground. His administration believed that government assistance could give Americans the means to overcome blight and restore beauty not only in the nation's countryside and national parks but also in city parks, along riverfronts, in older residential neighborhoods, and along highways. His vision for a Great Society sought to apply scientific management of the nation's natural resources, for the benefit of a growing society and economy, while at the same time preserving designated areas as sources of inspiration and restoration of the human spirit. Johnson's administration would also work to educate the public and government officials of the shortcomings of the nation as stewards of the natural environment in the hope of changing American values and beliefs concerning natural resources used for the betterment of mankind. In his State of the Union address in 1965, Johnson noted that his vision for a Great Society asked, "not how much, but how good; not only how to create wealth but how to use it; not only how fast we are going, but where we are headed."

From 1963 to 1968, Johnson would organize nine task forces to directly address environmental problems and to oversee his plans for a Great Society. He signed into law almost three hundred conservation and beautification measures supported by \$12 billion in funding.

Thirty-five sites were also authorized for addition to the National Park Service. His legislation spanned issues from land policy to water pollution and from wilderness areas to urban open spaces representing more environmental measures than had been passed in the previous 187 years of the nation's history. Johnson's push for preservation and beautification stressed the value of managing the nation's natural resources not just for economic security but for the betterment of the human spirit in his Great Society. His call for partnership in preservation with local participation appealed to the American sense of individualism and the personal pursuit of prosperity, emphasizing the human benefits in restoring beauty and preserving the natural environment. The Great Society was in Johnson's mind, "a place where man can renew contact with nature...which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race."<sup>3</sup> In a similar address a month after his commencement speech at the University of Michigan, Johnson spoke at the commencement ceremony at the University of Texas, where he reiterated his goals for environmental conservation, encouraging the students to join in his crusade, "Will you join to build the Great Society? The choice is yours, the power to shape the future is in your hands, the path is clear."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan,"

<sup>4</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Commencement Address at the University of Texas" *The American Presidency Project*, 30 May, 1964, Accessed 11 Sept. 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

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## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 1963 Clean Air Act
- 1964 Canyonlands National Park  
Water Resources Research Act  
Wilderness Act
- 1965 Federal Water Protection Recreation Act  
Highway Beautification Act  
Land and Water Conservation Act  
Solid Waste Disposal Act  
Water Quality Act  
Water Resources Planning Act
- 1966 Clean Water Restoration Act  
Endangered Species Act  
Federal Coal Mine Safety Act  
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Protection Act  
Historic Preservation Act
- 1967 Air Quality Act  
National Emissions
- 1968 National Trails Act  
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The research that has been undertaken for this project has highlighted a number of topics on which further research would be beneficial.

Lyndon Johnson's environmental policy was influenced by many factors, namely by the people he surrounded himself with, such as his wife Lady Bird and his Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. Future studies should look into the environmental beliefs of these individuals and their influence on Johnson's environmental views.

Johnson's environmental policy was also heavily influenced by his predecessors. The Kennedy administration, being the first to direct initiatives on environmental policy since Franklin D. Roosevelt, began the momentum for Johnson's administration and later administrations to use federal authority to address environmental concerns across the nation. Johnson, who began his political career in the era of the New Deal, was heavily influenced by the environmental and

conservation policies of Franklin Roosevelt. Further studies should look into the influence of the Kennedy and FDR administrations on Johnson's environmental beliefs.

While Johnson's administration passed the most legislation concerning the environment in the history of the nation at the time, further studies should look into the effects of Johnson's environmental legacy on future administrations, namely the Nixon administration, which created the Environmental Protection Agency.

### 3. Lady Bird Redefines Beauty



Figure 4: Lady Bird Johnson (center right) and guests on their way to plant flower bulbs.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Claudia Taylor Johnson (nicknamed “Lady Bird”) spent her formative years in the picturesque, heavily wooded, and luxuriously green region of northeastern East Texas near the small town of Karnack. As with other parts of East Texas, the land surrounding Lady’s Bird’s homeplace in the 1910s and 1920s was an isolated, almost primitive place where nature in all of its wondrous forms abounded and remained largely undisturbed by human activity. She spent many hours during her earlier years crisscrossing worn paths through local pastures, meadows, forests, and creek beds to commune with the abundant plants and wildlife. This experience instilled in her a deep appreciation, respect, and awe for the intense beauty and diversity that nature offered to the

human eye.<sup>5</sup> Lady Bird and her husband shared a passion for the environment; his passion showed when he delivered his “Great Society” speech, hers shined through when she fought to make America beautiful.

After hearing her husband eloquently describe his vision for a “Great Society” that would be focused on ensuring a better “quality of life” for all Americans, Lady Bird Johnson began to think about how she could make a difference in the daily life of Americans; whether they be rural or urban, she wanted everyone to know the healing power of the environment. She loved helping people, and she loved the environment. Lady Bird wanted to start a movement to beautify the U.S. When the idea was first introduced to the politicians of D.C., it was met with speculation and was often criticized and scoffed at. They did not see the value in beautifying cities and roadsides. Politicians criticized Lady Bird for using her influence for something so trivial; the First Lady ignored the doubters and pushed ahead with her movement. She was fearless and passionate.

In *The Johnson Years, Volume Two: Vietnam, the Environment and Science*, Martin Melosi argues that the criticism of Lady Bird’s beautification movement as nothing more than aesthetic frivolities underestimates the influence that Lady Bird had on her husband and the role that she had in raising environmental issues to national attention.<sup>6</sup> In her own words, Lady Bird Johnson stated, “the word beautification makes the concept sound merely cosmetic; it involves much more: clean water, clean air, clean roadsides, safe waste disposal, and preservation of valued old landmarks as

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<sup>5</sup> Rita G. Koman, “...To Leave This Splendor for Our Grandchildren: Lady Bird Johnson, Environmentalist Extraordinaire,” *OAH Magazine of History* 15, No. 3, First Ladies, Spring, 2001, 30. And Michael L. Gillette *Lady Bird Johnson: An Oral History*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012, 8-29.

<sup>6</sup> Martin V. Melosi, “Lyndon Johnson and Environmental Policy,” in *The Johnson Years, Volume Two: Vietnam, the Environment and Science*, ed. Robert A. Divine, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1987, 119.



well as great parks and wilderness areas. To me... beautification means our total concern for the physical and human quality we pass on to our children and the future.”<sup>7</sup> President Johnson’s Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, credited Lady Bird’s leadership and her beautification campaign as “a vital part of the attempt to re-educate the country.” Lady Bird knew the word beautification would be met with skepticism and criticism.<sup>8</sup>

The environment was Lady Bird’s passion; she wanted the whole nation to see how beautiful and healing the environment could be. She recognized the complexity of beautification efforts and noted that the subject was ‘like picking up a tangled skein of wool-all the threads are interwoven-recreation and pollution and mental health, and the crime rate, and rapid transit, and highway beautification, and the war on poverty, and parks-national, state, and local.’<sup>9</sup>

“Beautification had to do with combating pollution, halting urban decay, providing recreational opportunities, attending to citizens’ mental health needs, developing public transportation, and addressing the rising crime rate.”<sup>10</sup> With these goals in mind, Lady Bird set out to push a bill that would help the people, but also beautify the U.S. The goal of the Highway Beautification Act was to keep the landscape surrounding the highways looking like landscape, not a cityscape. She was appalled when she saw roadsides being treated as dumps or landfills.

Mary Lasker and National Park Service advisor Nash Castro were instrumental in helping Mrs. Johnson get started by overseeing the planting of millions of flowers, trees, and other plants

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<sup>7</sup> Joe Holley, “Lady Bird’s Washington: Johnson’s Beautification Efforts Transformed a Once-Drab City Into a Capital of Visual Distinction,” *The Washington Post*, Sunday edition, July 15, 2007, C01.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis L. Gould, “First Lady as Catalyst: Lady Bird Johnson and Highway Beautification in the 1960s,” *Environmental Review: ER*, 1986, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Nancy M. Germano, “Negotiation for the Environment: LBJ’s Contributions to the Environmental Movement.” *Federal History*, Issue 9 (April 2017), 54.

<sup>10</sup> Holley, C01

from one end of Washington, D.C. to another; cleaning up public buildings and statues; restoring decaying parks, city squares, street medians, and other neighborhood green spaces. When this was done, Lady Bird realized to keep the beautification movement going, she needed to motivate the local people. The success of beautification in Washington spurred similar, even greater success stories in other major cities, such as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Austin.<sup>11</sup> Lady Bird knew that if this definition of beautification was to be reiterated and used, the locals needed to become involved with the projects. They needed to know how healing a beautiful and clean space could be.

Lady Bird knew that for this movement to take hold and prosper, the locals needed to be involved in beautifying their public spaces. “Specifically placing responsibility for beautification with every level of government and in private hands also aimed to create a sense of ownership and pride for everyone participating.”<sup>12</sup> Lady Bird thought putting beautification in the hands of the local people would help make the cleanup last longer, and people would take pride in the work they did. She wanted everyone to feel proud of the city’s green areas, as well as know the areas are more than a view; she wanted the public to feel the healing nature of a clean environment.

Historian Lewis Gould talks about the movement; “it directed attention to the environment and improved the quality of life in towns and cities,” and this was the end goal for the movement.<sup>13</sup>

Lady Bird, as well as several societies, such as the Society for More Beautiful National Capital and National Capital Housing Authority, and other inner-circle advisors such as Udall, were largely in

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<sup>11</sup> Koman 31-32

<sup>12</sup> Germano, 58

<sup>13</sup> Gould, 77.

agreement that simply “dressing up” the nation’s capital or other urban areas, was not their only intention, nor was it the most important. The key focus was employing outside environmentalists, conservationists, and members of the public to unite together to make urban spaces not only more “natural” and healthier but also enjoyable for the people who lived and worked among those spaces. There was an immense focus on improving American citizens’ “quality of life” in the places where the vast majority of the population resided.

Lady Bird, with help from the organizations and agencies, helped fund and launch neighborhood cleanup efforts and the planting of trees, flowering plants, and community gardens in low-income and crime-ridden neighborhoods around Washington, with the help of residents, churches, and businesses. One of the committee’s new initiatives was known as Project Pride and enlisted the enthusiastic help of hundreds of high school students and Howard University students to pitch in with the help of these neighborhood cleanups, home and business repairs, and new plantings. Public parks and squares were also restored, and both public playgrounds and school grounds were greatly improved and landscaped with more natural features that boosted the spirits of the children and adults who used them. All of these efforts temporarily paid dividends in making the neighborhoods more livable, refreshing to the eyes and soul, and causing surprising decreases in crimes such as burglary and vandalism.<sup>14</sup>

Although she was only the First Lady for five years, her passion, dedication, and attitude toward the environment continued after her husband left office. She helped the nation become more ecologically conscious, ensuring locals took pride in their environment. “Mrs. Johnson had a

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<sup>14</sup> Holley, C01.

significant role in providing a foundation for the environment movement that burgeoned in the 1970s.”<sup>15</sup> In her years of retirement after President Johnson’s term in office, and his subsequent death in January 1973, Lady Bird Johnson continued to lead and inspire dozens of environmental conservation and beautification groups to flourish and make their communities safer, healthier, and more aesthetically pleasing places to live and work. Lady Bird was well-suited for this job. She had the attitude, passion, and dedication for the movement, and she was also well organized, and goal-driven. She believed that by fixing small natural spaces, such as parks and recreation areas within the cities, other issues would decrease with the presence of nature. Like her husband, she believed nature was an essential part of having a high quality of life.

Steve Coleman of the Washington Parks & People advocacy group said of Mrs. Johnson, “When she talked about beautification and the environment, she was talking about forgotten natural places and forgotten people. She connected the two. She really was the person who founded the urban environmental movement.”<sup>16</sup> For Lady Bird, beautification was a call to help Americans appreciate and love nature as much as she did. She wanted them to understand and feel the healing qualities of a clean environment. She understated her passion in an interview with Jan Jarboe Russell: “If we can get people to see the beauty of the native flora of their own corner of the world with caring eyes, then I’ll be real happy.”<sup>17</sup> She kept environmental issues at the forefront of the nation’s attention despite Vietnam and Civil Rights being prominent issues. In the half-century since her husband left office, environmentalist’s, politicians, and the Society for More Beautiful National Capital, credit her for the scenic beauty of the nation’s capital, as well as the picturesque

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<sup>15</sup> Gould, 78

<sup>16</sup> Holley, C01

<sup>17</sup> Russell, Jan Jarboe, “Lady Bird Looks Back.” *Texas Monthly*, December 1994.

environment that now surrounds our nation's highways and she is best remembered for her inspirational quotes on beautification, "where flowers bloom, so does hope."<sup>18</sup>

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## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 1964 Canyonlands National Park
- Fire Island National Seashore
- Lewis and Clark Trail Commission
- National Wilderness Preservation System Act
- 1965 Designation of Lake Meredith
- Highway Beautification Act
- Land Water Conservation Fund Act
- 1966 Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
- Guadalupe Mountains National Park
- Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore
- 1968 Great Swamp Wilderness Area
- Mount Jefferson Wilderness
- National Trails System Act
- National Wild and Scenic Rivers System Act
- North Cascades National Park
- Redwood National Park

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The research that has been undertaken for this project has highlighted a number of topics on which further research would be beneficial. Now regarded as a major inspiration for the environmental movement that gained momentum in the 1970s, Lady Bird Johnson worked tirelessly for the preservation of wild landscapes and the environment throughout her lifetime. Many scholars now believe she was the person most responsible for her husband’s heightened aesthetic sense and a major influencer of his environmental views. In the half-century since her

husband left office, many credit her for the scenic beauty of the nation's capital as well as the picturesque environment that now surrounds our nation's highways

Lady Bird's legacy extends beyond the scenic highways and wildflowers that we now see today. As an activist First Lady, she championed the causes of natural beauty, preservation, and urban renewal in relation to the nation's environment a decade prior to the environmental movement of the 1970s. She kept environmental issues at the forefront of the nation's attention despite the other troubling issues facing the country during the 1960s. In the half-century since her husband left office, many credit her for the scenic beauty of the nation's capital as well as the picturesque environment that now surrounds our nation's highways

Further studies should look into the influence of Lady Bird's beautification movement in generating support for her husband's environmental legislation, particularly in the passage of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965. Lady Bird's beautification of Washington D.C. served as a model for public participation in the urban renewal of America's inner cities and also warrants further study.



## 4. LBJ Expands the National Park Service



Figure 5: Conservation supporters at Redwood Park during Lady Bird Johnson's tour on November 25, 1968.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During his term as president, Lyndon Johnson sought to improve the quality of life of all Americans. To accomplish this goal, he thought protecting the nation's forests and scenic waterways would improve Americans' awareness of the natural beauty around them, thus improving their quality of life. His opinion was shared by Pennsylvania Congressman John Saylor and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. In his *Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty* in February 1965, Johnson spoke about the subject, noting, "for centuries Americans have drawn strength and inspiration from the beauty of

our country. It would be a neglectful generation indeed. . . which failed to preserve and extend such a heritage for its descendants.”<sup>19</sup>

Johnson knew one important way to save the forests and rivers of the nation was to expand the National Park Service. In his *Special Message to Congress Proposing Measures to Preserve Natural Heritage*, Johnson pushed Congress to develop parks and gave them a list of parks he wanted to see established.<sup>20</sup> He took his agenda to Stewart Udall, who pushed a number of bills regarding the natural landscape of the U.S.<sup>21</sup> When Secretary Udall and Representative Saylor found natural areas they were passionate about, and in danger, they pushed bills to be approved; these bills protected specific rivers, created national parks, or expanded existing parks.<sup>22</sup> The National Park Service was given the responsibility and maintenance of these newly protected sites.

Some of the proposed sites and additions were met with enthusiasm, while others were met with reluctance. A proposed addition that had the most pushback was the Redwood National Park. The Redwoods “awed Saylor and reinforced his commitment to protect them,” so he fought long and hard to expand the park to what he thought would increase the quality of life for everyone.<sup>23</sup> Saylor advocated for the Redwoods to be protected, but there were a number of obstacles in his

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<sup>19</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty," (Special Message to Congress, Washington, D.C. February 08, 1965) American Rhetoric, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-conservation-and-restoration-natural-beauty>.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, 1965; Lyndon Baines Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress Proposing Measures to Preserve Natural Heritage," (Special Message to Congress, Washington, D.C. February 23, 1966.) <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-proposing-measures-preserve-americas-natural-heritage>.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas G. Smith, 2006, *Green Republican: John Saylor and the Preservation of America's Wilderness* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press).

<sup>22</sup> Smith, Thomas.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, Thomas, 250

way, one of which being limited funds available to buy the land needed to extend the park as far as Saylor wanted.<sup>24</sup> The bill was helped by Secretary Udall, the Sierra Club, and Senators Jackson, Kuchel, and Cohelan.<sup>25</sup>

The Redwood Forest was not the only bill that met with massive pushback; the Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill did as well.<sup>26</sup> The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was a bill to preserve the wild, unhindered, and scenic rivers in the United States. Representative Saylor was the advocate for this bill. His original proposal was to have twenty-seven rivers preserved, including ones from his own state. It was an uphill battle to get the House and Senate to agree on which rivers to preserve and which class to place them under, whether preserved for scenic reasons, research reasons, or because it was wild.<sup>27</sup> “The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was one of the most sweeping and significant piece of preservationist legislation in the 1960s.”<sup>28</sup> While it had far-ranging effects on select streams, it may not have had such an impact on the waters of the Pedernales, which the Johnson ranching operation pumped for its own purposes, such as filling stock tanks. The bill was modified several times before a compromise was reached, giving instant protection to eight rivers and placing portions of twenty-seven others in the study group.<sup>29</sup> The bill enacted the protection of multiple rivers and helped build the foundation to protect other rivers in the future. Several other bills helped lay the foundation for future preservation, such as the National Wilderness Preservation System Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, National Historic

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<sup>24</sup> Smith, Thomas, 259-260

<sup>25</sup> Smith, Thomas, 264-265.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, Thomas, 206-221.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, Thomas, 215-216.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, Thomas, 220.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, Thomas, 220.

Preservation Act, and the National Trails System Act.<sup>30</sup> Each one made a significant impact toward preserving the quality of life for the American people.

Johnson signed the National Wilderness Preservation System Act in 1964. The act assured that the increasing population of the nation, accompanied by the expanding settlement and industrialization, would not occupy and modify all areas within the United States, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.<sup>31</sup> The act preserved wilderness areas, ensuring that the lands preserved by the bill could not be touched by industrialization. The bill was debated, in part over how the protected lands would be funded, how the staff protecting them would be paid, and where the money would come from.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 was the solution, intended to meet the demands of the upkeep and staffing needs for the proposed lands to be protected.<sup>32</sup> Johnson had a solution to the funding question: “the full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund will be an important step in making this a Parks-for-America decade.”<sup>33</sup> The fund was financed by visitor fees and motorboat fuel taxes, benefitting the NPS most. In 1965, Johnson made a statement to Congress, talking about environmental preservation and the parks he wanted to see established during his tenure: “I propose to use this fund to acquire lands needed to establish: Assateague Island National Seashore, Maryland-Virginia; Tocks Island National Recreation Area, New Jersey-Pennsylvania; Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina.” He went on to list nine more

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<sup>30</sup> Jessica Boerner, 2017, "A History of the National Park Service: Through the Lens of Legislation" (A Quarterly Journal of Government Information Practice & Perspective) 13-18.

<sup>31</sup> Boerner, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Boerner, 15.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, February 08, 1965, “Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty”

sites he wanted to see established.<sup>34</sup> Given the eventual repeal of the LWCF, this is a Johnson legacy that needs further exploration.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 gave the Secretary of the Interior authorization to designate historic sites. It was intended to protect the historical and cultural foundations of the nation, “as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.”<sup>35</sup> Historic sites were placed in a department of the National Parks Service called the Cultural Resource Center, which takes care of cultural history and education in each state. While the National Historic Preservation Act was intended to help people connect to the past, another act that helped the public connect to their current time and environment was the National Trails System Act.

The National Trails System Act of 1968 sought to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population in order to promote public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas of the nation. Johnson wanted a trail system in which “old and young alike can participate,” noting, “our doctors recommend and encourage such activity for fitness and fun.”<sup>36</sup> He elaborated his wishes, observing, “I am requesting the Secretary of the Interior work with his colleagues in the federal government and with state and local leaders and recommend to me a cooperative program to encourage a national system of trails, building up the more than a hundred thousand miles of trails in our National Forests and Parks.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Boerner, 15-16.

<sup>35</sup> Boerner, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, February 08, 1965, “Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty”

<sup>37</sup> Johnson, February 8, 1965, “Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty”

Johnson led the way for future presidents. He passed several environment bills, with the help of the Secretary of the Interior and a few members of Congress, and they were able to protect natural, scenic, and historic sites. During his presidency, Johnson improved the quality of life for the American people by approving and giving scenic areas a voice. He expanded existing parks and the authority of the National Park Service. He placed historic sites, rivers, scenic trails, and recreation areas under the authorization of the NPS to keep them clean and to educate the public on the environment and wildlife. During his administration, forty-seven bills were passed protecting national forests, waterways, landmarks, and historic landmarks.<sup>38</sup> President Johnson met his goal and then some. He also set the stage for adding land to the parks in later years, thus keeping environmental preservation at the forefront of the public stage. “The precious legacy of preservation of beauty will be our gift to posterity,” he noted.<sup>39</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

A researcher might wonder about the different struggles each piece of legislation went through when admiring the long list of environmental legislation Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson passed during his years in office. One avenue for further scholarship would be to look into the passing of the legislation for Redwood National Park as an example of the struggles that were in place before Stewart Udall started advocating for it.

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<sup>38</sup> "National Park Service Concession Policies," (October 09, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 28, LBJ Library.)

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, February 08, 1965, “Special Message to the Congress Transmitting Report on the National Wilderness Preservation System.”

Another piece of legislation that resulted in disputes over the course of its beginning was the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Researchers could explore the fight over building a dam on the Colorado River, which goes through the Grand Canyon. This dam would have interrupted the flow of the Colorado River and ruined the natural look of the Grand Canyon National Park. Another topic for further exploration would be the influence of the National Park Service since its expansion under Johnson's administration in the 1960s. One side subject that goes deeper is how the rivers are being preserved and how the local governments are handling them. Another topic that can be explored is how opposition to the National Historic Preservation Act evolved and how it is now mainstreamed and protected.

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"Addition to Fire Island National Seashore," October 09, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 27, LBJ Library.

"Authorizes the Addition of Lands to Morristown National Historical Park, New Jersey," September 18, 1964, Enrolled Legislation, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 16, LBJ Library.

"Authorizing the Establishment of the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in the State of North Carolina," October 17, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 74, LBJ Library.

"Authorizing the Establishment of the Redwood National Park in the State of California, and the Other Purposes," October 02, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 72, LBJ Library.

"Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area," October 15, 1966, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 43, LBJ Library.

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"Canyonlands National Park, Utah," September 12, 1964, Enrolled Legislation, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 16, LBJ Library.

"Designation the Lake to Be Formed by the Waters Impounded by Sanford Dam, Canadian River Project, Texas As 'Lake Meredith,'" August 31. 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 24, LBJ Library.

"Designating the Mount Jefferson Wilderness, Willamette, Deschutes, and Mount Hood National Forests, in the State of Oregon," October 02, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 72, LBJ Library.

"Designating the San Gabriel Wilderness, California," May 24, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 62, LBJ Library.

"Establish a National Wilderness Preservation," September 03, 1964, Enrolled Legislation, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 15, LBJ Library.

"Establish of the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area in West Virginia," September 28, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 26, LBJ Library.

"Establishing the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, Nebraska," June 2, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 19, LBJ Library.

"Establishing the North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake National Recreation Area, Designating the Pasayten Wilderness and Modifying the Glacier Peak Wilderness, in the State of Washington, and for Other Purposes," October 02, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 72, LBJ Library.

"Extending the Boundaries of the Kaniksu National Forest in the State of Idaho," June 14, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 20, LBJ Library.

"Fire Island National Seashore, N.Y." September 11, 1964, Enrolled Legislation, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 16, LBJ Library.

"Great Swamp Wilderness Area, New Jersey," September 28, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 71, LBJ Library.

"Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Texas," October 15, 1966, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 43, LBJ Library.

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<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-transmitting-report-the-national-wilderness-preservation>.



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- Johnson, Lyndon Baines. "Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty." Special Message to Congress. Washington, D.C. February 08, 1965. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-conservation-and-restoration-natural-beauty>.
- "Lewis and Clark Trail Commission," October 06, 1964, Enrolled Legislation, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 17, LBJ Library.
- "National Park Service Concession Policies," October 09, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 28, LBJ Library.
- "Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Michigan," October 15, 1966, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 43, LBJ Library.
- "Point Reyes National Seashore, California," October 15, 1966, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 43, LBJ Library.
- "Preservation of Historic Properties," October 15, 1966, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 43, LBJ Library.
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- "Revising the Boundaries of the Badlands National Monument, South Dakota," August 08, 1968, Enrolled Legislation, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 68, LBJ Library.
- "Revising the Boundaries of the Carlsbad Caverns National Park in the State of New Mexico," December 30, 1963, Enrolled Legislation, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 3, LBJ Library.
- "Revising the Boundary of Jewel Cave National Monument, South Dakota," October 09, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 28, LBJ Library.
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"Water Quality Act of 1965," October 02, 1965, Enrolled Legislation, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Box 27, LBJ Library.

## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 1964 National Wilderness Preservation System Act
  - Fire Island National Seashore
  - Canyonlands National Park
  - Lewis and Clark Trail Commission
- 1965 Establish the Nez Perce National Historical Park
  - Agate Fossil Beds National Monument
  - Designation of Lake Meredith
  - Land Water Conservation Fund Act
- 1966 Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
  - National Historic Preservation Act
  - Guadalupe Mountains National Park
  - Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore
- 1968 San Gabriel Wilderness
  - Badlands National Monument
  - Great Swamp Wilderness Area
  - North Cascades National Park
  - Redwood National Park
  - Mount Jefferson Wilderness
  - Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site
  - National Trails System Act
  - National Wild and Scenic Rivers System Act

## 5. Conservation and Preservation



**Figure 6: President Johnson hands Lady Bird a bill-signing pin from the Highway Beautification Act.**

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Despite his many achievements as president, Lyndon Johnson left a legacy of environmental conservation that remains somewhat overshadowed by major issues of his administration. While historians typically focus on Johnson's role in expanding civil rights during the racially charged 1960s, his war on poverty and urban renewal under his plan for the Great Society, and his involvement in Vietnam during the height of the Cold War, his environmental legacy as president has not received as much analytical focus. Too often, the origins of the modern environmental movement in the United States are traced back to the 1970s and the environmental

policies of the Nixon administration, such as the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 or the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. However, while the modern environmental movement blossomed in the decade of the 1970s, its origins were firmly rooted in the environmental policies that began in the previous decade. The Johnson administration's efforts to promote beautification and protection of the environment for human welfare were in response to the harmful environmental effects of postwar society and foreshadowed the priorities of the environmental movement of the next decade.<sup>40</sup>

The 1960s constituted a transitional period from old-style conservation to modern environmentalism. Environmental historian Martin V. Melosi specifies in his article on Lyndon Johnson and Environmental Policy during the Vietnam years that old-style conservationism was concerned primarily with the utilization of natural resources.<sup>41</sup> Initiated during the Progressive Era half a century earlier, with its intellectual origins dating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, "old" conservation, according to Melosi, was an effort to conserve, preserve, manage, or protect the nation's resources. Conservationists at the turn of the twentieth century sought to prevent waste through efficient use and management of the nation's natural resources. By the 1960s, as the nation faced a new environmental crisis brought about by the post-war economic boom, old-style conservationism failed to address issues beyond resource management such as increased pollution, environmental pollution, and quality of life.

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<sup>40</sup> Nancy M. Germano, "Negotiating for the Environment: LBJ's Contribution to the Environmental Movement," *Federal History*, Issue 9 (April 2017), 48 (accessed September 20, 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Martin V. Melosi, "Lyndon Johnson and Environmental Policy," in Divine, Robert A. ed., *The Johnson Years, Volume Two: Vietnam, the Environment and Science* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 114.

During the tumultuous 1960s, the Johnson administration would serve as the transitional force between old-style conservationism and the modern environmental movement. The conservation achievements of the Johnson administration were summed up best by Johnson's Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall. In a 1968 memorandum, Udall stated that "Presidential leadership has changed the outlook of the nation with regard to conservation... The total environment is now the concern, and the New Conservation makes man himself its subject. The quality of life is now the perspective and purpose of the New Conservation."<sup>42</sup> The term New Conservation, coined by Udall himself early in Johnson's presidency, would thenceforth be used to describe the modern environmental movement fostered by the Johnson administration. New Conservation included urban environmentalism, antipollution sentiments, wilderness preservation, and historic preservation, as well as land and water conservation.<sup>43</sup>

While the modern environmental movement and New Conservation can trace its origins to before the mid-1960s, it was under the Johnson administration that new conservation took root and was brought before a national stage. Johnson drew inspiration from the preservation and conservation efforts of his predecessors, especially Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy, and routinely voiced his opinion on the importance of natural beauty in the lives of Americans. With Udall's advice, Johnson and his wife, Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson, initiated new conversations and approaches to protecting the natural environment and shaped environmental advocacy during Johnson's time in office. In his "Remarks at the University of Michigan" in May 1965, better known as his "Great Society" speech, Johnson called on the

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<sup>42</sup> Otis Graham Jr., *Presidents and the American Environment*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 213.

<sup>43</sup> Melosi 141.

government and citizens to renew the people's contract with nature, reminding those in the audience that, "we have prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful."<sup>44</sup>

Though mainly concerned with racial equality, the elimination of poverty, and expanding access to education, environmental conservation within the Great Society would also address the same issues facing the quality of life of Americans concerning pollution, degradation of the natural and urban environments, preservation of the nation's natural beauty, and increased access to nature for the benefit of current and future generations. Later in 1964, in remarks delivered in Portland, Oregon, Johnson explained that New Conservation, "is not just the classic conservation of protection and development, but it is a creative conservation of restoration and innovation. Its concern is not with nature alone, but with the total relation between man and the world around him. Its object is not just man's welfare, but the dignity of his spirit."<sup>45</sup> Johnson's commitment to New Conservation demonstrated his support of continued use and management of natural resources, while at the same time preserving designated areas as sources of inspiration for mankind.

While Johnson's famous Great Society speech declared his vision for new conservation measures under his administration, Johnson's environmental legacy began the previous year. In his first month in office, Johnson signed the Clean Air Act on December 17, 1963. In September 1964, he signed the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund on the same day,

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<sup>44</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," *The American Presidency Project*. 22 May, 1964. Accessed 11 Sept. 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-university-michigan>

<sup>45</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks on Conservation at a Breakfast in Portland Saluting the Northwest-Southwest Power Transmission Intertie," Sept. 17, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-conservation-breakfast-portland-saluting-the-northwest-southwest-power>

remarking that the passage of the bills would enact, “some of the most far-reaching conservation measures that a farsighted nation has ever coped with.”<sup>46</sup> Both pieces of legislation were conservation milestones, not only setting aside millions of acres of wilderness areas for protection, but creating long term systems for the management, funding, and addition of future lands and waters for protection. Although the Johnson administration did not initiate these acts, it did incorporate the legislation into the conservation efforts of the Great Society.

In his State of the Union address on January 4, 1965, Johnson once again emphasized the importance of environmental conservation in his agenda. “In a fruitful new partnership with the states and the cities, the next decade should be a conservation milestone. We must make a massive effort to save the countryside and to establish—as a green legacy for tomorrow—more large and small parks, more seashores and open spaces than have been created during any other period in our national history.”<sup>47</sup> A month later on February 8, 1965, Johnson delivered his Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty. In his address, he called upon his colleagues in the legislative branch to address the rapidly worsening state of the environment in the United States and to take up an ambitious conservation agenda. “To deal with these new problems will require a new conservation. We must not only protect the countryside and save it from destruction, we must restore what has been destroyed and salvage the beauty and charm of our cities. Our conservation must be not just the classic conservation of protection and development, but a creative conservation of restoration and innovation. Its concern,” he added, “is not with

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<sup>46</sup> Lyndon Johnson, “Remarks Upon Signing the Wilderness Bill and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill,” September 3, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-upon-signing-the-wilderness-bill-and-the-land-and-water-conservation-fund-bill>

<sup>47</sup> Lyndon Johnson, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 4, 1965, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-the-congress-the-state-the-union-26>

nature alone, but with the total relation between man and the world around him. Its object is not just man's welfare but the dignity of man's spirit."<sup>48</sup> This detailed message to Congress outlined Johnson's plans to address the environmental concerns of the time during his years in office.

In 1965, the administration focused its efforts on a nationwide campaign for beautification. In May of that year, Johnson held the White House Conference on Natural Beauty, with the intent to focus on immediate means for the preservation of natural beauty, through federal, state, local, and private action. In his remarks at the conference, Johnson once again noted the goals of his New Conservation agenda. "I have called for a new conservation: to restore as well as to protect, to bring beauty to the cities as well as to keep it in the countryside, to handle the waste products of technology as well as the waste of natural resources."<sup>49</sup> Johnson hoped that all Americans could find their lives enriched by the beauty of the world they lived in. Eventually, he turned over his beautification efforts to the First Lady, who championed the cause of beautification. Her campaign against billboards and junkyards along the nation's highways, her plea for urban beautification, her beautification efforts in the nation's capital, and her support for the preservation of natural and wild spaces kept environmental issues before the American people during a busy decade and on her husband's agenda. Her efforts culminated in the passage of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, nicknamed "Lady Bird's Bill" by her husband for her passionate work in support of its passage. President Johnson thanked his wife on July 26, 1968, for her dedication by presenting her

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<sup>48</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Special Message to Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty," February 8, 1963. *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-conservation-and-restoration-natural-beauty>

<sup>49</sup> Lyndon Johnson, Remarks to the Delegates to the White House Conference on Natural Beauty," May 25, 1965, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-delegates-the-white-house-conference-natural-beauty>



with fifty pens used to sign legislation related to conservation and beautification. LBJ also gave his wife a plaque that read: "To Lady Bird, who has inspired me and millions of Americans to try to preserve our land and beautify our nation. With love from Lyndon."<sup>50</sup>

A year after his message to Congress on the conservation and restoration of natural beauty, Johnson delivered a similar speech concerning the preservation of the nation's natural heritage on February 23, 1966. Though the message once again addressed his concern for reigning in pollution of the nation's air and waterways, his speech also outlined his detailed plan and the role of the federal government in enforcing his plans to limit pollution. The message also proposed several additions to the National Park Service, such as the creation of Redwood National Park and eight outdoor recreation areas, a nationwide trail system, a wild river system, as well as a call for increased preservation of the nation's historic sites. His address concluded with a creed to preserve the nation's natural heritage. It included the right to clean water and the duty to not pollute; the right to clean air and the duty to not defoul it; the right to surroundings reasonably free from manmade ugliness and the duty not to blight; and the right of easy access to places of beauty and tranquility and the duty to preserve places clean and unspoiled. Additionally, it recognized the right to enjoy plants and animals in their natural habitats and the duty not to eliminate them from the earth.<sup>51</sup> In concluding his address, Johnson proclaimed, "1966. . . the year of the new conservation, when farsighted men took farsighted steps to preserve the beauty that is the heritage of our Republic."

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<sup>50</sup> "Lady Bird Johnson," ladybirdjohnson.org, <http://www.ladybirdjohnson.org/about>, (accessed October 13, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Special message to the Congress Proposing Measures To Preserve America's Natural Heritage," February 23, 1966, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-proposing-measures-preserve-americas-natural-heritage>

The presidency of Lyndon Johnson marked a high point in the history of environmental conservation in the United States. As president, Johnson signed into law nearly three hundred conservation and beautification measures, which were supported by more than \$12 billion in federal funding.<sup>52</sup> He authorized nine task forces to address environmental problems and thirty-five additions to the National Park Service. Recreation on public lands increased three-fold between 1963 and 1968.<sup>53</sup> Of all the funds ever appropriated by Congress for National Forest recreation, 64 percent were appropriated during 1963-1968.<sup>54</sup> His legislation spanned issues from land policy to water and air pollution, and from wilderness areas to urban open spaces, together representing more environmental measures than had been passed in the previous 187 years of the nation's history. Johnson's rhetoric and legislative actions while in office set the stage for American environmentalism that would flourish in the decade after he left office. His conservation legacy surpassed his predecessors and has been unmatched in the half-century since he left office.

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<sup>52</sup> Melosi, 113.

<sup>53</sup> Melody Webb, "Lyndon Johnson: The Last Frontier President," *Journal of the West*, April, 1995, 76.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

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## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 1963 Clean Air Act
- 1964 Wilderness Act
  - Land and Water Conservation Fund
  - Water Resources Research Act
  - Pesticide Control Bill
- 1965 Highway Beautification Act
  - Water Quality Act
  - Water Resource Planning Act
  - Water and Sanitation Systems in Rural Areas Bill
  - Solid Waste Disposal Act
  - Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act
- 1966 National Historic Preservation Act
  - Air Quality Act
  - Clean Water Restoration Act
  - Fish and Wildlife Conservation Protection Act
  - Endangered Species Act
- 1967 National Park Foundation
  - Wetlands Preservation Bill
- 1968 National Trails System Act
  - Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
  - Federal Aid for Highways Act

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The conservation legacy of President Lyndon Johnson, representing almost three hundred conservation and preservation bills, is a vast and diverse subject that cannot be fully covered in a brief summary such as this. Further work is necessary to adequately cover the expansive conservation legacy of President Johnson. The Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund of 1964 would be the best places to begin further research, as these pieces of

legislation set a precedent for further environmental legislation signed into law during Johnson's time in office. The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 and the beautification of Washington, DC by Lady Bird Johnson, are other areas where further research would prove beneficial, as these two efforts summarized the beautification efforts of the entire Johnson administration. Legislation relating to water and air quality could be researched separately from other environmental legislation signed by Johnson as an example of his administration's efforts to tackle pollution of the nation's waterways and the air of the nation's cities. His administration also dedicated significant efforts to curb the polluting effects of solid waste, which also warrants further research. The largest topic for additional work would be Johnson's protection of wilderness areas. Johnson's numerous additions to the National Park Service, preservation of wilderness/conservation areas, proposals for national trails, preservation of historic sites, and the preservation of wetlands marked the largest amount of land protected by any president in the history of the United States.

## 6. Task Force Mobilization



**Figure 7: President Johnson meets with members from his administration to discuss the Detroit riots.**

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Upon taking office after Pres. John F. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson, was well aware that not only had he inherited a host of legislative and executive actions that his new administration had to tackle in an upcoming election year, but the nation had a host of pressing issues that required attention. In his famous speech at the University of Michigan's commencement in May 1964, President Johnson publicly laid out his ideas, goals, and tentative action plans for forming a new "Great Society." His vision for a Great Society would not only attempt to resolve massive, systemic issues such as racial discrimination, lack of quality healthcare,

widespread poverty, and environmental pollution but forever change America's domestic sphere for the greater good.<sup>55</sup>

In his speech, Johnson issued a call for action and laid out a plan to establish a series of "task forces" or working groups that would perform highly detailed research and exploration into complex issues of the day. These task forces would report back to the president, his Cabinet, and other agency heads, recommendations that sought to produce workable solutions and formulate public policy. The recommendations of these task forces would serve as the springboard from which the ideas and goals of Johnson's Great Society would be turned into plans of action, congressional legislation, and executive orders with the hope of eliciting positive results across a broad spectrum of domestic and foreign issues.<sup>56</sup>

Early in his presidency, Johnson recognized that the massive bureaucratic structure of the federal government was often disorganized, overly cautious, and sluggish. As a longtime politico in Washington, DC, who had served in both houses of Congress and as vice president before ascending to the presidency, he knew the bureaucracy of government well. Johnson believed that even if he could not change the functionality of the federal government, there were strategic and innovative ways to work around it at a faster, organized pace that could produce the results he and his administration so desired.

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<sup>55</sup> Nancy Kegan Smith, "Presidential Task Force Operation during the Johnson Administration," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 321, accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27550209>.

<sup>56</sup> "Task Force Reports of the Johnson White House, 1963-1969," *Research Collections in American Politics*, ed. William E. Leuchtenburg (Summer 2005), accessed Nov. 5, 2019, [http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa\\_cis/LBJ%20Task%20Force%20Reports%201963-69.pdf](http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/LBJ%20Task%20Force%20Reports%201963-69.pdf).

On July 2, 1964, President Johnson turned his publicized ideas about the creation of task forces into a course of action. During a Cabinet meeting at the White House, the president asked for the full support and cooperation of his Cabinet in the matter. According to Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library archivist Nancy Kegan Smith in her article on White House task forces in the Johnson administration, “Johnson defined task forces as being composed of small groups of experts whose goals would include identification and analysis of major issues and problems, and recommendations of specific programs to alleviate these conditions.” Additionally, Smith stresses that one privately controversial point concerning the potential task forces was that their operations, research and exploration methods, and reporting were to be kept entirely confidential within the confines of the administration and therefore *not* open to public comment and criticism. This was apparently done to encourage more candid and outside-the-box thinking and planning as it related to problem-solving for complex issues. President Johnson himself stated in his July Cabinet meeting, “They will operate without publicity. It is very important that this not become a public operation. The purpose of these task forces is to come up with ideas, not to sell those ideas to the public.”<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the president was not about to let the public derail the hardworking, results-driven efforts of the people who served him in the executive branch or open up task force operations to a congressional inquiry. It can also be surmised that the president believed that when the day came for actually *selling* the ideas, recommendations, and proposed solutions of the task forces to Congress and the general public, he would likely do it himself as the nation’s chief spokesman.

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<sup>57</sup> Smith, 321.



Government task forces were not a new, unfamiliar concept for presidential administrations. They had been first implemented during the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt as he promoted and executed his New Deal policies. To a lesser extent, President Kennedy and his administration had also formed their own task forces relating to a number of core domestic issues and concerns. When the question of *who* would serve on the proposed task forces, how they would operate, and what issues and problems they would tackle, President Johnson was prepared. He decided that his full task force operation would be divided into two major groups: outside task forces and interagency task forces. Outside task forces were comprised of a variety of experts from *outside* the world of government, while interagency task forces membership and operations would be situated *inside* practically all Cabinet departments, sub-departments, and other government agencies. Each group would follow similar operational policies and procedures, only share their final reporting recommendations with the president and certain department heads, and would have a general understanding that while their overall recommendations and proposed solutions would be taken seriously by the president and his staff, it was *not* a given fact that these would result in legislative or executive action.

While interagency task forces would consist of membership from the ranks of select, dynamic government employees and representatives, the external task forces would be comprised of expert members representing different cross-sections of American life. These would include men and women (though mostly men) representing the worlds of business, labor, trade and finance, energy, medicine, academia, science, the arts and humanities, agriculture, social work, environmentalism and conservation, and various levels of public education. Both types of task forces would include one or two White House members who served as general liaisons between the task force and the executive branch. One major difference between the two groups, however, was their allotted length of reporting time. Outside task forces were usually given a full year before

they had to submit their final reports to the president, while interagency task forces were only given three to four months at a time. Finally, President Johnson, a gregarious man of passionate ideas with a thirst for quick, forward-thinking action, wanted the task forces to focus on American issues and problems in which to research, report, and recommend solutions for in a broad sense. Just as in the days of the New Deal, there would be in-depth research and exploration into diverse and even small-scale areas of American life that many citizens and government officials barely thought about, or which had never before been the focus of research and reporting.

The overall process for how these task forces were set up, went about their research and submitted their proposed recommendations to the president and his advisors for potential action went as follows:

In 1964, under Bill Moyer's coordination, the task force developed on an essentially ad hoc basis. This development became more refined in 1965, and by 1966, under Joseph Califano's coordination, a set task force process had developed. Both outside and interagency task forces followed the same process, except that the length of reporting time allotted to outside task forces was usually a full year, whereas the interagency ones were only given three or four months. In spring and early summer, Joseph Califano would gather ideas for the task forces. In mid-July, the task forces were set-up. In October and November, they compiled their reports. After transmittal of the report to the Office of the President, Califano, Larry Levinson (and by 1967 James Gaither, Fred Bohlen, and Matthew Nimitz) reviewed the task force proposals, as did the Bureau of the Budget and Council of Economic Advisors, preparing summaries for the president. Upon receipt of the summaries of the proposals, President Johnson would pick his programs for the coming legislative year. The proposals were either highlighted in the State of the Union Message, or in special messages sent to Congress after the State of the Union Message.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, most task force reports would include a charter from the White House to the task force chairman outlining the areas upon which their group was to focus; a transmittal letter from

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<sup>58</sup> Leuchtenburg, 1.

the task force chairman submitting the report to the president; a concise, presidential summary of the task force report; and lastly, a Bureau of Budget analysis of all task force recommendations put together by some of the interagency task forces.<sup>59</sup>

For the purposes of this project, we will focus solely on the list of outside and interagency White House task forces primarily concerned with environmental issues and concerns, such as pollution, degradation of natural resources, and conservation. There will also be inclusion of task forces whose scope of exploration and reporting looked into a broad range of issues, but which would have likely included research into and recommendations for environmental issues and solutions. One primary example of the latter would be task forces examining areas of urban, suburban, and/or rural life.

Overall, President Johnson was admittedly grateful during his term in office and afterward in recognizing the valuable, everlasting contributions of his White House task forces in helping to recommend and formulate results-based legislation and other actions that were modern, innovative, and mostly realistic for their time in history. From the very beginning, he had desired to have a “brain trust” of experts to help guide his administration into new areas of exploration and confront truly systemic problems and issues, much as his favorite predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had also done thirty years beforehand.

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<sup>59</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives on the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 328.

## **LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL TASK FORCES AND SCOPES OF RESEARCH BY YEAR**

- **1964 Task Force on Agriculture (Outside)** – Reported on and came up with recommendations for future agricultural conservation methods, practices, and innovations.
- **1964 Task Force on Environmental Pollution (Outside)** – Reported on and came up with major causes and effects of pollution. Also recommended possible strategies to combat and try to resolve issues in air, water, and land-based pollution and environmental degradation.
- **1964 Task Force on Metropolitan and Urban Problems (Outside)** – Likely instrumental in studying and reporting on major problems and concerns with urban-based pollution in air, water, and land; environmental health concerns among American citizens living in medium to heavily polluted areas, and the availability or lack of open parks and other green spaces for children and adults living in cities.
- **1964 Task Force on Natural Resources (Outside)** – Involved in studying and making recommendations for the conservation and preservation of various natural resources on land, water, and underground.
- **1964 Task Force on the Preservation of Natural Beauty (Outside)** – Instrumental in studying and promoting the preservation, expansion, and/or addition of national parks, other protected areas on land and waterways, and the creation or expansion of forests and open, natural green spaces in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Also recommended the regulation of billboard advertising along roadways, the removal or concealment of dilapidated lots and junkyards along highways, and the beautification of highway, urban streets, and sidewalks through the planting of grass, trees, and wildflowers.
- **1965 Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Life (Interagency)** – Likely instrumental in studying and making recommendations for improving and expanding agricultural

conservation, as well as environmental health issues and concerns for rural residents in the United States.

- **1965 Task Force on Pollution Abatement (Outside)** – Involved in studying the causes and effects of air, water, and land-based pollution, as well as coming up with strategies for its reduction and possible elimination.
- **1965 Task Force on Urban Problems (Outside)** – Likely studied and made recommendations for issues and concerns involving urban-based pollution, environmental degradation, and their effects on residents.
- **1966 Task Force on Federal Flood Control Policy (Outside)** – Studied and reported on issues and concerns involving flooding causes and effects. Made recommendations for better flood control solutions and strategies.
- **1966 Task Force on Natural Resource Studies (Outside)** - Involved in studying and making recommendations for the conservation and preservation of various natural resources on land, water, and underground.
- **1966 Task Force on the Quality of the Environment (Interagency)** – Examined and made recommendations for improving a broad range of environmental quality issues for all Americans living in urban, suburban, and rural environments.
- **1966 Task Force on Resources and Recreation (Outside)** – Examined issues and concerns with the availability and quality of outdoor resources and recreational areas for children and adults living in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Made recommendations for improvement, creation, and expansion of the above items.
- **1967 Task Force on the Quality of the Environment (Interagency)** - Examined and made recommendations for improving a broad range of environmental quality issues for all Americans living in urban, suburban, and rural environments.

- **1968 Task Force on the Quality of the Environment (Interagency)** - Examined and made recommendations for improving a broad range of environmental quality issues for all Americans living in urban, suburban, and rural environments.

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## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

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- 1964 Canyonlands National Park Act  
Water Resources Research Act  
Wilderness Act  
Pesticide Control Bill  
Fire Island National Seashore  
Canyonlands National Park
- 1965 Water Quality Act  
Water Resources Planning Act  
Federal Water Project Recreation Act  
Highway Beautification Act  
Solid Waste Disposal Act  
Land and Water Conservation Fund Act  
Water and Sanitation Systems in Rural Areas Bill  
Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act
- 1966 Air Quality Act  
Clean Water Restoration Act  
Endangered Species Act  
Federal Coal Mine Safety Act  
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Protection Act  
National Historic Preservation Act  
Guadalupe Mountains National Park  
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
- 1967 Air Quality Act  
National Park Foundation  
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
- 1968 National Water Commission  
National Trails System Act  
Colorado River Basin Project Act  
Wild and Scenic Rivers System Act  
San Gabriel Wilderness Act  
Great Swamp Wilderness Act  
Redwood National Park

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The research conducted on this project has highlighted a number of topics on which further study and exploration would be beneficial. One area of research could examine the various types of White House task forces created during the years of the New Deal in the 1930s and those of the Kennedy administration, their scopes of work and resulting action plans, and their overall



successes and/or failures with causes for those included. Additionally, these initial task forces could be compared and contrasted on multiple levels with those of Lyndon Johnson's White House, especially as it relates to the competing issues of group transparency versus confidentiality in the public realm.

Another area of study would be for scholars to record and analyze the membership makeup for outside task forces of President Johnson's administration. They could break down the membership of each task force into categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, occupation, education level, and socioeconomic status before creating visual graphs, charts, and statistics to showcase membership trends and demographics across the board, and perhaps offer up careful speculation as to why and how certain members were chosen for each task force.

Finally, the task forces of the Lyndon Johnson era were results-driven with high expectations for success, feasible solutions, and solid action plans. Therefore, it may be worth further scholarship to study which task forces produced reports that resulted in legislative or executive action, created new policies, produced initial action plans that were either delayed or never translated into eventual policy, and lastly, which ones resulted in unintended inaction and/or deliberate disregard by President Johnson and his senior White House staff for known or unknown reasoning.

## 7. Agricultural Conservation



**Figure 8: Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson roping calves at the LBJ Ranch.**

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

During his presidency, Lyndon B. Johnson focused on America's agricultural relationship with his war on poverty. He saw programs such as the Food Stamps Act and the Child Nutrition Act as not just ways to feed the hungry but also as a means to deal with issues of agricultural surplus and farm income. Along with an increase in production, Johnson saw agriculture reform as benefiting food abundance, which would raise the standard of living and accelerate development in rural America and around the world.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, "President's Message to Congress," *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1964.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) played a vital role in Johnson's War on Poverty. The success of the Food Stamps Act, the Child Nutrition Act, and Food for Peace relied on the success of U.S. agriculture. The president believed five agricultural commodities needed to be addressed. These included cotton, wheat, dairy, sugar, and potatoes.<sup>61</sup> The connection between food stamps and the farm bill created the connection between urban poverty and rural poverty, and that connection still exists today.<sup>62</sup> Johnson's attention to American agricultural production benefited not only the poor in cities but also the poor rural population.

The president used forest land to help provide more land for agricultural use. The Wilderness Systems Act passed in 1964 set aside large amounts of land for specific uses. Although most of the act focused on expanding national park land, Johnson believed that better use of "our timber, wildlife, scenic and other renewable resources of forest land," would benefit areas that were struggling economically and environmentally.<sup>63</sup> The renewed bill allowed cattle to continue grazing on lands that were added to the wilderness system. The expansion of forestry provided preserved land that would provide game and pure water for nearby residents. While also providing "recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use" to the selected lands.<sup>64</sup>

A blend of agricultural-centered legislation and legislation focused on food production is representative of the relationship between agriculture and poverty. Johnson also continued the efforts of previous administrations by creating further environmental restrictions on agricultural

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Rebecca Stoil, "The Forgotten Lessons of LBJ's Domestic Legacy," *Washington Monthly* 51, no. 1-3 (2019): 35.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, "President's Message to Congress," *New York Times*, 02/01/1964.

<sup>64</sup> Church, *Establishing a National Wilderness Preservation System for the Permanent Good of the Whole People and for Other Purposes*, 1963, 15.

practices. These included requiring labeling for economic poisons and amendments to the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to continue payment to farmers for reducing soil usage. The president combined the need for agricultural conservation and reform with the country's desire to end poverty.

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- 1962 Resource Conservation and Development program
- 1964 The Food Stamps Act
- Economic Opportunity Act
- Wilderness Systems Act
- Pesticide Control Bill
- Pub. L 88-305: Amendment to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act to provide for labeling of economic poisons with registration numbers, to eliminate registration under protest, and for other purposes
- 1965 Food and Agriculture Act (The Farm Bill)
- 1966 Truth in Packaging
- Food for Freedom
- Child Nutrition Act
- Pub. L. 89-742: Amendment to the Soil Conservation Act.
- 1968 Food for Peace

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The United States sent surplus wheat and other agricultural products to India and Vietnam during the Johnson Administration. This can further be connected to topics of famine in the world and the U.S. policy of containment during the Cold War. Oral history interviews with the Secretary of the USDA, Orville Freeman, detail issues with providing surplus goods to other countries when

the U.S. was struggling with its own poverty problems. Further issues with agricultural exports led to the creation of the International Agriculture Development Services.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Orville Freeman (former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture) in discussion with T.H. Baker, 7/21/1969.

## 8. The Urban Environment and Civil Rights



Figure 9: LBJ shakes hands with Robert Weaver at the signing of the Housing and Urban Development

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”<sup>66</sup> The issue of environmental justice is a contemporary social construct influenced by

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<sup>66</sup> “Environmental Justice,” United States Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>

Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson's advocacy of civil rights. The civil rights movement intended to not only improve the social standing of African Americans and other minorities but also improve the environmental health of minority-predominant neighborhoods. This can be seen through the case of the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio that was heavily polluted with oil and miscellaneous debris. The river caught fire multiple times during the Johnson administration. Its polluted waters flowed through major African American neighborhoods on the east side of Cleveland. Like President Johnson, Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes espoused a political agenda focused on "controlling water and air pollution, building public housing, improving public safety and public health, desegregating and improving schools, and enlivening downtown with economic development."<sup>67</sup> The environmental health of Cleveland directly affected the health and safety of the general population. Cleveland was not, however, the only city in America to face environmental pollution in predominantly minority neighborhoods.

One of Johnson's task forces from 1965 was the Task Force on Urban Problems, headed by Robert Wood, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The task force led to the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 and also to the creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Housing and Urban Development Act provided additional funding for housing programs and beautification of urban areas but failed to address areas labeled as "slums." The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 and the Model Cities Program created in the same year focused on rehabilitating blighted urban cities by providing community leaders with funding to achieve the changes. Further work would be required to

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<sup>67</sup> David and Richard Stradling "Where the River Burned: Carl Stokes and the Struggle to Save Cleveland, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015, x.



evaluate how successful they were at the time. This program received mixed reactions from the public, with some claiming their cities were fine and others arguing that federal funding for city clean-up was a good thing.

Another focus of urban improvement comes from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964. This act provided federal funding to primary and secondary schools for the betterment of public-school system, which could be anything from better supplies to advanced equipment and the rehabilitation of buildings. The assumption was that better education for children would translate to positive impacts on the communities around them.

Johnson recognized that in order to live a fulfilled life, environmental changes needed to be made. These included changes in car emissions and increased funding for the development of schools and housing. The president's environmental legacy helped create what we today recognize as environmental justice and the basic idea that everyone deserves a clean environment in which to live and be educated. Johnson's efforts with the Clean Air Act of 1963, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 are all representative of his enduring environmental legacy.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Aritree, Samantha and Wendy Kellogg. "Back to the Beginning: The Resurgence of the Cuyahoga River and Cleveland." In *Legacy Cities and Continuity and Change Amid Decline and Revival* edited by J. Rosie Tighe and Stephanie Ryberg-Webster, 205-221. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019.
- Bullard, Robert D. "The Threat of Environmental Racism," *Natural Resources & Environment* 7, no. 3 (1993): 23-26, 55-56.
- Johnson, Lyndon Baines. "President Johnson's Special Message to Congress: The American Promise Speech," Speech, Washington DC, March 15, 1965. LBJ Presidential Library. <http://www.lbjlibrary.org/lyndon-baines-johnson/speeches-films/president-johnsons-special-message-to-the-congress-the-american-promise>
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- Johnson, Lyndon Baines. *The Vantage Point: Perspectives on the Presidency, 1963-1969*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.
- McLaughlin, Malcolm. "The Pied Piper of the Ghetto: Lyndon Johnson, Environmental Justice, and the Politics of Rat Control," *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 4, 2011, 541-561.
- Stradling, David, and Richard Stradling. *Where the River Burned: Carl Stokes and the Struggle to Save Cleveland*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- The Kerner Report/National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968.

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- 1963 Clean Air Act
- 1964 Civil Rights Act  
Economic Opportunity Act  
Water Resources Research Act  
Pub. L. 89-272: An act to amend the Air Pollution Control Act to require standards for controlling the emission of pollutants from gasoline or diesel-powered vehicles.  
Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- 1965 Housing and Urban Development Act
- 1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act  
Pub. L. 89-404: Promote a more adequate national program of water research
- 1968 Fair Housing Act  
P190-542: An Act to provide for a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK**

President Johnson's legacy of civil rights and the environment continues to have a positive impact on society today. Further research can be done to see how his programs lasted in environmentally challenged cities like Detroit. The connection to the present can be seen with the Flint Michigan Water Crisis. Much like the Cuyahoga River pollution problem of the 1960s, Flint faces severe water contamination issues. The Flint crisis is a modern-day example of water pollution affecting the lives of a predominantly African American city. Further research can be done to connect Johnson's environmental efforts and legacy to problems that America and the world are still facing. For example, environmental justice advocate Robert Bullard analyzed the effects of environmental racism on Houston. Researching this topic further could bring the legacy of LBJ back to Texas within the national context of civil rights.

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