

OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF NATIONAL FORESTS AND NATIONAL PARKS

NATIONAL FORESTS

The Department of Agriculture has defined the objectives and functions of national forests as follows:

"The National Forests are primarily utilitarian in purpose. Their dominant function is to preserve and perpetuate the timber supply and to safeguard the watersheds of streams. Their resources are to be employed to meet the economic requirements of the nation, to the fullest degree consistent with their adequate perpetuation. In pursuance of this principle, the cutting of timber, the utilization of forage, the storage of water for irrigation or power, the occupancy of lands for purposes of industry, commerce or residence, and the exploitation of their mineral resources is permitted under proper regulation and control.

"But the very existence of forests, streams, varied and abundant vegetative growths, fish, game animals, etc., in combination with a wide and varied range of topographic and climatic conditions operates to create within the National Forests, an integrated recreational resource, which, when properly coordinated with the industrial utilization, of other resources, has a tremendous social and economic significance, that within limited areas may be of paramount importance and demand specialized and intensive development and management. The dedication of such areas to popular mass recreation is in no way inconsistent with the primary purposes for which the National Forests were created but, to the contrary, is in complete accord with the principles of regulated use by which their administration is governed..."

The definition of the objectives and functions of the National Forests as given by the Department of Agriculture seems entirely acceptable in principle. The only place where differences of opinion might arise lies in the degree to which the Forest Service, in response to the demands of popular recreation, might depart from what is termed its primary economic function and set up "A specialized and intensive development and management" which would duplicate that already maintained by and pertinent to the National Park Service.

NATIONAL PARKS AND MONUMENTS

National parks are the superlative natural areas, set aside and conserved unimpaired for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. Their development shall be conducive to realization of the scientific and recreational values consistent with their inherent characteristics.

National monuments are the outstanding areas or objects of pre-historic, historic, or scientific value, set aside and conserved unimpaired because of their national interest.

(Other classified areas, such as national historical parks, national military parks, national cemeteries, etc., are administered by the National Park Service. Since, however, these types of areas are not at

present involved in the problem of differentiating between national forests and national parks, they are not treated specifically in this statement.)

It is believed that all areas of national park or monument quality -- Kings Canyon, for example -- should be included in the national park system and that they should be administered by the one agency of government created to conserve them unimpaired for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. Areas of national park or monument character should not be jeopardized by concurrent commercial use.

National parkways, which are for recreational and not for commercial purposes, should be accorded similar protection and administration.

The Act to establish a National Park Service states:

"The Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

DISCUSSION

Recreation. In previous correspondence, the United States Forest Service has expressed the opinion that national parks should not be devoted primarily to recreation.

It is assumed that recreation is that which re-creates the individual. This is broader than the physical activity, or playground concept of recreation. In its broader sense, recreation includes spiritual and mental stimulation and exercise, as well as physical activity. It is believed that any more restricted definition of recreation is untenable.

If properly utilized, both national forests and national parks will provide recreation. To hold that either administrative Service should not provide for the recreational use of these resources is futile. Much misunderstanding in recent years could have been avoided if the types of recreation germane to the purposes of each Service had been defined.

Since national parks are superlative natural areas, the type of recreation which they provide must be consistent with their natural characteristics. To provide this type of recreation is the primary objective of the National Park Service, and there is no other competing objective. Preservation and interpretation of primeval nature and of the scientific, prehistoric and historic objects is an integral part of the main objective.

Since "the national forests are primarily utilitarian in purpose," the type of recreation which they provide is therefore incidental and must be consistent with all other uses of the forest and must be correlated with them.

If the recreational values of a superlative area are to be realized, the area must be dedicated to that end alone. Otherwise, it will be impaired. You cannot conduct banking in a temple and keep it a place of worship. Neither can you graze sheep and cattle and cut trees in a superlative forest and keep the forest superlative. But you can do these things in a forest and still provide a considerable degree of recreation, even though it will not be of the superlative-area type.

All superlative areas, then, if they are to be conserved unimpaired for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, should be dedicated to that purpose alone. And it is submitted that such areas should be classified as national parks and monuments, to be administered according to the standards for such areas.

It is evident that administration of superlative areas, for appropriate recreational use, under two Departments of government is an unwarranted duplication of expenditure and effort. Moreover, the administration of national parks and monuments by the Forest Service would be inconsistent with the purposes for which it was created; just as the administration of national forests by the National Park Service would be a similar inconsistency.

Boundary Adjustments. The Unit idea is the premise upon which boundary adjustments are advocated. That is, if a superlative natural area is to be preserved, it must be a unit capable of sustaining itself. Just as an economic unit is a community which is self-sufficient, so a natural or biotic unit is an area which can be preserved intact.

It would be futile to attempt to provide a city with pure water by controlling the area of the reservoir only. It is necessary to control the watershed above the reservoir to assure pure water within it. In like manner, it is futile to set aside a superlative area and attempt to preserve it unimpaired, without including the tributary-areas which give rise to its superlative character.

The unity of the area is particularly important to the psychological aspects of the problem. To take an obvious example: Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde provides a superb and satisfying spectacle in the primitive setting of its secluded canyon. What would Cliff Palace be with an oil well stuck in front of it? It is necessary, then in order to preserve the character of Cliff Palace to establish a suitable, protected area around it. Moreover, the archeological story of Cliff Palace adds to the pleasurable experience of the visitor. To preserve the primitive environment which made possible the life of the cliff dwellers on that arid mesa makes appreciation of the whole picture more vivid. Finally, there is the important matter of approach to the Cliff Palace area. This must be handled as part of the unit, for there are subtle values involved. These may seem to be intangible considerations but we acknowledge them frankly, and deal with them practically, in every city when we establish business and residence zones.

Perhaps in no instance is the unit character of a superlative area more clearly exemplified than in the attempt to preserve its

native biota. A park such as Yellowstone is established. Animal life and the vegetative cover are absolutely essential to the character of the area. But the winter game ranges are excluded. Civilization occupies them. The available range within the park is overgrazed; forest reproduction is consumed; the ground is laid bare and erosion sets in. The superlative features of the area are impaired because the foundations upon which they rest were not included.

Zion Canyon was set aside as a national park. The canyon itself is the superlative feature. But the watershed above the canyon is overgrazed. Run-off is violent. The wooded floor of Zion Canyon is washing away with repeated floods. Again, the unit character of a superlative area has been ignored.

The development of a park is of vital importance in its utilization and preservation. Human utilization of such areas, in a manner consistent with their characteristics, imposes extremely complex problems. If the reserved area is too small or is improperly conceived and delineated, the necessary developments and accommodations must impinge more severely upon features which it was desired to save. This is particularly true of national monuments, such as Aztec Ruins, Casa Grande, Bandelier, Muir Woods and Devil's Tower, as well as of most of the national parks. Human and wildlife utilization of an area is of necessity more concentrated and destructive in a restricted area than in a spacious one. The development and utilization of a superlative area are inescapable elements in the problem of its protection. They must be considered in delineating its boundaries.

Also to be considered is the nature of a proper recreation unit. A unique and magnificent spectacle such as Carlsbad Caverns or Crater Lake would be re-visited and enjoyed during successive days of a sojourn if the necessary recreation unit is properly conceived and made available. For example, the type of recreation which Diamond Lake provides is a necessary component of the Crater Lake unit. Moreover, the utilization of the Diamond Lake sector would relieve the development pressure at Crater Lake.

Unless a superlative area is treated as a unit it will be impaired. This applies equally to its spiritual aspects, its scientific, aesthetic and historic values, its forests and wildlife, its development, human utilization, protection and administration.

Commercial Considerations. At times, there seems to be a tendency to assume that only areas of little or no commercial value should be set aside as national parks, or utilized for recreation. If this premise were generally accepted, there would be no superlative areas saved for there is not one such area which does not have potential economic value apart from its utilization for recreation. No one could deny that the coast redwoods of California and the Virgin forests of the Olympic Peninsula would have economic value if cut for timber. But it is these merchantable trees which make the areas superlative. This nation can afford to reserve samples of its heritage for present

and future enjoyment. And then, of course, there is the economic proposition that some of these same trees would be worth far more to look at than to chop down.

New Areas. Aside from the Yellowstone, which was established when the area was in primeval condition, there never would have been another national park if the areas had been refused because of previous commercial exploitations. For instance, it was necessary to accept Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce, Mesa Verde, Glacier, and others, with privately-owned property and certain life-time grazing permits in order to establish these parks at all. But the private holdings are being gradually eliminated and the grazing is decreasing as the permits expire.

Because civilization has moved into the choicest areas faster than they could be established as national parks, some parks must now be carved out of commercialized areas. To permit a previously established and temporary commercial venture to thwart the establishment of national parks now would mean the loss of almost all remaining areas of national park quality.

It is realized that the attempt to preserve superlative areas is a highly specialized form of conservation, the benefits of which are not always immediately apparent. It is a type of present use which will not limit the possibilities of future use. The government is reserving certain archaeological areas which will not be excavated for many years, with the belief that archaeological knowledge and technique in the future will discover values which present methods of excavation would discard by the shovelful. In like manner, we should not "excavate" our great wilderness areas too heavily at present. For the health of man and of vigorous scientific inquiry, there is need of large superlative areas where nature can be enjoyed and studied as it was in the days of Audubon and Darwin. Thus we try to leave the doors open to new social values and new scientific knowledge.

If a condensed definition of objectives and functions of the National Park Service paraphrased upon and drafted somewhat similar to that given by the Department of Agriculture is desired, the following might be considered:

The national parks are primarily utilitarian in purpose: their dominant function is to preserve - and to render available for the benefit and enjoyment of the people - the superlative examples of Nature's handiwork. Their resources are to be employed to meet the re-creational requirements of the nation to the fullest degree consistent with their adequate perpetuation. In pursuance of this principle and of these obligations, the Service has built up and maintained an efficient administrative, educational and scientific staff. It has ministered to the recreational and spiritual needs of millions of our population and in addition it has sought to provide something more than an idle outing. It has devised methods for rendering recreation not

only physically but mentally constructive and of permanent spiritual benefit. Its achievements in this direction have justified the assignment to it of functions quite beyond these originally contemplated but thoroughly consistent with its objectives. Its range now includes not only outstanding and inspiring examples of physical geography and their interpretation but it controls geological exposure of wide human interest, archeological, faunistic, and historical areas that stimulate study, coastal and lacustrine territory of high educational content, and it is looking forward to the time - and it is not far distant - when it will be recognized as the most practical and potent agency for adult and juvenile field education that has been conceived by any nation.