

# The Rise and Decline of Ecological Attitudes in National Park Management, 1929–1940

## Part III (Conclusion): Growth and Diversification of the National Park Service

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**T**HE WILDLIFE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY GEORGE WRIGHT and his fellow Park Service biologists published its report, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States* (Fauna No. 1), in 1933, the first year of Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency. Thus the efforts of the Park Service's wildlife biologists to move national park leadership toward ecologically oriented resource management occurred largely within the context of the New Deal. Extending from Roosevelt's inaugural to the beginning of World War II, the New Deal fostered great expansion and diversification of Park Service programs and opened the way for dramatic changes in the composition of the national park system. It placed new responsibilities on the Park Service (especially in the fields of recreation and assistance to state parks), brought different kinds of parks into the system (historic sites, reservoirs, national parkways, among others), and accelerated physical development of the parks to provide for public use and enjoyment.

By the end of the 1930s the Park Service differed remarkably from what it had been when its first director, Stephen Mather, resigned early in 1929. Yet in some ways, the New Deal programs reflected a continuity of national park management, as many of the programs were in line with basic directions set under Mather. During the 1930s the Park Service sought (as stated in a 1936 internal report) to "enlarge its field of

usefulness" through increasing the viability and the social utility of the national park system—expanding the system and making it more accessible and popular with the public. These were goals quite similar to what Mather had sought.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> The quote is found in National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service Under Director Cammerer," 1936, 1, typescript, Entry 18,

Moreover, the proliferation of New Deal programs drew the Service's attention toward matters other than scientifically based management of the parks' natural systems. While such programs as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) nurtured the biologists' efforts by funding additional positions, the era's principal emphasis was certainly on recreational development and expansion of the system. The emergence of ecological management in the national parks had to confront this emphasis. By the end of the decade the gradual demise of the wildlife biology programs evidenced the triumph of the Park Service's traditional recreational tourism urge, therefore maintaining a strong continuity with the Mather era.

### The Bid for Expansion

During the New Deal the National Park Service aggressively sought growth, diversification, and park development—indeed, the Service seems to have gotten everything its leadership could have hoped for. Even before Congress passed the act establishing the CCC, Park Service Director Horace Albright (who had succeeded Mather in 1929) recognized the potential gains from the act. In early March 1933, approximately two weeks prior to the act's passage, Albright wrote his Assistant Director, Arthur Demaray, that the share of funds allotted to the national parks would depend on the Park Service's preparedness—how much it could demonstrate that it was ready to spend. As recalled by Conrad Wirth, the landscape architect who would ultimately take charge of the Service's many CCC programs, Albright was seeking “to justify a good, sound park program should the funds suddenly become available.” The director quickly prepared estimates of \$10,000,000 for con-

struction, including roads, trails, and other developments. He asked the park superintendents to assess immediately their ability to take advantage of the new funds, and called for an updating of national park master plans to prepare for the infusion of New Deal money. With Roosevelt's emergency relief programs, the Service was (as later recalled by Arno Cammerer, who succeeded Albright as director in August 1933) poised to “absorb...a large segment of such work and to benefit greatly therefrom” by making the parks more accessible for public use and enjoyment.<sup>162</sup>

Albright also contacted state park authorities around the country, advising them that the CCC would become involved with state as well as national parks. Of all CCC activities, assistance to the states in recreational planning and development most expanded the Park Service's operations. Funded by the CCC and given solid encouragement from the very first by the Service's directorate, the state parks assistance program began in 1933 and gained momentum rapidly under the leadership of Conrad Wirth. Wirth, who had joined the Service in 1931, was named Assistant Director for Recreational Land Planning—bureaucratic status which indicated the importance placed on these programs. His principal aide was Herbert Evison, former secretary of the National Conference on State Parks—the organization which Mather and Albright had helped found in the early 1920s in their efforts to encourage a stronger state park system.<sup>163</sup> Wirth quickly built an

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<sup>162</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, “History and Growth—the National Park Service” (1939), 4, typescript, HFLA. Albright's motivation and active pursuit of CCC money are discussed in Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 73-74. See also Paige, *Civilian Conservation Corps*, 38-39; and Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 77.

<sup>163</sup> Wirth *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 75-76, 88; Olsen, *Organizational Structures of the National Park Service*, 52-53.

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RG79. Unrau and Willis, in *Expansion of the National Park Service*, provide a detailed account of Park Service growth and expansion in the 1930s.

impressive, far-reaching program, developing proposals for adding new parks to state systems, and overseeing the planning, design, and construction of the facilities necessary for state parks to accommodate public use.

Soon employing thousands of CCC workers in state park projects, the Park Service constructed roads, trails, cabins, museums, campgrounds, picnic grounds, administrative offices, and other features of state parks—work which replicated the CCC projects Wirth was undertaking in national parks.<sup>164</sup> Through assistance to the states, the Service's expertise in intensive physical development of parks extended far beyond national park boundaries. Also, in state or national park construction, the Service's architects and landscape architects of the 1930s directed CCC craftsmen toward a harmonious blending of new construction with the surrounding park landscapes. Following the traditions of rustic architecture established earlier in the national parks, CCC laborers created many structures which later generations would praise for their beauty and quality of construction. Altogether, the focus of CCC development was clearly in support of public recreational use of parks, thus reinforcing within the Park Service this approach to management and greatly enhancing the bureau's leadership role in national recreation matters.

Added to the Park Service's state programs was a national survey of potential recreational lands which could help meet the American public's recreational needs. The survey came about as a result of Park Service encouragement when it participated on the National Resources Board, established by Roosevelt in 1934 to study the nation's natural re-

sources and land uses, including recreation. As recalled in an internal document, the Park Service submitted an "urgent" recommendation to the Board that there be a study to determine recreational requirements.<sup>165</sup> Late in 1934 the Service completed the survey—which it viewed as only preliminary. It quickly began campaigning to expand the survey and to institutionalize existing cooperation with the states by gaining full Congressional sanction for activities which heretofore had been only administratively authorized. This lobbying paid off; the resulting Park, Parkway, and Recreational Area Study Act of 1936 authorized the Park Service to make a comprehensive national survey of park and recreational programs and to assist states in the planning and design of parks.<sup>166</sup>

The National Park Service had thus secured Congressional approval for extensive participation in recreational programs throughout the nation, thereby making a decisive bureaucratic and political commitment to the recreational aspects of park management and to all levels of parks, from state and local to national. Using mostly CCC funds, Wirth promptly began implementation of the act, building upon the 1934 preliminary survey to detail the nation's park and recreational needs in a report

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<sup>165</sup> National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service," 5. For discussion of the survey, see Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 172-173; and Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 364.

<sup>166</sup> In a 1936 report, the Park Service stated that it had "sponsored" the legislation. National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service Under Director Cammerer," 5. See also *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1935* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935), 183. Conrad Wirth mentions in his autobiography that the act was passed "at the request of the National Park Service through the Department of the Interior." The act is reprinted in his autobiography. See Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 166-168; and Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 109-120.

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<sup>164</sup> The Park Service's CCC programs are discussed in Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 94-127; and Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 363-364.

entitled *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States*, published in 1941. A comprehensive document, the study argued for the expansion of recreational facilities throughout the country. Also, in cooperation with the Park Service, 46 states worked on statewide surveys, with 37 of the reports ultimately completed, and 21 published. In addition to these studies, the Service undertook a survey of seashores and major lakeshores in the United States, identifying numerous areas eventually to be included in the national park system or state park systems—and in many cases to be put to intensive, recreational use.<sup>167</sup>

The Service's development of parkways for "recreational motoring" further enhanced its leadership role in national recreational programs. Even before the New Deal began, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Colonial Parkway (to connect Yorktown and Jamestown, Virginia), and Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive were already under construction as part of the national park system. Major additions to the parkway program came later in the decade with authorization of the Blue Ridge and Natchez Trace parkways. All of these new scenic highways received massive doses of New Deal emergency relief funds. They also received staunch support from Park Service leadership, which regarded them as perhaps the most "spectacular new phase of national

park planning and development during recent years."<sup>168</sup>

As part of its nationwide recreational work, the Park Service urged authorization of the "recreational demonstration area" program, another type of park planning and development to accommodate intensive use. The Service recognized the potential for acquiring marginal agricultural lands located near urban centers, the lands to be converted into recreational areas—a concept promoted in 1934 by Wirth while serving as Director Cammerer's representative on a presidential land planning committee. Intended to become state or local parks, the demonstration areas were also to be developed for picnicking, hiking, camping, boating, and other similar uses. Having, as Wirth saw it, "unanimous approval and support" from within the Park Service, the program began in 1934, with the Federal Surplus Relief Administration purchasing the lands and the Park Service supervising their conversion into park and recreation areas. Most of the areas, as Cammerer noted in 1936, were meant to serve "organized camp needs of major metropolitan areas." In time, 46 demonstration areas were established, requiring a substantial Park Service commitment in planning, design, and construction to develop the areas for public use. As intended, almost all of the recreational demonstration areas were eventually turned over to state or local governments, with only Catocin Mountain Park, Prince William Forest Park, and a few other areas becoming part of the national park system.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>167</sup> National Park Service, *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1941), see for example, 122-132; Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 150, 192-193. In 1937, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, on the North Carolina coast, became the first of these areas to come into the national park system. Others followed, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. See Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington: National Park Service, 1991), 81-84.

<sup>168</sup> Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 144-145. The quote is from in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1937), 55.

<sup>169</sup> Cammerer's quote is in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1936), 104. The Recreational Demonstration Areas are discussed in Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 129-143; Paige, *Civilian Conservation Corps*, 117-118; and Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 176-190. Wirth's promotion of the Recreational De-

Most of the development that the Park Service oversaw in recreation demonstration areas and state parks was undertaken with CCC funds. CCC monies financed not only the labor (including the enrollees' housing and meals, provided in camps) but also the National Park Service's own professional staff involved in these programs. In addition, major developmental funds came from the Public Works Administration for such projects as electrical and sanitation systems, and road and building construction. Beyond the New Deal's giving crucial support to state park development, the Park Service recognized the relief programs as "invaluable" to the national parks themselves, making possible the completion of "a wide variety of long-needed construction and improvements."<sup>170</sup>

The Park Service expanded into additional fields during the New Deal era, most notably the management of historic and archeological sites, where heretofore there had been no coordinated federal oversight. During the administration of President Herbert Hoover, the Park Service had sought (without success) to gain control of historic and prehistoric sites managed by the departments of war and agriculture by authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906 and other acts. Among these sites were Gettysburg, Antietam, and Vicksburg battlefields (managed by the War Department), and archeological areas like Tonto and Gila Cliff Dwellings national monuments (managed by the U.S. Forest Service, of the Department of

Agriculture). Immediately upon Franklin Roosevelt's taking office, Horace Albright, who shared with Roosevelt a strong personal interest in American history, proposed to the new secretary of the interior, Harold Ickes, that the President transfer the numerous historic and prehistoric sites from other departments to National Park Service jurisdiction.

Aware that the Organic Act provided authority for involvement in historic preservation, Albright believed the Service could provide the best management of these sites. It already managed Mesa Verde National Park and a number of other prehistoric areas in the Southwest, plus three historic areas in the east—Morristown National Historical Park, and Colonial and George Washington Birthplace national monuments. But Albright also hoped to strengthen the Park Service's defenses against a possible U.S. Forest Service takeover by getting the Park Service into fields alien to its rival bureau. And he wanted to build the Service's political strength in the eastern United States—where most of the sought-after historic areas (mainly Civil War and Revolutionary War sites) were located, and where there were very few existing national park units.<sup>171</sup>

This time the Park Service succeeded. In June 1933 President Roosevelt signed two executive orders effecting transfer on August 10 of numerous sites to the national park system, thereby substantially reorganizing the federal government's historic preservation program. Thus the Service had campaigned for and gained a vast new program, with 44

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monstration Area program is also discussed in Herbert Evison and Newton Bishop Drury, "The National Park Service and Civilian Conservation Corps," interview conducted by Amelia Roberts Fry, Berkeley, California, 24 October 1962, and 19 and 26 April 1964, typescript, 64, HFLA.

<sup>170</sup> National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service" (1936), 3.

<sup>171</sup> Albright, *Birth of the National Park Service*, 245, 285-286. Albright recalled (p. 286) his belief that "acquisition of the military parks situated in many eastern states would bring a much larger constituency and much broader base, and the Park Service would be perceived as a truly national entity." For a list of the sites managed by the National Park Service prior to the reorganization by President Roosevelt, see Mackintosh, *Shaping the System*, 16-17, 22-23.

historic and prehistoric sites brought into the system, along with 12 natural areas. Among the new natural areas in the system were Saguaro and Chiricahua national monuments, while the new historic areas included many public parks and monuments in Washington, D.C., such as the Mall and the Washington and Lincoln monuments—the Park Service's first major venture into urban park management.<sup>172</sup> Two years later, with the Service's encouragement, Congress passed the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which authorized cooperation with state and local governments in identifying, preserving, and interpreting historic sites.<sup>173</sup> By this act the Park Service increased both its historic preservation responsibilities and its already substantial involvement in state and local surveys and planning.

But as a part of the reorganizations made early in the Roosevelt era, the National Park Service had to accept two changes that it did not want. In 1933 it was given responsibility for managing federal buildings in Washington, D.C. (except for judicial and legislative buildings); and along with this the Park Service suffered a name change—it became the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations. Management of buildings in Washington added significantly to the demands on the Park Service. Initially, this meant taking on about 1500 additional employees, a figure that escalated rapidly in the ensuing years. And by the mid-1930s, the Park Service was in charge of approximately 20,500,000 square feet of space in 58 government-owned buildings and 90 rented buildings in and around the District of Columbia

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<sup>172</sup> Background to the reorganization and a list of sites brought into the national park system in August 1933 are found in Barry Mackintosh, *Shaping the System*, 24-43. See also Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 352-353.

<sup>173</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 163-166; Mackintosh, *Shaping the System*, 49.

and elsewhere—for example, the United States courthouses in Aiken, South Carolina, and New York City.<sup>174</sup> In 1934 the Park Service managed to get its new name (a “much-hated” designation, as Albright recalled it) abolished, and the original name restored. Later, in 1939, management of federal buildings was transferred to the Public Buildings Administration.<sup>175</sup>

Finally, additional involvement in recreational programs came when Congress in the mid-1930s authorized a National Park Service study of the recreational potential of Lake Mead, the huge new reservoir behind recently-completed Boulder Dam on the Arizona-Nevada border. Even before the study was completed the Service had established CCC camps and begun development along the reservoir's shoreline. Not surprisingly, given the direction the Service was taking in other recreational matters, the study found the recreational potential to be very high, and in October 1936 the Park Service formally agreed with the Bureau of Reclamation to manage public recreational use on and around Lake Mead.<sup>176</sup>

Ironically, only 23 years after a bitter nationwide controversy over the destruction of Yosemite National Park's Hetch Hetchy Valley with a dam and reservoir, the Park Service thus found itself a willing participant in the management of

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<sup>174</sup> National Park Service, “Growth of the National Park Service,” 2; Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 60-64; *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1936), 135.

<sup>175</sup> Albright, *Birth of the National Park Service*, 314; Mackintosh, *Shaping the System*, 26; Olsen *Organizational Structures of the National Park Service*, 61. The director expressed desire to return to the “National Park Service” designation in his 1933 annual report. See *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1933* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1933), 192.

<sup>176</sup> Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 153-155; *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1937), 38.

Boulder Dam (later Lake Mead) National Recreation Area, then the largest reservoir in the world. Philosophical contradictions inherent in the National Park Service's managing a reservoir where the main feature was itself a gigantic impairment to natural conditions were apparent from the very first. In 1932, at the request of Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur, former U.S. Congressman Louis C. Crampton, a long-time supporter of national parks, headed a reconnaissance of the reservoir area, the study team including national park superintendents from Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Zion, and Bryce Canyon. Their lengthy report noted the contradictions, observing that conservationists had long fought to protect national parks from "becoming incidental to or subordinate to irrigation and water supply uses." The report warned that, heretofore, all national parks have involved the "preservation of wonders of nature." Thus:

To deliberately bring into the national park chain and give national park status to such a dam and reservoir would greatly strengthen the hands of those who seek to establish more or less similar reservoirs in existing national parks.

The team also warned that designating a reservoir a national park might encourage mining, cattle grazing and other utilitarian uses of the existing national parks.<sup>177</sup>

Yet even these contradictions were readily resolved, to the enhancement of Park Service interests. As with many other park-related programs initiated during the New Deal era, recreational needs provided the National Park Service its principal rationale for entry

into the field of reservoir recreation management. Crampton's 1932 report on Lake Mead recommended that the area should not be designated a "national park"; rather, the reservoir's *national* importance as a *recreation area* should be declared, and that aspect of its management turned over to the National Park Service. The reconnaissance team believed that the Park Service's reservoir recreation work would be "entirely consistent with history and with principle." As justification the report cited the 1916 Organic Act's statement that the Service would manage "such other national parks and reservations of like character as may be hereafter created by Congress."<sup>178</sup>

Thus, by devising the new designation of "national recreational area" (and indeed, by relying on its Organic Act) the Park Service effectively side-stepped the philosophical contradictions with its traditionally held purpose of preserving natural areas unimpaired and launched a new and ambitious program centered on reservoirs which were being created by damming the rivers of the West. (This program would ultimately mushroom for the Park Service, bringing huge sums of money and closer ties to the Bureau of Reclamation; it would also bring increasingly bitter criticism from conservationists of the 1950s and 1960s, who were very much aware of the contradictions with what they saw as the Park Service's primary mission.) Although within the Park Service, perhaps including Director Cammerer himself, there seems to have been some hesitation about this new involvement at Lake Mead, it was nevertheless urged on by

<sup>177</sup> Louis C. Crampton, Memorandum for the Secretary, 28 June 1932, Entry 18, RG79. Crampton's study was separate from the study conducted in the mid-1930s.

<sup>178</sup> Crampton, Memorandum for the Secretary 28 June 1932. The reconnaissance team included superintendents Roger W. Toll (Yellowstone), M.R. Tillotson (Grand Canyon), and P.P. Patraw (Bryce Canyon and Zion). The Organic Act's wording is in Tolson, *Laws Relating to the National Park Service*, 10.

Conrad Wirth, spearhead of the Service's growth in recreational development. Wirth, in turn, found support for recreational programs from such individuals as Associate Director Arthur Demaray, and even biologists George Wright and Ben Thompson.<sup>179</sup>

The National Park Service's recreational programs did in fact draw upon the talents of George Wright, who as head of the Wildlife Division represented the strongest potential resistance in the Service to its development-oriented park management. In 1934, recognizing Wright's considerable administrative skills, Director Cammerer appointed him to head the initial study of the nation's recreational needs, the study which the Park Service had urged the National Resources Board to authorize. The study team, which included, among others, Conrad Wirth and the Park Service's Chief Forester, John Coffman, worked feverishly through the summer and into the fall, submitting their final report in early November.

Wright wrote Joseph Grinnell, his mentor at the University of California's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, that he found the recreational field to be "quite alien"—nevertheless he supported the Service's rapidly expanding recreational programs. Shortly before his death in early 1936, Wright voiced approval of the Park Service's growth and diversification, stating in a paper entitled "Wildlife in National Parks," that it was logical to place "responsibility for recreational re-

sources" under the Service.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, Wright had earlier given his blessing to the Park Service's involvement with reservoirs.

Apparently, as the chief proponent of preserving natural conditions in the parks, he saw the Service's varied recreational efforts as a means of relieving harmful pressure on the traditional national parks. In this regard—and consistent with the major focus of his career—Wright wrote Sequoia superintendent John White in 1935 of his concern that the national parks themselves not "supply mass outdoor recreation"—a prospect that would place a "destructive burden" on the parks. To Wright, adopting the policy of "giving all of the people everything they want within the parks...would involve sacrificing the Service's highest ideals."<sup>181</sup>

Overall, the National Park Service eagerly responded to the variety of New Deal opportunities in national recreational planning and development, as well as expansion of historical programs. Regardless of the taint of bureaucratic aggrandizement, the Park Service pursued very seriously—and very idealistically—its advancement of recreational development in national, state, and local parks. Its assistance to the nation's park systems and its nationwide surveys and planning laid the foundation for expanding recreational opportunities throughout the country, a contribution which

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<sup>179</sup> George L. Collins, in "The Art and Politics of Park Planning and Preservation, 1920-1979," interview by Ann Lage, 1978 and 1979, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, typescript, 51-52, HFLA, recalls that Wright, Thompson, and Arthur Demaray supported Wirth in his quest for control of recreation management at Lake Mead. The Park Service's reservoir recreation program, begun with Lake Mead, was propelled further with the river basin development of the New Deal-World War II era and beyond.

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<sup>180</sup> George M. Wright to Joseph Grinnell, 29 August 1934, George M. Wright files, MVZ-UC; George M. Wright, "Wildlife in National Parks," *American Planning and Civic Annual* (1936), 62. Grinnell, Wright's admiring mentor, wrote Wright that, given the significance of the recreational study, he could think of "no one better fitted than...yourself to guide and direct along this important line." Joseph Grinnell to George M. Wright, 18 August 1934, George M. Wright files, MVZUC.

<sup>181</sup> George M. Wright to Col. John R. White, 23 June 1935, Entry 34, RG79.

later generations would find easy to forget or take for granted.

It is also important to point out that even though Conrad Wirth showed little interest in scientific resource management and allowed the biology programs to decline during the last half of the 1930s while he was in charge of CCC funding and staffing, he was nevertheless the Park Service's chief advocate for the creation and development of recreational open spaces, whether with national, state, or local parks. His extensive surveys and planning for new parks during the New Deal (and later during his "Mission 66" program) would bear fruit with the establishment of dozens of new parks for the public's enjoyment and for the preservation of fragments of the American landscape—a legacy of inestimable value.

### Effects of the New Deal Programs

Still, the variety of programs taken on during the New Deal impacted the Service and the national parks in significant ways. Prior to 1933 the Park Service administered a system consisting mostly of large natural areas in the West, along with a few archeological sites in the Southwest and historic sites in the East. During the New Deal, the Service's expansionist tendencies led it into enormous new responsibilities in recreation and historic site management. Using unprecedented amounts of money available, mainly from the CCC, it extended its activities and influence far beyond national park boundaries, becoming involved in complex planning, intensive development, and preservation work with state and local governments from coast to coast. By the mid-1930s, after all of the Park Service's CCC operations had been consolidated under Conrad Wirth, some observers were claiming that, given the size of the programs under Wirth, there were in fact two National Park Services—the "regular"

Park Service and "Connie Wirth's Park Service."<sup>182</sup>

The Park Service's official organizational chart, revised no fewer than eight times during the 1930s, reflected the bureau's growing diversification and professional specialization. The sequence of charts showed an increase from three Washington branches and four "field" professional offices (landscape architects, engineers *etc.*) in 1928, to a complex organizational maze of ten "branches" (or their equivalent) and four newly created "regional offices" on the 1938 chart. (The regional offices had been established in 1937, largely at Wirth's instigation, to correspond with the regional organization used by the CCC.) On the 1938 chart, specifically identified functions that related to the Service's growth and expansion during the 1930s included management of historic sites, archeological sites, memorials, parkway rights-of-way, and District of Columbia parks and buildings. In addition, under Assistant Director Wirth's Branch of Recreation, Land Planning and State Cooperation were the Land Planning Division, the Development Division, and the U.S. Travel Division (the latter, created in early 1937 to stimulate travel to the national parks, would soon open an office on Broadway in New York City).<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Collins, "The Art and Politics of Park Planning and Preservation," 52.

<sup>183</sup> The organizational charts are found in Olsen, *Organizational Structures of the National Park Service*, 42-61. Conrad Wirth recalled that the superintendents were at first "adamant" in their opposition to establishing regional offices, concerned that they would encroach upon the superintendent's authority and affect their lines of communication with the director. The superintendents also feared that the new offices would be headed by men who had risen through the ranks of the CCC, rather than the Park Service. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 119. See also Cammerer, "History and Growth of the National Park Service," 5. In early 1937, the Park Service established its travel division to fill, as Cammerer put it, "a long-indicated need for a national clearing house of information on recre-

Additional changes for the Park Service were detailed in a 1936 internal report, which noted that in the previous three years Service expenditures had increased "about fourfold and its personnel about eight." From 1930 to 1933, total appropriations had amounted to \$11,104,000 annually. Over the next three year period, appropriations averaged \$51,824,000 annually—a dramatic increase. Similarly, personnel figures rose from a monthly average of 2,022 employees in 1932, to 17,598 in 1936, with about three-fifths of the 1936 employees paid from CCC funds. (In Washington alone, management of the federal buildings and the public parks for which the Service was responsible required about 5,000 employees by 1936.) The overall figures also included money and personnel for managing the 56 new historical and archeological parks brought in by Roosevelt's 1933 reorganization, plus staffing for a number of newly created parks.<sup>184</sup>

The various New Deal emergency relief programs which the Service had so successfully tapped funded most of these staff increases. The 1936 internal report revealed that between July 1, 1933, and June 30, 1936, the Service's emergency relief funds totaled \$116,724,000, as compared to \$38,748,000 in regular Park Service appropriations. And, as stated in the same report, the "biggest single factor" in expansion of the Service's operations was supervision of recreational planning and development. The report

indicated that in state parks, up to 91,000 enrollees living in 457 camps had been directed by as many as 5,499 Park Service employees. The relief programs had not only helped bring the national parks "to new levels of physical development," as the 1936 report put it, but also had supported "new and important fields of activity" for the bureau—the many and varied Park Service programs of the 1930s.<sup>185</sup>

In the national parks themselves through 1936, the Service managed as many as 117 CCC camps with 23,400 enrollees, and employed as many as 2,405 "national park landscape architects, engineers, foresters, and other technicians."<sup>186</sup> This last figure alone exceeded the total of Park Service employees in 1932, prior to the beginning of Roosevelt's emergency relief programs—and was a reflection of the heavy emphasis the New Deal placed on forestry and recreational development in the national parks. Much later, in 1951, then Chief Landscape Architect William G. Carnes estimated that the Service in the 1930s had employed as many as 400 landscape architects at one time. By comparison, the Service employed a maximum of 27 biologists in the mid-1930s—significantly fewer than those employed in recreational development. Of the biologists, 23 were funded by CCC money, the remaining four being paid through the Service's regular appropriations.<sup>187</sup>

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ational and travel opportunities ...and to stimulate interest therein both at home and abroad." *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1937), 35-36. See also Swain, "National Park Service and the New Deal," 318.

<sup>184</sup> National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service Under Director Cammerer," 1-3. Numerous parks were authorized during the New Deal era, including Everglades and Big Bend national parks, Blue Ridge and Natchez Trace national parkways, and Joshua Tree, Organ Pipe Cactus, and Capitol Reef national monuments. Mackintosh, *Shaping the System*, 58-59.

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<sup>185</sup> National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service Under Director Cammerer," 4. Further discussion of appropriations during the New Deal is found in Unrau and Willis, *Expansion of the National Park Service*, 75-76.

<sup>186</sup> National Park Service, "Growth of the National Park Service Under Director Cammerer," 4. Almost certainly, many of these individuals were not fully trained professionals, but nevertheless were employed in some aspect of those fields.

<sup>187</sup> William G. Carnes, "Landscape Architecture in the National Park Service," *Landscape Architecture* (July, 1951), copy attached to Hillory A. Tolson,

The totals of funds and positions accounted for by the Park Service during this period suggested not only the New Deal's interest in recreational development of national and state parks but also its emphasis on large resource surveys and national planning—fundamental elements of the New Deal to which the Service readily responded. Furthermore, with these programs the bureau's foresters, architects, landscape architects, and engineers were gaining increasing voice in management affairs. And by the mid-1930s the Park Service claimed its "preeminence" in the recreational field had reached "new heights," with its mission expanded to aiding the conservation of "parklands everywhere."<sup>188</sup> Thus, while certainly meaningful, the emergence of scientific research and biological management in the national parks seems diminished, even overwhelmed, in the context of the Park Service's extraordinary expansion and development during the 1930s.

In this regard, it is significant that when Cammerer's health forced him to step down in 1940 to become regional director in the Park Service's Richmond, Virginia, office, one of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes' top recommendations to succeed Cammerer was none other than Robert Moses, the "czar" of New York's park, parkway, and recreational development. Ickes thought that the *New Yorker* would provide "vigorous administration"—clearly in contrast to what he thought of Cammerer's abilities. The secretary's interest in Moses, conveyed to President Roosevelt, certainly suggests a perception of the National Park Service as much more of a recreational and

tourism organization than one committed to scientific and ecological land management. Moreover, it was Roosevelt's personal animosity toward Moses—rather than any concerns that Moses' aggressive developmental tendencies might overwhelm the national parks—that seems to have led to the President's rejection of Ickes' proposal.<sup>189</sup>

### Dissent and Protest

The many developmental activities of the National Park Service during the 1930s did in fact draw criticism. Concerned about the bureau's developmental tendencies, Newton B. Drury, head of the Save the Redwoods League and destined to succeed Cammerer as director, observed that the National Park Service was becoming a "Super-Department of Recreation," and a "glorified playground commission." These tendencies also caused organizations such as the

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<sup>188</sup> Newton Drury discusses Ickes' interest in Moses becoming director in Newton Bishop Drury, "Parks and Redwoods, 1919-1971," interview by Amelia Roberts Fry and Susan Schrepfer (1959-1972), typescript, 352-353, HFLA. Ickes' quote is found in T.H. Watkins, *Righteous Pilgrim: The Life and Times of Harold L. Ickes, 1874-1952* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), 578. See also Swain, "National Park Service and the New Deal," 329-330. Cammerer died of a heart attack in April 1941, less than a year after stepping down to the regional director's position in Richmond. As Horace Albright saw it, Cammerer's death was due in part to the stress caused by Secretary Ickes' continually hostile treatment of Cammerer. In a fascinating account, Albright later described the anger he felt toward Ickes while at Cammerer's funeral. He recalled that Cammerer's body was in a "couch casket," opened along an entire side so that the former director appeared to be sleeping on a couch. Seated on the front row close to Ickes and near Cammerer's open casket, Albright felt his anger rising and badly wanted to rebuke Ickes. He recalled that the Secretary "looked right straight ahead, all through the services, but I never in my life came so near to doing something very bad....my feelings ran something like this: Look at Cammerer. Keep looking at him. Just feel, as I hope you do, that you killed him. You didn't knife him, you didn't poison him, you didn't shoot him, but you killed him just the same." Horace M. Albright, "Reminiscences," interview by William T. Ingerson, New York City, 1962, typescript, 543, BL.

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Memorandum to Washington Office and all Field Offices, 15 February 1952, HFLA; Sumner "Biological Research and Management," 9.

<sup>188</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1936), 99; *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (1937), 34.

Redwoods League, Wilderness Society, and National Parks Association to believe that the U.S. Forest Service might manage the Kings Canyon area of the Sierras (one of the principal national park proposals during the late 1930s) better than would the Park Service. Concerns of this kind contributed to a delay of Congressional authorization of Kings Canyon National Park until 1940 and inspired strong wording in the enabling legislation to protect the new park's wilderness qualities. Aversion to Park Service emphasis on tourism development also caused the Redwoods League to oppose establishment of a national park in the redwoods area of northern California.<sup>190</sup> This opposition contributed to decades of delay, with serious consequences for preservation of the redwoods.

Particularly vociferous criticism of changes taking place during the New Deal came from the National Parks Association, which, since its founding in 1919 with Park Service Director Stephen Mather's support, had been the public's principal advocate for maintaining high national park standards. The Association feared that the traditional large natural parks were threatened by too much development and that the Park Service was distracted by its many new and varied responsibilities. In a conservative reaction to the sprawl of New Deal programs, the Association argued that the

National Park Service was run by its "State Park group financed by emergency funds," and that with the new types of parks the public was increasingly confused as to what a true national park was. To the Association, the "real impetus" behind the expansion and development of the system was the:

recently conceived idea that the Park Service is the only federal agency fitted to administer recreation on federally owned or controlled lands. Some persons even go so far as to assert that its proper function is to stimulate and direct recreational travel throughout the country.<sup>191</sup>

To correct these problems, the National Parks Association in the spring of 1936 recommended purification. It urged establishment of a "National Primeval Park System" which would contain only the large natural parks and be managed independent of historic or recreation areas, or of state park assistance programs. As stated by the Association, this proposal was intended to save the "old time" big natural parks from "submergence" in the "welter of miscellaneous reservations" which were coming into the system. Furthermore, the Association proposed limiting future additions to the primeval park system to those areas which had not been seriously impacted by lumbering, mining, settlement, or other adverse human activities—only the most pristine areas were to be included.<sup>192</sup>

During the 1930s the National Parks Association's highly restrictive approach seems to have had little impact on the Park Service or on the growth of the sys-

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<sup>190</sup> Schrepfer, *The Fight to Save the Redwoods*, 56-64. On the other hand, some opposed the Kings Canyon legislation because a national park would restrict use and development. Details of the complicated campaign to establish Kings Canyon National Park are found in Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenger of the Big Trees*, 197-214; and Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 396-404. See also George M. Wright to John R. White, 23 June 1935, Entry 34, RG79, for Wright's comments on the U.S. Forest Service "treating the Kings Canyon areas as a national park...enforc[ing] practically the same rules for its preservation." Wright saw the Forest Service's efforts as an encroachment on traditional Park Service management practices—and thus one of the "gravest dangers" facing the Park Service.

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<sup>191</sup> "Wanted: A National Primeval Park Policy," *The National Parks Bulletin* 13 (December 1937), 13, 26; William P. Wharton, "Park Service Leader Abandons National Park Standards," *National Parks Bulletin* 14 (June 1938), 5.

<sup>192</sup> William P. Wharton, "The National Primeval Parks," *National Parks Bulletin* 13 (February 1937), 3-4.

tem. It was, in fact, criticized by individuals within the Service, from Cammerer to George Wright. Director Cammerer and his staff disliked the primeval parks proposal, believing it would divide the system into first and second class areas. And, writing in the *American Planning and Civic Annual* in 1938, former director Horace Albright, one of the principal proponents of Park Service expansion, attacked the very restrictive standards as being so "rigid" that they would "disqualify all of the remaining superlative scenery in the United States." Albright rightfully pointed out that parks like Glacier, Grand Canyon, and Yosemite, which had been grazed, mined, or settled before establishment, would not have become national parks had such standards existed in the past. He claimed that those who wanted only "unmodified territory" in the parks were actually allied with "other national-park objectors to prevent any more areas from being incorporated into the system."<sup>193</sup>

In a scathing letter to the National Parks Association, Interior Secretary Ickes voiced an opinion in accord with Albright's. Ickes wrote that opposition to legislation which would include cutover areas in the proposed Olympic National Park or allow recreation development downriver from the proposed Kings Canyon National Park "dovetailed perfectly with the opposition of commercial opponents." Thus he viewed the Parks Association as a "stooge" for lumber companies that also opposed the parks. George Wright's remarks on the matter were more tempered. In a speech to the American Planning and Civic Association given shortly before his death, Wright stated that he no longer feared that the system would be loaded with "inferior" parks—a position placing him

in disagreement with the Parks Association. But in any event, he believed the Service itself could adequately defend against "intrusion of trash areas." And more importantly, the failure to act on truly exceptional park proposals would be much more calamitous than allowing substandard areas to "slip in."<sup>194</sup>

It must be noted that criticism by the National Parks Association and others did not focus on any perceived need for greater research or for ecologically oriented management of natural resources. Rather, it centered on the amount of tourism development being allowed in the national parks and was thus focused on protection of the parks' roadless areas from development. Both Newton Drury's belief that the Service was becoming a "Super-Department of Recreation" and the National Parks Association's proposal for a primeval park system with only pristine parks being added stemmed from apprehension over excessive park development and the kinds of parks being brought into the system. Once an area was placed under the Service's administration, the specifics of its management of nature—the treatment of elk, fish, forests and the like—was not at issue. By implication then, where no development problems existed the parks were satisfactorily managed. Expressed largely in terms of opposition to various kinds of development, the critics' desire to protect both the parks and the system went against the tide of Park Service recreational growth and expansion under the New Deal. In the end this opposition had very little effect.

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<sup>193</sup> Watkins, *Righteous Pilgrim*, 554-555; Horace M. Albright, comments in *American Planning and Civic Annual* (1938), 31-32.

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<sup>194</sup> Harold L. Ickes to William P. Wharton, 2 May 1939; and William P. Wharton to Harold Ickes, 10 April 1939, Kent Papers. George M. Wright, "The Philosophy of Standards for National Parks, *American Planning and Civic Annual* (1936), 25.

## Declining Influence of the Wildlife Biologists

Writing to George Wright in the spring of 1935 on the need for highly qualified scientists in the parks, Joseph Grinnell stated "quite precisely" his high aspirations for the Park Service's biological programs. Grinnell believed that the country's "supreme 'hope' for pure, uncontaminated wildlife conservation" was the National Park Service, "under its Wildlife Division."<sup>196</sup> A year later the division had reached its maximum of 27 biologist—but Wright, its founder and chief, was dead. It is difficult to trace all of the reasons for the decline of the wildlife programs in subsequent years, but the loss of Wright's leadership clearly contributed to the decline.

Much later, Lowell Sumner recalled that among the biologists only Wright had the special ability to "placate and win over" those in the Park Service who increasingly believed "that biologists were impractical, were unaware that 'parks are for people,' and were a hindrance to large scale plans for park development." Wright had been able to exert a "reassuring influence at the top, [keeping] hostility to the ecological approach...muted." Writing Grinnell in the fall of 1936, Ben Thompson noted the frequently adversarial role of the biologists, with their negative "I protest" attitudes, which Wright had diverted and diplomatically finessed into "positive acts of conservation." Thompson stated that Wright had succeeded in establishing a division to "protect wildlife in the parks and make the Service conscious of those values." But the "immediate job" after Wright's death had been to keep the wildlife biologists

from "being swallowed...by another unit of the Service."<sup>196</sup>

These remarks indicated the vulnerability of the Wildlife Division. And by August of 1938, while forestry, landscape architecture, planning and other programs flourished within the Park Service, the number of biologists had dwindled to ten, with six of the positions funded by the CCC and only four funded from regular appropriations. The overall total was reduced to nine by 1939, as the transfer of the biologists to the Bureau of Biological Survey approached.<sup>197</sup> The transfer came not through any Park Service intention, but as result of a broader scheme—the compromises made when President Roosevelt rejected Secretary Ickes' attempt to transform the Interior Department into a "Department of Conservation." Ickes had also eagerly sought, but failed, to have the Forest Service moved from the Department of Agriculture to his proposed new Conservation Department. Instead he got the Biological Survey placed in Interior. Soon after (and apparently without Park Service protest) he brought all of the Interior Department's wildlife research functions into the Biological Survey, transferring the Park Service's biologists to the Survey's newly created Office of National Park Wildlife. While biologists located in the parks retained their duty stations, they nevertheless had become part of another bureau.<sup>198</sup>

Like the national park system, the Biological Survey's wildlife refuge system had expanded greatly during the 1930s.

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<sup>196</sup> Sumner, "Biological Research and Management," 15. Ben H. Thompson to Joseph Grinnell, 9 November 1936, Ben H. Thompson file, MVZ-UC. Thompson did not identify the unit interested in absorbing the wildlife biologists.

<sup>197</sup> A.E. Demaray to the Acting Secretary, Department of the Interior, 30 August 1938, Central Classified File, RG79; Sumner, "Biological Research and Management," 15.

<sup>198</sup> Watkins, *Righteous Pilgrim*, 587-590; National Park Service "A Review of the Year," 34.

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<sup>195</sup> Joseph Grinnell to George M. Wright, 16 April 1935, George M. Wright files, MVZ-UC.

The refuges in effect served as “game farms,” which, along with aggressive predator control, augmented the Survey’s efforts to assure an abundance of game for hunters. Thus the Survey’s management practices differed critically from those advocated by the biologists who transferred from the National Park Service. In June 1939, about six months before the transfer, Ben Thompson wrote E. Raymond Hall, Joseph Grinnell’s successor at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, asserting that the Survey had “never liked the existence of the NPS wildlife division.”<sup>199</sup> Thompson did not explain the cause of the dislike, but differences in management philosophies and policies, plus growth of the Park Service’s own biological expertise under George Wright (which very likely diminished the Biological Survey’s involvement in national park programs), probably had caused tension between the Survey and the Wildlife Division.

Aware of the policy differences, in late 1939, Park Service director Cammerer and the Biological Survey’s chief, Ira N. Gabrielson, signed an agreement whereby the national parks would be managed under their “specific, distinctive principles” by continuing the Service’s established wildlife management policies. The agreement spelled out the policies, using most of the recommendations included in Fauna No. 1.<sup>200</sup> Nevertheless, as Lowell Sumner later observed, the transfer weakened the biologists’ influence in the Park Service. To whatever degree the scientists had been considered part of the Park Service “family and programs,” Sumner wrote, “such feelings were diluted by this involuntary transfer to another

agency.”<sup>201</sup> Although the biologists were returned to the Service following World War II, it would still be almost another two decades before scientific resource management in the national parks would experience any kind of resurgence.

### Retrospective

Viewed within the context of the New Deal, the National Park Service’s declining interest in ecological management becomes comprehensible. The New Deal changed the Park Service fundamentally by emphasizing—and especially, funding—the recreational aspects of the Service’s original mandate. The Park Service, which under Mather had stressed development of the national parks for public access and enjoyment, used the recreational and public use aspects of its mandate as a springboard during the New Deal, justifying involvement in ever-expanding programs. And the emergency relief funds appropriated by Congress during the Roosevelt administration enlarged the breadth and scope of Park Service programs to a degree undreamed of during Mather’s time. In such circumstances the Service continued to respond to its traditional utilitarian impulses, influenced by what its leadership wanted and by its perception of what Congress and the public intended the national park system and the Service itself to be.

Even the Park Service’s first official natural resource management policies did not move national park management far from its utilitarian base. The forestry and fish management policies allowed continued manipulation of natural resources, largely as a means to assure public enjoyment and appreciation of nature in the parks. The policy on predatory animals, issued by Albright in 1931, contained sufficient qualifications

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<sup>199</sup> Ben H. Thompson to E. Raymond Hall, 13 June 1939, handwritten, Ben H. Thompson files, MVZUC.

<sup>200</sup> Arno B. Cammerer and Ira H. Gabrielson, Memorandum for the Secretary of the Interior, 24 November 1939, Central Classified File, RG79.

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<sup>201</sup> Sumner, “Biological Research and Management,” 15.

to permit continued control. Yet, even easing up on control met with resistance, including that of Albright himself, who feared the parks' popular game species were threatened by predators. Moreover, the Service's commitment to strict preservation through the research reserve program was never fulfilled. Almost alone among national park policy statements, Fauna No 1's wildlife management recommendations, with the expressed intent of preserving "flora and fauna in the primitive state," encouraged an ecological orientation in the Park Service. Yet the ecological attitudes that did emerge were inspired by the wildlife biologists, who failed to gain a commanding voice in national park management.

It is significant that during the 1930s no public organizations adamantly demanded scientific management of the parks' natural resources. Pressure from the Boone and Crockett Club, the American Society of Mammalogists, and other organizations which helped bring about the 1931 predator control policies seems to have been focused on that issue alone. It also seems to have subsided following promulgation of the predator policies. Likely, the National Parks Association's urging that the parks not be overdeveloped constituted the chief criticism faced by Park Service management during the decade. Without a vocal public constituency specifically concerned about natural resource management issues, the wildlife biologists were alone in their efforts to influence natural resource management. For what support they did get, the biologists had to rely on shifting alliances within the Park Service, depending on the issue at hand. In this regard, the 1930s would differ markedly from the 1960s and 1970s, when influential environmental organizations backed by increasing public understanding of ecological matters would

bring strong outside pressure on national park management.

While the number of wildlife biologists dwindled during the last half of the 1930s, the National Park Service's growth and expansion greatly enhanced the influence of professions like landscape architecture and forestry—and led to the ascendancy of landscape architect Conrad Wirth as a major voice in national park affairs. After waiting in the wings during the administration of Newton Drury, Wirth would become director in December 1951. And the next great era of park construction and development would begin in the mid-1950s with Wirth's "Mission 66" program. Beyond construction and development, Mission 66 would include extensive planning for new parks—yet it would provide almost no support for scientific resource management. The efforts of George Wright and his fellow wildlife biologists seemed to have come to naught. Only with the rising conservation movement of the late 1950s and the 1960s—which would sharply criticize Park Service management and Mission 66 in particular—would the wildlife biologists' vision of the national parks re-emerge, to become in time a significant aspect of national park management.

Finally, it must be said that, unlike attitudes of the landscape architects or foresters, the wildlife biologists' vision of national park management was truly revolutionary. The biologists were insurgents in a tradition-bound realm. They would leave in a natural state the windfalls of Andrews Bald in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the blackened and dead timber of Glacier's McDonald Creek area, the native insects that killed green forests, and the predators that fed on popular wildlife species. For the most part, they would accept that sometimes "nature goes to extremes

if left alone" (to use the words of Park Service forester Lawrence Cook).

Much more than that of their contemporaries in the Park Service, the biologists' vision penetrated beyond the parks' scenic facades to comprehend and appreciate the significance of the complex natural world. This vision found clear expression in *Fauna No. 1*, the report that had helped launch National Park Service biology programs in the early 1930s. The authors of that document (George Wright, Joseph Dixon, and Ben Thompson) had written that the nation's heritage was:

richer than just scenic features; the realization is coming that perhaps our greatest national heritage is nature itself, with all its complexity and its abundance of life, which, when combined with great scenic beauty as it is in the national parks, becomes of unlimited value.

"This," they concluded, "is what we would attain in the national parks."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Wright, Dixon, and Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks* (1933), 38.

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### Abbreviations Used in the Footnotes

#### **BL**

Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley

#### **GRSM**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives

#### **Hartzog Papers**

George B. Hartzog Papers, Clemson University

#### **HFLA**

Harpers Ferry Library and Archives, National Park Service

#### **Kent Papers**

William Kent Papers, Yale University Library

#### **Leopold Papers**

A. Starker Leopold Papers, Department of Forestry and Resource Management, University of California at Berkeley

#### **MVZ-UC**

Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California at Berkeley

#### **RG79**

Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service, National Archives

#### **YELL**

Yellowstone National Park Archives

#### **YOSE**

Yosemite National Park Archives

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### End

*This is the third and final installment of a three-part series, excerpted from Richard West Sellars' forthcoming history of natural resources management in the U.S. national parks.*

