

Beyond Wilderness:  
The Changing Politics of National Park Creation, 1960 - 1990

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**Abstract**

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In the second half of the twentieth century, the United States national park system underwent a dramatic transformation. Between 1960 and 1990, dozens of sites in or near the nation's cities came under National Park Service (NPS) administration, upending the agency's longstanding reputation as an entity primarily dedicated to overseeing public lands in the rural West. In a number of these locations, residents, workers, and others with enduring connections to the landscape retained the ability to live, labor, and own property within park boundaries. This was a remarkable change in park planning and management given the longstanding commitment of the NPS to prioritizing the experiences of tourists and other short-term visitors

This dissertation details the evolution of NPS conservation practice by examining the politics of park designation in multiple locations across a thirty-year period. It begins shortly after World War II, highlighting the growing significance of outdoor recreation in

federal policy. It then addresses the creation of several new types of parks situated near metropolitan areas, including national seashores and lakeshores and national reserves. It also examines controversies over various NPS urban initiatives before concluding with an assessment of public / private partnerships during the early years of the Reagan administration, in particular state and national heritage parks, corridors, and areas.

The central argument of this work is that after 1960 the National Park Service, to a great extent, lost the authority it had once enjoyed over management of its sites and programs. It was this diminution in control that allowed for an unprecedented innovation in approaches to park formation. Beginning in the 1960s, a wide variety of stakeholders, ranging from members of Congress to national nonprofit organizations, local community groups, and even individuals, began to regularly question NPS decision-making. New laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, gave those outside the agency greater opportunity to affect park creation. I analyze the actions taken by these diverse actors in the context of urban, suburban, and exurban park sites, highlighting the contribution to conservation history of these understudied sources. A key finding of the dissertation is that economic change played a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of NPS action. Shifts in modes of production and in the distribution of capital directly affected the scale, scope, and purpose of national park development in the latter half of the twentieth century, whether in regions devastated by the loss of industrial jobs or in once rural areas remade by unrestrained growth.

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My parents and brother have loved and guided me for going on 38 years now. Mom and dad reviewed every chapter of this dissertation and commented with both stylistic and content suggestions. They encouraged a love of history and learning from a young age. Humoring me when I demanded to visit National Park Service sites as a pre-teen. My brother Charlie is a fellow academic. I have been following in his footsteps since day one. His keen intellect and his even keener sense of humor keep me on my toes.

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## Introduction

### “Let’s Not Trade Yosemite for a Marina”

The year 2009 promised to be exciting for the National Park Service (NPS). That fall, the acclaimed filmmakers Ken Burns and Duncan Dayton planned to release a six-part documentary chronicling the history of national parks in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Set to air on PBS stations nationwide, the program would tell the full story of “America’s Best Idea” in twelve hours time, beginning with the mid-nineteenth century creation of Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks and continuing through the last decades of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Hoping to capitalize on the attendant publicity, NPS sites across the country offered numerous tie-in events, ranging from free screenings to concerts and lectures.<sup>3</sup> The agency even named Burns and Duncan “honorary rangers” during a ceremony at the Department of the Interior, awarding them iconic “flat hats” in recognition of their achievement.<sup>4</sup>

In reality though, despite its purported breadth, the documentary’s scope was far from comprehensive.<sup>5</sup> Five of its six episodes focused principally on the years before World War II. In

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most confusing aspects of the national park system is its nomenclature. At present (July 2018), there are 417 official units in the system, of which 60 bear the title “national park.” The other 357 have a variety of designations, including national seashore, national battlefield and national historical park. These sites are just as much a part of the national park system as the national parks, but often get ignored or forgotten in discussions regarding the NPS. In this dissertation, I use the term “unit,” which is what the NPS itself uses and the word “site” interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase “America’s Best Idea” comes from a 1983 article published by writer and historian Wallace Stegner entitled “The Best Idea We Ever Had.” I have not been able to find that phrase in the text, however, though it is often cited as such, followed by the lines (which are in the text): “Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.” Wallace Stegner, “The Best Idea We Ever Had,” *Wilderness* (Spring 1983): 4. In a somewhat ironic twist, early critics of national parks often charged them as being undemocratic – enclaves for the wealthy since elites were able to access the sites. See H. Duane Hampton, “Opposition to National Parks,” *Journal of Forest History* 25, no. 1 (January 1981): 36 – 45.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Jensen, “Ken Burns, the Voice of the Wilderness,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2009, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>4</sup> National Park Service, “Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan Named Honorary Park Rangers,” National Park Service Press Release, March 16, 2009, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/release.htm?id=856>.

<sup>5</sup> Historian Edward Linenthal, who has often written on the national park system, was also critical of the limited number of sites highlighted by Burns and Duncan. His critique, while trenchant, did not address the lack of an urban emphasis in depth. Instead, it focused on the absence of historic sites, in general, from the narrative. For

addition, the final 2-hour segment devoted much of its time to a discussion of the fifties and early sixties. It paid little attention to the agency's rapid expansion from 1965 to 1980 or to the subsequent growth in partnership endeavors such as the national heritage areas program.<sup>6</sup> Urban and suburban parks received scant mention, with more consideration given to the Park Service's role in Alaska than to its influence on dozens of American cities and towns. After watching the series, a viewer would likely be surprised to learn that the NPS maintains a significant presence in many major cities. In fact, fully one-third of NPS sites are located in urban centers. Even more perplexing would be the revelation that thousands of residents live within the boundaries of park units. The image presented by Burns and Duncan is largely one of unpeopled landscapes, places where, in Burns's words, one might go "to find God, or to find peace, or to find quiet, or to find tranquility, or to find just the possibility that is present in silence."<sup>7</sup>

The limited temporal and thematic focus of the 2009 National Parks documentary was disappointing for those hoping to see a more inclusive portrait of the National Park Service and its (at the time) 392 sites. Consternation was especially strong among current and former NPS employees who had worked at locations ignored by the production. One retired park superintendent made a public presentation to a community organization entitled simply "What Ken Burns Left Out."<sup>8</sup> Another wrote that Burns and Duncan "missed an opportunity to widen their lens" by failing to highlight the full breadth of Park Service responsibilities.<sup>9</sup>

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more see, Edward T. Linenthal, "Ken Burns's The National Parks: America's Best Idea: Compelling Stories and Missed Opportunities," *The Public Historian* 33, no. 2 (2011): 13-18.

<sup>6</sup> National heritage areas (also sometimes called national heritage corridors) are partnership initiatives. Designated by Congress, the National Park Service is the key federal entity involved. NPS provides limited funding and technical support for planning, interpretation, preservation and other activities, but is not the manager of the project. Between 1984 and 2018, Congress designated 49 national heritage areas. For more on the program, see chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ken Burns, interview with Tracy Ross, *Backpacker Magazine*, May 2009, video, <https://www.backpacker.com/videos-photos/the-backpacker-interview-ken-burns>.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Rick Smith, a former superintendent of Carlsbad Caverns National Park, wrote a blog post on the website, *National Parks Traveler*, detailing all the areas Burns and Duncan ignored. *National Parks Traveler*

Burns and Duncan are not alone in downplaying the significance of the Park Service's post World War II history. Academic historians, with a few notable exceptions, have also devoted relatively little energy to examining the management of National Park Service lands in the years after 1945.<sup>10</sup> This stands in contrast to the rich and complex historiography that addresses other aspects of American environmental history during the late twentieth century, which includes a growing number of studies on topics as varied as regulation and the state, health and the body, and environmental justice, to name only a few subsets.<sup>11</sup>

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has a popular following among current and former NPS staff, including rangers, who shared their views in the comments. Rick Smith, "What Ken Burns Left Out," *National Parks Traveler*, January 10, 2010, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2010/01/what-ken-burns-left-out5195>.

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Rolf Diamant, the former superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Site, critiqued the narrow focus of the documentary. Rolf Diamant, "When Will We Really Have a System of National Parks?" *The George Wright Forum* 31, no. 3 (2014): 238.

<sup>10</sup> Important exceptions to this trend (by historians) include the following works: James Feldman, *A Storied Wilderness: Rewilding the Apostle Islands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Kathy Mengak, *Reshaping Our National Parks and Their Guardians The Legacy of George B. Hartzog Jr.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012); Hal Rothman, *The New Urban Park: Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Civic Environmentalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004); and Laura Alice Watt, *The Paradox of Preservation: Wilderness and Working Landscapes at Point Reyes National Seashore* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017). Historical works from scholars representing different disciplinary perspectives include: Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1984); and Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Works examining the emergence of an environmental regulatory state include: Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Karl Boyd Brooks, *Before Earth Day: The Origins of American Environmental Law, 1945–1970* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Arthur F. McEvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Paul Charles Milazzo, *Unlikely Environmentalists: Congress and Clean Water, 1945–1972* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006); and Adam Rome, "What Really Matters in History: Environmental Perspectives on Modern America," *Environmental History* 7, no. 2 (April 2002): 303–18. Significant works examining health and the body include: Gregg Mitman, *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Nancy Langston, *Toxic Bodies: Endocrine Disruptors and the Legacy of DES* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); and Pete Daniel, *Toxic Drift: Pesticides and Health in the Post–World War II South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007). On environmental justice see: Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Elizabeth D. Blum, *Love Canal Revisited: Race, Class, and Gender in Environmental Activism* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008); and Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993).

Thus, while environmental history as a whole has flourished over the past several decades, writing and research on the National Park Service, land use in park sites, and agency partnership programs has remained relatively static. Most texts still focus (as Burns and Duncan did) on a few so-called “crown jewels,” such as Yosemite or the Grand Canyon, created during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>12</sup> Debate over the ideological meaning and practical implications of wilderness designation also continues to loom large in popular and academic publications, eclipsing the limited research that exists on other facets of post-1945 conservation practice. Far more attention is given to the 1964 Wilderness Act than to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a program launched at the same time, but aimed, in large part, at meeting the needs of metropolitan areas.<sup>13</sup> Analysis of the NPS role in major cities remains sparse, with only a handful of texts dedicated to the agency’s involvement in some of the country’s most densely populated regions.<sup>14</sup> Among historians who study the history of public lands in the United States, the analysis of alternative forms of protected area management is also limited, with modest consideration given to the growing number of Park Service units formed in whole or in part from private property.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Examining early Park Service history, of course, remains an important endeavor. This is especially true as it relates to questions of Indigenous claims to land, water, and material culture items housed in NPS museums.

<sup>13</sup> Created in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) uses earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to provide monies to federal, state, and local governments for the acquisition of land and water holdings. It also supports the purchase of easements on land and water holdings. For a history of the LWCF, see U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*, by Carol Hardy Vincent, RL33531 (2006), 1-14 and Robert L., Glicksman and George Cameron Coggins, "Federal Recreational Land Policy: The Rise and Decline of the Land and Water Conservation Fund," *Columbia Journal of Environmental Law* 9, no. 2 (1984): 125-236. One recent historical treatment of program origins is Sara Dant, "LBJ, Wilderness, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund," *Environmental History* 19, no. 4 (2014): 736-43.

<sup>14</sup> One notable exception is Hal Rothman’s examination of Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the San Francisco Bay Area. Rothman, *The New Urban Park*. Surprisingly, no historian has yet tackled the history of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in metropolitan Los Angeles. Lowell National Historical Park, located in a smaller city, has also been studied. Perhaps because of its focus on labor history, scholars have been quite interested in examining its origins and interpretive focus. Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment* is an excellent introduction.

<sup>15</sup> This is not necessarily true of other disciplines. Planners and geographers have been more engaged in these questions. Notable works include: Ronald A. Foresta, *America’s National Parks and Their Keepers*

There thus exists a rather dramatic disconnect between the story of national parks currently told in the existing parks and conservation historiography and the reality of what NPS responsibilities actually entailed by the end of the twentieth century. My dissertation addresses this incongruity by telling the story of the at-times fitful, entirely political, and by no means completed transformation of the national park system and National Park Service in the decades after World War II. It explains how and why the NPS, an agency long associated with rural landscapes in the western U.S., became heavily involved in metropolitan areas – so much so that today the NPS has a presence in 40 of the country’s 50 biggest cities.

Particular attention is paid to the thirty-year period from 1960 to 1990, an era of unprecedented experimentation in the administration of parks and other protected areas, as well as in the development of environmental policy more generally. During these years, for example, Congress designated parts of New York City and San Francisco as national recreation areas; several northeast mill towns became state and federal parks; and over a million acres of mostly private land in the southern New Jersey Pine Barrens came under the cooperative management of a state and federal commission. Longstanding notions of public good and private property were seemingly in flux, upset by rapid swings in economic power and by changing understandings of nature and culture. The authority once wielded by federal agencies, like the NPS, increasingly came under scrutiny, with voices from outside gaining in influence. Environmental historian Hal

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(Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1984); Robert J. Mason, *Contested Lands: Conflict and Compromise in New Jersey's Pine Barrens* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Robert J. Mason, "The Greenlining of America: Managing Private Lands for Public Purposes," *Land Use Policy* 11, no. 3 (1994): 208-21; and Ervin H. Zube, "Greenways and the US National Park System," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 33, no. 1 (1995): 17-25. Historian Carl Abbott has co-authored a book on the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, but has many similarities with non-traditional National Park Service units. Carl Abbott, Margery Post Abbott, and Sy Adler, *Planning a New West: The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1997)

Rothman has commented on how this phenomenon affected all public lands managers, calling it the “end of federal hegemony.”<sup>16</sup>

The postwar era in park creation might thus rightly be termed a near revolution in public lands administration. In the century since Abraham Lincoln first set aside land in the Yosemite Valley for “public use, resort, and recreation,” the management of national park sites had remained overwhelmingly top-down and visitor-centric.<sup>17</sup> Those in charge of the parks catered largely to the desires of middle and upper class tourists, with little regard given to the wants or needs of most other stakeholders. Native peoples were not only forcibly removed from within park boundaries, they were also denied an opportunity to continue long-standing uses, including agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering of food, and ceremonies. These federal policies, it should be noted, continued to persist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> In a smaller number of cases, non-Native residents were also expelled as part of the park creation process. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, the state governments of North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee carried out hundreds of bitter evictions to pave the way for the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Parks.<sup>19</sup> People, it seemed, were not at all compatible with parks.

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<sup>16</sup> Hal Rothman, "The End of Federal Hegemony: The Wilderness Act and Federal Land Management on the Pajarito Plateau, 1955-1980," *Environmental History Review* 16, no. 2 (1992): 41-59.

<sup>17</sup> “Yosemite Act, 1864,” in *America’s National Parks: The Critical Documents*, ed. Lary M. Dilsaver, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the forced removal and subsequent erasure of Indigenous peoples from national parks see: Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians & National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998); and Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). In 1996, a coalition of Native peoples formed the The Alliance to Protect Native Rights in National Parks as a response to past and present NPS behavior. One member of the coalition, the Timbisha Shoshone filed suit to change Park Service policy in Death Valley National Park – in 2000, NPS acceded to most of the Timbisha Shoshone demands. See Mark Miller, "The Timbisha Shoshone and the National Park Idea: Building toward Accommodation and Acknowledgment at Death Valley National Park, 1933-2000," *Journal of the Southwest* 50, no. 4 (2008): 415-45.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the forced evictions in the Smoky Mountains see: Dan Pierce "The Barbarism of the Huns: Family and Community Removal in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (1998): 62-79. A similar process took place in Virginia during the creation of

These patterns began to change after 1945, as a confluence of factors led to a radical re-imagining of the scope and purpose of the NPS. In the immediate postwar period, the agency found itself and its lands in sorry shape, owing to chronic underfunding by a government whose priorities were elsewhere. Visitation boomed during the late 1940s and early 1950s, but appropriations remained flat. Between 1951 and 1956, for example, the number of visits rose from 37 million to almost 55 million, an increase of just under 50 percent, with no commensurate growth in funding.<sup>20</sup> As a result, conditions inside park units declined rapidly. Roads had potholes, campgrounds were overcrowded, and bathrooms needed cleaning. In some cases, vandalism and the theft of historic objects even occurred as a consequence of understaffing.<sup>21</sup>

The deterioration did not go unnoticed. Major magazines and newspapers published exposes. These featured sensational titles such as “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks.”<sup>22</sup> NPS Director Newton B. Drury, who headed the agency from 1940 to 1951, also spoke out publicly on the issue, penning an article for *American Forests* magazine that highlighted the poor conditions.<sup>23</sup> He called on Congress and the Executive to increase appropriations, but his appeals went largely unanswered.

Drury’s successor as director, Conrad L. Wirth, would prove more adept at securing funds for the agency. A Park Service veteran with over two decades of experience in the Washington, DC office, Wirth had impressive connections on Capitol Hill. He also had a passion for promoting public access to national park sites, and hoped to greatly expand the acreage under agency management. In order to do this, however, Wirth first had to figure out a way to increase

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Shenandoah National Park. For more information, see: Justin Reich, "Re-Creating the Wilderness: Shaping Narratives and Landscapes in Shenandoah National Park," *Environmental History* 6, no. 1 (2001): 95-117.

<sup>20</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1961), 534.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” *Readers Digest*, January 1955, 45-50.

<sup>23</sup> Newton B. Drury, “The Dilemma of Our Parks,” *American Forests* 55, no. 6 (June 1949): 6-11, 38 – 39.

appropriations. In a move that demonstrated his political know-how, the NPS leader made an ambitious proposal to President Eisenhower in January 1956. It called for tens of millions of dollars in new funding for parks over a 10-year period, with a majority of the monies directed towards infrastructure such as roads and visitor centers. Calling the effort Mission 66, Wirth highlighted its practical and patriotic import. “To put the National Parks in shape is an investment in the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of Americans as individuals,” he explained to the President and members of his cabinet. “It is a gainful investment contributing substantially to the national economy...it is an investment in good citizenship.”<sup>24</sup>

Wirth’s pitch was successful. The Eisenhower administration forwarded a request to Congress for \$66 million in funds for 1957, a roughly 40 percent bump from the previous year.<sup>25</sup> Over the next decade, more than \$1 billion would be spent on the national park system. This impressive sum addressed much of the physical deterioration that had occurred since 1941.

Yet, as this study will show, the motivations driving Wirth and many other park supporters extended far beyond the rehabilitation of existing sites. By the mid-1950s, the United States was in the midst of a rapid social, cultural, and economic transformation. Buoyed by a roaring postwar economy, many (though far from all) Americans now had the resources to buy homes, cars, and all manner of consumer goods. They also enjoyed more vacation and leisure time, a prime factor driving the growth in park visitation.

The nation’s newfound affluence, however, provoked serious apprehension within conservation circles. Overuse of parks, as noted earlier, was a major concern, but so too was the

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<sup>24</sup> The text of his speech is from “Mission 66 Special Presentation to President Eisenhower and the Cabinet by Director Conrad Wirth,” in *America’s National Parks: The Critical Documents*, ed. Lary M. Dilsaver, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 169 – 173.

<sup>25</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 116; Wirth, *Parks, Politics and the People*, 260 – 261. In his autobiography, Wirth notes that the first big increase in funding actually came in 1956. That year, Congress allocated \$17 million in anticipation of Mission 66. (262)

destruction of scenic and historic landscapes not yet covered by any official protections. Wirth and others in the NPS were especially worried about shoreline areas. Since at least the 1930s, the agency had sought to add a number of coastal zones to its portfolio. Support for the idea grew during the New Deal, but then petered out following Pearl Harbor. Now though, the rapid privatization and subsequent development of beaches gave new impetus to the decades' old plan. Wirth worked with private donors to underwrite surveys of the country's coastline. These reports focused on identifying those places still suitable for potential park designation. The result would be a series of detailed studies featuring information on the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf Coast, and Great Lakes shorelines.

In large part as a consequence of these publications, Congress designated thirteen new national seashores and lakeshores between 1961 and 1975. The decision to take action on the issue can be tied to the recreation boom of the fifties as well as mounting unease regarding the effects of rampant growth on the environment. Though not yet a full-fledged movement, pockets of resistance to the rate, scale, and type of industrial and residential development then occurring in the United States played a critical role in generating support for the protection of open space (including shoreline) among federal officials, environmental organizations, members of Congress, and segments of the general public.<sup>26</sup>

By contrast, residents and landowners in potentially affected communities were not always as convinced of the need for NPS intervention. They pushed back, often quite vigorously,

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<sup>26</sup> Historian Adam Rome explores the roots of the open space conservation in suburban areas in the article "William Whyte, Open Space, and Environmental Activism," *Geographical Review* 88, no. 2 (1998): 259 – 274. For more on the history of open space preservation in various contexts, see: Christopher C. Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible : Suburban Nature and the Rise of Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Daniel Press, *Saving Open Space: The Politics of Local Preservation in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Richard A. Walker, *The Country in the City: The Greening of the San Francisco Bay Area* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); and David N. Bengston, Jennifer O. Fletcher, and Kristen C. Nelson, "Public Policies for Managing Urban Growth and Protecting Open Space: Policy Instruments and Lessons Learned in the United State,." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 69, no. 2-3 (2004): 271-286.

against the Park Service, which many viewed as an existential threat to the continued ability to live and work in coastal settings.<sup>27</sup> For their part, agency officials recognized these qualms as having merit, yet nonetheless advocated for federal action, believing that their activities were justified as a means to protect public access and prevent further environmental degradation. In a 1959 article he penned describing the ongoing debate over the potential creation of Cape Cod National Seashore, Wirth commented that the pressures of the “march of progress,” were simply “too powerful for purely local measures to cope with successfully.”<sup>28</sup> Yes, some Americans would have to “make sacrifices,” but these would be in the name of a greater good – one determined by NPS experts.<sup>29</sup>

As I argue, the tensions between (and among) residents, landowners, community groups, national environmental organizations, federal elected officials, and NPS staff and leadership would become one of the defining features of Park Service history after World War II. This study makes an important intervention in examining these at-times discordant relationships through its analysis of multiple sites situated across space, time, and geography. It examines cases, including national seashores and lakeshores, where the NPS initiated involvement as well as other instances, such as national reserves, urban parks, and heritage corridors where local organizing precipitated federal intervention.

The dissertation shows that the NPS was usually a reluctant participant when it came to sharing managerial authority at its own sites, but, over time, became more open to partnerships,

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<sup>27</sup> Studies that examine the push and pull over seashore and lakeshore designations include: Feldman, *A Storied Landscape*; Brian C. Kalt, *Sixties Sandstorm: The Fight Over Establishment of a Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 1961-1970* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001); Theodore Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore: The Creation and Administration of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2000); Jacqueline A. Mirandola Mullen, “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation: How Postwar Politics and Urban Growth Shaped America’s Shores,” (PhD diss., University at Albany, State University of New York, 2015); and Watt, *The Paradox of Preservation*.

<sup>28</sup> Conrad L. Wirth, “Birth Throes of a National Park,” *Think Magazine*, June 1959, 28, 29.

especially when it involved lands not directly under agency purview. This was particularly true during the administration of Ronald Reagan, when budget cuts, coupled with a hostility to regulation, made cooperation even more essential. Understanding how, when, and why collaboration is possible between federal agencies and diverse outside interests is, I believe, essential to planning and executing conservation and preservation projects in an increasingly complex world.

In highlighting the Park Service's interactions with various stakeholders I seek to better understand the give-and-take behind park creation. Though at times critical of NPS actions and priorities, I also acknowledge the importance of agency goals – namely the preservation of landscapes with historical, cultural, and ecological significance and the protection of ongoing public access to these same places. Balancing such aims with the needs and interests of local, regional, and national groups has been a complex and difficult task – one that this study will hopefully render more achievable in the future.

In addition to the burgeoning role of non-NPS voices in the park planning process, the new national seashores and lakeshores were significant for two other reasons. First, their locations – many were situated in or within east driving distance of large metropolitan areas. Second, in some cases, residents and landowners were allowed to continue living and working within park boundaries. Prior to the sixties, most parks, with the exception of smaller, historical sites, had been situated far from population centers. However, under Wirth and his successor, George Hartzog, Jr., the NPS prioritized public access and recreation, primarily through the creation of new park units near cities. However, they faced a conundrum in how to accomplish their aims – most urban and suburban lands were already in private hands, with homes,

businesses, schools, roads, and other development in plain view. Could a park even “be made” from such a setting?

The NPS ultimately answered this question at the first postwar seashore park, which was located on Cape Cod. Using an innovative approach now known as the “Cape Cod formula,” the agency relied primarily on a mix of local zoning and purchase from willing sellers to achieve its conservation goals. This meant that, in many cases, residents and landowners could remain within park boundaries, provided they followed certain regulations approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

The model developed for Cape Cod appeared to signal a willingness on the part of the NPS to modify its longstanding commitment to keeping landscapes free from ongoing human use and habitation, save for visitors and staff.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, however, this was not the case. To a great extent, most of the subsequent national seashore and lakeshore designations adhered to the agency’s more traditional approach to resource management.

The sixties and early seventies were a heyday for park funding and NPS expansion. Between 1960 and 1973, the number of park sites grew from 187 to 298. Annual appropriations increased over the same time period from \$79,682,000 to \$221,748,000. Moreover, the agency received another \$440 million, largely for land acquisition, from the newly created Land and Water Conservation Fund.<sup>31</sup> Conservation, in general, was a top national priority for both parties, as the environmental movement gained in prominence. Paradoxically perhaps, activists’ emphases on a broader range of issues than those traditionally pursued by park advocates posed

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<sup>30</sup> In her book *The Paradox of Preservation*, historian Laura Watt offers a detailed analysis of how “preservation” in the context of national parks came to be so closely linked with 1) the removal of people and 2) the erasure of their acknowledged influence on a landscape. See p. 33-35, 54 – 61.

<sup>31</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 260 - 261.

challenges for the NPS.<sup>32</sup> Scholars have focused attention on how new understandings of ecology, for example, called into question Park Service approaches to managing flora and fauna at its sites.<sup>33</sup> My work highlights another issue that arose for the NPS as a result of the 1970s environmental movement - land use control and zoning.

In many ways, this was an extension of the Cape Cod experiment. Only now, the federal and state regulatory environment had changed dramatically. Passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1970 as well as enactment of legislation addressing historic resources, especially the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), offered new tools for protecting threatened landscapes. In addition, an expansion in zoning laws and other land use restrictions, once under the almost exclusive purview of local governments, had begun to garner support at the state and even federal levels, offering additional means to affect development patterns.<sup>34</sup>

As a result of these shifts, the Park Service faced growing resistance to its preference for static, de-populated sites. Other models now existed, communities and a growing chorus of politicians argued, why not embrace them? Not only did they generate less opposition (though, of course, there still was hostility), they were also often cheaper to administer.

This new approach to conservation was called “green-lining.” The term refers to the practice of drawing a green line on a map around an area of ecological or cultural significance

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<sup>32</sup> Foresta, *National Parks and their Keepers*, 65 – 74.

<sup>33</sup> Foresta, *National Parks and their Keepers*, 67 – 74 and 96 – 127; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997)

<sup>34</sup> These sentiments coalesced in the (ultimately failed) drive to pass a National Land Use Law during the early 1970s. For more on that and related efforts, see: Frank Popper, *The Politics of Land Use Reform* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 17; Jayne E. Daly, "A Glimpse of the Past—A Vision for the Future: Senator Henry M. Jackson and National Land-Use Legislation," *The Urban Lawyer* (1996): 7-39; Jerold S. Kayden, "National Land-Use Planning in America: Something Whose Time has Never Come," *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy* 3 (2000): 445-472; John R Nolon, "The National Land Use Policy Act," *Pace Environmental Law Review* 13 (1995): 519-523.

without regard to title.<sup>35</sup> Land within the boundaries of a green-line park or area usually had mixed ownership, with local, state, federal, and private interests all involved. Different types of zoning or other regulations were typically the preferred means to control or limit development, rather than “fee-simple” purchase or condemnation.<sup>36</sup> A commission or board representing various stakeholders made management decisions. Tourism and visitation by non-residents represented only one of various land uses, with agriculture, aquaculture, logging, and even light industry also continuing. This model, with examples like the Pinelands National Reserve in New Jersey and Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve in Washington State, marked a distinct evolution even from the novel “formula” that had been developed for Cape Cod.

Some in the NPS were skeptical of the green-line approach. Unlike the national seashores and lakeshores, those few green-line parks that did eventually become part of the national park system often entered amid controversy. That some areas did gain designation as park units or affiliated areas reflects another important theme in my work – the growing power of Congress over the park creation process.

If local constituencies now had more of a say in how, when, and where the Park Service got involved, their influence was rivaled, if not exceeded, by federal elected officials. More and more, parks became a prize to be collected for one’s district, so much so that the term “park-

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<sup>35</sup> US Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Green-line Parks: An Approach to Preserving Recreational Landscapes in Urban Areas*, prepared by the Environment and Natural Resources Policy Division (written by Charles Little) printed at the request of J. Bennett Johnston, chairman, Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate (1975). The term “green-line” was likely termed by Charles Little, a land use and environmental policy expert who worked served as head of the Natural Resources Division of the Congressional Research Service in the 1970s and later edited an influential journal, *American Land Forum*. Little had been active in conservation since the early 1960s, serving as chief executive officer of The Open Space Institute and published its *Open Space Action Magazine*. Little derived the term green-line from the “blue line” that New York legislators famously drew around the area that would become the Adirondack Park in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For more on green-line parks, see Robert Mason, "The Greenlining of America: Managing Private Lands for Public Purposes," *Land Use Policy* 11, no. 3 (1994): 211-212.

<sup>36</sup> Fee-simple refers to land ownership without restrictions. By contrast, “less-than-fee” refers to the purchase of certain interests in a property, i.e. the right to sub-divide, develop, etc. For conservation purposes, less-than-fee usually means buying a conservation easement or placing some other limit on a parcel’s uses.

barrel” came into vogue.<sup>37</sup> The *Washington Post* noted in an otherwise favorable 1981 editorial on parks that “in recent sessions of Congress...members began to prefer parks to dams in their home districts.”<sup>38</sup> Representatives and Senators no longer deferred to agency expertise on designation as well as a host of other issues, including resource management and interpretation. Many postwar parks and affiliated areas were thus not bureaucratic creations of Park Service officials seeking to expand their influence – in fact, quite the opposite.<sup>39</sup> To a significant degree, I argue, the agency became just another stakeholder in park planning processes, with site after site established despite official NPS disapproval.<sup>40</sup>

If the environmental movement was one major factor contributing to the direction of NPS policy in the sixties and seventies, the nation’s economy was another major determinant. The funding boom of the Johnson and Nixon years came to an abrupt stop in 1973-1974. Fiscal woes, along with the austerity bent of the Ford administration, meant that monies for land acquisition, like that which occurred at new seashores, lakeshores, and recreation areas, would no longer be available. This reality forced some within the Park Service to accept the idea that the green-line model might have merit. It also, however, created tension regarding the agency’s involvement in urban areas. How could the NPS justify providing services in cities, when its “crown jewels” were also in need of resources? One former official commented at a national conference on

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<sup>37</sup> For example, when the House passed a massive NPS bill in 1978, the *Washington Post* entitled an article describing the legislation as “‘Park-Barrel Bill’ Clears House Panel.” Mary Russell, “‘Park-Barrel Bill’ Clears House Panel,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1978, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>38</sup> “Shaping Up the Park System,” Editorial, *Washington Post*, April 11, 1981, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>39</sup> Of course, this varied across the system. In *A Storied Wilderness*, his work on the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, James W. Feldman argues that the activities of a variety of local, state, and federal actors led to “the creation of legible landscapes to more easily control both humans and nature” (13). Analyzing the state’s involvement in conservation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is complex. Though it can be a destructive actor, it also represents an alternative to unbridled development and capital speculation.

<sup>40</sup> In his article on the history of opposition to park creation, H. Duane Hampton comments that one of the most tenacious foes to new national park creation has been the NPS itself. He provides an impressive list of many of the areas that the NPS has blocked over the years, quoting critics as calling it a “recalcitrant agency” during the Nixon-Ford era. In other words, the NPS was not always keen on expanding its footprint – growth often came from outside forces. Hampton, “Opposition to National Parks,” 41-43.

outdoor recreation that he did not want to “trade Yosemite for a marina.”<sup>41</sup> This debate over the proper role of the agency, always simmering, boiled over as a result of federal belt-tightening. For a period, it seemed that the Park Service might altogether abandon its newfound presence in population centers.

For insiders and outside alike, charting NPS decision-making during the seventies could be a confounding experience. Rapid changes in executive branch priorities led to frustration and uncertainty, especially in regard to metropolitan projects, with one Park Service leader remarking, “I’m not against urban parks...but what the hell is our policy?”<sup>42</sup> The unpredictability within NPS, I argue, is indicative of volatility within the federal government more generally. The progressive energy of the sixties did not simply disappear once Republicans came to power. Instead, as scholars documented in a variety of contexts, it took on new forms and foci, often moving to the local level as the preferred setting for action.<sup>43</sup> This was, in many ways, true for the Park Service. With national seashores and lakeshores, the agency had broadened its scope, but the initial impetus for the program came largely from career officials. Now, ideas for innovation in park management had their origins at the local level, with communities pushing the NPS to act rather than vice-versa.

The election of Jimmy Carter in November 1976 prevented the immediate termination of Johnson-era urban programs, but it did not eliminate internal tensions within the Park Service. Debates over the creation of a new national historical park in Lowell eventually came to embody

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<sup>41</sup> Quote is attributed to Lemuel “Lon” Garrison, a visiting professor of Parks and Recreation at Texas A&M University and former high-ranking NPS official. It was made at the Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation held in Reston, VA during the summer of 1975. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, National Park Service, *Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation* (Reston, VA: Government Printing Office, 1975), 6.

<sup>42</sup> “I’m not against urban parks...” is quoted in Everhart, *The National Park Service*, 71.

<sup>43</sup> Though his work does not address NPS conservation per se, Michael Foley’s research on local activism and activists during the 1970s is informative on this topic. Michael S. Foley, *Front Porch Politics: The Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970’s and 1980’s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).

much of the rancor regarding the proper geography of NPS involvement. As an economically struggling textile mill town in eastern Massachusetts, Lowell did not immediately strike many agency partisans as the best location to invest scarce federal resources. Yet, parts of the city's downtown and adjacent areas did gain Congressional designation as a park unit in 1978. Strong support at the local level, in concert with assistance from influential elected officials, allowed backers of the Lowell plan to overcome initial opposition from within the NPS.

The stories of working-class life told at Lowell were unique in the Park Service at that time, as was the public-private partnership model laid out in the park's authorizing legislation. The economic justifications for the site's creation were also – up to that point at least – rather exceptional. Though members of Congress downplayed the urban revitalization aspects of the bill in their final push for passage, there was no denying that major motivations for park creation included garnering federal investment and reviving the city's economy. The idea of national parks and the National Park Service as catalysts for economic development took hold more emphatically in the 1980s. However, the conservative shift in American politics would force other communities vying for NPS involvement to pursue a much different approach than that followed in Lowell. Instead of direct public investments, private monies would be more essential, with the NPS playing the role of partner and facilitator, rather than manager.

In 1984, Congress designated the first national heritage corridor in Illinois. That same year, the state of Pennsylvania published a wide-ranging report calling for the creation of a system of heritage parks to be established throughout the Commonwealth. These efforts, though at different levels of government, were closely connected. They reflected, I argue, a turning point for the Park Service as well as American conservation practice more generally. Scarce funds and hostility to regulation meant that the era of NPS growth initiated with Cape Cod National

Seashore had come to an end. 148 new sites had been created between 1960 and 1980 for a total of 334, with almost 80 million acres now in the system. Between 1981 and 1992, however, only 32 park units would be designated.<sup>44</sup> In fact, some officials within the Reagan and Bush administrations even wanted to abolish a number of existing sites, including several near urban areas.<sup>45</sup>

The new political reality meant that the scope of NPS involvement in new park projects would likely be far different than in previous decades. Federal ownership, in particular, seemed unlikely. In 1981, the Interior Department proposed a halt to almost all Park Service land acquisition. It also called for a substantial reduction in funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.<sup>46</sup> Though they broke new ground for the NPS in terms of management, national seashores, lakeshores, green-line parks, and urban sites all still required a substantial investment. Lowell, for example, had an initial authorization of over \$20 million – a number it had exceeded in less than two decades.<sup>47</sup> Many communities were still interested in some type of federal assistance however – they simply remained unsure as to its scope and form.

Two hallmarks of the rise of conservatism in late twentieth century America, austerity and an antipathy towards regulation, proved critical in launching the era of heritage corridors, parks, and areas in the early 1980s. My work makes this connection explicit in new ways, revealing just how closely heritage development was tied to the decade's changing politics. This

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<sup>44</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Park Statistical Abstract* (Denver: National Park Statistical Office, 1982) and Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 260 – 261.

<sup>45</sup> "Not Planning to Abolish Any Parks, Watt Says," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1981, Proquest Historical Newspapers; "Disposing of Federal Land Holdings Was One of Watt's Primary Goals," *Conservation Foundation Letter* (May 1982): 1-8; "Federal Land Sales Stir Up Turf Disputes," *Conservation Foundation Letter* (April 1982): 1-8;

<sup>46</sup> Seth S. King, "U.S. Help to States for Parks May End," *New York Times*, Feb 20, 1981, Proquest Historical Newspapers; Gladwin Hill, "The Interior Secretary Last Week Ended the Freeze on Land Acquisition," January 1, 1984, *New York Times*, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>47</sup> Michael deCoursey Hinds, As 'Steamtown' Grows, So Does Parks Debate," *New York Times*, November 23, 1991, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

it not to argue, by any means, that it was a product of conservative think tanks or ideologues. Rather, that the economic, cultural, and political conditions of the eighties created a particular policy making milieu in which heritage-oriented conservation could grow. Between 1984 and 2009, Congress authorized 49 national heritage corridors and areas in 32 states, with many additional regions still hoping to achieve congressional recognition in the near future.

The new heritage sites differed significantly from traditional NPS units. Firstly, they were not “officially” parks. They were partnership sites that sometimes had temporary NPS staffing, but no permanent or predictable funding in the agency’s budget.<sup>48</sup> Second, designation as a heritage area or corridor included no regulatory protections. It was an honorific that signaled a desire for local governments in a region to work cooperatively with one another as well as with non-profit organizations and other entities. Not surprisingly, this endeared the concept to many conservatives. In one early instance, for example, Ronald Reagan’s first Interior Secretary James Watt, a staunch opponent of most federal environmental initiatives, called the approach “daring and precedent setting.”<sup>49</sup> Finally, a majority of the new heritage parks and areas highlighted economic development as a reason for designation. Preservation, conservation, and recreation still mattered, especially to staff and local supporters, but encouraging investment and job growth were key elements of most heritage development initiatives and served as a crucial means to garner political support.

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<sup>48</sup> National Park Service involvement in each national heritage corridor or area varied tremendously. Much depended on the parameters laid out in authorizing legislation as well as the relationship with nearby park units. The first three national heritage corridors were all initially managed by federal commissions and had close working relationships with the NPS. Areas designated later were often managed by a nonprofit and did not have as consistent collaboration. For more on the history of National Heritage Areas, see: Brenda Barrett and Eleanor Mahoney, "National Heritage Areas: Learning from 30 Years of Working to Scale," *The George Wright Forum* 33, no. 2 (2016): 163-74.

<sup>49</sup> Watt quoted in Bob Wiedrich, “A National Park for Illinois,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 11, 1981, newspapers.com.

The history of U.S. National Parks and the National Park Service is frequently presented as a story of privilege and exclusivity, populated primarily by wealthy elites in search of a romanticized wilderness ideal. And, indeed, there has been and continues to be much truth to this account. Yet, other narratives also exist, cases where more varied constituencies came together and organized in an attempt to protect places of historic, cultural, and ecological significance. My dissertation calls attention to these efforts, which grew dramatically in both scope and number after World War II. It focuses on the designation and management of new national park units and partnership areas in metropolitan regions experiencing the effects of rapid investment and capital flight. These sites were neither nature preserves nor idyllic green spaces. Private property, including homes and businesses, comprised much of the land within their boundaries. Supporters did not emulate the wilderness ideal of John Muir, the resource management model of Gifford Pinchot, or even the progressive reform notions of Frederick Law Olmsted. Rather, they sought, but did not always realize, new paradigms, grounded in evolving understandings of ecology and a renewed interest in local, place-based histories.

The Park Service was both an advocate and an opponent of these efforts. Much of the initiative for establishing national seashores and lakeshores near cities originally came from within the agency itself. Leaders, such as longtime director Conrad Wirth, argued for the protection of coastal areas. In other cases, including many green-line parks and urban sites, the agency proved less enthusiastic, especially as once plentiful federal funds became increasingly scarce. Heritage areas, corridors, and parks offered a compromise of sorts, with little financial risk, but still opportunity to reach new constituencies. NPS staff had mixed views on such

projects. Some argued for an expansion in non-traditional parks, while others saw them as little more than a “puff of nothing,” in terms of their ability to further environmental quality aims.<sup>50</sup>

Examining National Park Service history in the post World War II era reveals the growing influence of local communities on public lands administration as well as the expanding power of Congress to dictate decision-making to executive branch agencies. It also demonstrates that our ideas of what a “park” can be and can do are malleable. The sites managed by the NPS after 1960 included textile mills, highways, farms, and housing developments. They were situated in major cities, suburbs, and exurbs. People lived and worked within the boundaries. The enduring myth of wilderness as an ideal still persisted, but it now had serious competition from a living landscape approach to national park management that recognized the ongoing and undeniable relationship between human and non-human nature.

### *Chapter Organization*

This dissertation is organized into five chapters that tell a chronological story based in several places. Chapter 1 examines the relationship between conservation policy and economic change from roughly 1945 to 1960. It analyzes the rhetoric employed by policymakers, politicians, and activists seeking to magnify the federal government role in supporting outdoor recreation. I focus particular attention on Mission 66, an NPS initiative, as well as the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, an influential planning and advisory body established by Congress in 1958. The chapter explains how public officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations successfully tied their recreation agenda to a particular set of ideas about white American manhood and national identity, one explicitly linked to the nation’s

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<sup>50</sup> In 2009, the author attended a meeting with current and former NPS staff focused on new and novel approaches to conservation within the agency. One attendee used the phrase “puff of nothing” to refer to national heritage areas.

colonial past (and present) as well as more recent concerns over juvenile delinquency, affluence, and expanded leisure time.

Chapter 2 discusses the Park Service's growing involvement in coastal areas between roughly 1930 and 1975, including the designation of Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961. The push to create new national seashores and national lakeshores gained momentum from the 1950s advocacy campaigns discussed in chapter 1, but also evolved to reflect local concerns and needs far more than the NPS anticipated. Agency leadership and planning staff wanted the power to create coastal parks as they deemed fit, with external involvement kept to a minimum. Cape Cod residents and landowners, as well as the Massachusetts congressional delegation, hindered these wishes, instead advocating for a park more reflective of homegrown needs. In the end, Cape Codders and their allies succeed in influencing the national seashore legislation to an impressive extent, though the much-vaunted "Cape Cod Formula" was difficult to emulate at other locations.

Using Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve in coastal Washington State as a case study, chapter 3 traces the emergence of green-line parks within the national park system. It links the growing suburban environmental movement of the sixties and seventies to innovations in park management. As the metropolitan fringe underwent rapid growth, communities experimented with various mechanisms to limit or control the pace of development. In some regions, zoning on a regional scale emerged as a popular option, with supporters hoping to extend the approach to include protected area management in the form of green-line parks. Significantly, in contrast to many national seashores and lakeshores, which had been championed by the NPS, green-line parks did not enjoy the same broad support from agency leadership.

Chapter four examines the growing involvement of the Park Service in urban areas with a focus on Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts. It examines the motivations driving both Park Service and local action as well as the rapid shifts in agency policy that occurred during different presidential administrations. While projects in urban areas did have the support of NPS leadership for much of the sixties and early seventies, this backing was tenuous. Vocal critics from inside and outside government argued that parks like Lowell were simply a ruse to continue the city-centric public policy programs of the Great Society.

Chapter five analyzes the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program as well as the designation of national heritage areas and corridors. It describes how the concept of a “heritage park” or “heritage area” evolved during the late 1970s and 1980s, with an emphasis on both community action and the initiative of actors in state and federal government. The role of the NPS in these efforts was one of partner, rather than long-term manager. The agency provided critical technical and financial assistance but did not assume administrative responsibilities. Indeed, at the federal level, legislation creating heritage areas and corridors specifically circumscribed the NPS role, controlling not only the time and money it could dedicate to projects, but also any environmental restrictions it might wish to impose. These efforts highlight the increasingly localized nature of Park Service involvement, especially in an era (the 1980s) when only limited amounts of monies for federal conservation activities were available.

The dissertation concludes with a brief examination of the National Park Service in 2018. It assesses how the metropolitan projects initiated in the years between 1960 and 1985 fared over time, especially in regards to their influence on public lands management as a whole. It also highlights parks and partnership areas created in recent years that drew directly or indirectly on the models established in the post World War II-era.

## Chapter 1

### The Dilemma of our Parks

In the spring of 1951, as Newton B. Drury neared the end of his term as Director of the National Park Service, he could not help but worry about the agency's future. He had accepted the position in August 1940, on the eve of American entry into World War II, having previously served as leader of the Save-the-Redwoods League and as an acquisitions officer for the California State Parks Commission.<sup>1</sup> For the first five years of his NPS tenure, Drury's primary concern had been protecting park resources from commercial interests. Ranchers with government contracts, for example, hoped to graze their sheep and cattle on NPS lands, while timber companies pursued authorization to log the towering Sitka Spruce trees of Olympic National Park. In the end, Drury managed to deflect most of these threats, though the military did conduct training exercises and test equipment at several locations within the national park system.<sup>2</sup>

With the war's conclusion in 1945, a new set of challenges confronted the Park Service leader. Most significantly, visitation to NPS sites skyrocketed following the end of hostilities and the agency was simply not prepared for the surge in use. The public's pent-up demand for outdoor recreation overwhelmed a short-staffed and underfunded NPS system. Upset by what he perceived as chronic disregard for the nation's public lands, Drury published an article in the June 1949 edition of *American Forests* entitled "The Dilemma of our Parks." In the piece, he criticized the continued austerity of NPS budgets, citing numerous examples of deferred maintenance at iconic locations such as Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks. He estimated that the Park Service needed \$140 million for physical improvements, \$175 million for roads and

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<sup>1</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 19 – 20.

<sup>2</sup> On the NPS, Drury, and World War II, see Carr, *Mission 66*, 31 – 32; Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 48 – 49; and Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 449 – 453.

trails, and \$181 million for parkways. These numbers dwarfed the actual appropriations allocated by Congress to parks that year, which amounted to only a little over \$14 million. As a result, the NPS struggled to meet the demands of its almost 30 million visitors (up from 7 million only five years earlier), who often arrived at their vacation destinations to find campsites taken, roads in poor condition, and rangers too busy to provide assistance. Drury lamented such poor conditions, calling national parks “victims of the war,” desperately in need of monies for “protection and development.”<sup>3</sup>

Drury stressed not only degraded infrastructure but also the impact that crowding and understaffing had on the more intangible aspects of a national park visit. “The majority of visitors expect to carry home the memory of an uncommon experience,” he explained. “They look forward, consciously or not, to something that can stir them emotionally and spiritually.” Without an infusion of cash, time spent in a national park would not have the same transformative effect on visitors. Drury worried about the possible implications of such a change.<sup>4</sup>

Newton B. Drury was no populist nor was he an evangelist for offering unlimited access to the country’s public lands. Indeed, he is often portrayed as one of – if not the – most preservation minded of all Park Service directors.<sup>5</sup> Yet even Drury had to admit that drastic steps were needed to accommodate the postwar boom in visitation. New roads, lodges, campgrounds, trails, visitor centers, and staff all had to be added – an expensive scheme apt to arouse opposition from fiscal conservatives and conservationists alike. Nevertheless, the NPS director still made the case for action, arguing, “Whether we like to admit it or not, the enjoyment of the scenery, the natural and historic objects and the wildlife is inevitably in large degree dependent

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<sup>3</sup> Drury, “The Dilemma of Our Parks,” 11, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 30.

on the ‘physical plant.’”<sup>6</sup> Dithering on the matter, he argued, might well endanger the future of the national park system.

Though striking given his high position in government, Drury’s piece was far from the only critique of park maintenance and funding published in the immediate postwar era. Between 1945 and 1960, dozens of similar pieces filled the pages of newspapers and magazines with sensational titles like “National Parks: Tomorrow’s Slums?”<sup>7</sup> Pundits decried the presence of litter along trails, filthy bathrooms, and potholed parkways, among a host of other complaints.

Significantly, their arguments, like those of Drury, did not end there. Many commentators, including elected officials and others in NPS leadership, also chose to emphasize the social, cultural, and even spiritual implications of limiting access to the parks and other outdoor experiences. Advocates claimed, for example, that hiking, camping, and similar activities built character and moral fortitude, especially among young people, and needed to be a national priority. Allowing park environments to deteriorate from pollution and other causes was “inconceivable” and even downright “sinful,” in the words of one Park Service official, who bemoaned that “a civilization such as ours would allow such conditions.”<sup>8</sup>

History and heritage also figured prominently in debates over funding for parks and outdoor recreation. Spending time in a park or forest, proponents maintained, offered visitors a chance to connect with the country’s past, to appreciate and experience, if only briefly, the tests and travails of earlier generations. Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd declared that, “Americans will be better citizens if they spend more time in the out-of-doors. Our strength is in the spirit of our

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<sup>6</sup> Drury, “The Dilemma of Our Parks,” 9.

<sup>7</sup> This title is cited in Carr, *Mission* 66, 7.

<sup>8</sup> “Ten-Year National Parks Expansion Program Described to Editors Here,” *Washington Post*, Oct 16, 1955, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

citizens.”<sup>9</sup> Outdoor recreation (or at least its evocation) thus served a decidedly patriotic function in the 1950s United States. National parks and other public lands were both iconic representations of the nation and sites where citizenship could be learned and performed – attributes that had a heightened importance in the context of the ongoing Cold War.

These types of claims for the merits of the “outdoors” were not new; in important ways they echoed arguments made during both the Progressive-era and the New Deal.<sup>10</sup> However, the context of the post World War II era differed significantly from these earlier periods. Never before had the country experienced such widespread prosperity. Many Americans had the money and the means to spend time pursuing non-work activities. Whereas national parks, especially, had once been the playgrounds of wealthy elites, a decidedly more middle-class (though still overwhelmingly white) clientele now visited. More and more, the outdoors came to be seen as a place for relaxation and respite, rather than labor. Wild places and open spaces increasingly had to be protected for their reputed value as sites of leisure, instead of production or resource extraction.<sup>11</sup>

Postwar affluence, however, led to tremendous stress on national parks and other popular destinations. Overcrowding, coupled with the pressures presented by suburbanization, highways, and industrialization, threatened all manner of recreation locations. The solution, according to NPS leadership as well as recreation advocates like the Isaac Walton League and The Sierra

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<sup>9</sup> "Wirth Warns Overcrowding May Force 'Rationing' the Use of National Parks," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1955, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>10</sup> For more analysis of masculinity and the outdoors centered on the Progressive-era, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 170 – 216, and John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," in *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1965): 73-102. For more on the connections between masculinity, national identity, and the outdoors during the New Deal, see Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Richard White explores many of the tensions precipitated by this shift in his essay, “ ‘Are You An Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?’: Work and Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Towards Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 171 – 185.

Club, was more funds for upkeep and staffing of parks, but also additional monies for land acquisition and better coordination at the national level. The challenge lay in convincing Congress and the public to support such an ambitious program.

This chapter examines the relationship between United States conservation policy and national economic change from roughly 1945 to 1960, with an emphasis on the National Park Service. Though this was not a period of expansion per se in the number of NPS sites, the decisions made by elected officials and NPS leadership during this era created the conditions necessary for the phenomenal growth that occurred from 1960 to 1980. The chapter focuses attention on the rhetorical arguments employed by policymakers, politicians, and activists seeking to expand the federal government role in supporting outdoor recreation. Executive branch agencies, like Interior and Agriculture, had long been engaged in the protection of significant sites, whether for productive or scenic purposes, but the actual provision and funding of recreation opportunities, including purchasing land in and near population centers, remained quite limited. Prior to 1960, there was minimal federal government coordination of either planning or spending for such matters, with only modest federal resources dedicated to the issue.

Outdoor recreation advocates, including NPS managers, drew on a powerful intellectual lineage to make the case for increased support. They employed well-worn, masculine-centric tropes from the past – the rugged frontiersman, the intrepid adventurer, the diligent Boy Scout - to demonstrate the value of expanded access to all manner of outdoor experiences. These historic images were favorably contrasted with doleful depictions of the supposed mid-century American man, a bureaucrat with leisure pursuits one federal report described as “frivolous, frustrating, and

self-defeating.”<sup>12</sup> If the United States hoped to retain its connection to the glories of history, open spaces would have to be protected and recreation prioritized.

In addition to these more elevated justifications for action, practical complaints, focused on roads, housing, staffing, and sanitation, also figured prominently in the case for heightened federal attention. Commentators publicly shamed elected officials for not spending more money on parks and other sites. Ultimately, these linked campaigns, which were centered on patriotism and pride, proved successful when Congress allocated billions of new dollars to all manner of conservation initiatives. The national park system, especially, would benefit. The NPS not only completing a gigantic modernization program, but also added dozens of new units in the years between 1960 and 1980. The designation process and subsequent management of these parks though, would be far less centralized than agency leaders had hoped, demonstrating that the sweeping plans for outdoor recreation crafted in the fifties and early sixties did not always turn out exactly as anticipated.

Analyzing the rhetoric of outdoor recreation advocates in the 1950s and early 1960s reveals both the continuities and the discrepancies between earlier moments in American conservation history and the post-World War II era. It shows that government officials, elected leaders, and representatives of nonprofits shared a common belief that the scale of change in mid-century American was unprecedented. As such, it necessitated new and bold solutions, albeit swathed in the familiar trappings of romantic frontier rhetoric. By merging the old and the new in one compelling message, proponents of an expanded federal presence succeeded in presenting a convincing message to politicians and the general public.

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<sup>12</sup> Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission Chairman Laurance S. Rockefeller quoted in “Program and Policy Objectives of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission,” December 1959, box 13, Program and Policy Folder (1 of 3), Central Files, Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, Record Group 368, National Archives at College Park, MD (hereafter cited as ORRRC Files).

My argument in this chapter draws on the writings of Park Service officials as well as materials prepared by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), an influential bi-partisan body created by Congress in 1958 to assess the country's present and future outdoor recreation needs. For much of the period under consideration, the ORRRC and the NPS operated as rivals, with each seeking to control the outdoor recreation debate. Ultimately, both entities managed to secure huge new appropriations, with funds for infrastructure, staff, and land acquisition. Public relations were key to these efforts, with evocative speeches and writing convincing elected leaders and their constituents to act on the issue.

### *The Federal Role in Outdoor Recreation Before 1945*

Prior to the 1950s, federal involvement in outdoor recreation could best be described as a history of fits and starts. The romance of spending time outdoors, and its significance to dominant notions of what it meant to be “American,” especially for young white men, never lost its potency, but the degree to which the federal government actually intervened and offered ongoing support wavered over time. Periods of enthusiasm would then be followed by stretches of inaction, especially in regards to concrete financial investments. In one of the ORRRC's earliest publications, for example, commission staff characterized their work as “catching up on half a century of neglected research.”<sup>13</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, debates raged over the relative merits of conservation, preservation, and outright exploitation of land, water and wildlife, but neither the purposeful provision of outdoor recreation opportunities, such as boating, fishing, camping, hiking and hunting, nor the purchase of lands by the federal government, generated much interest from Capitol Hill or the White House. Both Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 and

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<sup>13</sup> “Program and Policy Objectives of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission,” December 1959, box 13, Program and Policy Folder (1 of 3), Central Files, ORRRC Files.

Calvin Coolidge in 1924 convened conferences on the issues, but little in the way of sustained and coordinated action came as a result.<sup>14</sup> Urban areas, in particular, received scant attention, with recreation left almost entirely in the hands of local officials and non-governmental organizations.

As in so many other areas of national life, however, the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 served as a turning point. The New Deal became a defining moment for recreation policy, planning, and on-the-ground implementation. All levels of government, but especially federal agencies, invested enormous sums in the provision of recreation opportunities, developing infrastructure that still serves as the basis for parks and programming across the country. Public access, rather than simply the preservation of scenic or historically significant places, became both a national priority and a subject of growing controversy among conservationists seeking to protect less developed areas from encroachment.<sup>15</sup> The work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, in particular, made a lasting impact on the landscape. Over the course of nine years, roughly three million young men enrolled in the popular program, dedicating some 4.5 billion hours to tasks ranging from trail building and historic site restoration, to fire fighting, soil conservation and road construction. Hundreds of state parks owe their

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<sup>14</sup> Between 1900 - 1920, several pieces of legislation passed Congress that made reference to either recreation or to enjoyment of public lands, including the Agricultural Appropriations Act of 1915 and the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916, but no bills attempted to promote national guidelines for outdoor recreation or offered direction for streamlining policies across various federal agencies. For more background on federal outdoor recreation policy during this period see: Carlton S. Van Doren and Louis Hodges, *America's Park and Recreation Heritage: A Chronology* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, 1975), 3-5, 9-12. For more on the Roosevelt conference, see Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1880 - 1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 127-30, 139-41; Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), 130; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 33. For more on the Coolidge conference, see Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 41 - 48.

<sup>15</sup> This tension is explored extensively in Sutter, *Driven Wild*.

existence to CCC labor, as do many national parks, which benefitted from an investment of over \$200 million in Corps projects.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these and other achievements, officials in the Roosevelt administration never succeeded in instituting a cohesive, inter-agency outdoor recreation policy; though they did begin to take important steps in that direction. Among the most significant accomplishments was a series of studies aimed at documenting and then prioritizing land and water use and potential acquisition on a national-scale. In 1934, for example, the National Park Service, acting under the aegis of the Land Planning Committee of the National Resources Board, completed a far-reaching report entitled *Recreational Use of Land in the United States*. Its publication marked the first time the federal government had attempted to document outdoor recreation opportunities for the country as a whole - lands managed by executive branch agencies as well as state and local holdings.<sup>17</sup>

In order to supplement the work completed in 1934, Congress passed the Park, Parkway, and Recreational Areas Studies Act in 1936. Its purpose was to provide “data helpful in developing a plan for coordinated and adequate public park, parkway, and recreational-area facilities for the people of the United States.”<sup>18</sup> As a result of the bill, the NPS began a series of seashore surveys (discussed in chapter 2) with an eye toward adding lands to the agency portfolio. Ultimately, the agency recommended that some 400 miles of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts (roughly ten percent of the total seashore frontage) be included in the national park system. This marked the first expression of federal government interest in acquiring shoreline for

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<sup>16</sup> Neil M. Maher, "A New Deal Body Politic: Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Environmental History* 7, no. 3 (July 2002): 442.

<sup>17</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Recreational Use of Land in the United States: Part XI of the Report on Land Planning* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1938).

<sup>18</sup> Van Doren and Hodges, *America's Park and Recreation Heritage*, 5.

recreation.<sup>19</sup> The promise of these recommendations went unfulfilled in the short term, however, with only one area, Cape Hatteras, gaining federal designation before 1960.

Another New Deal initiative that influenced recreation planning in the United States was the Technical Committee on Recreation, which had been created in 1935 as a subcommittee of the Interdepartmental Committee to Coordinate Health and Welfare Activities. It consisted of representatives from a wide variety of agencies, including the Children's Bureau, the Office of Education, the Forest Service, the Park Service, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, among others. In contrast to the earlier studies undertaken by the NPS, which tended to emphasize less populated, largely rural spaces, the work of the Technical Committee focused on urban recreation experiences and opportunities. Its summary report, issued in 1937, offered not only an overview of major federal recreation programs (some 70 in total), but also a set of recommendations for coordinating these disparate activities. Interestingly, its most ambitious proposal centered on the creation of a national recreation bureau, an idea that would finally reach fruition in 1962 following the release of the ORRRC research study.<sup>20</sup>

With the start of World War II, funding for the management of national parks and other protected areas decreased significantly, as did the still smaller amount of monies focused on outdoor recreation planning and coordination. The momentum generated by various New Deal efforts, such as CCC work, came to a halt. Appropriations fell even more as the war continued. The NPS allocation dropped from \$21 million to \$5 million between fiscal years 1940 and 1943.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Library of Congress, Environment and Natural Resources Policy Division, *Past Federal Surveys of Shoreline Recreation Potential* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1978), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Edwin M. Fitch and John F. Shanklin, *The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 53-55.

<sup>21</sup> Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 452.

Not surprisingly, visitation to public lands declined during this period. National parks had welcomed a record-breaking 20 million users in 1941, but that number dropped to 6 million within a single year. Gas rationing had a significant effect on accessibility, as did the termination of many railroad promotional tours. As usage declined, staffing also decreased. CCC camps closed and many rangers and foresters entered the military. Between June 30, 1942, and June 30, 1943, for instance, the number of permanent, full-time positions in the NPS shrank fifty-five percent.<sup>22</sup> Fire fighting and other resource management priorities suffered, with the remaining personnel taking on double-duty in key areas.

As the conflict drew to an end, the demand for outdoor recreation swelled, with Americans “restive and raring-to-ride,” according to an Associated Press report.<sup>23</sup> After a decade and a half of depression and war, the standard-of-living for many families quickly improved. For the first time, many workers enjoyed two-week vacations and owned automobiles. Record high incomes, low gas price, and newly built highways all made interstate travel more appealing. Parks, forests, beaches, and reservoirs emerged as especially popular destinations. Indeed, 1946 marked a record for national park usage, with 21,752,000 annual visits – a number that climbed to over 30 million by the decade’s end.<sup>24</sup>

Funding, however, remained low across most federal and state recreation agencies, putting a significant strain on the country’s public lands. Attention from Congress, the Executive Branch, and state legislatures lagged well behind demand as most resources were still directed towards military expenditures.<sup>25</sup> As a result, according to one prominent commentator, outdoor

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 452, 448.

<sup>23</sup> William J. Conway, “All National Parks Preparing for Record Vacation Crowds,” *Courier News* (Plainfield, New Jersey), June 25, 1946, Newspapers.com,

<sup>24</sup> Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 455.

<sup>25</sup> Between 1950 and 1955, for example, visitation to National Parks grew from 33.2 million to 56.5 million, an increase of about 70 percent. Funding, meanwhile, remained relatively flat, rising only 9 percent over the

recreation had reached a “grade-A crisis” by the 1950s.<sup>26</sup> Modest attempts at reform, such as the creation of the Federal Interagency Council on Recreation in 1946, resulted in few concrete changes or improvements.<sup>27</sup> Many recreation advocates also criticized the overwhelming focus on largely rural, public lands west of the Mississippi, calling instead for a massive infusion of federal cash directed at urban areas.

At mid-century, poor planning and inadequate funding were only some of the challenges facing public lands and outdoor recreation. Development in cities and suburbs absorbed well hundreds of square miles of land a year during the fifties, with little commensurate increase in parkland.<sup>28</sup> Many of the same forces driving the country’s unprecedented economic growth, namely a thriving construction industry, an expanding population, and an increasingly interconnected transportation network, also fueled the transformation of open space and farmland into tract houses and industrial zones.

Suburban residents, even those who had only recently left the city, became progressively energized around land use issues. Less than decade after World War II, many Americans had already begun to question how the unchecked growth of cities and suburbs might be affecting their quality-of-life.<sup>29</sup> In response, communities around the country began to mobilize for open space protection, eventually forming, in historian Adam Rome’s words, “the first broad attempt to deal with some of the problems caused by the postwar pattern of development.”<sup>30</sup> These

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same period, from \$30.1 million to \$32.9 million. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 234; See also, Carr, *Mission 66*, 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Marion Clawson, *Crisis in Outdoor Recreation* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1959), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Interior Secretary Julius Krug created the Federal Interagency Committee on Recreation in 1946, which included representatives from eleven federal agencies at its peak. Participants met monthly and represented a variety of viewpoints and priorities. The Committee produced little in the way of concrete results, serving more as a vehicle for information sharing than actual policy development. Van Doren and Hodges, *America's Park and Recreation Heritage*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Rome, “William Whyte, Open Space, and Environmental Activism,” 260.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 259 – 272. Rome provides an excellent overview of this growing concern among suburbanites.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

efforts touched on a variety of areas, everything from preserving close-to-home forests or fields to protecting public lands hundreds of miles distant. Park Service leaders drew on this momentum, as well as growing concerns over overcrowding in existing national parks, to make a compelling case for increased funding. They hoped not only to modernize the parks, but also acquire new land, especially near cities.

### *Mission 66*

In 1951, Conrad Wirth became the sixth director of the National Park Service. At the time of his appointment, Wirth had served with the agency for two decades, almost exclusively in the central office. In contrast to Newton Drury, who disliked the rough-and-tumble of policymaking in Washington, Wirth was a persistent advocate for park issues, both in Congress and with the public at large.<sup>31</sup> He also had a history of promoting public access, having championed the issue while working as a park planner during the New Deal (see chapter 2).<sup>32</sup> Thus, Wirth came to the position of director with political acumen and media savvy as well as a commitment to making parks as visitor-friendly as possible. These attributes would be pivotal in shaping his signature undertaking: Mission 66, a billion dollar program to upgrade infrastructure across the entire National Park System.

As previously mentioned, the NPS was in a sorry state in the early 1950s. In a 1955 *Readers Digest* piece, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” Wirth used dire language to describe the conditions. “Visitor concentration points can’t be kept in sanitary condition...Physical facilities are deteriorating or are inadequate to meet the public needs. Some of the camps are approaching rural slums. We actually get scared when we think of the bad

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<sup>31</sup> Foresta, *America’s National Parks and their Keepers*, 52 - 53.

<sup>32</sup> For a review of Wirth’s New Deal activities, see Carr, *Mission 66*, 28 – 29, 40- 45.

health conditions,” he said.<sup>33</sup> Later that year Wirth went even further, telling an audience at the annual meeting of the National Citizens Council on Parks and Open Space that the Park Service might have to resort to “rationing use of the nation’s parks,” in the face of record demand, or even forbid overnight camping entirely.<sup>34</sup>

These gloomy depictions were typical for the period. In a famous example, *Harper’s Magazine* contributor Bernard DeVoto penned an article entitled, “Let’s Close the National Parks.” There, he condemned the entitled attitudes of many park visitors as well as insufficient support from Congress. DeVoto argued that barring immediate action, the “priceless heritage” found in the nation’s parks would, quite simply, “go to hell.” Linking the funding shortfall to cuts first undertaken during the Second World War, he compared the Park Service to “a favorite figure of American legendry, the widow who scrapes and patches and ekes out, who by desperate expedients succeeds in bringing up her children to be a credit to our culture.” The only viable option, DeVoto continued, was closure of the most popular sites. Such a step would motivate elected officials to act – driven not by concerns over park conditions, but rather by angry letters from constituents.<sup>35</sup>

Circumstances in many national park sites had unquestionably reached a low point by the start of Wirth’s tenure. Yet it is also the case that the director, along with many of his fellow park advocates, had long hoped to magnify the mission and scope of NPS activities, both by acquiring more land, especially near cities, and by offering increased recreation opportunities at existing NPS sites. Indeed, Wirth had been advocating these changes, as well as a more robust central planning effort, since the New Deal. The degraded condition of the parks, coupled with the

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<sup>33</sup> Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” 45-50.

<sup>34</sup> “Wirth Warns Overcrowding May Force ‘Rationing’ the Use of National Parks,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 1955, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>35</sup> Bernard DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” *Harper’s Magazine*, October 1953, 49-52.

public's growing desire to spend time outdoors, offered a compelling opportunity to advance just such an expansionist program, even in the face of opposition from a small but growing chorus of preservationists seeking to curtail public access and new construction.<sup>36</sup> Ever the astute observer of politics, Wirth sensed his chance and took action.

As the Korean War drew to a close, politicians in Washington began turning their attention toward domestic priorities. Years of bad publicity regarding park conditions meant that policymakers already had some inkling of the issues facing the NPS. Moreover, as noted earlier, the fifties marked an upsurge in concern about the effects of affluence on American culture, as well as worry over sprawl and loss of open space. In this context, funding of national parks took on outsized importance, reflecting not only worries about overuse, but also more deep-seated anxieties, linked to changing lifestyle patterns and an unpredictable geopolitical landscape.

In January 1956, after a year of research and preparation, Wirth finally had the chance to make a bold pitch to Eisenhower and his cabinet. In congressional testimony, the NPS director described the intensive planning process: "I took a group of about 8 of our leading people and put them in a room and we spent a whole year in tearing apart every single plan we had, every policy we had, every piece of legislation we had and made a prospectus on each particular area and tried to come out with a program of what our anticipated needs would be."<sup>37</sup>

Dubbing his proposal "Mission 66," Wirth called on the federal government to fund a dramatic upgrading program for the national park system. Slated to run for the decade from 1956 to 1966, the program would culminate in the Park Service's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Road construction, lodging, land acquisition, visitor centers, staffing, improved sanitation, and trails

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<sup>36</sup> Carr discusses these opposing perspectives in *Mission 66*, 54-57.

<sup>37</sup> *Hearing [unpublished] before the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, Mission 66 [National Parks Improvement], 86 Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., April 8, 1959, 4-5, Proquest Congressional.

were all to be included. In his autobiography, Wirth summed up the idea as a “renaissance.”<sup>38</sup> Detractors, at the time and in later years, would take issue with that term, many of them seeing Mission 66 as little more than an excuse to build roads into previously inaccessible areas.<sup>39</sup> Given the validity of such appraisals – roads were a huge part of the plan - “revolution” might be the better label for the program’s implications. It certainly succeeded in remaking the landscape of almost every NPS site, though not to universal acclaim.

Owing to the scope of his demands, Wirth knew he had to deliver a convincing argument. It needed to appeal to the president’s practicality as well as his patriotism. The director’s presentation revolved around three main points: the poor physical condition of NPS infrastructure; the economic value generated by recreation; and the ongoing significance of park sites to American culture and identity.<sup>40</sup>

During his talk, which included a 16-minute slide talk and a three-minute color movie, Wirth explained that parks were being “loved to death” by huge numbers of visitors. To address the situation, immediate action was needed. New roads, sewer systems, and campsites had to be built quickly.<sup>41</sup> Wirth next called attention to the fact that “National Parks are an American idea—Yellowstone became the first national park in the world when it was established ... The National Parks have become a real part of the American way of life, as attested by the phenomenal increase in their popularity.”<sup>42</sup> Not only did these points appeal to national pride,

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<sup>38</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 237

<sup>39</sup> For more on this perspective and controversy over Mission 66 generally, see chapter five of Richard West Sellers, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) and Runte, *National Parks*, 173 – 179.

<sup>40</sup> According to Carr, Eisenhower had little personal interest in national park issues. Carr, *Mission 66*, 59.

<sup>41</sup> The description of Wirth’s presentation, i.e. slide show and video, comes from Carr, *Mission 66*, 115. The text of his speech is from “Mission 66 Special Presentation to President Eisenhower and the Cabinet by Director Conrad Wirth,” in *America’s National Parks: The Critical Documents*, ed. Lary M. Dilsaver, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 170.

<sup>42</sup> “Mission 66 Special Presentation to President Eisenhower and the Cabinet by Director Conrad Wirth,” 170.

they also had a specific Cold War significance. As the conflict with the Soviet Union and its allies intensified, policymakers in Washington actively searched for what might be termed “cultural exports” to promote abroad as tangible evidence of the benefits of American-style democracy. National parks, Wirth’s words implied, would be a fitting example to highlight. And in fact, within only a few years’ time, the NPS would begin sponsoring global conservation congresses, followed soon thereafter by the creation of an office dedicated specifically to international affairs.<sup>43</sup>

In his remarks, Wirth also emphasized that Mission 66 was at once a long-term financial and a patriotic investment in the United States. Here, he invoked romantic images from the country’s past, including the Revolutionary War and the Western frontier, to buttress his claims. “To put the National Parks in shape is an investment in the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of Americans as individuals....It is an investment in good citizenship,” he explained. “Where else but on historic ground can they [Americans] better renew the idealism that prompted the patriots to their deeds of valor? Where else but in the great out-of-doors as God made it can we better recapture the spirit and something of the qualities of the pioneers? Pride in their Government, love of the land, and faith in the American Tradition—these are the real products of our national parks.”<sup>44</sup>

The soaring rhetoric, paired with Eisenhower’s penchant for construction projects, was a successful formula. The administration approved the NPS plan and submitted a proposal to Congress asking for \$66 million in funding for 1957, a roughly 40 percent increase over the 1956

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<sup>43</sup> Brent A. Mitchell, "Projecting America's Best Ideals: International Engagement and the National Park Service," *George Wright Forum* 28, no. 1 (2011): 7-16.

<sup>44</sup>“Mission 66 Special Presentation to President Eisenhower and the Cabinet by Director Conrad,” 172.

fiscal year.<sup>45</sup> More money would come in the following budget cycles. Significantly, however, as Ethan Carr has pointed out in his research on Mission 66, the program never received a 10-year appropriation, instead going through the annual funding process. While this did not necessarily result in a lower level of support, it did mean that officials in the executive and Congress had the chance to scrutinize program outcomes. Having tangible projects, like a new visitor center or road, thus remained important to ensuring ongoing funding.<sup>46</sup>

Once appropriations had been secured, the Park Service released a promotional brochure entitled *Our Heritage: A Plan for its Protection and Use*. The publication aimed to sell the Mission 66 concept to the general public by explaining the significance of national park sites to “Mr. and Mrs. America and their youngsters.” It described how parks differed from other resources, “chiefly in the nature of their ‘products.’ Others yield material things. But parks yield the great cultural and inspirational products of knowledge, refreshment, and aesthetic enjoyment equally needed by all people.” These exceptional products, however, were endangered by a lack of funding coupled with overcrowding, leading to facilities that resembled “slums.”<sup>47</sup>

Mission 66 would address these ills. The program had the potential not only to improve the visitor experience, but also, according to the brochure, to advance research in the parks, improve the care of historic sites, and protect wildlife. An investment in Mission 66 would be an investment in “something as simple yet as fundamental, as good citizenship.” Parks, the report explained in its concluding pages, promoted the unity of the family, and offered a chance to “renew the idealism that prompted the patriots to their deeds of diplomacy and valor...” as well

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<sup>45</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 116; Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics and the People*, 260 – 261. In his autobiography, Wirth notes that the 1956 appropriation was already a big jump, as Congress had allocated an additional \$17 million in anticipation of Mission 66 (262).

<sup>46</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 115 – 116.

<sup>47</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Our Heritage: A Plan for its Protection and Use* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1956), accessed June 10, 2016, <http://npshistory.com/publications/our-heritage.pdf>.

as “recapture the spirit and something of the qualities of the pioneers.”<sup>48</sup> America was indeed changing, the NPS publication said, but spending time in a park offered much needed respite from any discomfort that might accompany such transformations.

News coverage of Wirth’s proposal was overwhelmingly positive. The *Los Angeles Times* excitedly described the new roads, trails, and structures funded by the initiative, before informing its readers (without irony), “All this so that American vacationists may enjoy the majesties of nature that have escaped the blights of modern civilization.”<sup>49</sup> The *New York Times* also generally lauded the effort, noting that the NPS had been “limping along on utterly inadequate appropriations” since the war years. The article explained that Mission 66 would allow the Park Service to address its maintenance backlog, build campgrounds, improve interpretive programming, and purchase land, among other goals. In closing, the piece did strike a cautionary note, warning that enhanced public accessibility could lead to the “danger of overuse.” Wirth and his colleagues needed to be prudent, the article emphasized, remembering the importance of “preservation and protection,” in addition to “enjoyment.”<sup>50</sup>

The *New York Times* analysis was remarkably prescient. Mission 66 did reverse decades of underfunding with over \$1 billion allocated to the NPS over a ten-year period. More people could go camping, hiking, and car-touring than ever before. Moreover, Mission 66 had a ripple effect beyond its most immediate emphasis on construction. Other contemporary Park Service initiatives, especially in urban and suburban areas, readily drew on the energy of the program to gain traction and support in Washington, DC. This was particularly so with national seashore and lakeshore proposals, which assumed a heightened profile at roughly the same moment as Mission

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley B. Horstman, "How to See America Now!," *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1957, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>50</sup> John B. Oakes, "Conservation: Ten-year Plan," *New York Times*, March 4, 1956, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

66. Wirth himself often linked the two efforts. He viewed Park Service forays into coastal conservation as part of its efforts to expand access and improve visitor experiences more generally.<sup>51</sup>

Still, despite many achievements, the immediate results and lasting legacy of Mission 66 were decidedly mixed, owing in large part to the fears of overbuilding and overuse cited in the *Times* report. Sections of parks that had once been remote now had roads cut through them, triggering outrage among preservationists, including The Sierra Club. Critics wondered why the agency would so readily encourage car travel, rather than promote alternative means to enjoy the parks? These disagreements drove a wedge between the NPS and its allies in the burgeoning environmental movement, especially those groups pushing for more wilderness protections on public lands. The backlash to Mission 66 would be an important factor driving support for the Wilderness Act, which became law in 1964.<sup>52</sup>

Though the primary purpose of Mission 66 was modernization of NPS facilities and expanded funding for land acquisition, the program also sought to cement the Park Service's position as the country's premier federal recreation agency. Other land managers, especially the U.S. Forest Service, simply did not focus on the issue to the same extent. However, by the fifties, many within conservation circles felt that increased demand, coupled with added pressures on rural lands, necessitated a more holistic perspective – one that the Park Service, as only one agency among many, could not readily provide. Instead, advocates began pushing for creation of an entirely new entity to conduct a top-to-bottom re-examination of the role and scope of outdoor recreation in American life.

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<sup>51</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 199-201.

<sup>52</sup> Ethan Carr, "Park, Forest, and Wilderness," *The George Wright Forum* 17, no. 2 (2000): 22-23.

Not surprisingly, Wirth and others in the NPS took offense to this approach, as it not only belittled the agency's past efforts, it also created the potential for turf battles with a rival federal organization.<sup>53</sup> Mission 66, with its big budget and nationwide scope, did present a possible alternative, but the program's obvious emphasis on national parks was far too limiting. Ultimately then, much to the chagrin of the NPS, Congress decided to create a new federal authority to complete the task, authorizing creation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission or ORRRC in 1958.

#### *The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission*

Established by Public Law 85-470, the ORRRC appeared, at least on the surface, to have a limited mandate. According to the bill, the Commission's primary duty was the completion of "a nationwide inventory and evaluation of outdoor recreation resources and opportunities," the first one ever undertaken by the federal government.<sup>54</sup> In fulfilling this task, Congress expected the ORRRC to compile information "concerning trends in population, leisure, transportation, and other factors" that could influence "the amount, kind, quality, and location of such outdoor recreation resources and opportunities as will be required by the year 1976 and the year 2000."<sup>55</sup> Drawing on its survey data, the ORRRC would then recommend programs for all levels of government as well as private organizations, businesses, and citizen groups.

The Commission's legal responsibilities thus reflected a keen focus on the current and future administration of outdoor recreation in the United States. An analysis of broader social concerns, though perhaps implied by the use of terms such as "leisure" and "transportation," remained at best ancillary, at least insofar as the authorizing legislation was concerned. However, in both congressional hearings leading up to the creation of the ORRRC as well as in subsequent

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<sup>53</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 62- 63.

<sup>54</sup> Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Act, Public Law 87-470, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 72 (1958): 238.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

public pronouncements and private correspondence by leadership, staff, and political champions, a far more expansive agenda emerged as a driving force behind commission decision-making. It centered on addressing the material and cultural effects of economic change, particularly rising standards of living and increased free time, through a much expanded federal role in recreation and the provision of open space. Making sure people had places to hike, hunt, and camp certainly mattered, but so too did the social context of such activities.

In particular, since at least the late 1940s, commentators from across the political spectrum had been expressing worry over the tangible and intangible effects of affluence on America life. These concerns were far-reaching, ranging from juvenile delinquency to gender roles and from consumption patterns to bureaucracy.<sup>56</sup> Pulitzer-prize winning poet and historian Carl Sandburg summed up much of this angst regarding “America’s fat dripping prosperity” shortly before receiving a Humanities Medal from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in 1956. “When the goal of a county is only happiness and comfort, there is danger...All these things in the advertisements – anytime the main goal in life is to get them, so that they override your other motives, there is danger,” he warned the nation.<sup>57</sup>

Discussions about whether to create the ORRRC and, later, how it should be operated occurred within this larger context of social, economic, and political uncertainty. Just as Conrad Wirth had emphasized national parks’ connections to American history in making his argument

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<sup>56</sup> A fairly large literature exists on this topic, with texts written contemporaneously and later in historical perspective. Some of the key works from the 1950s include: C. Wright Mills, *White Collar; The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); David Morris Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); and David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953). For more recent analyses of the period, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 2003); Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004); and Juliet B Schor, "In defense of Consumer Critique: Revisiting the Consumption Debates of the Twentieth Century," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611, no. 1 (2007): 16-30.

<sup>57</sup> Anna Petersen, “Sandburg Notes Prosperity Peril,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1956, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

for Mission 66, so too did recreation advocates link the “outdoors” to American identity writ large. In *The Crisis in Outdoor Recreation*, for example, an influential pamphlet published by the think tank Resources for the Future, author and former Bureau of Land Management director Marion Clawson argued, “As a people, we [Americans] don’t feel right unless we can get back from time-to-time to the out-of-doors. If we should ever lose this urge, there will have been a profound change in the national character.”<sup>58</sup> The material manifestations of Americans’ desire to recreate outside were obvious – overcrowded campgrounds, overflowing trashcans, and congested roadways all captured the public’s attention but seemed unlikely to inspire dramatic action on the part of elected leaders. However, when these more prosaic problems were coupled with supposed existential threats, such as the “profound change in the national character” mentioned by Clawson, advocates’ arguments for action on recreation suddenly became more compelling.

A series of congressional hearings held to consider the creation of the ORRRC in 1957 highlights the pervasiveness of such claims. In remarks offered by elected officials and representatives of various non-governmental organizations, the act of outdoor recreation was presented as synonymous with enduring American identity and values. Joseph Penfold, Director of Conservation for the Izaak Walton League of America and a principal architect of the Commission legislation, described spending time outdoors as “basic in the American scheme of things,” and “a basic characteristic of our total culture.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Daniel Poole, editor of the Wildlife Management Institute’s *Outdoor News Bulletin*, testified, “Outdoor recreation has long been associated with the American way of life...many popular outdoor sports like hunting,

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<sup>58</sup> Clawson, *The Crisis in Outdoor Recreation*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, HR 3592, HR 3593, HR 3594, HR 3596, HR 4819, HR 4822, HR 5238, HR 6884, HR 7230, Establishment of a National Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, day 1, 85<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., May 13, 1957, 20-22, Proquest Congressional.

fishing, camping, and hiking are a logical and traditional extension of activities from colonial times when a man's steadiness with a gun, a snug camp, and an ability to walk great distances were as indispensable in everyday life as today's dwellings, automobiles, and super-markets."<sup>60</sup>

For Penfold, Poole, and others hoping to secure increased federal involvement in the funding and coordination of outdoor recreation activities, making a connection between past and present experiences of the outdoors was an essential rhetorical device. Even though contemporary uses of parks and other open spaces largely centered on leisure rather than survival or exploration, to cite two popular tropes, the shared experience of confronting "nature" as a way to affirm manhood retained much of its symbolic power. In the 1950s, mainstream American culture, everyday life, and even the landscape itself were in rapid flux. In comparison, the outdoors could be presented as enduring, an affirmation of an earlier, ostensibly simpler, more healthful era. Despite its dubious validity, recreation supporters nonetheless took up this refrain as a key element of their advocacy campaign.

Following the ORRRC's authorization in 1958, the most prominent public voice for the commission was its Chairman, Laurance S. Rockefeller. The grandson of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Laurance Rockefeller had a longstanding interest in parks and conservation. Prior to his association with the ORRRC, he had contributed funds for improvements at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming and donated thousands of acres for a new national park in the U.S. Virgin Islands.<sup>61</sup> He was also a Republican, brother to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, and a known quantity to officials in the Eisenhower White House.

Throughout his tenure as chairman, Rockefeller displayed a keen interest in the question of leisure time and its connection to outdoor recreation. On repeated occasions, he spoke of his

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>61</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 297.

concerns regarding Americans' use of their newfound free time, often linking what he perceived to be the unproductive use of leisure to broader social and political concerns, including national security. "If the hours away from the workbench and office are spent only on frivolous pastimes," Rockefeller warned Congress in 1961, "individuals become weaker and in turn our nation collectively becomes weaker. In this era of challenge to Americans, we cannot afford weakness."<sup>62</sup>

Whether addressing elected officials, the media, or civic organizations, Rockefeller almost always highlighted leisure as a key conundrum facing the nation, a problem that could only be solved by more robustly funding recreation. "Americans of today have more non-working hours at their disposal than their grandfathers dreamed could be possible or their more remote ancestors thought godly. But this new leisure is not without challenge," he explained to a House hearing on the ORRRC in 1961.<sup>63</sup> The promotion of recreation opportunities offered a solution to this dilemma. Growth and prosperity could continue unabated, so long as citizens had ample opportunities to develop sound minds and bodies in the outdoors. Such recreation would serve as a buffer against the temptations of prosperity. It could ease the conscience of a troubled nation, unsure of the benefits of its growing wealth.

In a speech delivered to a meeting of the Radio and Television Executive Society in New York City, Rockefeller expanded on these ideas. He identified affluence and the commensurate increase in free time as one of the greatest tests facing the nation. "Misuse, waste of leisure, if allowed to persist, might easily prove the Achilles heel of our free society," he warned. "The physical, cultural and spiritual benefits of leisure wisely used, can give new meaning and

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<sup>62</sup> *Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, HR 2204, Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, 87<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., January 13, 1961, 7, Proquest Congressional.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

purpose to our lives – and help us to become a spiritual, as well as a material, example to the people of all nations.” For Rockefeller and many others who supported the ORRRC, the outdoors was touted as more than “a place to acquire a suntan.” Instead, recreation would offer a “re-creative experience...it should recharge our emotional and spiritual batteries. Otherwise it is providing nothing more than an escape.”<sup>64</sup> This message had resonance during a period of anxiety and served as a compelling justification for increasing the federal government’s involvement in conservation and recreation initiatives.

Beyond Rockefeller himself, concerns with the wider implications of outdoor recreation drove much of the day-to-day work of the ORRRC, including the research of commission staff and contractors. In October 1960, for example, Arthur Davis, a forester by training, who had worked at the Bureau of the Budget before taking a position with the ORRRC, penned a dispatch to Rockefeller entitled “Some Early Thoughts on Commission Objectives and Recommendations.” In this wide-ranging document, Davis made the case for recreation “as a new, important, and proper national concern,” whose significance had “assumed a new proportion in a changing American culture.” If it hoped to capture the sustained attention of politicians and the general public, the ORRRC report would have to move beyond “the individual interests of campers, boating enthusiasts, hunters and fishermen, and wilderness devotees” and instead present a comprehensive case for the significance of the outdoors, such that when “measured against other national social and economic problems...outdoor recreation comes into its own.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Laurance S. Rockefeller, “Leisure: The New Challenge,” (address presented at the Television Executive Society’s Newsmaker Luncheon, New York, NY, October 26, 1960), box 18, folder: speeches, Central Files, ORRRC Files.

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Davis, “Some Early Thoughts on Commission Objectives and Recommendations,” box 4, folder: October 1960 (1 of 2), Reading Files, ORRRC Files.

For Davis and other ORRRC staffers, the new social and economic conditions of the postwar period made such a transition possible. “Our affluence, our general abandonment of the notion that leisure time is evil time, our national vigor, our mobility, are all contributory factors,” Davis wrote to Rockefeller. “These circumstances require new arrangements and techniques for meeting the challenges presented by increased demands.”<sup>66</sup>

Just one month after Davis submitted his memorandum an article by David Riesman, author of the bestselling book *The Lonely Crowd*, circulated at ORRRC headquarters in Washington, DC. Entitled “Abundance for What?,” the piece examined the nation’s increasing reliance on consumption as an indicator of both personal and collective well-being. It gave little, if any, attention to more mundane questions of how, when, and where to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation.<sup>67</sup> Commission staff reviewed and commented on the article, passing it around through roughly a dozen hands in one week’s time. Later that month, a pair of senior policy researchers visited Riesman’s office in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They hoped to convince the Harvard faculty member to participate formally in the commission study. Riesman demurred, though he did recommend several colleagues for possible consideration, among them Eric Larrabee, managing editor of *American Heritage*, a popular history magazine, and Robert Woods Kennedy, a noted architect and author of the 1953 book *The House and its Design*.

On the same trip, which also included a stop in New York City, ORRRC staff members arranged meetings with several other prominent figures, including William Whyte, John Kenneth Galbraith, and William Goode, a Columbia University sociologist with expertise on changing family structures. They were an impressive though not particularly recreation-centric group of

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Connie Foley to Mr. Tharp and Mr. Hewes, November 4, 1960, article by David Riesman entitled “Abundance for What?,” reprinted for private circulation from *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* XIV, no. 4, April 1958, box 4, folder: November 1960, Reading Files, ORRRC Files.

possible contributors.<sup>68</sup> These meetings showed that considerations other than the day-to-day management of the country's land and water resources were playing a significant role in driving the Commission's research and public policy agenda.

Following roughly three years of meetings, research, and internal review, the ORRRC released its final report, *Outdoor Recreation for America*, in January 1962.<sup>69</sup> In his transmission letter to President Kennedy, Rockefeller made sure to highlight the social and cultural implications of the Commission's work, especially its potential to cushion the more jarring effects of economic change. Comparing the postwar period to earlier moments of transformation in the country's history, he stressed that the "physical, cultural, and spiritual benefits (of recreation) should be ensured for each generation... Americans have responded in the past to the need for protecting their unparalleled outdoor heritage. To follow their lead in our time, when our country is growing even faster and becoming ever more urban in character, requires a new scale of effort and ingenuity."<sup>70</sup>

Despite the outdoors purported importance to American life, however, Rockefeller worried that recreation, especially the protection of open space, faced unprecedented threats, economic prosperity and expanded consumption being the most significant. As urban landscapes grew ever more congested, the ease of public access to the outdoors correspondingly declined. "More and more, most Americans must traverse miles of crowded highways to know the outdoors," he lamented. "The resources for outdoor recreation – shoreline, green acres, open

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<sup>68</sup> L.I. Hewes, Jr., to the Files, November 22, 1960, "Field Trip to New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 16-17 inclusive," box 4, Folder: November 1960, Reading Files, ORRRC files.

<sup>69</sup> US Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Outdoor Recreation for America: A Report to the President and to the Congress* (Washington, DC: The Commission, 1962). This document was complemented by the publication of 27 additional studies focused on issues as diverse as shoreline recreation, wilderness, hunting, fishing, private recreation facilities, open space acquisition, and recreation patterns in metropolitan regions.

<sup>70</sup> US Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Outdoor Recreation for America: A Report to the President and to the Congress*, iii.

space, and unpolluted waters – diminished in the face of demands for more of everything else.”<sup>71</sup>

For too long, in Rockefeller’s view, conservation had taken a backseat to growth - with potentially devastating results, not only for the environment, but for the American character more generally. As he explained, “America must not neglect its heritage of the outdoors – for that heritage offers physical, spiritual, and educational benefits, which not only provide a better environment but help to achieve other national goals by adding to the health of the Nation.”<sup>72</sup>

In addition to Rockefeller’s letter, an entire chapter of the report, appropriately titled “The Heritage,” focused attention on the links between national identity and outdoor recreation. It presented the Euro-American male “pioneer” experience as a cultural archetype, with the outdoors, usually wilderness, posited as the ideal setting for the development of a rugged masculinity particular to the United States. “This is a civilization painfully and only recently carved in conflict with the forces of nature – farms from unbroken prairie and cities from wilderness,” the report explained. “The epic of American life is the tale of the pioneer, edging his way westward in the face of unending danger and hardship. When an American looks for meaning of his past, he seeks it not in ancient ruins, but more likely in mountains and forests, by a river, or at the edge of the sea. The tale is one of discovery, of encounter, of hard-won settlement.”<sup>73</sup>

For the report’s authors, the American “character,” a subject under such intense discussion during this period, had its roots in the taming of a mythic, untouched landscape. The loss of this experience, they argued, would have devastating consequences, especially during a period of uncertainty and even danger such as the Cold War. While recreation, especially when

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., iii.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 13.

undertaken as a leisure activity, could certainly not replicate the pioneer life, it offered the closest parallel, at least according to the ORRRC.

Widely and, for the most part, positively covered in the contemporary press, the commission's findings also received an endorsement from the Executive Branch. President Kennedy, for example, cited them extensively in his 1962 conservation message to Congress. Calling for an "an aggressive program of recreational development," Kennedy recommended the prompt passage of legislation to implement the ORRRC recommendations, especially as they related to land conservation in and around metropolitan centers. Using the recently designated Cape Cod National Seashore as an example, the President highlighted the need to protect shorelines access in other areas threatened from impending development, including Point Reyes in California, Sleeping Bear Dunes in Michigan, and Padre Island in Texas.<sup>74</sup>

Federal lawmakers likewise reacted positively to the ORRRC report. They eventually passed several key pieces of legislation recommended by the commission, including two signature actions – establishment of a recreation agency, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and creation of a multi-million dollar federal and state grant program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund.<sup>75</sup> The multi-year advocacy campaign of recreation proponents had been highly successful. Once an after thought for federal policymakers, providing adequate sites to recreate, including through land acquisition, was now a priority for both the Kennedy administration and members of Congress. The NPS, already growing as a result of Mission 66, would benefit from these trends. Although the creation of the new Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

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<sup>74</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Conservation," March 1, 1962, made available online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara, accessed June 4, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9081>.

<sup>75</sup> Though often overshadowed by the Wilderness Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has arguably had a greater influence on land conservation and is the principal source of funds for federal agencies seeking to acquire land. For more on the LWCF, see US Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*, by Carol Hardy Vincent, RL33531 (2006), 1-14.

certainly stung the pride of longtime NPS staff, the general push for recreation and conservation funding ultimately aided the agency's efforts to expand public access, grow its presence in urban areas, and acquire tens of thousands of acres of land.

### *Conclusion*

Long associated with romantic notions of virility, courage, and manhood, exposure to the outdoors took on fresh significance in the context of the Cold War and 1950s economic and cultural change. Anxieties tied to rising levels of wealth and leisure time gave recreation, along with the outdoors more generally, added cachet at a moment when large numbers of Americans were choosing to spend their vacations at national parks, national forests, and other state and local public lands. Advocates who had long been eager to increase spending on recreation activities used this momentum to lobby for a huge new investment of federal funds. These monies would be directed toward upgrading existing sites, many of which had fallen into disrepair during World War II and its immediate aftermath, and toward acquiring new locations, especially near growing metropolitan areas.<sup>76</sup>

In making the case for support of recreation, proponents, including public officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations, successfully tied their agenda to a particular set of ideas about white American manhood and national identity, one explicitly linked to the nation's expansionist past as well as more recent concerns over juvenile delinquency, affluence,

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<sup>76</sup> During and immediately after World War II, ideas of masculinity and masculine action occupied a prominent place in American society. One historian referred to the attitude as a "cult of toughness." The growing prevalence of white collar office work and expanded leisure time appeared to threaten this "toughness," however, creating a panic of sorts among politicians and public commentators. For more on this moment, see Donald Mrozek, "The Cult and Ritual of Toughness in Cold War America," in *Rituals and Ceremonies in Popular Culture*, ed. Ray B. Browne (Bowling Green, 1980), 178. Other scholars have referred to the 1950s as a moment of "masculinity crisis," comparing it to the Progressive Era. See James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 16.

and expanded leisure time.<sup>77</sup> Their rhetoric, which often echoed that of Theodore Roosevelt and other turn-of-the-century public figures, added Cold War angst to the earlier era's arguments for a return to the "strenuous life."

This strategy, the coupling of the outdoors to amorphous, yet powerful sentiments such as patriotism, hard work, and thrift, not to mention the "frontier" of a violent and expansionist nation-state that present-day scholars refer to as settler colonialist proved effective in convincing a broad swath of the country to support expanded federal involvement in the management and protection of public lands – though the particulars of how this involvement would, in fact, play out remained murky in many cases. Within a few years, the federal government had considerably expanded its role in protecting open space and promoting recreation, eventually making outdoor recreation a leading domestic priority. The implementation of Mission 66 and the creation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission stand as key successes in this campaign, laying the foundation for the dramatic increase in federal action that would define the next twenty years of American conservation history.

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<sup>77</sup> This is not to imply that US colonialism had come to an end; rather, that the images invoked were drawn from an earlier historical period.

## Chapter 2

### The Cape Cod Formula

National Park Service Director Conrad “Connie” Wirth did not expect an especially friendly reception when he arrived at a public meeting in Eastham, Massachusetts, on the evening of March 23, 1959. Indeed, he later recalled “a feeling of uneasiness in the pit of my stomach” regarding the events about to unfold.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of four hours the assembled crowd, which numbered roughly 550, peppered Wirth with comments regarding the agency’s plan to create a new national seashore on Cape Cod. Questions ranged from the practical, largely centered on eminent domain and its potential use, to the more conspiratorial, such as one speaker who first accused Wirth and the NPS of following “communist doctrines” before demanding to know if the Park Service was intent on destroying the American family. A seasoned public official who was nonetheless taken aback by such an interrogation, Wirth responded simply, “I refuse to answer that question.”<sup>2</sup>

Local politicians pursued a similarly aggressive approach in their queries, alleging that seashore designation would diminish both municipal tax revenues and employment opportunities. Adding to the hostile atmosphere, Wirth’s comments were often met “with hoots,” according to a report in *Boston Globe* published the following day.<sup>3</sup> One meeting attendee eventually grew so frustrated with the director’s assurances regarding condemnation that he shouted, “Take the sand dunes and leave our houses alone.” Another indignantly declared, “We’re going to get crowded out into the deep briny.” Such critiques brought out a grim humor

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad L. Wirth, “Birth Throes of a National Park,” *Think Magazine*, June 1959, 26.

<sup>2</sup> “Eastham Meeting,” *The Cape Codder*, March 26, 1959, <https://www.town.orleans.ma.us/snow-library/pages/special-collections>, accessed September 30, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Falacci, “Cape Cod Storms Park Hearing,” *Boston Globe*, March 24, 1959, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

in Wirth, who answered a question regarding terms of life tenancy within the proposed park with the response, “My life tenancy on this platform may not last until midnight.”<sup>4</sup>

Wirth’s difficulty in addressing the concerns raised by Cape Cod residents, landowners, and civic leaders, should not be surprising. The NPS had limited experience operating in landscapes with as much private property as the Cape. Other sites had certainly included parcels not under government control, but only on rare occasions had the Park Service itself committed to direct acquisition, and certainly not on this scale.<sup>5</sup> Most areas under its control had been carved out of the public domain, with donations by both states and private individuals also occurring in a smaller number of cases.<sup>6</sup>

Cape Cod, with its numerous towns, highways, small businesses, farms, and recreation facilities, presented an entirely different type of challenge. If seashore supporters wanted to limit further growth, especially along the Cape’s stunning Atlantic coastline, they would have to act with speed, ingenuity, and the cooperation of local communities. The distrust evidenced during

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<sup>4</sup> Quotes are from the article “Eastham Meeting” cited above. My description of the Eastham meeting is drawn from the newspaper accounts cited above as well as additional articles published on the same day in the *Cape Codder*. I also reviewed the following sources for their accounts: Thad Lewis Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore: A Study in Conflict” (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1963), 125-127; Francis Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore* (Plymouth, MA: The Leyden Press, 1978), 13-14; Jacqueline A. Mirandola Mullen, “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation: How Postwar Politics and Urban Growth Shaped America’s Shores,” (PhD diss., University at Albany, State University of New York, 2015), 55-56, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; and Wirth, “Birth Throes of a National Park,” 26 – 30.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph L. Sax, “Buying Scenery: Land Acquisitions for the National Park Service,” *Duke Law Journal*, no. 4 (1980), 709 – 740. In this article, Sax contrasts the pre-1960 focus on securing inholdings within parks carved out of the public domain or donations to the purchase of dozens to hundreds of privately owned tracts of land for parks created in the latter decades of the twentieth century. A few older park units also required limited federal acquisition of land besides inholdings, including the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian Trail, see Mirandola Mullen, “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation,” 43 for more detail. Additionally, other park units, especially in the eastern United States had included private property, but acquisition was left to state governments, most notably in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee for the creation of Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Hundreds of private landholders, most of modest means, lost their land to forced condemnation during the creation of these sites. The most prominent instance of an NPS site authorized to purchase large amounts of land before Cape Cod was Minute Man National Historical Park in Concord, MA (designated in 1959).

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps best known among the Park Service’s early private benefactors was John D. Rockefeller. He donated land for Grand Teton National Park, then known as Jackson Hole National Monument, as well as Acadia National Park and Shenandoah National Park. He also provided funds for the expansion of Yosemite National Park in the 1920s.

Wirth's visit made this a decidedly uncertain prospect. Even so, NPS leadership hoped that the Cape Cod proposal would be the first of more than a dozen new national seashores and lakeshores, serving as a model for protected area management in more densely populated regions of the country.

This chapter examines the growing Park Service involvement in coastal areas between roughly 1930 and 1975, with a particular focus on the designation of Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961. It argues that involvement in the protection of shorelines, especially near urban areas, presented a chance for a fundamental re-orientation of the NPS' approach to conservation. Not only would the geographical location of park units change, but so too would their purpose and management. Agency leadership believed that shorelines were crucial to preserving existing recreation opportunities and to growing the number of sites available for use.

As pressures from development and privatization, linked to the country's growing affluence, threatened access to beaches in the postwar period, the Park Service, with backing from Congress as well as the influential Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, emerged as a high profile advocate for intervention by local, state, and federal agencies. Most shorelines, however, especially along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, were already in private hands, making the task of protecting them from further growth that much more difficult. It would take a collaborative and, in all likelihood, expensive effort to ensure that at least some beaches remained open and available for public use.

Though its fate seemed far from assured in 1959, the plan to create a national seashore on Cape Cod was ultimately successful. During the summer of 1961, Congress passed a bill establishing the Cape Cod National Seashore, which President John F. Kennedy quickly signed into law. The legislation's approach, dubbed "the Cape Cod formula," incorporated several

features distinctive in American conservation history. These included: the authorization to use a significant amount of federal funds (up to \$16 million in this bill, with millions more added later) to buy property and/or development rights from individual landowners within a strictly defined boundary; the suspension of federal condemnation authority for improved property so long as the six towns within the national seashore adopted federally-approved zoning ordinances; permission to continue some longstanding natural resource uses; and the creation of a ten-member advisory commission with representation selected by city, county, and state governments to counsel the Secretary of the Interior and the NPS on seashore administration.<sup>7</sup>

All this set Cape Cod National Seashore apart from most other NPS units, which were almost exclusively owned and managed by the agency. Also unusual was the seashore's proximity to a major metropolitan area. NPS did administer many historical sites, but these were usually small in size. As late as 1960, the larger landscapes under its purview were almost always some distance from cities, with a few exceptions such as Olympic and Mount Rainier National Parks in Washington State (near Seattle) and the Everglades National Park in Florida (near Miami).<sup>8</sup> The Lower Cape's diverse mix of property ownership at the time of designation was also unique.

As Jacqueline A. Mirandola Mullen has expertly documented in her research on the national seashore, many of the novel aspects of the Cape Cod legislation reflect the high level of political and cultural prestige enjoyed by a number of residents and landowners. These individuals, who came from the worlds of politics, art, literature, and academia used their

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<sup>7</sup> An Act to Provide for the Establishment of Cape Cod National Seashore, Public Law 87 – 126, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 75 (1961): sec. 1-10, 284 – 293. The details of the law itself are quite complicated and provide, for example, different rules for regulation of commercial and industrial properties.

<sup>8</sup> Data on distance of designated National Parks from cities is found in John P. Keith, "Park Space for Urban America," in *National Parks for the Future* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1982), 183-185. Since the 1930s, the NPS had also managed a number of parks, mostly smaller in size, in Washington, DC.

standing to influence federal policymakers and national media outlets.<sup>9</sup> Other Cape Codders lacked these same high-level connections, but were also effective lobbyists. They wrote letters, attended public meetings, and founded community organizations, all in an attempt to affect the seashore planning process. Though far from unanimous in their views, Lower Cape stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds succeeded in shaping the final bill to an extent far greater than Park Service officials in Washington D.C. had anticipated. Congressman Hastings Keith, whose district included the Cape, explained the importance of these perspectives in a September 1959 speech on the floor of the House of Representatives. “Our bill is more than a statement of principle that preserving shoreline recreational areas deserves our support. It embodies a knowledge of the distinct nature of the area, the people, and the character of the Cape. A national seashore park and the individuality of the Cape can exist together and serve each other with mutual benefit.”<sup>10</sup>

Any one of the elements contained in the Cape Cod formula would independently have made the seashore noteworthy. In combination, the effect was nothing short of radical – at least insofar as the NPS was concerned. For almost a century, the agency had endeavored to remake the parks it managed into ostensibly unspoiled, visitor-centric landscapes that it controlled with minimal outside input. Forced removal of both Native peoples and non-Native residents from within park boundaries was the norm, with dispossession typically followed by a deliberate erasure and even outright denial of human impacts.<sup>11</sup> Long-standing uses, including hunting,

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<sup>9</sup> In her dissertation, Mirandola Mullen provides impressive documentation of the influence of many Cape Cod residents. See Mirandola Mullen, “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation,” 41-42, 59 - 68, 72 – 73, 82 – 89.

<sup>10</sup> Representative Hastings Keith of Massachusetts, speaking on a Bill to Establish a National Seashore Park on Cape Cod, on September 3, 1959, 86<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., *Cong. Rec.* 105, pt. 14: 18025, Hein Online.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the forced removal and subsequent erasure of Indigenous peoples from National Parks see: Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians & National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998); and Mark David

fishing, gathering of food and other items, and agriculture were also curtailed following park designation. As Mark Spence has stated regarding the widespread forced removal of Indigenous peoples, “Uninhabited wilderness has to be created before it can be preserved and this type of landscape became reified in the first national parks.”<sup>12</sup> In pursuing this approach, the NPS hoped to create a wilder, more pristine experience for tourists, regularly prioritizing their needs over those of nearby communities with longstanding connections to the land.

In important ways, the Cape Cod National Seashore legislation outlined a different vision for conservation. It centered on ongoing cooperation among residents, local governments, and federal officials, rather than unilateral NPS action. It also gave significant consideration to the needs of existing stakeholders, in addition to potential visitors, though in the case of the Cape, a large number of local residents were themselves already engaged in the business of marketing the landscape to outsiders.<sup>13</sup>

The mixed ownership patterns, especially the very limited existing federal presence, presented lawmakers and the NPS with both a challenge and an opportunity. Instead of unpeopling the landscape, why not permit continued habitation, albeit with additional protections for the environment and historic sites? To this point, such aims had largely been anathema to many American conservationists, who had seen exclusive government ownership and administrative prerogative as the ideal conditions for protected area administration.

As the first of what would be thirteen national seashores and lakeshores designated between 1961 and 1975, Cape Cod appeared to mark the beginning of a new era. Public access to

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Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive history of the tourism industry on the Cape, see James C. O’Connell, *Becoming Cape Cod: Creating a Seaside Resort* (Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire & University Press of New England, 2003).

the outdoors would be expanded, while allowing for the continuation of earlier uses. So significant, in fact, was the Cape Cod legislation that at a meeting held at NPS offices in Philadelphia shortly before the seashore's establishment, Northeast Regional Director Daniel Tobin reportedly told his staff, "Next to the Organic Act creating the National Park System, the Cape Cod bill is the second most important legislation in park history. There will be a different kind of park management than before. It will be difficult, but we will do our best to live up to it."<sup>14</sup> It is important to note here though, that despite its transformative language, the Cape Cod bill made no effort either to ensure equitable access to Park Service sites or to address claims to land or resources by communities, especially Native peoples, that had been forcibly removed in the past.

As demand for recreation surged in increasingly urbanized areas with few, if any, existing national park sites, the Cape Cod formula, with its reliance on zoning and purchase from willing sellers, offered a way to expand the supply of park units without resorting to the more politically fraught option of condemnation. In a speech delivered shortly after the seashore's creation, President Kennedy predicted that Cape Cod would become a template for later efforts, "I think we are going to need a good deal more efforts like this, particularly in the more highly developed urban areas, where so many millions of people now live...I know that the Government and the Congress will work together in seeing how they can carry on similar projects in other parts of the country."<sup>15</sup> American conservation, it seemed, would be re-made along the windswept sands of

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with George Palmer by Charles Foster, October 10, 1975 as quoted in Charles H.W. Foster, *The Cape Cod National Seashore: A Landmark Alliance* (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 1985), 66.

<sup>15</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Remarks Upon Signing Bill Authorizing the Cape Cod National Seashore Park," August 7, 1961, made available online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8273>.

eastern Massachusetts, in a landscape that the writer Henry David Thoreau famously described as a place where a man might stand and “put all America behind him.”<sup>16</sup>

The Cape Cod National Seashore marked a potentially revolutionary moment for conservation practice in the United States, but its impact, especially within the NPS, initially proved limited. The seashore certainly set a new standard for inter-governmental cooperation within national park boundaries, but its model, especially the use of zoning as an alternative to full fee acquisition, did not spread quickly within the agency. Neither did the use of advisory commissions. Instead, for more than a decade, the NPS continued to largely prize internal expertise and its national mission over a more balance approach that recognized the ongoing need to incorporate local and / or non-federal perspectives. Most park units remained largely under NPS control, and, even in those with mixed ownership patterns, the Park Service still controlled decision-making. This pattern reflected the NPS vision of itself as an agency serving a coast-to-coast public, the “Mr. and Mrs. America and their youngsters” identified in the 1956 Mission 66 brochure (see chapter 1) rather than an organization with any particular duty to meet the needs or demands of more local constituencies. Significantly, exceptions to this outlook would eventually emerge in the late 1970s as 1) communities and their elected leaders became more adept at bypassing the Park Service during their push for federal recognition, 2) new regulations like the National Environmental Policy Act, mandated community consultation and 3) the Park Service became more comfortable with power-sharing arrangements like advisory boards and commissions.

In the interim, for many of the seashores, lakeshores, and other new units created after 1960, the potential for condemnation and/or involuntary removal remained in place. Laura Watt, a historian who has examined the history of land tenure and use at Point Reyes National

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<sup>16</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Cape Cod* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 252.

Seashore in northern California, notes, “The U.S. National Park ideal, developed in the late nineteenth century, allows no space for residents and their relationships with the land, even if those relationships are the very activities that shaped the land into something worthy of preserving.”<sup>17</sup> Cape Cod, with its novel approaches to land use and park management, offered a compelling alternative to the “U.S. National Park ideal,” referenced by Watt, but, for more than a decade after its creation, it proved to be less a model and more an exception to the agency’s conservation practices.

It is important to note here that the “local perspectives” I reference in the above paragraphs often skewed towards individuals and groups already quite experienced in influencing and exercising power. All local voices were thus not equally included in the limited conservations that did occur and, of course, these views were not unanimous. Moreover, some residents and landowners advocated for actions that could seriously threaten the integrity of parklands, often through residential or industrial development. My argument is not to unequivocally advocate for the positions of locals and longtime users at the expense of the NPS or others from outside a particular region who might nonetheless care deeply about a landscape. Rather, it is to acknowledge the importance of a genuine give-and-take with those most affected by federal actions: to encourage a process that recognizes the potential hardships and difficulties (and the many benefits) that might result from park designation as well as the need to be cognizant of longstanding structural inequities that amplify some voices and silence others.<sup>18</sup>

### *New Deal Origins of Federal Seashore Conservation*

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<sup>17</sup> Watt, *The Paradox of Preservation*, 154.

<sup>18</sup> Local perspectives were, of course, far from unanimous, unbiased, or inclusive. Most of the voices influencing park policy on the Cape, for example, came from the middle-class (developers, town officials) and elites. Joseph L. Sax, a legal scholar who has written extensively on conservation, explores these tensions in regards to NPS decision-making in his article, “Do Communities Have Rights: The National Parks as a Laboratory of New Ideas,” *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 45 (1983): 499 - 511.

In a 1938 speech to mark the dedication of a new state park in Missouri, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes articulated a concern that had been rankling federal park planners and others interested in conservation for several decades: the rapid privatization of America's shorelines. "When we look up and down the ocean fronts of America, we find that everywhere they are passing behind the fences of private ownership," Ickes declared. "The people can no longer get to the ocean."<sup>19</sup> For Ickes, this decline in public access demanded immediate attention and more. He envisioned the acquisition, by federal and state authorities, of large stretches of coastline, preferably sections approaching hundreds of miles in length. "The people," he declared, "have a right to a fair share" of the country's beaches, even land profitable for private interests.<sup>20</sup>

Ickes' disquiet was based on more than just anecdotal observation. For several years, the federal government had been engaged in an unprecedented survey of the country's natural resources, an effort that included documenting existing and potential outdoor recreation opportunities in every state. As detailed in chapter 1, the NPS took a leading role in these initiatives, contributing to several recreation-centric publications throughout the New Deal era.<sup>21</sup> Among these were a series of "Seashore Recreational Area Studies," begun in 1934, which aimed to identify potential new national park units along the nation's shorelines. At the time, despite the popularity of water-based leisure activities, only a handful of federal park sites had

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<sup>19</sup> Harold L. Ickes as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 125.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> In 1934, for example, the National Park Service, acting under the aegis of the the Land Planning Committee of the National Resources Board, completed a far-reaching report entitled *Recreational Use of Land in the United States*. Its publication marked the first time the federal government had ever attempted to document outdoor recreation opportunities for the country as a whole, including lands managed by executive branch agencies as well as state and local holdings. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Recreational Use of Land in the United States. Part XI of the Report on Land Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938). In 1936, Congress passed the Park, Parkway and Recreational Area Study Act, which directed the National Park Service to survey and rank lands throughout the country according to their recreational potential – though Department of Agriculture lands, including National Forests, were excluded. The final product, *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States*, featured reports, with accompanying maps, on 34 states.

any significant beach frontage. Park Service officials hoped to remedy this situation by conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the nation's coastlines with recreation in mind: an effort that had never before been undertaken in such detail.

After roughly a year of intensive review, the NPS identified twelve Atlantic and Gulf Coast sites as suitable for possible designation. The agency also recommended that an additional twenty locations be prioritized for protection by state governments. A January 1935 cover memo to Secretary Ickes from NPS Director Arno Cammerer summarized the survey findings. It included information on the size of each area proposed for federal acquisition, the length of oceanfront available, and the estimated purchase cost. Cammerer stressed the potential of seashore parks to be a recreation destination for urban residents, noting that, "the most important item is the population living sufficiently close to it to make use of it on one-day or week-end trips." From the perspective of the Park Service, immediate and rather dramatic action was necessary to ensure that beaches remained open to the public. To this end, Cammerer proposed a goal of ten percent public ownership, roughly 400 miles of Atlantic and Gulf Coast frontage, as the minimum needed to ensure continued access.<sup>22</sup>

Although NPS planners found Cape Cod's undeveloped beaches compelling, they were not among the 12 locations forwarded to Ickes for consideration. A November 1934 memorandum revealed the rationale for this decision. "Massachusetts has always guarded its state rights, and has never approved government ownership, particularly of its coastline," the letter explained. "Cape Cod has the scenic, recreation and historic values sought for in a national seashore park, but it would be most difficult to acquire any area in this highly developed playground. Regardless of this difficulty, there will no doubt always be a desire for park

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<sup>22</sup> Memorandum from National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, January 2, 1935, as cited in Library of Congress, Environment and Natural Resources Policy Division, *Past Federal Surveys of Shoreline Recreation Potential*, 2,3.

development on Cape Cod.”<sup>23</sup> Only a few years later, in 1939, the Park Service reversed course and did sponsor a study of the southeast Massachusetts coastline, including Cape Cod.

Completed by landscape architect Thomas H. Desmond, the report made several bold recommendations, including construction of a historic parkway running the length of the Cape and extensive land acquisition (roughly 30,000 acres) throughout the entire area, with an eye towards recreation and public use.<sup>24</sup>

Much of the impetus for the New Deal-era seashore work came from future Park Service Director Conrad Wirth, who was then overseeing NPS-run Civilian Conservation Corps projects in state parks across the country. Born in 1899, Wirth spent many of his formative years in and around urban parks. His father, Theodore Wirth, served as superintendent of first Hartford and later the Minneapolis city park systems, an experience that shaped the younger Wirth’s own perspective on urban recreation and open space.<sup>25</sup> In 1923, he earned a degree in landscape architecture from the Massachusetts Agricultural College (later the University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and then entered private practice in New Orleans. Five years later, after his architecture firm went under during the Great Depression, Wirth accepted a position with what was then the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) in Washington, D.C. Established by Congress in 1924, the NCPPC had broad responsibility for the parks, parkways and playgrounds of the capital city and its environs. It was one of a handful of regional planning efforts launched during the 1920s and would later prove significant in influencing New Deal projects.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Memorandum from National Park Service Assistant Director Conrad Wirth to National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer, November 13, 1934, as cited in Library of Congress, Environment and Natural Resources Policy Division, *Past Federal Surveys of Shoreline Recreation Potential*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas W. Doe, “The New Deal Origins of the Cape Cod National Seashore,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 149; Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 5; Mirandola Mullen, “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation,” 22.

<sup>25</sup> Wolfgang Saxon, “Conrad L. Wirth, 93; Led National Parks Service,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1993, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>26</sup> Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 15.

Wirth joined the NPS as Assistant Director for the Branch of Lands in February 1931, with duties that included the oversight of land acquisition for new and existing park units. He also served as primary liaison between the NPS and its partners in state government. While in this position, Wirth played a pivotal role in expanding Park Service involvement in various emergency relief programs, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Famous for his planning and administrative skills, he oversaw the development of CCC camps in over 100 state parks. Wirth also spearheaded the creation of more than 40 recreational demonstration projects in states across the country. These projects, which varied in size from small wayside areas adjacent to highways to large parks with camping and hiking facilities, proved to be a key part of the Park Service's New Deal program.<sup>27</sup> Wirth, who felt personal ownership of the effort, described the demonstration areas as "Newcomers to the recreation field...they are part of the recreation renaissance, directed at the proper use of resources and the personal health and happiness of the people."<sup>28</sup>

Throughout his 33-year Park Service career, Wirth advocated for growing recreation opportunities in the national park system, an emphasis that likely had much of its origins in these New Deal experiences. As detailed in chapter one, his push for public access often earned the wrath of those who saw these efforts, such as road construction, as damaging to the ecology and the aesthetics of park units – claims that did, in fact, have merit given the tremendous scale of infrastructure completed during his tenures. This conflict, between preservation and use, had long bedeviled Park Service officials, because their agency's 1916 Organic Act called for both "unimpaired" conservation and public "enjoyment" of NPS sites. Disputes regarding the relative significance of the two missions reached a crescendo during the 1950s and early 1960s, when

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 73 – 93 and 103 – 157; Carr, *Mission 66*, 28 – 29, 40- 45.

<sup>28</sup> Fanning Hearon, "3-Day Convention Will Take Stock of America's Parks," *Washington Post*, January 19, 1936, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

Wirth, now NPS Director, launched his massive building and modernization program, Mission 66. It provoked a fierce backlash, especially among wilderness advocates who decried the initiative's effects on less visited areas with little tourist infrastructure.<sup>29</sup> Though initiated separately, the postwar push for seashores and lakeshores eventually became enmeshed in the Mission 66 agenda, as Wirth linked shoreline preservation to his broader goals for enhanced access to recreation at NPS units.<sup>30</sup>

All this lay in the future, however. By the late 1930s, Wirth and his NPS colleagues had produced a wealth of documentation demonstrating the need for shoreline conservation, yet little tangible action had come as a result. Only one of the twelve sites proposed in 1935 gained congressional authorization before World War II and even that location, Cape Hatteras in North Carolina, suffered from a lack of state or federal funds for land acquisition. Along with most domestic conservation efforts, the drive to protect coastlines would fade as a priority during the war years. The costs of fighting on multiple fronts, along with a lack of gasoline for automobile transport, undercut federal interest in the issue. The Park Service budget was also slashed during this time from \$21 million in 1940 to only \$5 million in 1943. It would not recover until the late 1950s, despite the surge in visitation after 1945.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, outside funding, in the form of grants from the private, Mellon-family affiliated Old Dominion and Avalon foundations, would be necessary to revive the seashore effort.<sup>32</sup>

Wirth's New Deal-era push to protect the country's shoreline had garnered interest but little in the way of concrete action. The Seashore Recreational Area Studies, along with other

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<sup>29</sup> Carr, *Mission 66*, 12 – 15, 255 - 289; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 185 – 191; and Runte, *National Parks*, 173 – 179.

<sup>30</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 199-201.

<sup>31</sup> Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 452.

<sup>32</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 199-200; Theodore Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore: The Creation and Administration of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2000), 16.

NPS planning and research, revealed the need for coastal parks, but Congress remained loath to provide the funding necessary to secure beachfront land for long-term public use. This approach would change in the postwar period, as the country's growing prosperity, coupled with increasing demand for outdoor recreation opportunities by newly affluent suburbanites, prompted Congress and the NPS to act more decisively on the issue.

### *The Post World War II Recreation Boom*

Outdoor recreation boomed after World War II. Pent-up demand coupled with increased wages, urbanization, expanded access to vacation time, and a growing network of interstate highways, all contributed to a surge in the number of Americans spending time hiking, biking, boating, bird-watching, fishing, hunting and camping. According to an estimate by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), an astounding 90 percent of the American population participated in some form of outdoor recreation during the summer of 1960.<sup>33</sup> That same year, well over 70 million visitors made their way to national park units, an increase of more than than 120 percent since 1950.<sup>34</sup>

Beaches were an especially popular destination, both for weekend getaways and for second home construction. The 1962 ORRRC summary report singled out water for its importance as “a focal point of outdoor recreation.”<sup>35</sup> The commission saw shorelines as so significant that it authorized the publication of an entire supplementary report on the issue, “Shoreline Recreation Resources of the United States.” In addition to providing extensive data on the current and potential future uses of beachfront areas, the study lamented the degree to which these lands had been “neglected...as a national recreation resource.” Too often, shoreline

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<sup>33</sup> US Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Outdoor Recreation for America*, 3-4.

<sup>34</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 63.

<sup>35</sup> US Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Outdoor Recreation for America*, 4.

had been “left for acquisition and exploitation,” with little or no thought given to access or environmental protection.<sup>36</sup>

The result, not surprisingly, was a country whose coasts, especially along the eastern seaboard and Great Lakes, were largely privatized, with a scant 5 to 7 percent available to the public for recreation.<sup>37</sup> This number, the report emphasized, actually underestimated the problem, because visitation was overwhelmingly concentrated at a limited number of sites within a few hours drive of major metropolitan areas. Beaches such as Atlantic City in New Jersey and Jones Beach on Long Island welcomed huge crowds each summer weekend and holiday. Traffic jams and overflow parking became the norm. Eight beaches in the New York City metropolitan area were so popular that the estimated total attendance in 1959 was over 65 million.<sup>38</sup>

Describing the conditions at local shorelines that summer, the *New York Times* reported that “a solid metallic flow of traffic” could be seen filling roads on Long Island and in New Jersey. Jones Beach was so crowded that cars had to be turned away from its massive parking lots beginning at 11 a.m.<sup>39</sup>

Heavy use and privatization created significant environmental problems as well. Construction of new roads, parking lots, hotels, condominiums, restaurants and other infrastructure all threatened fragile coastal ecosystems. In his autobiography, Conrad Wirth lamented that as early as the 1920s, developers were “leveling off dunes to build houses” in

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<sup>36</sup> George Washington University and US Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Shoreline Recreation Resources of the United States: Report to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 10.

<sup>37</sup> The remaining areas had been spared, in large part, due to their lack of accessibility for cars. Some were islands, while others could only be reached via back roads. In a smaller number of cases, including Georgia’s Cumberland Island, wealthy families or individuals owned large tracts of land. For more on Cumberland Island, see Lary M. Dilsaver, *Cumberland Island National Seashore: A History of Conservation Conflict* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> George Washington University et al, *Shoreline Recreation Resources of the United States*, 4.

<sup>39</sup> “Warm, Crystalline Day Sends City to Beaches,” *New York Times*, Jul 27, 1959, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

order to speed along the process of subdivision.<sup>40</sup> The heavy equipment needed for building destroyed beach grasses and buried wetlands and marshes. Erosion, which often led to property damage during storms, occurred as a result. Coastal wildlife also suffered tremendously during the postwar boom, from both a loss of habitat and increased exposure to pollutants, especially at beaches in or near cities. Migrating birds that relied on barrier islands and other coastal sites as key stopover locations experienced a decline in numbers. Marine life, including oysters, crabs, seals, dolphins and whales, were also threatened by the rapid change.

Shoreline development could, of course, be hazardous to humans too. Sewage and industrial waste as well as ship discharge all affected water quality. Pollution in Lake Michigan, for example, caused officials to shut down beaches in both Milwaukee and Chicago during the summers of 1961 and 1962. Lake Erie beaches near Cleveland and Detroit also closed throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s for fear of possible contamination from “sewage and industrial effluents.” Sites on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts faced hazards as well, leading to closures in the Los Angeles and New York metropolitan areas. The ORRRC report decried these types of events, noting that such condition could “destroy the recreational value of the beaches.”<sup>41</sup>

The rapid development of the country’s shorelines generated both material and existential worries that echoed broader debates over outdoor recreation and land use. Concerns over pollution, for example, were compounded by fears of what the loss of coastal access might mean for the American “character” writ large. Thanks to their tremendous popularity, seashores emerged as an especially potent symbol of the amenities that postwar development could jeopardize.

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<sup>40</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 192.

<sup>41</sup> George Washington University et al, *Shoreline Recreation Resources of the United States*, 19-20, 84.

Yet, paradoxically, despite the attention focused on recreation, access to the outdoors, including beaches, remained highly uneven. Low levels of funding for conservation throughout the 1940s and 1950s discouraged action on the issue. Those places closest to population centers faced the most severe threats from overuse and development, but had no obvious way to access federal funds for preservation. The situation called for novel approaches, including collaboration - a challenge for the NPS, which had long been accustomed to operating with little involvement from either the public or local and state counterparts.

### *Our Vanishing Shoreline*

In the face of record recreational seashore use, Conrad Wirth, NPS Director since 1951, pursued his vision of adding new coastal areas to the national park system. With Congress and the tight-fisted Eisenhower administration generally unwilling to allocate new monies to the agency, however, that goal initially appeared far-fetched. Mission 66 would not be launched for five years yet, in the interim, the agency continued to face tens of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance of roads and trails, chronic understaffing, and inadequate housing for employees and visitors.

Wirth knew he needed to look beyond the federal government for support to achieve his aims for coastal conservation. One important source of funding was private donors. The Mellon family, in particular, provided millions of dollars through the Old Dominion and Avalon Foundations. These funds financed a series of updated seashore studies and land acquisition in select locations, including Cape Hatteras and, later, Cumberland Island, Georgia.<sup>42</sup>

Paul Mellon and his sister Ailsa Mellon Bruce, children of Andrew Mellon, had a keen interest in shoreline preservation, driven in part by their ownership of land in states along the eastern seaboard. George Hartzog, Jr., who succeeded Wirth as NPS director in 1964, regarded

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<sup>42</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 199-200; Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore*, 16.

the Mellon family as pivotal figures in Park Service history. In his autobiography, Hartzog described the Mellons “devoted to the National Park System,” and noted that they donated funds not only to shoreline conservation but also toward the establishment of the White House Rose Garden and the refurbishment of Lafayette Park in Washington, DC.<sup>43</sup> Paul Mellon was an especially hands-on philanthropist, even accompanying Park Service planners on their survey work in the field.<sup>44</sup> He also supported private nature conservancies as well as state and local parks, donating land to the state of Virginia for the establishment of Sky Meadows State Park at the northern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

With the help of the Mellon funds, the NPS would complete detailed surveys, both by aerial photography and by ground reconnaissance, of the Atlantic, Gulf, Pacific and Great Lakes coastlines. In 1955, the first study deemed 16 areas stretching from Maine to Texas as worthy of federal designation. Park Service planners prioritized seashores that were “undeveloped” or “only sparsely developed in relation to the density of improvements within the general vicinity.” Also important were qualities such as “vastness, contrast, picturesqueness, or a combination of those intangible elements that are generally recognized as contributing to inspiration, understanding, and appreciation.”<sup>45</sup> Another factor driving selection was recreation potential, especially whether NPS would be able to site facilities, like roads, campgrounds, and parking lots near the beaches, all of which would likely threaten the “undeveloped” character of the landscapes that the agency appeared to prize so highly.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the key finding of the 1955 report, which focused on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, was the “startlingly small amount of undeveloped seashore...” remaining for

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<sup>43</sup> George B. Hartzog, *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1988), 198.

<sup>44</sup> Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *A Report on a Seashore Recreation Area Survey of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1955), 1.

public use.<sup>46</sup> Only 6.5 percent (240 miles out of 3,700 miles total) fell under local, state or federal control. That number was even more dismal from the Park Service perspective when it considered that most of those lands were in three sites: Acadia National Park in Maine, Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina and the Everglades National Park in Florida. Also daunting were the costs associated with acquiring property in these regions. The NPS estimated, for example, that “an undeveloped area 30 miles long recommended as a national seashore in 1935 could have been purchased for \$260,000, about \$9000 a mile. Today only nine miles remain undeveloped, and they would bring \$110,000 a mile - an increase of 1100 percent in 20 years.”<sup>47</sup>

In the hope of prompting quick action, the Park Service released *Our Vanishing Shoreline* in 1955. The visually appealing promotional document used evocative prose and striking imagery, such as desolate beaches juxtaposed with crowded, carnival-like boardwalks, to highlight the effects of rapid development on America’s beaches. Lamenting the speed at which commercial and private interests had already restricted public access to coastal areas, the report called for the initiation of a significant land acquisition program, with an ultimate goal of more than doubling the holdings of state, federal and local entities.

According to the NPS, the seashore “had become Big Business,” with more and more people getting “the seashore habit.” Fifty years earlier, the report claimed, “a boy could go five miles from the populous city of Boston, spend the day combing the beach or digging mud clams in the estuaries, and seldom see another human being within shouting distance.” Now, lamented the study’s authors, with only a nominal amount of coastal land secured for public use, such

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<sup>46</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Pacific Coast Recreation Area Survey* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1959), 2.

<sup>47</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Our Vanishing Shoreline* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1955), 25, 12.

diversions were all but inconceivable. Almost “every attractive seashore area from Maine to Mexico that is accessible by road has been developed, has been acquired for development purposes, or is being considered for its development possibilities,” bemoaned the report.<sup>48</sup> Only a fraction of the coast remained available for recreation, and even this “small portion is rapidly disappearing before our eyes.”

The report cast growth and development as destructive agents, with non-human nature represented as a passive victim of “progress.” Redemption remained possible, however. Park Service management, by means of national seashore designation, would do much to stem the decline. Summarizing his hopes for the report in a short introductory note, NPS Director Wirth explained, the survey “will have served its purpose well if public-minded citizens and local, State, and Federal governments are stirred to take necessary steps - before it is too late - to preserve this priceless heritage.”<sup>49</sup> More specifically, Wirth and others in NPS leadership envisioned a much-expanded role for the agency, with a broader geographic footprint, more recreation-centric programming, and expanded services for those in population centers.

*Our Vanishing Shoreline* received substantial coverage in the local and national press. *The New York Times*, for example, featured an article, “Conservation: Our Ocean Beaches,” that highlighted the “tragic story of how the American people have allowed to slip out of their hands one of the unique natural resources, the ocean shoreline.”<sup>50</sup> Likewise, the *Washington Post* ran a feature on the report. Entitled “Shorelines Vanish Under Human Tide,” the article highlighted the loss of coastal zones, noting that the “unspoiled seacoasts which so many of us enjoyed in our youth and which could still be found 10 years ago are pretty much a past memory for most of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.,12, 7-8, 27, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.,3.

<sup>50</sup> John B. Oakes, "Conservation: Our Ocean Beaches, Park Service Reports On State of Nation's Shore Areas," *New York Times*, August 5, 1956, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

those living in the populous East.”<sup>51</sup> Each story looked back nostalgically at a bygone era, depicting the nation’s coasts as untouched, unpopulated, and wild, rather than as landscapes long shaped by human activity.

Both the newspaper coverage and the report itself evinced an uncertainty about postwar prosperity and unbridled growth more generally. On multiple occasions, the authors of *Our Vanishing Shoreline* decried the effects of the market on seashore landscapes, writing, for example that, “beachfront holdings respond to the inevitable law of supply and demand. The supply of such land is fast dwindling; the number of people seeking to acquire property is skyrocketing – and so is the price.”<sup>52</sup> This echoed the language used by Interior Secretary Harold Ickes two decades earlier when he made a similar push for seashore conservation during the New Deal. Such doubt regarding the “march of progress,” to use a term found in the report, reflected broader concerns about affluence explored in chapter 1, especially the pace of change associated with new development. In this way, I argue, coastal conservation, as well as mid-century park creation more generally, served as an important - if imperfect – means of questioning the value of unrestrained markets and investment flows. That expression of doubt attracted interest at a moment when few such critiques existed.

Momentum generated by the report garnered the attention of some federal lawmakers, who were already primed to act by their constituents’ growing demand for outdoor recreation. On July 12, 1956, western Massachusetts Congressman John Heselton made a floor speech touting *Our Vanishing Shoreline* as “one of the most significant and challenging reports” ever released by the NPS. He highlighted Cape Cod, along with Cumberland Island, Georgia, and Fire Island, New York, as the agency’s top priorities. Heselton described seashore conservation as

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<sup>51</sup> Istron R. Barnes, "Shorelines Vanish Under Human Tide," *Washington Post*, August 19, 1956, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>52</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, 11.

“worthy of the fullest and promptest kind of consideration on the part of individual citizens, groups, organizations and of Congress.”<sup>53</sup> He even submitted the entire text of *Our Vanishing Shoreline* for inclusion into the Congressional record. A former legislative aide to Massachusetts Senator Leverett Saltonstall has speculated that Heselton made the speech, which did not affect his own district, as a favor to his old college friend, Conrad Wirth, now NPS Director.<sup>54</sup> Whatever the reason for Heselton’s endorsement, his actions marked the beginning of what would soon become a surge in congressional activity regarding the country’s shorelines.

The 1950s were a definitive turning point in the federal government’s commitment to conservation. Outdoor recreation, especially, emerged as a national priority as Congress reacted to both practical and cultural concerns. The National Park Service, a leader in recreation since at least the 1930s, responded with an ambitious program of expansion, culminating in its one billion dollar Mission 66 initiative. The creation of new coastal parks, though initially a separate venture, ultimately became closely tied to other efforts at agency expansion.

Despite the NPS’ firm belief in the value of protecting public access to the country’s shorelines, the practical details of specific preservation projects remained elusive. How exactly would the NPS create a park or parks in landscapes with existing development (roads, housing, schools, commercial buildings) and little to no government ownership? Could protection be achieved without displacement of residents and landowners? Would the costs of acquiring land be too high?<sup>55</sup> Building on the momentum of *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, the agency set forth to

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<sup>53</sup> Representative John Heselton of Massachusetts addressing the release of *Our Vanishing Shoreline* by the National Park Service, *Cong. Rec.* 84<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., July 12, 1956, vol. 102, pt. 9: 12579 – 12582, Hein Online.

<sup>54</sup> Representative Heselton attended Amherst College while Wirth attended the nearby University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Peter Healey, “The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act: How an Executive Agency Assisted in Resurrecting and Expanding a Dormant Public Policy,” (Master’s Thesis, Georgetown University, 1967), 21. Peter Healey, who served as an aide to Senator Saltonstall, provides a detailed and well-researched account of the Cape Cod National Seashore designation process in the thesis referenced above.

<sup>55</sup> As early as 1955, the NPS had identified the Great Beach of Cape Cod as one of its top priorities for coastal conservation, but agency leadership remained uncertain as to the best course of action. In the *Seashore*

answer these questions, with Cape Cod, long an agency priority, serving as the inaugural test case.

### *Cape Cod and the Leisure Boom*

Extending like a bent arm off the southeast coast of Massachusetts, Cape Cod juts first 40 miles east and then 20 miles north into the Atlantic Ocean. Its gently rolling topography, formed some 15,000 years ago by receding glaciers, never rises more a few hundred feet above sea level, rendering the entire peninsula susceptible to the harsh winds, rains, and storm water surges common to coastal New England. Hundreds of freshwater lakes and kettle-hole ponds, also a product of the ice age, dot the landscape, as do creeks, salt marshes, mudflats and large boulders.<sup>56</sup> The Cape's contemporary form, the iconic hook or arm, likely took shape about 3,500 years ago, when rising sea levels submerged the moraines and glacial sediments left behind by melting ice sheets.<sup>57</sup>

In 1928, naturalist and writer Henry Beston published *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod*, an evocative account of his time living in Eastham. Beston's descriptions of the coastal landscape captured the beauty and the ephemerality of life on the Atlantic shoreline, offering a glimpse of what attracted Park Service planners (and, of course, millions of others) to the Cape throughout the twentieth century. "The long miles of beach are never more beautiful than when waves are rolling in fighting a strong breeze. Then do the

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*Recreation Area Survey of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts*, for example, NPS planners gave Cape Cod top billing on a list of 15 potential sites, but still remained cautious, declaring that, "...Careful study should be given... to the possible boundaries of this area in order to determine if acquisition of its natural features without excessive cost is feasible." The Great Beach was a priority, albeit one that presented unprecedented challenges. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *A Report on a Seashore Recreation Area Survey of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts*, 9

<sup>56</sup> John T. Crumbler, *Cape Cod: An Environmental History of a Fragile Ecosystem* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 16-18; University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, *People and Places on the Outer Cape: A Landscape Character Study* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2004), 15.

<sup>57</sup> University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, *People and Places on the Outer Cape: A Landscape Character Study*, 15.

breakers seem to actually charge the coast. As they approach, the wind meets them in the shock of war, the chargers rear but go on, and the wind blows back their manes.”<sup>58</sup> Fittingly enough, a massive winter Nor’easter, the so-called “Great Storm of 1978,” claimed Breston’s cottage along with three other nearby structures. Winds gusts of over ninety miles per hour, coupled with a punishing storm surge, remade the coast, reducing dunes near the site of Breston’s house to small mounds in only a few hours.<sup>59</sup>

When discussing the Cape’s geography, residents often split the peninsula into two sections, the Lower Cape and the Upper Cape, with the dividing line falling roughly at the point where the “arm” begins to bend.<sup>60</sup> The Lower Cape, which stretches north from the town of Chatham (at the “elbow”) to Provincetown at the tip, is especially striking. The Atlantic coast, (sometimes called the Outer Cape) is made up of a continuous stretch of sand, dunes, and cliffs known as the Great Beach. It was this area, which includes land in six municipalities (Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans and Chatham) that formed the core of the national seashore. In 1961, at the time of designation, the Lower Cape had a far smaller population and less commercial development than the Upper Cape, though construction rates had increased rapidly in the former throughout the 1950s. It was not an explicit desire for NPS presence on the Cape, but primarily that pace of change and its potential threats to beach access, environmental quality, and life style that accounted for a large part of the enthusiasm for the seashore’s creation among some residents and landowners.

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<sup>58</sup> Henry Beston, “The Headlong Wave,” excerpt from the *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod*, reprinted in *American Land Forum* IV, no. 4 (Fall 1983): 44.

<sup>59</sup> “Coast Guard Beach – Eastham,” National Park Service, Cape Cod National Seashore, <https://www.nps.gov/caco/planyourvisit/coast-guard-beach-eastham.htm>, accessed August 4, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> More recently, the term “mid-cape” has also come into widespread usage to describe the eastern portion of the “upper arm” before the bend. I have not encountered it with much frequency in the literature from the 1940s – 1960s, however. Usage of the term may be linked to completion of a new “Mid-Cape Highway” in the 1950s.

Cape Cod had long been a destination for vacationers. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, its economy began to move away from natural resource extraction, such as fishing, whaling and agriculture, and towards service industries like tourism and hospitality. The Cape also did not have a deep harbor suitable for steam ships and had no river capable generating power for textile production. With few opportunities for factory work, residents began to leave, moving to nearby urban centers as well as farther west.<sup>61</sup> By 1920, the Cape's population had declined to 26,000, down from 36,000 immediately before the Civil War. Its economic fortunes, like much of New England, appeared uncertain at best.<sup>62</sup>

Soon though, a new industry would take root in the Cape's sandy soils – tourism, initially driven by the late nineteenth-century arrival of the railroad and a popular travelogue by Henry David Thoreau. The dawn of the mass automobile age after World War I would then forever transform the peninsula. While train passengers had been limited in where they could venture, usually staying near rail stops, those traveling by car faced no such limitations. Older resorts and hotels, which had largely served railroad visitors, now faced competition from cottage colonies and campgrounds catering to the automobile tourist.<sup>63</sup> Roadside attractions, such as restaurants theaters, sprang up along major routes. Summer became something unto itself, with the Cape's population doubling and then tripling during the peak months.

Employment patterns also changed dramatically. Cranberry production and maritime work largely gave way to the service sector. Real estate became one of the most important elements of the Cape's economy as rising land values made farming less attractive.<sup>64</sup> Norman Cook,

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<sup>61</sup> Lewis M. Alexander, "The Impact of Tourism on the Economy of Cape Cod, Massachusetts," *Economic Geography* 29, no. 4 (1953): 321-323; Deidre Hirner, "Public Parks on Private Lands: Greenline Parks Protecting Landscapes of National Significance," (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1985), 135; O'Connell, *Becoming Cape Cod*, 8-9.

<sup>62</sup> Alexander, "The Impact of Tourism on the Economy of Cape Cod, Massachusetts," 321-322.

<sup>63</sup> O'Connell, *Becoming Cape Cod*, 54-59.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander, "The Impact of Tourism on the Economy of Cape Cod, Massachusetts," 322-324.

Executive Secretary of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce from 1947 to 1970, commented that the market for land sales dated to at least the 1930s. “Rich people were arriving with plenty of money to buy land at what we thought were unbelievably high prices,” he explained. “Property that had been worthless was slowly becoming more valuable as more and more city dwellers sent their families for a pleasant summer along the shores.”<sup>65</sup> One study called this transformation in the area’s economy “the dramatic shift from living off the land and the sea to living off people...”<sup>66</sup>

Postwar prosperity, along with improved roads, accelerated these trends, and the steady stream of summer tourists became a veritable torrent. By the mid 1950s, over 200,000 visitors were making their way to the Cape during peak season.<sup>67</sup> In 1951, according to one account, the value of tourism to Barnstable County (largely coterminous with the Cape) reached \$70,000,000 compared to \$8,000,000 for agriculture, fishing and manufacturing combined. By 1958, the number of tourism dollars had grown, by NPS estimate, to \$100 million.<sup>68</sup> Locals, not surprisingly, expressed mixed feelings, with one resident noted, “We feed’em quahogs and clams. We don’t have to entertain’em too, do we?”<sup>69</sup>

Since the Lower Cape was within a day’s drive of one-third of Americans, it may seem surprising that it took so long for the area to experience acute development pressures. Long identified as a priority for conservation, the Great Beach and its environs had reached a tipping point by the mid-1950s. In the eyes of NPS officials and their supporters at the local and state levels, now was the time to take action and protect the iconic landscape.

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<sup>65</sup> Norman Cook, as quoted in Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore: A Study in Conflict,” 29.

<sup>67</sup> Alexander, “The Impact of Tourism on the Economy of Cape Cod, Massachusetts,” 323.

<sup>68</sup> Alexander, “The Impact of Tourism on the Economy of Cape Cod, Massachusetts,” 323; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cape Cod Study Group, *A Field Investigation Report on a Proposed National Seashore, Cape Cod, Barnstable County, Massachusetts*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1958), 43.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Ed Smith by Thad Beyle, August 10, 1962, as quoted in Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore,,” 36.

Many Cape Cod residents and landowners were not certain about the benefits of federal involvement. In contrast to other park sites that encountered stiff local resistance, Cape Cod could claim many influential inhabitants. As Jacqueline Mirandola Mullen has documented, former Cabinet officials, celebrated artists and authors, and prominent academics all lived within or adjacent to proposed boundaries.<sup>70</sup> In drafting plans for the Cape, the Park Service, even Washington veteran Conrad Wirth, underestimated the degree to which outside actors could shape the direction of what had previously been a matter of agency prerogative. Even more surprising to Wirth and others in NPS leadership was the ultimate preeminence of local rather than the national perspectives in the final Cape Cod bill. This was a new development for the Park Service, which had long responded to and been a symbol of the American nation writ large, rather than a vehicle for local or regional communities to realize their more particular conservation and preservation aims.

In a 1959 article promoting the seashore idea, Wirth made the case that “Cape Cod was only one small part of a much larger picture, a larger problem” – that of unrestrained postwar growth. In his view, protection of the Great Beach was possible only through federal action. The pressures of the “march of progress,” were simply “too powerful for purely local measures to cope with successfully.”<sup>71</sup> The NPS had the entire country’s interests in mind and would not be swayed by the parochial concerns of a small number of homegrown detractors. Furthermore, Wirth explained, most of the seashore critics did not understand how the agency functioned. In the end, the Park Service director bluntly stated, a handful of residents might indeed suffer, but

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<sup>70</sup> In her dissertation on national seashores and lakeshores, Jacqueline A. Mirandola Mullen has documented in compelling detail the number of wealthy and influential individuals who called the Cape home as well as their important influence on the development of the Cape Cod legislation. At mid-century, the list included: John F. Kennedy advisor and historian Arthur P. Schlesinger, Jr., former U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle, and artists Edward Hopper and Mark Rothko. See Mirandola Mullen, “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation,” 60-61 for a longer list of high-profile residents.

<sup>71</sup> Wirth, “Birth Throes of a National Park,” 28, 29.

that was the price for saving one of “America’s few remaining nationally significant recreation areas... some must make sacrifices.”<sup>72</sup>

Not surprisingly, many Cape Codders, did not meekly assent to this view. Instead, they took action, in concert with the Massachusetts congressional delegation, to ensure that the final national seashore designation bill as well as the area’s subsequent management reflected their specific needs and desires, rather than the more global aspirations of Wirth and the NPS.<sup>73</sup> The result was a groundbreaking piece of legislation, but one that initially proved difficult to transfer to other landscapes threatened with abrupt transformations – whether precipitated by the state, private capital, or both.

#### *Cape Cod National Seashore and the Cape Cod Formula*

The August 30, 1959, edition of the *New York Times* could have been subtitled the “Shoreline Issue.” Not only did it contain a lengthy piece by Oregon Senator Richard Neuberger championing the creation of 10 new coastal National Park units, it also featured a letter to the editor critiquing the proposed Cape Cod National Seashore.<sup>74</sup> The letter’s signatories were prominent Cape Cod residents (many part-time) and landowners, including historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a confidant of John F. Kennedy, and former U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle. They argued that Park Service plans for the Cape would result in widespread condemnation via eminent domain. Hundreds of historic homes, they claimed, faced imminent

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 26 – 30, 30.

<sup>73</sup> For some Cape Codders, the ability to affect the legislation was directly tied to their economic, political, and cultural prestige. Miranda Mullen documents this in depth in her dissertation “Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation.” Other residents did not have the same connections, but still organized to either block or modify NPS plans. For an analysis of what happened in Eastham, see Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore: A Study in Conflict” and for Chatham see Douglas Doe, “The Road to Monomoy: Chatham, Massachusetts, and The Cape Cod National Seashore” (Master’s Thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Richard L. Neuberger, “Plan for Shoreline Parks,” *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1959, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

demolition, with three communities, Truro, Wellfleet, and Eastham, in danger of being “practically wiped out” if the NPS scheme ever became law.<sup>75</sup>

The letter writers reserved particular scorn for an NPS-supported bill introduced by none other than Senator Neuberger, a Democrat who was advocating the creation of national seashore along the Oregon coast. His legislation, they contended, would “empower one man, the Secretary of the Interior, to take over shoreline areas in his sole discretion” Local communities would have little, if any, say in the designation or management process. Instead, the writers called for “immediate collaboration” on the part of federal officials. In their view, the Park Service needed to reach out and partner with affected populations, avoiding the use of eminent domain at all costs. Such cooperative activity would serve as “an example for similar undertakings in the future” in other parts of the country.<sup>76</sup> Cape Cod could still be a model, as the Park Service hoped, but its form would have to evolve significantly in order to garner support from prominent individuals with ties to the Cape like those behind the *New York Times* piece.

It is important to underline that while individuals like Schlesinger, Jr. and Biddle certainly had a connection (emotional, ancestral in the case of Biddle, and tangible, in the form of property) to Cape Cod, their perspectives were quite different than those of a municipal politician, a construction worker, an innkeeper, or a restaurant worker. The writers of the opinion piece were incredibly elite voices that had unprecedented access to power, including the *New York Times*. They thus represented a quasi local-national faction that had the means to compete with the Park Service’s own appeals to America writ large as an audience. The editorial’s message was Cape Cod-centric, but its medium was national in scope and scale. These tactics

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<sup>75</sup> Francis Biddle, Marcel Breuer, Phyllis Duganne, Waldo Frank, George J. Higgins, Edwin O’Connor, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Herbert Wechsler, Edmund Wilson, John C. Worthington, Letter to the Editor, “Park Plan for Cape Cod: Legislation Criticized as Failing to Weigh Communities’ Problems,” *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1959, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

were not immediately replicable in other areas, especially before passage of the National Environment Policy Act inaugurated an era of legally mandated public engagement.<sup>77</sup>

Between 1957 and 1961, members of Congress introduced several bills to designate large parts of the Lower Cape as a national seashore. Some were specific, targeting only Cape Cod, while others, such as those championed by Neuberger, aimed to sweep up multiple seashore and lakeshore proposals into a single piece of legislation. Park Service officials largely advocated the latter approach, as it offered the agency more latitude in determining where new coastal park units might be located as well as how the sites would be administered.

In contrast, residents and landowners and most members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation supported a legislative approach that focused only on the Cape, prioritizing its needs and perspectives. They criticized the Park Service backed omnibus bills as lacking in sufficient on-the-ground input, especially on the issue of boundaries.<sup>78</sup> Many Cape Codders remained highly skeptical of federal involvement, but, if it proved inevitable, they preferred an approach tailored to the specific conditions and geographies of the Lower Cape and would doggedly advocate to ensure that any new law fulfilled that desire.

This was especially true for residents and landowners in the real estate and construction industries, who worried about the seashore's possible effects on future growth and development. In Eastham, for example, where opposition to the proposal ran high, almost a quarter of the work force made a living in construction. In Provincetown, by contrast, the trades were less important and antagonism to the NPS proposal far less prevalent.<sup>79</sup> Eastham would remain a hotbed of

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<sup>77</sup> It is important to note another piece of legislation here, the 1946 Administrative Procedures Act. This law allowed for public comment on proposed agency actions and also judicial review. Karl Boyd Brooks documented its effects in his book *Before Earth Day: The Origins of American Environmental Law, 1945-1970* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> Hirner, "Public Parks as Private Lands," 138 – 139.

<sup>79</sup> This is the argument made by O'Connell in *Becoming Cape Cod*, 113 – 114.

opposition throughout the designation process, with continual pushback against the Park Service proposals regarding boundaries, beach access, and other issues.<sup>80</sup>

The first bills to create a national park on Cape Cod date to the early months of 1957.<sup>81</sup> These pieces of legislation, which never gained much traction, focused not on the Great Beach, but on a section of land along the Cape Cod Canal at the northernmost part of the Cape. Town leaders in Bourne, adjacent to the Canal, hoped that property owned by the Army Corps of Engineers could be converted into a park.<sup>82</sup> In response, the local Representative, Donald Nicholson and Congressman Philip Philbin from east-central Massachusetts, each sponsored a Cape Cod Canal National Park designation bill.<sup>83</sup>

Shortly after introducing his legislation, Philbin contacted the NPS to solicit an opinion on the merits of the proposal. Director Wirth responded in April 1957 that the Park Service would not comment before the Interior Department had an opportunity to examine the proposition in full.<sup>84</sup> In the last paragraph of his letter, however, Wirth did mention that the agency had been considering the creation of a park on the Cape, just in a different location. He noted, “We have been very much interested, however, in the possibility of preservation of the Great Beach Area on the outer cape for public use...The potentialities of the Great Beach Area on Cape Cod are found to be very high, but a much more thorough study is needed...Such a study, which will take

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<sup>80</sup> Thad Lewis Beyle chronicles Eastham debates regarding Seashore designation in great detail in his dissertation, “The Cape Cod National Seashore: A Study in Conflict.”

<sup>81</sup> In telling the story of the four-year legislative process leading to seashore creation, I draw predominately on contemporary newspaper coverage, congressional testimony, and the detailed accounts of two on-the-ground observers, Peter Francis Healey, an aide to Massachusetts Senator Leverett Saltonstall, and Francis Burling, the editor of the weekly *Cape Coddler* newspaper. Healey and Burling offer complementary perspectives, with the former more focused on politics in Washington, DC and the latter, on the responses of Cape Codders to the ongoing machinations of both NPS officials and members of Congress.

<sup>82</sup> Healey, “The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act,” 21.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Conrad Wirth, National Park Service Director, to Honorable Philip Philbin, U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, July 10, 1963 as quoted in Healey, “The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act,” 23-24.

approximately one year to complete, is now being undertaken by this Service with donated funds.” Wirth also enclosed a copy of *Our Vanishing Shoreline* for the congressman’s review.<sup>85</sup>

Philbin, a member of the House since 1942, had little prior experience working on conservation issues, but he took an interest in the Cape Cod proposal after reading the Park Service report.<sup>86</sup> On April 8, 1957, he introduced H.R. 6720, which sought to establish “a Cape Cod National Park.” Short on other details, his bill did allow for federal funds to be used for land acquisition – a departure from the 1937 Cape Hatteras legislation.<sup>87</sup> Neither the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee nor the Department of the Interior took any action. The congressman did not lose his enthusiasm for it. He put forward identical legislation on January 7, 1959, the first day of the 86<sup>th</sup> Congress. This iteration did not gain purchase either, but other events were also transpiring to propel the seashore idea.<sup>88</sup>

As noted earlier, prior to the establishment of Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961, the only seashore park (then known as a National Seashore Recreational Area) was Cape Hatteras in North Carolina. When Congress authorized that seashore in 1937, it barred the use of federal funds for land acquisition. In earlier decades, the common practice of purchasing or condemning private property to facilitate park creation – usually delegated to state government entities – provoked bitter battles over the forced displacement of longtime residents. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, evictions attended the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. Congress established the park in 1926 but forbade the use of federal funds for purchasing land. Instead, state-run commissions (with the aid

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid; Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 10-11.

<sup>86</sup> Healey, “The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act,” 23-24; Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 10-11.

<sup>87</sup> By the mid 1960s, especially after passage of the landmark Land and Water Conservation Fund legislation in 1964, the use of federal monies to buy land for park creation became increasingly common. This trend would continue until the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, with a pause in the mid-70s during the Ford administration.

<sup>88</sup> Healey, “The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act,” 25.

of private funding) took over the acquisition process, at-times buying from willing sellers, but also, ultimately, condemning hundreds of tracts of land. Those who sold their property were further embittered when the bank failures of the 1930s left them landless and broke.<sup>89</sup>

Given this history, it was not surprising that North Carolina officials made little effort to acquire coastal lands following passage of the Hatteras bill. It was not until 1958, twenty-one years after Congress authorized the seashore, that the NPS could finally dedicate the site. Even then, private monies, supplied by the Mellon family, were essential to this process.<sup>90</sup> Public and congressional opinions on conservation had already begun to change, however. The recreation boom, coupled with declining open space in once rural areas, convinced federal elected officials that lands near urban centers had to be preserved. Cape Cod National Seashore became a test case, with Congress, for one of the first times, allocating millions for land procurement in an NPS unit.

As Peter Healey recounts in his history of the Cape Cod legislative process, the April 24, 1958, Cape Hatteras dedication ceremony drew a varied group of federal officials and lawmakers, including Massachusetts Representative Edward Boland. Though his district in and around the city of Springfield was far removed from the Outer Banks, Boland traveled to the event at the invitation of his friend Herbert Bonner, a member of the North Carolina Congressional delegation.<sup>91</sup> Not only did Boland have an opportunity to explore the 100-mile plus seashore during his visit to North Carolina, he also spent time with NPS Director Wirth,

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<sup>89</sup> For more on dispossession in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, see: Pierce "The Barbarism of the Huns," 62-79. For more on Shenandoah National Park, see Reich, "Re-Creating the Wilderness," 95-117.

<sup>90</sup> Langdon Smith, "Cape Hatteras: Birth of the National Seashore," *Historical Geography* 35 (2007): 49.

<sup>91</sup> Healey, "The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act," 25.

who took the opportunity to update the congressman on the Park Service's soon-to-be completed study of Cape Cod.<sup>92</sup>

This important document, entitled *Cape Cod, a Proposed National Seashore Field Investigation Report*, laid out specific boundaries for the proposed park. It also documented the Outer Cape's "natural values," and its "scenic, historic and scientific" interests. Additionally, the report included sections on the Lower Cape's "recreation potential," with an analysis of sites suitable for swimming, camping, and related activities.<sup>93</sup> It drew on themes similar to those found in *Our Vanishing Shoreline* and other earlier studies, repeatedly emphasizing that, "the charms of wild beach, heath, forest, and pond were being obliterated by development." It also highlighted the connection between time spent outdoors and physical and emotional health, arguing that a new national seashore would be especially significant for "the fatigued city dweller."<sup>94</sup>

Once back in Washington, D.C. Boland followed up on his conversations with Wirth. The chance meeting with the NPS leader had piqued his interest in the possibilities of a new national park on the Cape. Among his first actions was a phone call to Park Service staff charged with developing legislation. The congressman asked whether a Cape Cod bill existed and, if so, could he please see a copy. In response, the agency sent over its draft legislation. Shortly thereafter, on May 12, 1958, Boland, and his close friend and colleague Congressman Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, introduced an identical designation bills (H.R. 12449 and H.R. 12456 respectively).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cape Cod Study Group, *A Field Investigation Report on a Proposed National Seashore, Cape Cod, Barnstable County, Massachusetts*, 1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 1, 11.

<sup>95</sup> Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 11; Healey, "The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act," 26.

Both men had only been elected to the House in 1952, and neither had a reputation as a conservationist. Indeed, in a later survey issued by the League of Conservation Voters, O'Neill would score lowest among Massachusetts' representatives, with Boland only a few places higher.<sup>96</sup> Thus, rather than a deep-seated commitment to environmental issues, the motivation to act appears to have been the lawmaker's particular, even personal, interest in the Cape itself. Boland, especially, took a strong interest in the messages promoted by *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, such as the belief that commercial development, in the form of boardwalks and other amusements, sullied the coast. In describing to a local newspaper the type of park his bill would produce, Boland emphasized that it "would be bare of hotdog stands, motels, and other commercial stands."<sup>97</sup>

The Boland / O'Neill proposal that drew on information from the still unreleased NPS study had important differences from Philbin's bill. Most notably, it identified more precise geographic boundaries and limited the park's size to 30,000 acres. It also allowed land purchases using federal funds (but provided no exact sum) – a departure for the NPS, but a necessity in a developed area like Cape Cod. The legislation gave the agency authority to condemn improved property with the caveat that "the owner or owners thereof may retain use and occupancy of the

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<sup>96</sup> "Mass Congressmen Ranked Fourth in Ecology by Conservation Group," *Boston Globe*, April 21, 1974, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>97</sup> Quote from "Delay Seen in Issuing Report of National Park Service on Beach," *The Cape Codder*, May 29, 1958, <https://www.town.orleans.ma.us/snow-library/pages/special-collections>, accessed September 23, 2017. Conflicting visions of how best to manage visitation to the Cape animated much of the debate over the seashore. Proponents were worried not just about growth in general, but about a specific kind of development – mass market tourism. The leisure industry had long been the peninsula's premier economic engine, but, on the Lower Cape, sightseeing of the variety associated with Coney Island or Jones Beach had not been dominant. Seashore supporters noted that federal oversight, while perhaps not ideal, would likely prohibit that type of development. In fact, Wirth said as much at a 1959 public meeting in Eastham, "We're not trying to build a Jones Beach," he assured those in attendance. (Eastham Meeting," *The Cape Codder*, March 26, 1959). Seashore opponents, ironically, made similar claims, but contended that NPS involvement would be the catalyst for increased visitation rather than a deterrent. A new park would bring millions of new sightseers, overrunning the Cape's small towns. See O'Connell, *Becoming Cape Cod*, 113 – 114.

improvements for a period not to exceed twenty-five years or until the demise of the last surviving owners, whichever is the lesser period.”<sup>98</sup>

The 85<sup>th</sup> Congress took no action on either bill. However, the proposals attracted the attention of Cape Cod residents, who had been anxiously anticipating legislative action based on early NPS planning documents. Word about the proposed park had come in fits and starts since *The Cape Codder* first broke the story in a November 1956 editorial. In that time, the Park Service had communicated little in the way of specifics. Instead, the agency issued vague assurances that “thickly settled areas” would be avoided.<sup>99</sup> The agency’s detailed study of the Great Beach area, the *Field Investigative Report* referenced earlier, would not be released to the public until March 1959, leaving little concrete information for those who wondered whether their property would be included in seashore boundaries. As rumors filled the void, no one could be sure whether they would be forced to sell and, if so, for how much.

Following the introduction of their bills, the congressmen received a barrage of criticism. According to an interview with Boland, his involvement generated considerable anger among Cape residents and landowners.<sup>100</sup> Leo Diehl, an aide to Representative O’Neill, confirmed this account, recalling later, “The Cape Codders burned Boland and O’Neill in effigy because of their bills.”<sup>101</sup>

Much of the censure came from influential, politically connected individuals, like those who published the *New York Times* opinion piece. Another group that organized in opposition

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<sup>98</sup> *To authorize the establishment of the Cape Cod National Park in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and for other purposes*, H.R. 12449, 85<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., introduced in House May 12, 1958.

<sup>99</sup> Ernestine Perry, “An Interview with the Director of the National Park Service,” *The Cape Codder*, May 1, 1958, <https://www.town.orleans.ma.us/snow-library/pages/special-collections>, accessed September 23, 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Congressman Edward Boland by Patrick Healey as quoted in Healey, “The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act,” 37 – 38.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Leo Diehl by Francis Burling, as quoted in Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 12.

was the Eastham Citizens Committee (ECC).<sup>102</sup> Formed in April 1958, the largely ad-hoc ECC promoted local solutions, such as zoning changes, as an alternative to federal involvement.<sup>103</sup> In newspaper pieces and other publications, the ECC emphasized the potential for federal or state condemnation, writing in one fact sheet from spring 1958, “If something came up that affected your livelihood, your income, your taxes, and the realization of all your hopes for the future and your family’s security, would you be willing to protect it?”<sup>104</sup> The negative economic impacts of seashore designation were also emphasized. In March 1959, shortly after the NPS released its initial study report, one ECC representative blasted Conrad Wirth at a public meeting. “Our economy has gone to pot in one week,” he told the Park Service director. “Land sales have dropped. Rentals are off. This could be disastrous. How long will this go on?”<sup>105</sup>

ECC members channeled much of their energy into influencing Eastham town government, which, in turn, responded by creating a conservation committee to take the lead on seashore-related issues in May 1958.<sup>106</sup> Though concerned about the Boland/O’Neill legislative proposal, Eastham activists, along with residents and landowners in other communities, would set their sights on the Park Service’s own bills, which generated even more angst and unhappiness.<sup>107</sup>

In contrast to the existing Philbin, Boland, and O’Neill legislation, which focused only on the Cape, the NPS and Interior Department hoped for a more comprehensive piece of seashore legislation. One of their bills (S. 2010), introduced on May 10, 1959, gave significantly more

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<sup>102</sup> The Cape Codder, a pro-seashore weekly paper, described the ECC as including the “most persistent and vehement voices” against NPS involvement. “Local opposition to Park has been strong, vocal,” *The Cape Codder*, March 12, 1959, <https://www.town.orleans.ma.us/snow-library/pages/special-collections>, accessed September 30, 2017.

<sup>103</sup> Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore,” 116 – 118.

<sup>104</sup> *The Cape Codder*, April 24, 1958 as quoted in Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore,” 116.

<sup>105</sup> Frank Falacci, “Cape Cod Storms Park Hearing,” *Boston Globe*, March 24, 1959, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>106</sup> Beyle, “The Cape Cod National Seashore,” 118-119.

<sup>107</sup> Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 12.

authority to the executive branch.<sup>108</sup> Federal officials would both select and manage the sites, with no process laid out in the bill for accepting feedback from a non-federal perspective. S. 2010 called for the creation of three new seashore and/or lakeshore parks, but did not specify where they would be located – leaving that decision to Park Service and Interior.<sup>109</sup> It also authorized \$15 million for land procurement – a small number considering that the NPS itself had estimated that land acquisition for Cape Cod alone would be at least \$15.5 million. Overall, the bill reflected a far more traditional approach to conservation, prioritizing Park Service expertise and allowing little room for any give-and-take with other stakeholders, whether residents of affected communities, landowners, local government, or nonprofit organizations.

The stated goals of S. 2010, public access, environmental conservation, and, in some cases, historic preservation, were laudable. The friction came from a lack of transparency in regard to how the state’s actions might affect those living or working within or near park boundaries. Following the bill’s release, Undersecretary of the Interior Elmer Bennett commented that coastal protection was “urgent and highly desirable in the public interest.”<sup>110</sup> But, which public was he referring to in his remarks? Often, the NPS prioritized a national public of potential visitors, rather than balancing this perspective with more local viewpoints, even those that might be at odds with the protection of areas as exceptional as the Lower Cape. Consultation on the part of federal actors would not necessarily result in a plan to the liking of all affected by a particular park project, but it could lead to better cooperation in the future – as the creation of the Cape Cod Advisory Commission eventually demonstrated.

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<sup>108</sup> This is the bill introduced by Senator Richard Neuberger first discussed on p. 27 of the dissertation.

<sup>109</sup> Elsie Carper, “Interior Moves to Save Natural Shoreline Areas,” *Washington Post*, May 31, 1959, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

The response from many on the Cape to S. 2010 was heated. At a special town meeting in Truro, for example, hundreds of angry residents and landowners protested the legislation. Attendees feared the seashore would decimate tax revenues and force the town to give up its charter.<sup>111</sup> Reactions were similarly fiery at a gathering in Eastham called to “map war on the National Park Service.” Former Attorney General Biddle referred to the bill as a “rotten, sneaky and dictatorial scheme of the Park Service to circumvent Congressional bills to establish a national park on the Cape.” He went on to proclaim that it “must be defeated.” Joshua Nickerson, an East Harwich business owner, said the Park Service was “completely without integrity.” Summing up local sentiment at the gathering, *The Boston Globe* concluded: “Cape Codders chorused one of the most vitriolic attacks on a government arm since pre-revolutionary days.”<sup>112</sup>

The raft of seashore bills continued to grow. On July 29, 1959, Montana Democratic Senator James Murray, Chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, introduced yet another piece of legislation, Senate Bill 2460. More ambitious than the Neuberger proposal, the bill sought to create an entire system of seashore parks. It authorized an initial \$50 million in funds, along with \$10 million in subsequent years, for the creation of 10 shoreline parks, which were all identified in the bill. In addition to Cape Cod, other areas selected for designation included Point Reyes in California, the Indiana Dunes along Lake Michigan and the Sleeping Bear Dunes in Michigan. Known as the “Save our Shorelines Bill,” or “SOS,” it attracted substantial media and public attention owing to the number of sites and the amount of funding

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<sup>111</sup> “Truro Voters Agree U.S. Park Means End of Community,” *Boston Globe*, June 25, 1959, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Cape Cod Protests,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1959 Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>112</sup> “Cape Just-a-Minute Men Rise Against Park Plan,” *Boston Globe*, Jun 13, 1959, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

involved. Ultimately though, the bill stood little chance of passing, as it lacked the support of federal elected officials from affected states.<sup>113</sup>

While Congress debated various seashore proposals, the Park Service continued its Cape Cod study process. In March of 1959, the agency released its long-awaited feasibility report, which proposed clear boundaries as well as priorities for conservation, recreation, and historic preservation. It was at this moment that Director Wirth made his visit to Eastham (discussed earlier in the chapter) with a stop the following evening in nearby Chatham. Residents, landowners, and business owners whose homes and properties fell within the proposed boundaries were understandably nervous about the possibility of condemnation. Local elected officials anxiously foresaw lost tax revenue and federal interference. At the Chatham event, Wirth began his presentation by tracing the proposed seashore boundaries on 9 x 9 foot colored map. He emphasized to an apprehensive audience that Park Service plans remained flexible, saying “the current proposal is just a suggested one.”<sup>114</sup> Despite such assurances, Cape Codders remained skeptical. Their opposition centered on three primary issues: infringement on private property rights, loss of tax revenue, and fear that a national park would bring still more tourists to the peninsula. The possibility that inclusion in a national seashore might also undercut local government authority elicited apprehension as well.

In an article for the June 1959 issue of *Think* magazine, Wirth reflected on his experience at the public meetings. He described the Eastham attendees as “grim-faced Cape Codders packed together like sardines into a small and hot auditorium.”<sup>115</sup> He went on to acknowledge the stakes of the gathering for many of those present. “They were there because this proposal not only

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<sup>113</sup> Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore*, 24.

<sup>114</sup> “Eastham Meeting,” *The Cape Codder*, March 26, 1959, <https://www.town.orleans.ma.us/snow-library/pages/special-collections>, accessed September 30, 2017.

<sup>115</sup> Wirth, “Birth Throes of a National Park,” 26.

affected the lives of them (sic), but also could mean a drastic change in the economics and way of life of the area in which they have their homes and businesses, in which many of them have grown up and reared their children.”<sup>116</sup>

Wirth contrasted these local and personal costs with what he deemed to be the national, even spiritual, benefits of protecting the Great Beach. It would be a “recreational sanctuary” for all Americans – those now living and the generations to come.” Yes, some of the grim-faced locals, especially the “grizzled oldsters, the carpenters, the fishermen, the just plain old folk living out their lives in the only homes they had ever known.” would likely have to sacrifice, Wirth admitted, but protecting beaches, dunes, and marshland of the Outer Cape was, in his view, “a vitally necessary thing for America.”<sup>117</sup>

Wirth’s emphasis on national not local concerns reflected the Park Service’s confidence in its ability to determine independently what conservation priorities should be for the country as a whole. After several years of studying the issue of shoreline preservation, the agency now had the information it needed to act. From the director’s perspective, establishing multiple sites at once made perfect sense: the country’s undeveloped coastlines were disappearing and the time to act had come.

Given the conditions documented in *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, it is clear that public access to many beaches was in jeopardy. The environmental impacts of inaction on delicate coastal ecosystems would also be substantial. Additionally, the costs of acquiring land in coastal areas were rising rapidly. It is hard to fault Wirth then for wanting to move swiftly on the issue. Yet, the mechanics of park creation were changing, perhaps too quickly for NPS veterans to fully grasp. Not only did metropolitan areas pose new challenges, stakeholders of all types were

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

growing more empowered to challenge federal expertise, which had often ignored outside perspectives (whether local, regional, or even national in origin) in the past.<sup>118</sup>

Cape Cod represented the beginning of a radical change in public lands management, one that would see agencies like the NPS increasingly share decision-making authority with entities and individuals outside the federal government. These voices came from across the political and ideological spectrum, with some advocating for the elimination of federal government involvement in public lands and others calling for a huge increase in wilderness designations. Contending with such disparate perspectives would pose a major challenge to the NPS in the latter decades of the twentieth century.

In light of the acrimony generated not only by Wirth's visit, but also by the content of the NPS-backed bills pending in Congress, the prospects for seashore creation seemed far from certain promising. The summer and fall of 1959, however, would be a turning point in the designation process. Massachusetts' two senators, John F. Kennedy and Leverett Saltonstall, who had not yet been overly engaged, directed their respective staff members to work on a new bill – one that would better reflect the needs and wants of Cape residents.

Part of the senators' motivation stemmed from the poor public reception of the Park Service approach, especially the agency's desire to select potential national seashore and lakeshore sites after bill passage - thereby avoiding as much public scrutiny. Additionally, a House member elected in late 1958, Hastings Keith, was far more open to the idea of a national seashore than his predecessor, Donald Nicholson. Both Keith and the senators harbored concerns that the assurances of Conrad Wirth and other NPS officials regarding the use of eminent domain

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<sup>118</sup> Hal Rothman traces these changes in his article "The End of Federal Hegemony: The Wilderness Act and Federal Land Management on the Pajarito Plateau, 1955-1980," *Environmental History Review* 16, no. 2 (1992): 41-59.

were not reliable. They also felt intense pressure from local officials, landowners, and residents to push for statutory protections not contained in any of the bills introduced so far. To address these concerns, Kennedy and Saltonstall tasked their staffs to come up with a more innovative solution. In the end, they proposed a suspension of condemnation authority in return for passage of federally approved zoning in the affected communities. That proposal became the foundation of the Cape Cod formula.<sup>119</sup>

NPS leaders would later say that they willingly allowed the Senators' staff to take the lead in crafting legislation. Ben Thompson, former Associate Director of the NPS, who was involved in early park planning at the Cape Cod National Seashore, recalled that, "it seemed to us that the project was extremely fortunate to have a bi-partisan interest on the part of the two Senators, and it followed several House bills that had been different." In Thompson's telling, the Park Service gladly shared authority with Congressional staff, and offered support and information when needed.<sup>120</sup> Whether this is an accurate representation of events is unclear, especially given the Park Service's less than enthusiastic initial response to the proposal.

The account of Francis Burling, a local newspaper editor who played a key role in promoting the seashore idea, offers a different perspective. In his analysis, the new local-federal zoning idea was "not particularly welcomed by the Park Service or the Interior Department."<sup>121</sup> Instead, the federal response was eventually resignation. Hoping to get any bill passed, officials ultimately accepted most of the novel elements in the Kennedy, Saltonstall, and Keith proposal. The hostility at the March 1959 public meetings made it clear that an omnibus bill would likely never gain traction with the Massachusetts congressional delegation. Concessions, it seemed,

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<sup>119</sup> Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 17-18; Charles H.W. Foster, *The Cape Cod National Seashore*, 64; Mirandola-Mullen, "Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation," 53 – 54, 56 – 61.

<sup>120</sup> Burling, *The Birth of Cape Cod National Seashore*, 17.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 17-18.

would be necessary to avoid a bitter and protracted political fight, including with a soon-to-be presidential candidate.<sup>122</sup> Though it took some time and effort, NPS and Interior eventually came on board with an approach that did not have leadership's full support.

In September 1959, Kennedy and Keith introduced Cape Cod National Seashore designation bills in their respective chambers. The bills crafted by senatorial staff, with input from Representative Keith, included several novel elements, most notably the zoning in lieu of condemnation provision, the creation of an advisory commission, and authorization of extensive federal funding for land acquisition. The ideas were, in Kennedy's words, "uncharted areas of park legislation."<sup>123</sup> Shortly after the bills were introduced, hearings took place in both Washington, D.C. and on the Cape.

As debate continued during 1960, with Kennedy's presidential run attracting scrutiny to the effort. Interest and opinions in Congress and on the Cape remained divided. At a June 21, 1960, hearing before the House Subcommittee on Public Lands, for example, Congressman Wayne Aspinall commented that he had received "hundreds of letters" expressing "a lot of support and a lot of opposition."<sup>124</sup> Hastings Keith, the Cape Cod representative, testified as to why he felt the approach put forward by himself and Senators Kennedy and Saltonstall was preferable:

Our bill is more than a statement of the principle that preserving shoreline areas deserves our support. It recognizes the distinct nature of the area, the people, and the character of the Cape. Several well-developed and prosperous communities are involved in this proposition. The bill reflects our concern with the unique problem in national park legislation of providing adequate protection for property owners, along with sufficient space for the normal economic growth of the towns involved.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>123</sup> As quoted in Healy, "The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act," 49.

<sup>124</sup> *Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Public Lands*, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, HR 49, Establishment of the Cape Cod National Park in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 86<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., June 21, 1960, 5, Proquest Congressional.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 7.

Keith felt strongly that the legislation had to reflect the needs of the Cape, rather than only those of the NPS. Protection for private property rights remained a paramount concern for him throughout the bill drafting process. Above all, Keith wanted the Cape Cod towns to remain “self-sufficient and dynamic,” not become static tourist attractions. In his testimony, Keith also highlighted the creation of an advisory council, to “help the Secretary (or his Park Administrator) in his policy decisions affecting the park and the surrounding towns.” He added, “I am in complete agreement with the towns in their desire to have a strong advisory council established with an unlimited life.” In a bid to convince skeptical Cape Codders, Keith ended his comments by arguing that visitation to the Cape could not be avoided or wished away. Instead, this bill would allow more control over how that visitation occurred.<sup>126</sup>

Some of the harshest criticism of the bill came from Keith’s predecessor, Donald Nicholson. He argued that the legislation would be subject to litigation for some time, “keep the issue in controversy” and thus “hold the future of Cape Cod as a recreation center in suspense.” He allowed that the proposal was “different from others of the Interior Department, seeking to establish Federal jurisdiction over beach lands in other states,” but even so, he insisted, “A heavy majority of Cape Cod people want no part of these bills.”<sup>127</sup>

It is our contention that such a reservation is not properly defined as a “park” in the first place. My idea of a park is a rustic area, usually wooded, sometimes enclosed for protection. We have such places already in Massachusetts under state jurisdiction. A beach or a seaside area, inhabited for centuries by settlers from abroad and their descendants, full of cultural progress and with a distinct architectural character of its own, to which thousands of seasonal visitors are attracted every year, is not my idea of a development site for a national park. Most of the people who live in the six towns I have mentioned thoroughly agreed with this viewpoint.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 8,9,10.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 31, 32.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 34.

Nicholson ended his testimony by emphasizing the importance of local control rather than federal oversight. “This whole case involves the preservation of the liberties for which the government of Massachusetts was established – the right of free citizens to regulate and to administer their local affairs – the cherished right of home rule, when not in conflict with the rights of others within the purview of the Federal union.”<sup>129</sup> For Nicholson and many other seashore opponents, the concessions by the NPS were not adequate. In their view, any level of Park Service involvement was already too high. Decisions regarding conservation and land use should be left under the jurisdiction of the towns with input, as needed, from the state of Massachusetts.

Other residents remained ambivalent about the process. They were suspicious of NPS intentions but sensed that the creation of a park was unavoidable and that the best course of action might be to work with the Senators’ proposal to ensure it reflected their viewpoints. At the 1960 hearing, for example, a selectman from Barnstable wondering why other Cape Codders did not oppose the seashore said perhaps “they feel that the establishment of the park is inevitable and that, therefore they should not waste their time in registering opposition, but rather spend it in bargaining for the best deal they can get.”<sup>130</sup> This pragmatic approach paid dividends in that skeptical locals did, ultimately, get to play a role in shaping the legislation.

In November 1960, Kennedy, one of the Cape Cod National Seashore sponsors, defeated Richard Nixon and became president-elect. His first cabinet selection was especially significant for public lands policy. Stewart Udall, installed as Secretary of the Interior, had long advocated greater federal involvement in urban areas and would dedicate much of his time as Secretary to protecting lands near cities, including shorelines. At one of his first press conferences, Udall

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 137.

specially highlighted national seashores, saying that the plan for three seashores would get priority in the new administration, although the approach would be through individual not multiple bills.<sup>131</sup> Significantly, as explored in Chapter 4, Udall had no loyalty to Wirth and, at least in part for that reason, did not favor the Director's preferred course of action when it came to Cape Cod and other seashore and lakeshore parks.

On February 9, 1961, Senator Saltonstall introduced a new version of the Cape Cod designation bill, S. 857. It would go on to become law on August 7, 1961. The idea that a large percentage of the land within a National Park unit could remain in mixed ownership and the realization that management could be shared, even to a limited degree, were both novel notions for American conservationists. The Senators, Representative Keith, and their respective staff members had listened to the concerns of residents and landowners and crafted a bill that reflected the particularities of the Cape to a great extent. In the end, it was the NPS that had to adjust its vision for protection of the Lower Cape.

*Conclusion: Cape Cod, a Formula or an Anomaly*

The 1961 designation of Cape Cod National Seashore marked the beginning of a dramatic expansion of NPS involvement in coastal areas. Over the next fifteen years, twelve more national seashores and lakeshores would gain federal designation. Most of the new shoreline areas faced development pressures similar to those encountered at Cape Cod, though the particulars varied in each location. Assateague Island, off the coast of Maryland, had been zoned for a massive private resort. Fire Island, near New York City, faced looming suburbanization. Indiana Dunes, along Lake Michigan, confronted the construction of steel mills and other heavy industry. In each case, the pressures of investment and the rights of capital to alter a landscape encountered opposition from the Park Service, a subset of local residents, and, in some cases, regional and

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<sup>131</sup> Healey, "The Legislative History of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act," 75-76.

national environmental organizations. This shared concern, however, did not always lead to a productive ongoing partnership, as fissures often developed regarding how the lands in question should be managed.

Cape Cod appeared to offer a roadmap for future federal action. Yet, over the next two decades, the opportunity to promote conservation without also incentivizing the removal of residents and the discontinuation of longstanding uses, like farming, ranching, or even leisure, failed to materialize to a significant degree. Rather than serving as a model for most future parks, Cape Cod seemed to be becoming an outlier. Only a minority of the subsequent seashore designation bills followed its formula for joint federal-local zoning. Instead, the Park Service largely followed its preferred approach to conservation, which prioritized federal authority, preservation, and eventual removal of most residents and businesses, rather than collaboration and a mixed or evolving land management regime.

Why did this occur? As noted above, local conditions in each national seashore or lakeshore varied, but a few factors appear to have been especially important. First, the ability of residents and landowners to influence Congress and the NPS varied considerably. Second, at least some of the subsequent seashore and lakeshore locations became entangled in “wilderness politics.” After the 1964 passage of the Wilderness Act, advocates pushed for sections of new coastal parks (land and/or water) to be considered for designation. At Point Reyes and Sleeping Bear Dunes, for example, creating wilderness became a priority whether the NPS always wanted it or not - one, that by its very nature, precluded many of the compromises established in the Cape Cod legislation.<sup>132</sup> Once an area became wilderness, strict management rules came into effect severely limiting non-recreational activities and pursuits.

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<sup>132</sup> Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore*, 74 – 90; Watt, *Paradox of Preservation*, 99 – 121.

Cape Cod's economy also played a role in the designation process. By the time the Park Service got seriously involved with Cape Cod, its (the Cape's) economy was already dependent on tourism and real estate development. Agriculture and various maritime industries continued, but not to the degree found at some other seashores and lakeshores.<sup>133</sup> Tourism, especially of the sort desired by many local residents, depended on a pristine environment – a situation that the NPS might help ensure. Conrad Wirth was sure to make this point during the testy public meetings he attended in 1959, providing examples of how other travel-dependent regions had benefitted from a new park.<sup>134</sup> The agency also invested in an economic impact study prior to designation as a means to assure worried local officials and business owners that the park would actually be a positive addition to the economy.<sup>135</sup> This reality created some shared ground between NPS and at least a subset of stakeholders on the Cape.

Despite its groundbreaking legislation, Cape Cod's establishment did not fundamentally challenge Park Service orthodoxy regarding what a park should look like or aim to accomplish over time. Yes, the seashore was located near major population centers, a departure for the NPS, but only in geography, not in ideology. Approaches to protected area management had certainly evolved since the agency's founding in 1916, especially since more private property now fell within park boundaries, but the Park Service commitment to a particular vision, one dedicated to stasis rather than change and visitors rather than residents.

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<sup>133</sup> On this point, Mirandola Mullen also argues that much of the productive work that did still occur on the Cape fell into the category of "archaic" production that contributed to a sense of place and thus appealed to the NPS. She contrasts this to the for-profit, industrial work at Point Reyes or Indian Dunes, which the Park Service hoped would be discontinued. Mirandola Mullen, "Coastal Parks for a Metropolitan Nation," 12 – 13. It is also worth considering that tourism can exist side-by-side with productive industries, if a land management agency / entity allows it. James Feldman explores this idea in his book on the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. He writes, "Today, we tend to see landscapes of tourism and landscapes of production as mutually exclusive. This was not always the case." (10) On the Apostle Islands, summer visitors once relaxed at sites in close vicinity to farmers, fisherman, loggers, and rail transport. Much of this interaction disappeared when development for recreation, which was tied to the NPS designation, took precedence. Feldman, *A Storied Wilderness*, 10.

<sup>134</sup> Wirth, "Birth Throes of a National Park," 26 – 30.

<sup>135</sup> Hirner, "Public Parks on Private Lands," 138 – 140.

An early promotional brochure for the seashore epitomized this perspective. In bold blue font it proclaimed, “A great peninsula, shaped like a bold bent arm, thrusts seventy-miles into the Atlantic Ocean from the Massachusetts mainland. This is Cape Cod, landmark and haven for mariners, who sought a new world or wrested their living from a perilous sea. Here vacationists now seek refreshment along sweeping shores and quiet coves.”<sup>136</sup> A section of text focused on the park’s creation explained, “Wild beach, heath, forest, and ponds are no longer threatened here in one of the last expanses of uninterrupted natural lands along the Atlantic. Historic buildings with traditional shake or clapboard siding can repose in natural surroundings.” Other than an admonishment to respect private property, the agency did not choose to emphasize or describe the novel approach to conservation initiated at the seashore.

Thus, while Park Service involvement in coastal areas like the Cape did ensure that a greater number of Americans could access beaches for recreation, it did little to alter public perceptions of those same sites as fragile and fixed in time – ostensibly “wild” islands of preservation with few ongoing productive interests or uses. The Park Service eventually accepted the innovative elements in the Cape Cod legislation, but did not make an effort to include them in most of the later national seashore and national lakeshore bills. Indeed, in the years leading up to the passage of the Cape Cod National Seashore Act, the NPS repeatedly introduced and supported competing pieces of legislation that gave the agency far more power over management of the landscape. For at least a decade and a half after its designation, Cape Cod appeared to be an anomaly, rather than a model for further action. By the mid 1970s, however, a combination of changed economic circumstances and expanded environmental regulation finally offered the opportunity to apply the lessons of the Cape Cod formula in a variety of new settings.

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<sup>136</sup> The reference to European colonization “a new world,” is indicative of language promoting outdoor recreation opportunities more generally during this period (See chapter 1). US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Cape Cod National Seashore,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965).

## Chapter 3

### “You Can’t Run a County on Beauty”

Traveling along Washington State Route 20 on central Whidbey Island most motorists would likely be surprised to know they had arrived at Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, a 22-square mile area managed, at least in part, by the National Park Service.<sup>1</sup> No uniformed rangers, sporting their iconic “flat hats,” greet visitors upon entry and exit and no fees are collected at an admission gate. Instead, the reserve, which includes the small town of Coupeville, as well as fields, forests, prairie, and the waters of Penn Cove, is largely in private ownership, with few obvious indications of NPS influence.<sup>2</sup>

Appearances can be deceiving. The picturesque farms that line the roadway and the miles of breathtaking water vistas are a direct result of more than four decades of federal, state, and municipal intervention. If not for the participation of public bodies, along with the contributions of private land trusts and engaged community members, sub-divisions and condo developments, rather than migrating birds, mountain vistas, and historic barns, would likely dominate the landscape. To quote one of the reserve’s historians, it is as much a monument to “the social and economic changes brought to Whidbey Island by a rapidly expanding population,” as an example

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Ebey’s Landing” references the ferry landing once operated by Isaac Neff Ebey in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is now shorthand for roughly nine miles of central Whidbey Island coastline stretching from Crockett Lake to Point Partridge. More information on Ebey, among the first non-Native persons to live on the island, is found later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The land in the reserve is about 50 percent agricultural / open space, 30 percent woodlands, 5 percent wetlands, and 15 percent commercial and residential. Elizabeth Guss, Janice O’Mahony, and Mary Richardson, *Whidbey Island: Reflections on People & the Land* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2014), 25.

of landscape preservation.<sup>3</sup> Or, as an NPS employee commented, “These views did not happen accidentally...People have worked countless hours.”<sup>4</sup>

Designated by Congress in 1978, Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve was and remains a conservation experiment. One agency official called it a “quiet revolution in the development of national parks.”<sup>5</sup> It is a project centered largely on voluntary cooperation and compromise rather than direct government management. The campaign to protect the rural and agricultural character of central Whidbey Island was linked to local conditions as well as national trends in conservation practice and land use. Expanded ferry service, improved road access, and a booming postwar economy tied to the aerospace industry made Whidbey, only about 30 miles north of Seattle and even closer to Boeing production facilities in Everett, an attractive option for city dwellers seeking either weekend leisure or a rural hideaway.<sup>6</sup> Population growth on the island outstripped the rest of Washington State, leading to soaring property values and increased tax loads for farmers and other longtime inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> In a 1971 report on the island, two Park Service officials observed:

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<sup>3</sup> Ken House, “The Establishment of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve,” (Graduate seminar paper, Western Washington University, 1986), 2, box 2, folder: 1970s movement, Ac# EBLA-00004, Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve Collection, North Cascades National Park Complex (hereafter cited as EBLA Collection).

<sup>4</sup> Former Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve NPS manager Gretchen Luxenberg, as quoted in William Dietrich, “Whidbey’s Secret - Preserving the Historic, the Rural and the Settled, Together,” *Seattle Times*, June 13, 2004, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

<sup>5</sup> Reed Jarvis, “The Application of Strategic Management Theories at Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve,” (unpublished paper c. early 1980s), box 8, folder: Reed Jarvis interview notes, EBLA Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Laura McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record: Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve Administrative History* (Seattle: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region Cultural Resources Division, 1993), 19-22. For a history of Island County, which includes Whidbey Island, from the period before contact between Native and non-Native peoples to roughly World War II, see Richard White, *Land Use, Environment and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the 1960s, there was little recognition that suburbanization, along with development of certain regions for tourist activities, could lead to huge increases in tax assessments on agricultural lands. In 1960, Maryland enacted the first law aimed at aiding farmers and other rural landowners by giving them preferential assessment. For more on this issue, see Thomas F. Hady and Ann Gordon Sibold, *State Programs for the Differential Assessment of Farm and Open Space Land*, Agricultural Economic Report: No. 256 (Washington:

The threat of subdivision tells the story. Land prices are rising. Property owners want the area to remain as it is but cannot avoid forever the Charybdis of potential profit and the Scylla of rising taxes. The first sales have occurred. Others are near certain. The State cannot afford to acquire the land, the owners cannot afford to donate it. Zoning has not provided a solution. No one wants change, but change becomes inevitable.<sup>8</sup>

Searching for a means to stem the tide of these changes, a group of island residents, landowners, and their allies in the environmental and historic preservation movements began to consider the possibility of creating a new national park site in the Puget Sound region. At an early informational meeting in 1971, community members discussed the benefits and drawbacks of seeking national seashore designation for sections of Whidbey Island and possibly neighboring areas as well. Federal intervention, one speaker reasoned, might soon be their lone option given declining revenue forecasts at the state and local level. Taxes had gone up so fast, another proponent argued, that only corporations looking to subdivide could afford the prices being charged for real estate. Barring swift action, many in attendance agreed, agriculture and open space might soon be a thing of the past.<sup>9</sup> Park Service officials, who visited the area in the weeks after this gathering, were sympathetic to these entreaties, but demurred when asked to take further action. This was a local issue they countered, and did not meet agency standards for intervention.<sup>10</sup>

This type of community opposition to highways, sprawl, and second home construction in sensitive locations was no longer a new phenomenon by the 1970s. Many of the residents of Cape Cod, for example, though skeptical about the Park Service, had been unhappy with

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Economic Research Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1974) and Philip M. Raup, "Urban Threats to Rural Lands: Background and Beginnings," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 41, no. 6 (1975): 371-78.

<sup>8</sup> "Whidbey Island (Washington) National Seashore Proposal," box 47, folder 2 - National Park Service, 1971 - 1972, Ac# 2900-009, Lloyd Meeds Papers, UW Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries (hereafter cited as Meeds Papers).

<sup>9</sup> Mary Syreen, "As Local Ideas Flow: Ebey Park Project Grows," *Whidbey News Times*, June 10, 1971, clipping found in box 2, folder: Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection.

<sup>10</sup> Bennett T. Gale to Congressman Lloyd Meeds, July 9, 1971, "Whidbey Island (Washington) National Seashore Proposal," box 2, folder: National Park Service 1971 - 1972, Meeds Papers.

development along the coastline for years. What had changed, however, in the decade since the Lower Cape's designation as a national seashore was the federal and state regulatory environment. Bills like the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its state counterparts, the so-called "little NEPAs," as well as legislation addressing historic resources, especially the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), offered those seeking to protect threatened landscapes a host of new tools and strategies not available in the early 1960s. In addition, an expansion in zoning laws and other land use restrictions, once under the almost exclusive purview of local governments, had begun to garner support at the state and even federal levels, offering still more mechanisms for influencing development patterns. Finally, the NPS lost much of its authority over site designation and management beginning in the early 1970s. Instead non-agency actors, including national nonprofits, local residents, and especially members of Congress began to exert far greater influence over agency decision-making, allowing for new and innovative park proposals to gain approval.

Along with these political shifts, the seventies ushered in new cultural attitudes towards growth, especially in once rural areas undergoing a speedy transition into suburbs and exurbs. In some places, a mantra of "no growth" even garnered adherents.<sup>11</sup> As land values rose, the potential for profit through sale or subdivision grew dramatically. So too did the value, in a monetary and nonmonetary sense, of undeveloped land, as residents, landowners, advocacy groups, and concerned citizens banded together to protect agricultural uses, historic buildings, and public access to shoreline and open space. Development and growth, long viewed as signals

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<sup>11</sup> For example, in 1971, the city of Petaluma, California famously passed a one-year moratorium on new housing starts. The following year, the city council approved a resolution called the Petaluma Growth Control Plan. It limited residential construction to only 500 units a year, with exemptions for low-income housing. Developers challenged the law's constitutionality in court. Many other municipalities, ranging from Boulder, Colorado to Fairfax County, Virginia, considered similar legislation. For more see: Robert C. Kellner, "Judicial Responses to Comprehensively Planned No-Growth Provisions: Ramapo, Petaluma, and Beyond," *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review* 4, no. 4 (1975): 759 – 799.

of prosperity, had begun to lose their luster.<sup>12</sup> A letter to Congressman Lloyd Meeds, who represented Whidbey Island and nearby areas in the House for 15 years, captured these types of sentiments. A couple visiting Washington State wrote, “It’s important to us, even though we don’t live in your district, that these areas continue to receive the best efforts of all of us to protect it from the encroachment of ‘progress’... We belong to that minority who do not believe bigger cities are better. Natural areas need to be protected for the enjoyment and sanity of all.”<sup>13</sup>

Given these changed conditions, it is perhaps not surprising that the administration of protected areas would also take on new forms and functions. The classic National Park Service approach to land management, which emphasized static preservation and depopulation, offered only limited inspiration for those communities seeking to protect endangered living landscapes, places where people had homes, businesses, farms and deep familial histories. Instead, advocates drew more readily on European models, such as the English National Parks and the French Regional Nature Parks.<sup>14</sup> A handful of state and local initiatives were also influential, especially the 6-million acre Adirondack Park in northeastern New York State.<sup>15</sup> This mix of practices,

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<sup>12</sup> For more on this theme, see: Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence*; Rome, “William Whyte, Open Space, and Environmental Activism;” and Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*.

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Lloyd Meeds from Pamala W. Jacobel and Robert W. Jacobel, September 1, 1975, box 55, folder: National Park Service, Interior Department, 1975 – 76, Meeds Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Reed Jarvis, the first NPS manager of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, had an interest in the English National Park system and visited several sites while working on reserve planning. For an example of his correspondence on the issue, see Reed Jarvis, Project Manager, to Richard Webster, Asst. National Park Officer, North York Moors National Park, July 24, 1984, box 4, folder: Cultural Parks in UK and Europe, EBLA Collection.

<sup>15</sup> Almost unique among American protected areas created before World War II, the Adirondack Park encompassed large amounts of private land within its boundaries. Its authorizing legislation allowed at least some continued productive use of these properties, while applying a “forever wild” provision to state-owned acreage. For more on the Adirondack Park and its development, see: Frank Graham and Ada Graham, *The Adirondack Park: A Political History* (New York: Knopf, 1978); Glenn Harris, Sarah Gross, and Daniel Auerbach, “Land Ownership and Property Rights in the Adirondack Park of New York, USA.” *Landscape Research* 37, no. 3 (2012): 277-300; Jeffrey M. O’Donnell and Patricia A. Stokowski, “Collaboration and Conflict in the Adirondack Park: An Analysis of Conservation Discourses Over Time,” *Society & Natural Resources* 29, no. 12 (2016): 1501-1516. Not all uses or users were treated equally within park boundaries, for more on these inequities see Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation*, 10 – 78.

which evolved over time in response to changing population dynamics and economic circumstances, would serve as a key influence on National Park legislation in the late 1970s.

In the United States, public regulation of private lands has typically been seen as a political lightning rod, tied to the so-called “takings clause” of the Fifth Amendment. Yet, for a brief period, running from roughly 1960 to 1980, with its highpoint in the seventies, jurisdictions in rapidly growing areas across the country, frequently with the aid or direct oversight of the federal government, attempted to pursue just such an approach to landscape protection. In these places, different types of zoning, rather than fee simple purchase or condemnation, emerged as a dominant conservation strategy, as did the use of federal, state, and even citizen-run commissions to oversee development decisions.

In a 1975 report to Congress, land use policy researcher Charles Little dubbed these efforts “green-line parks” and described them as “a resource area containing a mix of public and private land which is comprehensively planned, regulated, and managed by an independent State agency set up specifically to preserve its recreational, aesthetic, ecological, historic and cultural values.”<sup>16</sup> Little saw these parks as a compromise between an increasingly tight-fisted federal government and a general public still keen to protect open space. Comprehensive planning, followed by regulation, would form the basis of park management, rather than a campaign of outright acquisition. Not having to buy land would make an increase in the acreage of new parks

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<sup>16</sup> The term “green-line” refers to the practice of drawing a literal green line on a map around an area of ecological or cultural significance without regard to ownership. Charles Little likely derived the name from the “blue line” that New York legislators supposedly drew around the area that would become the Adirondack Park in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Green-line Parks: An Approach to Preserving Recreational Landscapes in Urban Areas*, prepared by the Environmental Policy Division, printed at the request of J. Bennett Johnston, chairman, Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate (1975); Robert Mason, “The Greenlining of America: Managing Private Lands for Public Purposes,” *Land Use Policy* 11, no. 3 (1994): 211-212.

possible, thus allowing the “whole recreational landscape” to be protected, rather than only a few especially scenic sections.<sup>17</sup>

Using Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve as an example, this chapter traces the emergence of green-line parks within the national park system. It connects broader changes in American land use and planning to the designation and management of new Park Service sites during the 1970s. In contrast to national seashores and lakeshores, which NPS championed, many green-line parks did not enjoy the broad support of agency leadership. Instead, the green-line parks largely owed their creation to a mix of community activism and congressional initiative. As a result, their management structures and resource protection foci reflected local input to a remarkable degree.

Already struggling to address the land acquisition and maintenance costs of existing units, the Park Service had little incentive to add new sites to its system – especially complex landscapes with mixed ownership patterns. Yet, despite this opposition, a number of the green-line parks did eventually receive congressional authorization, a signal of the strength of the environmental movement as well as the passion of local organizers. Then, in the late 1970s, just as the green-line approach appeared to gain momentum, the nation’s politics and its economy would undergo a seismic shift, upending two decades of action on conservation. A resurgent conservative movement, coupled with an ongoing energy crisis, dampened Americans’ enthusiasm for expanded regulations. The souring fiscal situation decreased available funding. Government, to paraphrase a line from President Ronald Reagan’s 1981 inaugural address,

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Green-line Parks: An Approach to Preserving Recreational Landscapes in Urban Areas*, 8-9.

would soon become the problem, not the solution, with the result that green-line parks eventually gave way to other, less interventionist models of land conservation.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Value of Growth*

In December 1973, the *Washington Post* launched a six-part series entitled “The Slowing of Suburbia.” The subject was what the newspaper termed “the value of growth.” During a quarter century of rapid construction, “the development of suburban housing, shopping centers, offices and industrial complexes” had coincided with a loss of farms, forests and open space. The newspaper asked its readers to consider whether the American axiom of “bigger is always better” still held true. Overloaded sewage plants, rising taxes, air pollution, flooding, garbage, and traffic were only a few of the ills examined in the articles, which catalogued a long list of what the author termed the “costs of suburbia.” One local elected official lamented that “growth does not necessarily mean progress...I don’t see the quality of life...as being any better,” while another acknowledged that, “there is a realization that too much is enough.”<sup>19</sup>

Russell Train, the newly appointed head of the Environmental Protection Agency, cited such views as evidence of “an awakening.” He told a congressional committee that, “public concern is beginning to coalesce” on the issue of sprawl. After years of fighting a “lonely battle” against unrestrained growth, Train could now confidently declare that, “improved land use is the No. 1 environmental priority facing the nation today.”<sup>20</sup> The Senate, with backing from the Nixon administration, had recently approved a National Land Use Law, and supporters expressed

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the effects of this transition in the 1980s and 1990s, see Robert J. Mason, *Collaborative Land Use Management: The Quieter Revolution in Place-based Planning* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Bredemeier, “The Boom Fades as Area Weighs Value of Growth,” *Washington Post*, December 30, 1973, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Bredemeier, “Builders Protest N. Virginia Curbs,” *Washington Post*, January 3, 1974, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

confidence that the House would soon pass its own version of the bill.<sup>21</sup> Growth, long seen as an unquestioned harbinger of prosperity, now occasioned a more wary response, with policymakers wondering how best to balance private property rights against the environmental and social costs of development.

While notable for its level of detail, the *Washington Post* series was quite typical reporting for the era. The early 1970s saw similar stories published in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Seattle Times*, and *Los Angeles Times*, among other outlets.<sup>22</sup> The particulars in each location varied, but the principal themes were the same in each case: local governments' inability to adequately cope with the diverse and burgeoning effects of growth; a disquiet regarding the ecological, social, and cultural effects of development; a push for expanded regulation of future construction; a conviction that better planning and intergovernmental coordination could do much to remedy the situation; and a belief that land use constituted one – if not the – principle environmental issue facing the country. Land use regulation was the “focal point around which a hell of a lot of decision-making occurs,” a staff member of the Senate Interior Affairs Subcommittee told the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>23</sup> Even some homebuilders had begun to acknowledge the problem. One Maryland-based developer commented, “Land is a critical and very scarce resource that can't be dealt with any longer as a speculative commodity.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For more on the failed effort to pass a National Land Use Law see: Jayne E. Daly, "A Glimpse of the Past—A Vision for the Future: Senator Henry M. Jackson and National Land-Use Legislation," *The Urban Lawyer* (1996): 7-39; Jerold S. Kayden, "National Land-Use Planning in America: Something Whose Time has Never Come," *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy* 3 (2000): 445-472; John R. Nolon, "The National Land Use Policy Act," *Pace Environmental Law Review* 13 (1995): 519.

<sup>22</sup> For example, see: Les Gapay, "Showdown on Planning," *Wall Street Journal*, July 3, 1975, Proquest Historical Newspapers; Irv Burleigh, "Two Councilmen Assail Growth-is-Good Policy," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1970, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>23</sup> John V. Conti, "A Quiet Revolution," *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 1972, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Expressions of anxiety regarding the nation's mid-century affluence and growth were not a new phenomenon. Even before the end of the 1940s, as explored in chapter one, some recreation advocates had called for an expanded federal role in protecting open space. Their efforts eventually culminated in the 1958 creation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. Protests against highway construction had also been widespread since at least the mid-1950s. "Freeway revolts" took place in more than three-dozen American towns and cities.<sup>25</sup> Concerns over pollution and pesticide exposure also gained traction, especially after publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962. And, though the roots stretched back to the 1930s, the drive to designate Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961, as well as many of the subsequent national seashores and lakeshores, owed much to the unhappiness surrounding rapid, largely unregulated growth in the postwar period.

Despite these misgivings, very few laws were in place to regulate land use at a scale larger than the town or county. Many locales, especially in rural areas, lacked restrictions entirely; leaving them especially ill-equipped to address new development, be it a sub-division, a jet port, or a chemical plant. For example, on a trip to Kentucky in 1971, then Park Service director George Hartzog hoped to convince locals to limit development around Mammoth Cave National Park, which had become overrun with souvenir shops and other tourist infrastructure. When he mentioned zoning, he was met with incredulity. "Zoning?...I had the impression that I was in a foreign land," he later told the journalist John McPhee.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For an examination of freeway revolts, see Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> John McPhee, "Ranger," *New Yorker*, September 11, 1971, 87. For more on the history of planning and zoning, see Seymour Toll, *Zoned American* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966) and Robert A. Walker, *The Planning Function in Urban Government*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).

Where zoning was in place, it was generally weak and sporadically enforced. One scholar of land use reform has called these laws “little more than a record of good intentions.”<sup>27</sup> Many ordinances had their origins as attempts to deal with specific threats, such as fire or flooding, rather than as a means to control new construction in more lightly settled areas.<sup>28</sup> Others, often dating to the 1920s and 1930s when states first delegated planning authority to localities, simply sought to differentiate commercial, industrial, and residential areas and limit the placement of billboards. While not entirely inconsequential, they had little power to constrain the scale and pace of postwar growth.<sup>29</sup>

State governments could not offer much guidance or support. As late as 1970, only Hawai‘i had a comprehensive land use plan in place. The federal government also had few resources. In fact, its actions often undercut local preservation efforts because federal dollars funded highways, airports, energy facilities (power plants, strip mines), sewage systems, and other infrastructure that negatively affected sensitive ecological sites and historic neighborhoods.

At a congressional hearing on the topic in the early 1970s, Washington Senator Henry Jackson, the foremost proponent of a national land use law, called the issue one of “critical importance.” Describing the current system as, “...chaotic, ad hoc, short-term, crisis-by-crisis, and case-by-case,” Jackson called for immediate action in order to avoid a “national land use

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<sup>27</sup> Popper, *The Politics of Land Use Reform*, 9-10.

<sup>28</sup> William A Fischel, "An Economic History of Zoning and a Cure for Its Exclusionary Effects," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 2 (2004): 317-40.

<sup>29</sup> Land use controls were not common in the U.S. until the 1920s. The court case *Village of Euclid vs. Ambler Real Estate Company* declared that such authorities fell under the police powers of the state. Land use controls have often been used as a means of exclusion – though they are not inherently so. Most often wealthy, predominately white, single-family homeowners favored regulations that limited or even banned low-income and multi-family housing from a particular area. For more on this aspect of zoning, which continues to be debated, see Popper, *The Politics of Land-use Reform*, 47 and Richard A. Walker and Michael K. Heiman, “Quiet Revolution for Whom?” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 71, no. 1 (1981): 67-83.

crisis.”<sup>30</sup> To buttress his case, the senator quoted a letter he had recently received from President Richard Nixon, who opined, “As a Nation we have taken our land resources for granted too long. We have allowed ill-planned or unwise development practices to destroy the beauty and productivity of our American earth.”<sup>31</sup>

*The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control*

Given the changes in American life during the 1960s, it was not surprising that a 1971 government report began, “This country is in the midst of a revolution.” However, the rest of the sentence might have been unexpected to those not versed in recent land use debates, “. . . in the way we regulate the use of our land.”<sup>32</sup> According to Fred Bosselman and David Callies, authors of the *The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control*, a study commissioned by the newly created Council on Environmental Quality, land use had never been in so tumultuous a state. In their view, “the ancien regime” of municipal control over zoning was being “overthrown” by a region-level approach to managing growth. This new model would address “social problems as well as problems involving environmental pollution and destruction of vital ecological systems, which threaten our very existence.”<sup>33</sup> The “tools of the revolution,” would be new laws and regulations re-asserting state, regional, or even federal control over land-use decision-making. For too long, they argued, these rulings had been left in the hands of “local governments, each seeking to maximize its tax base and minimize its social problems, and caring less what happens to all the others.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Hearing before the Senate Committee Interior and Insular Affairs*, S. 268, The Land Use Policy and Planning Assistance Act of 1973, 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., February 6, 1973, 59, Proquest Congressional.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Fred P. Bosselman and David L. Callies, *The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control* (Washington, DC: Council on Environmental Quality, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, academics, planners, and even some developers had been complaining about the inability of municipalities to manage growth effectively. They hoped to see the use of zoning expanded, to address not only health and safety but also broader social and environmental concerns.<sup>35</sup> As the scale of construction projects increased, the drive for a more regional approach gained momentum, with texts like Robert Wood's *1400 Governments: The Political Economy of the New York Metropolitan Region* (1961) and Richard Babcock's *The Zoning Game: Municipal Practices and Policies* (1966) generating attention both within and outside academic circles.<sup>36</sup> The latter, in particular, was especially influential, as Babcock played a role in drafting a new Model Land Development Code for the American Law Institute. This document, which called for the designation of "Areas of Critical Concern," such as zones around major public facilities or sites with historical or natural significance, would serve as the basis for many state land use reform efforts.<sup>37</sup>

The increasing strength of the environmental movement and its forceful critique of growth offered those in favor of land use reform the support they needed to move ahead with efforts to strengthen zoning regulations. Advocates such as the influential Rockefeller Brothers Fund Task Force on Land Use and Urban Growth argued that a "new mood" had overtaken the country, one that prioritized "human values" like "the preservation of natural and cultural characteristics" instead of "private economic gain."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence*, 164-170.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Coldwell Wood, *1400 Governments: the Political Economy of the New York Metropolitan Region* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961); Richard F. Babcock, *The Zoning Game: Municipal Practices and Policies*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

<sup>37</sup> "Two Years Before the Mast with a Land Use Law," *Conservation Foundation Letter*, March 1974, 1-3; Walker and Heiman, "Quiet Revolution for Whom?," 68-70; Robert Mason, *Collaborative Land Use Management: The Quieter Revolution in Place-based Planning* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 25 – 30.

<sup>38</sup> William K. Reilly (ed.), *The Use of Land: A Citizens' Policy Guide to Urban Growth* (New York: Crowell, 1973), 17; Russell Train, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, called the Rockefeller Brothers Task Force report "seminal." Luther J. Carter, "Land Use Control: Rockefeller Task Force Calls for Boldness," *Science New Series*, 180, No. 4090 (June 1973): 1039.

Elected officials took heed of the changing political climate. In states across the country, legislators introduced land use reform bills. Many of these early efforts centered on controlling the effects of development in scenic areas like coastlines and mountain ranges. For example, Vermont, among the first states to pass a comprehensive land use bill, took action following the announcement of massive new subdivisions and ski resorts in its Green Mountains. Passed in 1970, Vermont's Act 250 required larger developments to undergo a rigorous screening process before one of nine District Environmental Commissions. The application required a prospective developer to acknowledge community and environmental impacts as well as a project's potential effects on the aesthetic character of the state.<sup>39</sup>

Other states soon followed, enacting laws that increased the level of oversight for large scale construction, especially in areas deemed ecologically, culturally, or historically sensitive. Maine, for example, adopted a state land use law limiting coastal development, while Florida increased state oversight of mega-projects, such as a hotly contested proposal for a new jetport in the Everglades and a cross-peninsula canal. Minnesota, California, Massachusetts, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, and Oregon also approved legislation aimed at controlling growth during the early 1970s.<sup>40</sup>

By the decade's midpoint, more than twenty state land use laws were in place, up from only one in 1969. Though diverse in scope and enforcement mechanisms, the efforts had some similarities. Most sought to limit municipal prerogative and instead vest control in a state agency or commission. The newly created bodies, in turn, were tasked with determining where, when, and how development should occur, especially when the proposed growth had the potential to

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<sup>39</sup> Bosselman and Callies, *The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control*, 54 – 107.

<sup>40</sup> Bosselman and Callies provide a good overview of many of these efforts in *The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Control*. For more information on state level approaches, see Dennis E. Gale, "Eight State-Sponsored Growth Management Programs: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58, no. 4 (1992): 425-439.

affect sensitive places like wetlands or farmland. The agencies were often called upon to mediate complex disputes involving conservationists, builders, homeowners, individual towns and cities, and industrial concerns.<sup>41</sup> Their purpose, according to land use scholar Robert Mason, was to “organize the use of space to protect certain values and to promote others – to make preservation ‘compatible’ with development.”<sup>42</sup>

While advocates of land use reform tended to emphasize the movement’s idealistic connections to environmentalism, many of those supporting various state and federal initiatives had far from altruistic motives. A new generation of mega-developers, for example, frustrated by a hodge-podge of local laws, played an important role in pushing proposals at the state and federal level.<sup>43</sup> Local firms had once dominated the building industry, but the postwar years witnessed the entry of large corporations, which chafed under the constraints imposed by some municipalities and even by individual states. In their view, a single review would likely ease the permitting process, especially in smaller jurisdictions perhaps not as friendly to development.<sup>44</sup>

The part played by corporate interests in forwarding land use legislation underscores a key feature of the quiet revolution – its embrace of the market. The new laws, though undoubtedly a break with past precedent, were not, by and large, hostile to profit making or industry. Instead, as Frank Popper has argued, their primary purpose was to “mitigate market imperfections, inefficiencies, and injustices.”<sup>45</sup> In its attempt to mesh economic expansion with a

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<sup>41</sup> Mason, *Collaborative Land Use Management*, 26; Frank Popper, "Understanding American Land Use Regulation since 1970: A Revisionist Interpretation," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 54, no. 3 (1988): 292-298; Paul Van Seters, “Magnificent Places: Public Efforts to Protect Natural Resources,” PhD diss., University of California, 1989, 2-3, Proquest Theses and Dissertations Global.

<sup>42</sup> Mason, *Contested Lands*, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Walker and Heiman provide a compelling account of these actions in their article “Quiet Revolution for Whom?.”

<sup>44</sup> Walker and Heiman, “Quiet Revolution for Whom?,” 70 -74; Foresta, *America’s National Parks and Their Keepers*, 227.

<sup>45</sup> Popper, *The Politics of Land-use Reform*, 14

growing environmental consciousness, land use reform thus proved largely friendly to the needs of capitalist production.

### *The Development of Green-line Parks*

The “quiet revolution” in land use described in the preceding pages coincided with a period of rapid growth in the national park system. In 1961, the same year Hawai‘i passed its first-in-the-nation land use law, Congress authorized Cape Cod National Seashore. This was no coincidence. The campaign for parks in and around urban areas and the passage of dozens of new state and federal land use regulations had their genesis in the country’s explosive postwar growth. By the time John F. Kennedy was elected, concerns over new development and the changes it had wrought on the American landscape had grown so pronounced that the new president issued a first-ever national message to Congress on conservation in 1962. Amidst unprecedented prosperity he commented, “the obligation to make the most efficient and beneficial use of our natural resources becomes correspondingly greater.”<sup>46</sup>

Kennedy’s new Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, went still further in his influential 1963 book *The Quiet Crisis*. Udall argued that a widespread “indifference to the land” had created a country of “city-bound citizens” who “were encouraged to acquiesce in the diminution of the spaciousness and freshness and green splendor of the American earth.”<sup>47</sup> In his view, government action, in the form of both expanded regulation and new parks, was needed to reverse this decay.

Despite their shared origins, however, land use reform efforts differed substantially from most park proposals. While many of the seashores, lakeshores, and national recreation areas

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<sup>46</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Conservation," March 1, 1962, made available online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara, accessed October 2, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9081>.

<sup>47</sup> Udall, *The Quiet Crisis*, 178, 189.

contained private property within their boundaries, future development was either prohibited or heavily restricted. Park Service officials accepted that sites like Cape Cod and Fire Island would have some legacy landowners, but they hoped to limit additional development. Unlike the planners and others advocating for regional land use regulation as a means to balance growth and conservation, NPS leadership, for the most part, had no such aspirations. Instead, the dictum laid out in the preamble to the agency's 1916 Organic Act remained paramount: "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."<sup>48</sup>

Yet, by the 1970s, the traditional NPS approach to land conservation had become largely untenable. Funding for national parks, like many other conservation initiatives, was on the decline. Even supporters of the Park Service, like Louisiana Senator Bennett Johnston, admitted that the generous budget allocations of the sixties and early seventies were likely a thing of the past. In a 1975 memorandum to fellow members of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Senator Johnston bemoaned the funding decline, noting that, barring swift action, the NPS might well abandon urban and suburban sites and return fully to its "wilderness-preserving mission."<sup>49</sup> At the same time, he continued, "At no time in the past two decades has the demand been greater for outdoor recreation opportunities close to our jobs and homes...Never has the assertion that 'local parks are a local responsibility' seemed more inane than in these days of near bankrupt city governments."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> An Act To establish a National Park Service, and for other purposes, Public Law 64 -235, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 39 (1916), sec. 1, 535.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Environmental Policy Division, *Green-line Parks*, III.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, III-IV.

In Johnston's view, a new approach was needed, one that would promote a better balance of outdoor recreation near cities with the reality of declining budgets. Johnston attempted to pursue just such a strategy when he introduced legislation in 1975 to establish a national recreation area on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Encompassing large amounts of private land, local and state parks, and some federal holdings, the proposed Santa Monica National Recreation Area drew on lessons learned from the national seashores and lakeshores of the sixties as well as the ongoing quiet revolution. "The concept in this bill is not only to bring Federal dollar exposure to reasonable limits," he explained, "but also to encourage preservation of this recreational resource (and by extension, others) in ways that would use all the tools of recreational land preservation – fee purchase, less than fee acquisition, an importantly land-use controls."<sup>51</sup>

Officials in the Ford administration were dubious of such plans. During a 1975 symposium on outdoor recreation, James Watt, then serving as Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, referred to the NPS presence in cities as a "free lunch" for local government. He queried rhetorically, "Do cities have the right to ask Americans everywhere to pay their recreation bills?"<sup>52</sup> Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel Reed, also at the meeting, declared, "Unless there is some change, the way we are going now will destroy the National Park Service as we know it."<sup>53</sup> Advocates like Johnston thus faced an uphill struggle if they hoped to expand the national park system.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, V.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, et al, *Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation*, 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> Extemporaneous remarks presented at the Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation as quoted in Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Environmental Policy Division, *Green-line Parks*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Despite such challenges, there was some support within the NPS for these types of efforts. In *National Parks and their Keepers*, Foresta quotes an agency insider as saying, "In the early 1970s, there was a faction of good, smart people in the Park Service who were interested in [the greenline park] concept. They felt these parks were the coming thing, and that if the National Park Service did not get involved in them, it would be left behind. The states would run them themselves or perhaps the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation would move in." (248)

More than partisan politics or austerity explains the changing land acquisition priorities on the part of the NPS. Critics on the right and left decried the agency's propensity for condemnation, as well as its lack of planning and prioritization in deciding when and how to buy properties within park unit boundaries. Despite the existence of less-than-fee options (i.e. preservation tools besides outright purchase), such as conservation easements and transfer-of-development rights, Park Service leadership continued to prioritize full fee acquisition well into the 1970s.<sup>55</sup>

Ultimately, economics would force the agency's hand as the country's worsening fiscal fortunes compelled a reassessment of land acquisition policies. Even if criticism had not already been mounting, a lack of federal monies would have precipitated some sort of change. Facing declining financial resources as well as community pushback, the Park Service began experimenting more with approaches other than outright purchase, even creating a new category of park unit to reflect this change - the national reserve.<sup>56</sup>

Closely aligned with the green-line park concept put forward by Charles Little in his Congressional Research Service report, national reserves (sometimes referred to as areas of national concern) prioritized intergovernmental partnerships, regional planning, and zoning, rather than federal ownership, as a means to protect significant landscapes. "Federal, state, and local governments form a special partnership around an area to be protected," a 1976 Park Service publication explained. "Planning, implementation, and maintenance is a joint effort and

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<sup>55</sup> For a good general review of NPS land acquisition policies, see Sax, "Buying Scenery."

<sup>56</sup> On April 26, 1979, the NPS issued a "Revised Acquisition Policy" regarding the agency's approach to private property within park unit boundaries. According to the document, each park unit needed to complete a land acquisition plan, with the hopes that this would systematize the purchase process and acknowledge the growing significance of less-than-fee acquisition. For more on the policy and its implications, see Hirner, "Public Parks on Private Lands, 9-10.

is based on a mutual desire to protect the resource.”<sup>57</sup> Under the reserve model, the government could maintain an interest and influence over land it deemed valuable (and, in some cases, water) without the costs associated with direct management.

In 1974, momentum behind passage of a National Land Use Law, which would have provided federal monies to states for supra-local planning initiatives, came to a halt. Impeachment politics, declining support for new regulation, and a divided environmental community all contributed to the bill’s defeat. In the aftermath of this setback, many conservation advocates in Congress now championed National Reserves as a way to both expand the NPS footprint in a cost conscious manner and implement at least a modicum of land use regulation in sensitive areas.<sup>58</sup> A report by the federal Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, a short-lived agency created by the Carter administration and rolled into the NPS after Ronald Reagan’s election, called reserves “a new approach for meeting the large area conservation challenge...while allowing private land ownership and economic activities to continue.”<sup>59</sup>

The idea especially caught the attention of the New Jersey congressional delegation. For several years, members had been advocating for the establishment of a park in the southeastern Pine Barrens (also sometimes called the Pinelands). In 1977, Congressman James Florio introduced a bill to create a 970,000-acre Pine Barrens National Ecological Reserve in the region, calling it “an excellent outdoor laboratory for scientific research, environmental education, and interpretive activities, and opportunities for a great diversity of recreational use

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<sup>57</sup> Cynthia Orlando and Gretchen Luxenberg, “Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve: Non-Traditional Management of a Nationally Significant Resource,” in *Partnerships in Parks and Preservation: Proceedings and Bibliography*, Albany, NY, September 9-12, 1991 (Albany, NY: National Park Service, New York (State). Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and National Parks and Conservation Association, 1991), 95.

<sup>58</sup> Foresta, *America’s National Parks and their Keepers*, 248.

<sup>59</sup> US Heritage Conservation Recreation Service, *The Third Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan: An Assessment* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), 237.

and enjoyment for some fifty million people...currently threatened with ecological downgrading because of encroaching residential, commercial, and industrial developments.”<sup>60</sup> The proposal, which enjoyed the backing of the Park Service and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, had come out of a working group on the issue of national reserves, as well as a more detailed study of the Pine Barrens sponsored by the Department of the Interior.<sup>61</sup>

The following year, Florio introduced the National Reserves Systems Act. It called for a “national system of reserves to protect outstanding ecological, scenic, historic, cultural, and recreational landscapes.” The bill acknowledged that both the public and private sectors were guilty of “inadequately directed and uncoordinated development and growth,” and, in response, “public pressures for the protection of outstanding landscapes are being increasingly manifested through the introduction of a variety of legislative proposals for special areas with special provisions that are beyond the traditional scope of existing Federal programs.” The bill proposed to regularize this process, creating a “uniform and equitable system” that prioritized “private land ownerships and uses which are frequently an integral part of the value of such landscapes.” A joint state-federal council would make decisions on potential reserves, evaluating proposed areas for feasibility and national significance.<sup>62</sup> The ultimate goal was creation of a new, coast-to-coast network of protected areas largely made up of private property in exurban and rural settings.

Florio’s proposal for a reserve system never gained traction in Congress, but it did heighten awareness of the concept. One scholar of the effort has attributed its failure to timing, noting that conservation groups and environmentally minded legislators had other priorities,

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<sup>60</sup> *New Jersey Pine Barrens National Ecological Reserve Act*, H.R. 6625, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., introduced in House April 26, 1977, accessed December 1, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/6625>.

<sup>61</sup> US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Northeast Region, *New Jersey Pine Barrens: Concepts for Preservation*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975).

<sup>62</sup> *National Reserves System Act*, H.R. 12417, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., introduced in House April 27, 1978, accessed December 1, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/12417>.

including the creation of new parks in Alaska. In addition, a huge omnibus parks bill was already being put together in the House, and Florio's proposal could have been perceived as a rival effort.<sup>63</sup>

November 1978 brought passage of the gigantic, \$1.2 billion National Parks and Recreation Act. It included language creating several new reserves as well as other units influenced by the green-line concept.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the Pinelands National Reserve, the bill designated Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in Louisiana, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in California, and Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park in Hawai'i, all of which encompassed property not owned by the federal government.

Also established, against the Park Service's recommendation, was Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve on Whidbey Island in Washington State. The plan for conserving the 22-square mile area laid out in the bill was distinctive, even in comparison to the other innovative protected areas created by the legislation. Key elements included: a ban on federal condemnation; the prioritization continued farming within reserve boundaries; and a diminution of NPS involvement over time, with management authority eventually slated to pass into the hands of a local or state entity following approval of local land use protections by the Interior Department. According to the lead Congressional proponent of the idea, Representative Lloyd Meeds, this was a chance to "preserve a rural community, which provides an unbroken historical record from the 19<sup>th</sup> century exploration and settlement in Puget Sound to the present."<sup>65</sup> On paper, at least, it looked intriguing. Would it work in practice?

### *A Paradise of Nature*

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<sup>63</sup> Cecily Corcoran Kihn, "A Second Generation of National Parks: Background Paper," *American Land Forum* 4, no. 4 (Fall 1983): 19-20

<sup>64</sup> National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, Public Law 95-625, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 92 (1978): 3467 – 3550.

<sup>65</sup> "Skagit Bill Will Allow Study of Dam on Sauk," *Seattle Times*, July 14, 1978, 11.

Long and irregularly shaped, almost “like a griffin” according to one NPS report, Whidbey Island stretches forty miles from end to end and varies in width from one to ten miles.<sup>66</sup> Its geology, hydrology, and land configuration are largely products of glacial ice that retreated 12,000 to 13,000 years ago.<sup>67</sup> The island took shape as “a combination of glacial moraine, rolling masses of sand and gravel and clay mixed with glacial stone.”<sup>68</sup> It has since been transformed by the wind and water, as waves and currents have eroded a fragile shoreline of high bluffs and narrow beaches. Within the land that would eventually become Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, no place is more than 2.5 miles from the shoreline of the Puget Sound.<sup>69</sup>

Diverse communities of Indigenous peoples lived, visited, and traded on Whidbey Island for thousands of years prior to the arrival of non-Native peoples. In the centuries before European and then American intrusion, Southern Coast Salish, including Kikiallus, Snohomish, and Skagits, had an especially significant presence, with over 90 village sites on Whidbey and neighboring Camano Island.<sup>70</sup> The island’s sheltered waters provided good mooring locations for canoes. Clams, oysters, and fish offered abundant sustenance. It was Skagits who tended the fecund prairie lands around the center of the island, using fire as a means to maintain clearings

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<sup>66</sup> Whidbey Island (Washington) National Seashore Proposal, Box 47, Folder 2 - National Park Service 1971 – 1972, Meeds Papers.

<sup>67</sup> Island County (WA) Planning Department and US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Pacific West Region, *Final EIS: Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve* (Coupeville, WA: Island County Planning Dept., 1980), 20 – 21; House, “The Establishment of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve,” 5.

<sup>68</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Pacific West Region, *Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve: Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Seattle: National Park Service, Pacific West Region, 2007), 21.

<sup>69</sup> Island County (WA) Planning Department et al., *Final EIS: Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, 15 - 16. In his text, White uses an alternative spelling of Kikiallus. I have chosen to use the spelling that is found in Robert H. Ruby, John A. Brown, Cary C. Collins, Cary C., M. Dale Kinkade, and Sean O'Neill, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest*. 3rd Ed., revised and updated by Sean O'Neill, editor, Civilization of the American Indian Series, vol. 173 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 140.

and grow camas, nettles, and bracken fern.<sup>71</sup> Early non-Native visitors regularly remarked on the manicured nature of the landscape. Second Lieutenant Peter Puget, a member of Captain George Vancouver's 1792 expedition, referred to them as "beautiful lawns."<sup>72</sup> In the 1840s, Clallam people moved to central Whidbey, planting potatoes both to eat and to exchange with British fur traders.<sup>73</sup>

A permanent non-Native presence on the island dates from the 1850s, though Europeans had regularly visited and traded with Indigenous communities in the region for several previous decades. These interactions brought devastating diseases such as small pox and influenza along with goods such as metal tools, glass, and fabrics. In 1855, a violent conflict between Native peoples and non-Natives in Puget Sound led to the forced confinement of Snohomish, Kikiallus, and Skagit in temporary Whidbey Island reservations or camps for a several-month period that was characterized by starvation and ill health.<sup>74</sup>

Passage of the Donation Land Claim Act (1850), with its offer of free land, served as a powerful incentive for newcomers to move to the Northwest, accelerating the violent displacement of Native peoples. The law recognized the claims of white settlers who had been living in Oregon country when it became a United States territory, thus legitimizing (at least under U.S. law) 640-acre allotments provided in 1843 under the Provisional Government. White male citizens already resident could receive 320 acres, as could their wives. Later arrivals

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<sup>71</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Pacific West Region, *Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve: Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 23-28; White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Andrea Weiser and Dana Lepofsky, "Ancient Land Use and Management of Ebey's Prairie, Whidbey Island, Washington," *Journal of Ethnobiology* 29, no. 2 (2009): 189.

<sup>73</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Pacific West Region, *Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve: Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 23-28; White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, 6.

<sup>74</sup> White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, 19.

(December 1, 1850 - 1854) were eligible for 160 acres, or 320 for a couple. To own the land outright, a claimant had to reside and make improvements on the property for four years.<sup>75</sup>

In October 1850, Isaac Neff Ebey, a Missourian who had come west during the California gold rush, filed a 640-acre claim for himself and his wife, Rebecca, on Whidbey Island. His square mile of land included a portion of the island's most fertile prairie, part of an area sometimes referred to as the "garden spot of Oregon," as well as a mile of beach with a good landing point on the Strait of San Juan de Fuca.<sup>76</sup> In one letter to his brother, Ebey called the island, "a paradise of nature," and encouraged others to join him. He told his wife in another message that "the great desire of my heart is, and has been, to get my own and my father's family to this country...If Rebecca, the children and you were all here, I think I could live and die here content."<sup>77</sup>

Ebey's missives must have been persuasive, for within a few years, his parents, his wife's three brothers, and several friends and associates had also filed claims on the island. They were part of a larger decade long land rush, during which almost all the best farmland was claimed. These white settlers re-ordered the landscape to suit their needs, planting commercial crops such as potatoes and wheat with an eye for sale to growing cities in Washington, Oregon, California, and beyond.<sup>78</sup>

Isaac Ebey quickly made himself as a well-known figure in the Puget Sound region. He built a dock on his beachfront property and "Ebey's Landing" soon became an important landing point for trading vessels and passengers coming from the Olympic Peninsula. Ebey also served

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<sup>75</sup> William G. Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Act," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 1, 2018, [https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon\\_donation\\_land\\_act/#.WwHwBq3Mx0s](https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_donation_land_act/#.WwHwBq3Mx0s).

<sup>76</sup> Quote from White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, 37.

<sup>77</sup> As quoted in Jim Dawson, "Central Whidbey: Growth in a Fertile Heartland," *Whidbey News-Times*, July 25, 1974.

<sup>78</sup> White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, 33 – 53.

as a prosecuting attorney for Whidbey Island and represented his county (then Thurston County) in the territorial legislature. His life came to a quick and violent end, however, when a group of Tlingit Indians from the Kake tribe in what is now British Columbia killed him on August 11, 1857. The act was reprisal for the death of 27 Tlingits, including a chief, by shelling from the United States Warship *Massachusetts* in Port Gamble the previous year.<sup>79</sup>

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most Whidbey Island residents found employment in resource dependent industries, including fishing, logging, and especially agriculture. This pattern began to change in the 1920s with the arrival of regular ferry service between the island and several points on the mainland of Washington State. As more people could visit, Whidbey's popularity as a recreation destination increased. The 1922 creation of Deception Pass State Park, located at the island's northern tip, added to this allure. The *Seattle Times*, for example, promoted one of the park's beaches as a "gem of peaceful beauty," and "an island paradise four hours from Seattle."<sup>80</sup>

Tourism to Whidbey Island increased further with the completion of a bridge at Deception Pass in 1935. Funded by the New Deal's Public Works Administration, the stunning structure, which consisted of two spans (one over Canoe Pass to the north, and another over Deception Pass to the south) offered another travel option for residents of the growing Puget Sound cities of Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma. By the end of the decade, the financial impact of tourism had grown substantially; its effects now rivaled the island's longstanding resource-based economy for preeminence.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Patrick McRoberts, "North Coast Indians, likely members of the Kake tribe of Tlingits, behead Isaac Ebey on August 11, 1857," *HistoryLink.org*, February 26, 2003 - updated November 24, 2008, accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.historylink.org/File/5302>; Ron Newberry, "Kake tribal members visit Ebey 157 years after death that shook region," *Whidbey-News Times*, August 21, 2014, accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/news/kake-tribal-members-visit-ebey-157-years-after-death-that-shook-region/>.

<sup>80</sup> "Rosario Beach is Hidden Gem: Few Autoists know its Charm," *Seattle Daily Times*, August 26, 1923.

<sup>81</sup> White, *Land Use, Environment and Social Change*, 210.

World War II further transformed Whidbey Island. In 1942, the United States Navy established a seaplane base on condemned farmland near the community of Oak Harbor at the island's north end. After the war, it became a major naval station (Oak Harbor Naval Air Station), bringing thousands of military personnel and their families to the area – both on active duty and later in retirement. These newcomers needed housing and services, fueling a population and building boom in the immediate area.

Other parts of the island also felt pressure from postwar growth. Attracted by moderate weather and beautiful scenery, retirees flocked to towns such as Langley and Freeland located near the ferry terminal. The burgeoning aerospace industry, anchored by Boeing production facilities in nearby Everett, brought more residents. As wealthy Seattleites began buying second homes in greater numbers, the island became a major weekend and summer recreation destination. The population of Island County, which includes Whidbey, neighboring Camano Island, and three smaller uninhabited islands, ballooned from 11,079 in 1950 to 19,638 in 1960, a jump of over 75 percent. Coupeville experienced an even bigger relative expansion, growing 95 percent (from 379 to 740) over the same time period.<sup>82</sup>

The population surge on the island led to increased property values, taxes, and demand for public services. New residents at times came into conflict with longtime islanders, as disagreements erupted over water use, septic tanks, and farm odors.<sup>83</sup> One article in the local newspaper called the tensions over growth “an explosive volcano.”<sup>84</sup> Not surprisingly, as land prices rose, farmers and other landowners began to consider the possibility of selling at least some of their holdings. During one five-year period, 1964 to 1969, the number of farms on

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<sup>82</sup> Island County (WA) Planning Department, et al., *Final EIS*, 28.

<sup>83</sup> Dawson, “Central Whidbey: Growth in a Fertile Heartland;” House, “The Establishment of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve,” 17.

<sup>84</sup> Dawson, “Central Whidbey: Growth in a Fertile Heartland.”

Whidbey Island dropped from 109 to 84, with the acreage under cultivation decreasing more than a third, from 18,443 to 12,141. Despite record yields, many farmers found it harder to make ends meet, balancing the need to purchase new equipment, for example, with higher tax bills and competition from lower cost products produced by industrial-scale rivals.<sup>85</sup> With an average age of 54, many also wondered how and if any heirs might take over their lands, leading one government assessment to call the situation “of grave concern.”<sup>86</sup>

Despite these changes, a few swaths of Whidbey Island, especially in and around Coupeville, remained only modestly affected by growth – at least on the surface. Even here however, landowners were experiencing the pinch of heightened assessments and the attraction of potentially lucrative payouts for subdivision or sale. Ultimately it would be a conflict over farmland in this area, especially a tract that had once belonged to Isaac Ebey, that aroused a group of residents, landowners, and supporters to take cooperative action and involve the NPS in an untested plan for landscape preservation. The following sections of the chapter detail this process.<sup>87</sup>

*“You can’t run a county on beauty”*

In March 1970, George and Knight Smith, brothers and lifelong residents of Whidbey Island, wanted to change the zoning designation that governed much of their farmland. In a request to the county commission, the brothers asked that 124 acres be re-classified from rural to

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Island County (WA) Planning Department et al., *Final EIS*, 49.

<sup>87</sup> In telling this story, I draw on three primary archival collections -- the papers of Washington State Congressman Lloyd Meeds, the papers of Island County historian Jimmie Jean Cook, and the Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve Collection housed at the North Cascades National Park Complex. Contemporary newspaper accounts and Congressional testimony are useful as well. Two secondary sources were also essential to drafting the narrative. The first is a graduate seminar paper by Ken House, a former archivist with the National Archives and Records Administration. House grew up on Whidbey Island. His aunt was local historian Jimmie Jean Cook. During the 1970s, Cook played a key role in documenting the historic landscape of the lands that would become Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve. The second secondary source is an NPS administrative history by historian Laura McKinley. This text, based in large part on interviews with community members and federal employees, offers a detailed analysis of the years leading up to the Reserve’s establishment as well as its subsequent management by a Trust Board - a unique structure within the National Park System.

residential. This was not the first time the Smiths had asked for a modification, but it would be by far the most controversial. The property in question comprised some of the island's most fertile land as well as its most scenic. It included a popular hiking trail long used by the public, though it passed through the Smith's private property. Each year, hundreds of school children walked along the scenic pathway, part of an annual visit to a nearby environmental education center. Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, the property in question encompassed a large chunk of Ebey's Prairie, the area settled by Isaac Ebey and his family in the early 1850s<sup>88</sup>

The Smiths' re-zoning request quickly gained approval from the County Commissioners. One letter to the local member of Congress described the decision with dismay, noting that commissioners expressed "unanimous indifference" to those who opposed their ruling.<sup>89</sup> This outcome was not especially surprising, given the Board's history and its current make-up. According to Ken House, who authored a history of the reserve's creation, many of the members were themselves involved in real estate dealings, which had become quite lucrative with the increase in property values. Additionally, commissioners did not legally have to state justifications for their decisions, making suspicions of impropriety more likely.<sup>90</sup> The growing controversy over Ebey's Prairie, along with Island County's explosive growth (a 44 percent population increase from 1970 to 1978 compared to 2 percent in nearby King County for the same time period) raised the commission's profile as citizen scrutiny grew throughout the 1970s.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Louise B. Marshall, "Ebey's Landing: Let's Go Hiking," *Lynnwood (WA) Enterprise*, May 13, 1970, newspaperarchive.com; McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 26; Mary Syreen, "As Local Ideas Flow: Ebey Park Project Grows," *Whidbey News Times*, June 10, 1971. ;

<sup>89</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morris to Congressman Lloyd Meeds, June 22, 1971, box 139, folder: Whidbey Island Seashore 1971, Meeds Papers.

<sup>90</sup> House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 13-14;

<sup>91</sup> Statistics from Island County (WA) Planning Department et al., *Final EIS*, 28.

The request and the subsequent approval of the zoning change stunned many Whidbey Island residents and landowners. The Smith family had owned the land since 1917, when George Smith (father to George and Knight) bought the 320 acres from John Gould, who had himself purchased the property from Isaac Ebey's son. The Smith brothers, along with their wives Roberta and Marion, had raised livestock and farmed the land for several decades. By the late 1960s, though, facing debts of \$50,000, they had reluctantly decided to sell at least a portion of the property.<sup>92</sup>

After hearing of the county commission's impending decision, a small, motivated group of neighbors, landowners, and others interested in the Whidbey Island landscape began to organize. Albert Heath, then serving as caretaker of a property adjacent to the Smith land, expressed consternation typical of those opposed to development, "That suddenly made me an environmentalist," he remarked in an oral history interview.<sup>93</sup> At a public hearing, opponents of the development plan articulated a variety of concerns. Some feared, for example, that agriculture was imperiled, while others worried that public access to beach and bluff might be curtailed. There was also a more general unhappiness over growth on the island. One longtime resident pointed out that areas needed to be kept for "people to enjoy as well as developers."<sup>94</sup>

Shortly after the zoning changes had been approved, Knight Smith passed away unexpectedly. His wife Roberta now faced the potential costs of probate along with the existing farm debt, adding urgency to her financial situation. In the hopes of moving forward with development, she, along with George and Marion Smith, partnered with a Seattle-based real estate company to initiate a condominium project on one section of the property. This plan,

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<sup>92</sup> House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 8; McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 27-28,

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Albert Heath by Laura McKinley, August 26, 1991, as cited in McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 26.

<sup>94</sup> "Ebey Development Hearing Lively," *Whidbey News Times*, March 12, 1970.

though, never came to fruition, as ventures elsewhere on Whidbey Island consumed the time, energy, and, most importantly, the money of the development firm.<sup>95</sup>

While the owners of the Smith farm considered their options, opponents to development of the prairie and surrounding lands took action. A number of groups came together, their efforts often overlapping as attention shifted from legal challenges to fundraising to advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels.<sup>96</sup> While hostility to the development of Ebey's Prairie and the surrounding lands was by no means haphazard, it was also not a centralized or top-down movement. Varied actors, representing different constituencies (longtime residents vs. occasional visitors vs. summer residents, for example), pursued a mix of strategies to prevent the sale and subdivision of the Smith farm. Federal involvement was not preordained. It came about largely through sustained local advocacy and the involvement of an informed and interested Washington State congressional delegation.

One campaign to counter development sought national seashore designation for central Whidbey and nearby areas of western Washington. According to organizers, the effort (which would eventually formalize as a nonprofit and take the name Northwest National Seashore Alliance) hoped "to preserve the beauty, allow history to continue uninterrupted, and to promote tourism," in and around Ebey's Prairie. Creating a seashore, proponents argued, would allow "generations to come to see the land as it is now." An option that, they claimed, would not be available if widespread development was to occur.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Guss et al., *Whidbey Island*, 31 – 31; Marshall, "Ebey's Landing: Let's Go Hiking,"; McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 28.

<sup>96</sup> "Ebey's Landing Attracts '100 Friends' " *Whidbey News-Times*, October 18, 1972, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection; "Friends of Ebey's Eye Preservation," *Whidbey News-Times*, December 7, 1972, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection; House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 16.

<sup>97</sup> At a gathering held to share ideas on the Seashore proposal, not everyone agreed with the McPhersons. One attendee, for example, argued that a National Seashore would lead to unintended consequences like large parking areas, public restrooms and other facilities for the public. Quotes from Mary Syreen, "As Local Ideas Flow:

The group, though small, was energetic. For several years during the early 1970s, members regularly wrote letters to Congressman Lloyd Meeds and Senators Henry Jackson and Warren Magnuson. In one message sent to Meeds, Jack McPherson, a seashore supporter, described central Whidbey Island as “worthy of national recognition because it not only abounds in natural beauty, but is the site of much of the history of the Pacific Northwest...it is one of the last unspoiled, undeveloped pieces of land left in Island County. It could be our last chance to preserve a beach for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public.”<sup>98</sup> Though Meeds did not have Jackson’s reputation as an outspoken conservation advocate, he had generally been supportive of park projects in the Northwest. To those who contacted him regarding the seashore idea, he wrote that he “shared their concerns” about land use in and around Ebey’s Prairie and would follow up with the NPS.<sup>99</sup>

The seashore group also presented a proposal to the Island County Commission. They called for the protection of a corridor of beach land on the west side of Whidbey Island. Some commissioners were sympathetic but made no concrete commitments. Others did not believe the county needed a new protected area. The county assessor stated the mood of many in attendance in a blunter manner. “You can’t run a county on beauty,” he noted.<sup>100</sup>

The national seashore drive garnered more success with members of Congress. Both Jackson and Meeds contacted the regional office of the National Park Service with inquiries. In response, a team of senior agency officials - Bennett T. Gale, Associate Director of the Pacific

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Ebey Park Project Grows,” *Whidbey News-Times*, June 10, 1971, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection.

<sup>98</sup> Jack McPherson to Congressman Lloyd Meeds, June 7, 1971, box 149, folder: Whidbey Island Seashore, Meeds Papers. Jack and Joan McPherson left Whidbey Island for a brief period in the mid-1970s, but they returned shortly thereafter. Jack McPherson was elected mayor of Coupeville after their return.

<sup>99</sup> For a typical letter, see Congressman Lloyd Meeds to Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morris, June 29, 1971, box 139, folder: Whidbey Island Seashore 1971, Meeds Papers.

<sup>100</sup> This quote is found in House, “The Establishment of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, 19 and McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 29.

Northwest Region, and Roger W. Pegues, the region's Assistant Director for Cooperative Programs - visited central Whidbey Island for two days during June 1971.

It is hard to know how familiar NPS officials were with the site prior to the trip, but the Department of the Interior had included Whidbey, along with the San Juan Islands, in a national report, *Islands of America*, published by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) in 1970. Recalling the NPS coastline surveys of the 1930s and 1950s, which had eventually resulted in the designation of more than a dozen national seashores and lakeshores, the BOR report set out to 1) document the environmental conditions and historic significance of the nation's islands and 2) make recommendations for possible designation in the national park system. The fact that Whidbey Island, while described positively, did not make the list of priority locations for a new park unit might well have influenced the NPS visitors' noncommittal attitude when they arrived less than a year later.<sup>101</sup>

Following his visit, Gale dispatched a follow-up letter to Representative Meeds. He wrote that he and his colleague were "quite impressed with the area and...hopeful something can be done to preserve its present character."<sup>102</sup> As to future Park Service involvement, however, he was not optimistic. As currently envisioned, a national seashore designation did not seem at all feasible, Gale wrote, especially given the "limited recreational value and size" of the land under consideration. One solution, he said, might be a regional Puget Sound National Seashore, with land and water in Canada also included.<sup>103</sup> This idea, while intriguing, gained little traction within or outside the NPS – though letters from Senator Jackson indicate he did follow-up with

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<sup>101</sup> US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, *Islands of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970).

<sup>102</sup> Bennett T. Gale to Congressman Lloyd Meeds, July 9, 1971, "Whidbey Island (Washington) National Seashore Proposal," box 47, folder 2: National Park Service 1971 – 1972, Meeds Papers.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

the NPS on a few occasions.<sup>104</sup> A new national seashore or national recreation area in western Washington would necessitate a region-wide advocacy campaign, and such an effort never came to fruition – despite the dedication of supporters on Whidbey Island, who continued to pursue the idea until at least the mid-1970s.<sup>105</sup>

This early quest for Park Service involvement, while ill fated, offers important insights into the later, more successful campaign for federal recognition. It reveals that central Whidbey Island, while acknowledged to be a scenic place with significant connections to Pacific Northwest history, was not a leading contender for inclusion in the national park system. Homegrown activism, along with congressional intervention, would be the key elements in eventually achieving national reserve status. The NPS had a surprisingly limited part to play in the matter.

This outcome was part of broader trend in the evolution of public lands management in the United States. The agencies themselves, including the Park Service, were more and more becoming one stakeholder among many, rather than the dominant decision makers. Park Service officials, along with their counterparts in other Department of the Interior bureaus, had clear ideas about the types of landscapes they wished to see protected. However, outside groups (both local and national) supported by members of Congress, did not always agree with these assessments. Instead, they had their own perspectives and priorities, which often clashed (and frequently overruled) those of the agency.

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<sup>104</sup> For example, in a September 1972 letter to a constituent inquiring about a national seashore in the Puget Sound region of western Washington, Jackson writes, “At my request, the National Park Service has initiated a study to determine the feasibility of preserving areas such as Ebey’s Landing and other areas in the Puget Sound and Straits of San Juan de Fuca region because of their scenic and historic values.” Senator Henry Jackson to Mrs. Meredith Pfahl, September 15, 1972, box 15, folder 33, EBLA collection.

<sup>105</sup> “Seashore Alliance Incorporated,” *Whidbey News-Times*, February 8, 1973, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection.

What sets the Whidbey Island case apart from many other examples is that it did not involve debates over wilderness or use of existing public lands. Additionally national environmental groups did not play a significant role in the debate. This was private property given over in large part to agriculture. The advocates involved came from the local area, though not all were fulltime Whidbey Island residents. Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve thus had a rather distinct designation trajectory – one that would be reflected in its unique authorizing legislation.

#### *Central Whidbey Island National Historic District*

In 1966, Congress passed the landmark National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The bill transformed the field of historic preservation, raising its profile in Washington, DC and in states and localities, which were now required to document structures potentially eligible for the newly created National Register of Historic Places. Among its many innovations, the NHPA authorized the creation of state historic preservation offices (SHPO) whose primary mission in those early days was to inventory historic properties – a task never before undertaken in such detail. At the federal level, the NHPA designated the NPS as the lead federal preservation agency, putting the Park Service in charge of the National Register among other duties. SHPOs and the NPS both also played a critical role in enforcing section 106 of the bill, which mandated that all federally funded and/or permitted projects undertake a review to determine any potential impacts on sites eligible for or already listed on the National Register.

In the NPS administrative history of Ebey's Landing, Laura McKinley emphasized the significance of the historic preservation movement to the eventual designation of the National Historical Reserve by Congress in 1978.<sup>106</sup> Much of the credit is due to the work of historian Jimmie Jean Cook. In the late 1960s, when Washington began the historic property survey called

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<sup>106</sup> McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 31 – 32.

for in the NHPA, the state needed to find a coordinator for Island County. After some initial inaction, Cook eventually took control of the effort in spring 1971. A former county records clerk, who also served as curator of the local history museum, Cook eventually the area's state liaison officer for the Washington Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In order to complete her research on central Whidbey Island, Cook spent several months collecting detailed information on the both historic structures and past residents.<sup>107</sup>

As the survey progressed, she noticed that Central Whidbey Island, in particular, had distinct land patterns originating in the 1850s. A large number of extant buildings dated to the land claims era, as did many of the property lines. Such striking findings led her to the conclusion that the entire area merited designation as a historic district.<sup>108</sup>

Though by no means a new concept in historic preservation, historic districts had not been especially widespread before the NHPA. After the bill's passage, the number of districts multiplied, a product of increased documentation as well as efforts to protect areas threatened with demolition. In identifying a potential Central Whidbey Island Historic District, Cook hoped to affect the ongoing debates over the development of Ebey's Prairie and surrounding areas. "The area is so unique that I think we should do everything we can to preserve it," she told a local newspaper.<sup>109</sup>

In 1972, Cook presented her plan for a Central Whidbey Historic Preservation District to the state historic preservation advisory council. It included 8,000 acres and over 100 structures

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<sup>107</sup> "County Ordinance Designates Historic Preservation District," *Whidbey-News Times*, October 19, 1972, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection; House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 20; and McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 31-32; Descriptions of Cook's work are drawn from Jimmie Jean Cook's papers, the House and McKinley texts, and local newspapers. I reviewed Cook's papers at the University of Washington Special Collections. She produced voluminous research on the history of Central Whidbey Island, looking at property records, birth and marriage records, and military records, among other sources.

<sup>108</sup> House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 20; McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 31-32

<sup>109</sup> "County Ordinance Designates Historic Preservation District," *Whidbey-News Times*, October 19, 1972.

and sites. Its size was unprecedented, even for an era characterized by bold preservation initiatives. If approved, the proposal would create the largest historic district in the country.<sup>110</sup>

In order for the plan to move forward for federal approval, both the town of Coupeville and Island County had to pass historic preservation ordinances, which would allow them to review all building permits affecting a historic structure or site.<sup>111</sup> Following the approval of these regulations in late 1972, the state sent the nomination on to Washington, D.C. Approval came several months later, and the Central Whidbey Island Historic Preservation District was listed on the National Register in December 1973.

The historic district designation was critical to the eventual creation of the reserve. Congressman Meeds's used the district boundaries as the basis for the reserve in his designation bill. Cook's documentation demonstrated the historic significance of the landscape; her detailed work added legitimacy to the claims of those seeking its preservation. Though by itself lacking in "teeth" for enforcement, a National Register designation solidifies the status of a site as important in the eyes of the federal government – adding another layer of review should federal funds be involved in any type of activity. Moreover, the passage of local historic preservation ordinances, like the creation of new zoning regulations, adds to the time, effort, and cost of development. It also makes renovation more attractive. Properties within a district's boundaries can receive federal funds and also potentially be eligible for tax credits.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of the National Register of Historic Places not only to the story of Ebey's Landing, but to those of National Park units created after its establishment. The NHPA allowed for an unprecedented documentation of the country's historic

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<sup>110</sup> Jimmie Jean Cook, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Central Whidbey Island Historic District," 1973, available digitally at <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=36049e61-bd6b-40d8-9843-8d35320109ef>; House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 24; McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 31.

<sup>111</sup> "County Ordinance Designates Historic Preservation District," *Whidbey-News Times*, October 19, 1972.

structures. Although many of the early surveys were flawed, especially in that they privileged stories and sites associated with elites, they nonetheless succeeded in preserving thousands of buildings that might otherwise have been destroyed or abandoned. Moreover, the National Register process empowered locals (albeit ones “in-the-know” vis-à-vis preservation laws) to interpret the historic significance of their own communities. The work of Jimmie Jean Cook is an excellent example of this phenomenon. The NPS, with its limited staffing, might never have gotten around to researching the history of the Oregon Land Claims in and around the small town of Coupeville, Washington, but Cook did. She then used that information to make a strong case for protection – one that was pivotal in securing national reserve status.

### *Bulldozers and Bill Passage*

In the years following the initial decision to rezone their farm, the Smith family, along with various developers, engaged in a tense back and forth with local activists over the future of Ebey’s Prairie and the surrounding area. The Smiths and their supporters contended that private property owners should have the final say over land use, while those fighting for the prairie’s preservation emphasized its historic, agricultural, and scenic value as both a local and a national asset worthy of protection.<sup>112</sup> Though the disputes often divided longtime neighbors and even friends, compromise appeared increasingly unlikely. In 1974, for example, the Smith family put forward a new plan for a 30-unit condominium building on the prairie. The plan called for sod roofs and other measures to decrease visual impact. The county commission tentatively approved the proposal, pending the acceptance of several requirements set forth by the county planning

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<sup>112</sup> In an opinion piece entitled “History didn’t stop with Ebey,” the Smith family summarized their arguments. They noted that for years visitors had been allowed to cross their property to enjoy the views and trails, but now some of those same individuals were suing them – over what they deemed to be a family decision regarding private property. Moreover, the Smiths wrote, only some of the land was to be developed, largely to pay debts, while the rest would remain in agriculture. “It is time for the SILENT MAJORITY to become a VOCAL MAJORITY,” the editorial warned, otherwise no development would be allowed on Whidbey Island. Roberta M. Smith, Karl (Bill) and Renee Smith, Steven and Sandi Smith, “The Readers Speak: History didn’t stop with Ebey” *Whidbey News-Times*, December 6, 1973, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection.

department, including an agreement that the rest of the land under discussion be rezoned rural - a condition the Smith family ultimately did not accept.<sup>113</sup>

Opponents of the Smith proposal pounced on this decision. They claimed that the whole plan was a ruse; more development was certain to follow. “There is no testimony that any of the people now speaking will actually be in control of the development in the future,” stated Barbara James of the Northwest National Seashore Alliance, reflecting a widely held view that even limited changes to zoning would inevitably lead to widespread construction.<sup>114</sup> With each passing year, the two sides grew more determined to exert full control over the landscape.

At almost every step along the way, citizen groups and individual residents and landowners challenged the Smith family proposals in courts and in the media. The existence of Washington State’s environmental policy act, as well as the historic district, and, later, county planning laws, gave opponents increased legal standing to challenge development in a way that would have been impossible only a decade earlier. Though none of these options proved effective in the end (that took federal action) these types of activities significantly slowed the permitting and construction process, allowing time for the eventual involvement of state agencies and the NPS.

Those working to protect the prairie as well as endangered coastal access hoped to purchase the land outright, but they faced significant fundraising hurdles. Federal sources such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund had grown increasingly limited due to the austerity bent of the Ford Administration.<sup>115</sup> In 1975, Albert Heath, the Smiths’ neighbor, reached out to

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<sup>113</sup> Roberta Smith Hem, “Rocking K Bar Owner Cites ‘Traditional’ Property Rights,” *Whidbey News-Times*, July 11, 1974, clipping found in box 2, folder Pre-Legislation, EBLA Collection; House, “The Establishment of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve,” 28 - 30; McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 35-37.

<sup>114</sup> *Whidbey News Times*, May 16, 1974

<sup>115</sup> Joel Connelly, “Wild Whidbey Beach Bluffs May be Sold,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 21, 1976. This article details the challenges that land conservation advocates had in accessing public and/or private funds to support their efforts.

Representative Meeds, reminding him of the threat that “land speculation” posed to the Ebey’s Landing Area. He wondered if the Congressman might be willing to “talk over what help the federal government might give toward making our plan a reality while the opportunity for it still exists.” Meeds replied, “Although there are federal programs through which projects like the one you have outlined might be funded, the outlook is not overly encouraging. The programs we have uncovered are administered by the states.” He suggested that Heath reach out to the Washington Parks and Recreation Commission for assistance, adding that he would “cooperate in anyway” that he could.<sup>116</sup>

In researching the history of the reserve, it is hard to pin down exactly when Meeds decided to champion federal involvement. In addition to his response to Heath, noted above, the congressman penned another noncommittal letter one year earlier regarding his ability (or perhaps more accurately his desire) as a member of Congress to influence growth on Whidbey Island. Writing to David Strong, the Prosecuting Attorney of Island County, regarding the Smiths’ condominium proposal, Meeds remarked, “I have been watching the Ebey’s Landing situation closely for some time. This is the kind of crucial land-use decision that local governments must reach in terms of the long-run needs of the community. Because it is a local decision, it would be presumptuous of me to intervene.”<sup>117</sup> The language in the letter is at-once revealing and opaque. Meeds shares little regarding his own personal views on the value of land conservation, but he does posit a belief in the significance (even preeminence) of local decision-making. While not definitive, such statements uncover some of the congressman’s thinking

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<sup>116</sup> Albert Heath to Congressman Lloyd Meeds, July 18, 1975, “Ebey’s Landing Area,” box 118, folder: Ebey’s Landing 1973 – 1975, Meeds Papers.

<sup>117</sup> Congressman Lloyd Meeds to David B. Strong, Prosecuting Attorney of Island County. June 12, 1974, Box 2, folder: Ebey’s Landing Bills, Ac# 4308-002, Jimmie Jean Cook Papers, UW Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries (hereafter cited as Cook Papers).

behind the 1978 Ebey's Landing legislation, which prioritized municipal and state involvement far more than most previous NPS bills.

In 1977, a small breakthrough in regard to funding for land acquisition occurred. A state senator, who was also a friend of the Smith family, managed to secure \$750,000 for protection of the threatened shoreline and bluff area. The monies would be applied towards the creation of a scenic beach corridor stretching between two state parks, Fort Casey and Fort Ebey, on Whidbey Island's west side.

At about the same time, members of the Friends of Ebey's, an advocacy group formed shortly after the initial threat to Ebey's Prairie gained public attention in 1970, decided to create a nonprofit land trust, the Ebey's Landing Open Space Foundation. They did this in consultation with the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), which administered funds distributed to states and localities via the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The BOR advised the foundation to complete appraisals of the land it [the foundation] wanted to protect; contact private foundations for matching funds; and seek passage of a bill in the state legislature creating a new park in the area.<sup>118</sup> A conservation approach growing in popularity across the country, land trusts allowed private entities to acquire land, development rights, and easements as well as hold donations, until a public body could assume control. More nimble than many agencies, land trusts could make deals quickly under the presumption that a unit of government would eventually become steward of the property.

The year 1978 was pivotal for both the National Park Service and Whidbey Island. A massive parks omnibus bill, with over one billion dollars in spending, was winding its way through Congress and representatives from across the country, including Washington State, were

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<sup>118</sup> Maurice H. Lundy, Regional Director, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to Ken Pickard, April 6, 1977, box 2, folder: Ebey's Landing Bills, Cook Papers. Several other letters in the Cook papers also detail this relationship.

eager to include their district or state in the final legislation. On Whidbey Island, the long simmering feud over the fate of Ebey's Prairie also appeared headed to a dramatic conclusion. Facing estate costs and other debts, the Smith family remained committed to selling at least a portion of their property. After years of disappointment, the family found a capable partner in Clyde "Bud" Wagner. A savvy local developer, Wagner knew how to employ the island's zoning regulations to ensure maximum profit, using various platting mechanisms to avoid triggering more stringent oversight.<sup>119</sup> With development seemingly imminent, the future of central Whidbey Island grew increasingly intertwined with the fate of the parks omnibus bill. Preservation activists, desperate to delay development, used all the legal challenges at their disposal, while members of Washington's congressional delegation maneuvered to get central Whidbey Island included in the omnibus bill. One local newspaper described all the machinations as "a complicated chess game of opposing strategies."<sup>120</sup>

During the spring of 1978, Congressman Meeds introduced two bills aimed at protecting the area. One - H.R. 12423- called for the establishment of a National Historical Reserve, while the other - H.R., 12550 - created a National Historical Park. Both pieces of legislation used boundaries identical to the Central Whidbey Historic District as their basis. The reserve bill was especially innovative. It required a comprehensive plan, forbade any condemnation, and authorized up to \$5 million in federal funds for land acquisition. It called for the reserve to be "administered by local government agencies with Federal assistance," clearly indicating that cooperation would be central to management. The bill even had a provision that the federal

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<sup>119</sup> For example, in May 1978, the Smiths and Wagner filed a proposal to build Ebey's Landing Estates. It would have divided 77 acres of the prairie into 66 lots. Friends of Ebey's challenged the plan in court, hoping that Congress would intervene. House, "The Establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 38, 42. McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 38.;

<sup>120</sup> "Congressional Decision Looms Over Ebey's Prairie," *Whidbey News-Times*, July 6, 1978, clipping, found in Box 2, folder: Ebey's Landing Bills, Cook Papers.

government would turn over land it had acquired to local authorities if they had appropriate land use ordinances in place.<sup>121</sup>

Despite the support of Meeds, the bill would likely have languished in committee had it not been for the backing of Senator Jackson. Long a leader on conservation and environmental issues, Jackson had taken an interest in the Whidbey Island issue, lobbying NPS officials on the topic and exchanging letters with a number of local preservation advocates. One missive from September 1978 urged the Senator to take action quickly, because otherwise, “some of America’s richest farmland will soon become another slurb (sic); with unique scenic, historical and agricultural values lost forever.”<sup>122</sup> Another letter, sent the same month, argued that the beauty of the proposed reserve paralleled that of existing National Parks and thus merited protection. “Ebey’s Prairie compares in magnificence with Acadia National Park in Maine and Tennessee’s Cades Cove Area,” the document claimed.<sup>123</sup>

While Congress debated the omnibus package during the summer and fall of 1978, the situation on Whidbey Island grew increasingly tense – likely motivating the many letters that Jackson received on the subject. Wagner, the Smith family partner, obtained a permit from Island Country to begin road construction on the prairie and heavy equipment soon arrived. In response, four individuals, along with the Friends of Ebey’s, filed suit seeking an injunction challenging the legality of Wagner’s actions under both county and state law.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *An act to authorize the establishment of the Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve in the State of Washington, and for other purposes*, H.R. 12423, 95th Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., introduced in House April 27, 1978.

<sup>122</sup> Allen L. Ryan, President Save Whidbey Island for Tomorrow (SWIFT) to Senator Henry M. Jackson, September 8, 1978, box 2, folder: US Senators, UW Manuscripts and University Archives Division HM Jackson, EBLA Collection.

<sup>123</sup> Harriette Hayes, Chairman, Island Action Coalition to Senator Henry M. Jackson, September 8, 1978, box 2, folder: US Senators, UW Manuscripts and University Archives Division HM Jackson, EBLA Collection.

<sup>124</sup> Lee Haro, “Ebey’s Prairie Ruling Promised Soon, *Skagit Valley Herald*, October 3, 1978, clipping found in box 2, folder: Ebey’s Landing Bills, Cook Papers.

Kenneth Pickard, a resident, lawyer, and ardent opponent of development, presented an affidavit to the court from Representative Meeds himself. In it, the congressman stated, “Ebey’s Landing is a place of singular beauty...If the presently contemplated development proceeds, I am convinced that much of the unique beauty and importance of Ebey’s Landing and the surrounding area will be lost. Ebey’s Landing possesses an ideal combination of recreational, historical, scenic, and agricultural attractions. Once such an area has been impaired by changes that are not compatible with these kinds of values the county, the state and the country will have suffered an irreversible loss.”<sup>125</sup> Jimmie Jean Cook, the local historian so pivotal to the creation of the Central Whidbey Island Historic District, likewise filed an affidavit. In her statement, Cook outlined the history of Central Whidbey Island before linking it directly to the form of the contemporary landscape. “Photographs of the prairie taken in 1908...show that with the exception of the removal of a few trees...there has been no change in the appearance of the prairie.”<sup>126</sup>

As this high drama played out on the shores on Puget Sound, Senator Jackson took action in Washington, DC. He shepherded a version of Meeds’s proposal into the 1978 Parks and Recreation Omnibus bill, adding it as an amendment to the Senate version of the legislation.<sup>127</sup> Jackson, a powerful member of Congress with years of seniority, managed to do this despite opposition from the NPS, which did not support the reserve plan at the regional or national level.

In the Seattle office, Russell E. Dickenson, Pacific Northwest regional director, was “characteristically skeptical” about the reserve. He viewed it as a local dispute, rather than an

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<sup>125</sup> Friends of Ebey’s et al. v. The Board of County Commissioners of Island County, et al. “Affadavit of Lloyd Meeds in support of Plaintiffs’ motion for Preliminary Injunction,” September 20, 1978, box 2, folder: Ebey’s Landing Bills, Cook Papers.

<sup>126</sup> Friends of Ebey’s at al. v. The Board of County Commissioners of Island County, et al. “Affadavit of Jimmie Jean Cook in support of Plaintiffs’ motion for Preliminary Injunction,” September 20, 1978, box 2, folder: Ebey’s Landing Bills, Cook Papers.

<sup>127</sup> McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 42 – 45.

issue requiring attention from the federal government.<sup>128</sup> This was a typical refrain used by NPS officials to deflect the entreaties of communities seeking federal recognition. Yet, as evidenced by the ultimate success of the Ebey's Landing proposal as well as other efforts discussed in chapters 4 and 5, it became increasingly less effective beginning in the 1970s as non-federal actors, including local advocates, became more adept at bypassing the Park Service approval process in favor of working directly with their members of Congress.

At a 1978 congressional hearing, Park Service Director William Whalen echoed Dickenson, arguing for deferred action. "We have just not completed any studies that would give us any information to base a national significance argument on," he complained.<sup>129</sup> Robert L. Herbst, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, offered a similar opinion, noting, "The National Park Service does not recommend the establishment of Ebey's Landing National Historical Park. We feel the acquisition of these lands should be handled by the local or State government and not the Federal Government as the lands do not meet the historical criteria necessary for a national historical park."<sup>130</sup> In the face of this resistance, Jackson's influence and Meeds's support proved decisive. When President Jimmy Carter signed the \$1.2 billion bill on November 10, 1978, the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve was included.

### *Managing Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve*

By law, Whidbey Island could now claim a National Park Service site, but, in practice, much remained in flux. In the months and years following designation, the conflict over Ebey's Prairie only intensified, despite an initial truce following the reserve's creation. In a reflection

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 43 – 44.

<sup>129</sup> *Hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation*, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, H.R. 12536, National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, day 1, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., July 21, 1978, 10

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

written after the fact, one Park Service official described the situation during this period as “a volatile political atmosphere...the community was polarized over the degree of federal involvement and the planners had no guidelines to follow.”<sup>131</sup>

Supporters and opponents alike found themselves wondering when and even if the federal government would eventually take action. A 1980 letter to backers of the Friends of Ebey’s captured this rollercoaster of emotions. “We went off to other efforts thinking Ebey’s Landing was saved. Then to everyone’s surprise, developers started building roads on Ebey’s prairie and the National Park Service started sounding like it was going to compromise and allow ‘limited’ development for recreational residential use on Ebey’s prairie in close proximity to the beach and bluff.”<sup>132</sup>

At least some of these problems stemmed from the uniqueness of the Ebey’s Landing legislation. Forty years later, it remains the only national historical reserve in the national park system. The degree of intergovernmental collaboration laid out in the bill was almost without precedent in federal conservation history and consequently presented a serious challenge for NPS staff assigned to the project. Not only did the reserve legislation prohibit condemnation – meaning all interaction with the NPS was voluntary - it also mandated that the Park Service partner with local and state government in the early planning stages. Then, in an even more novel requirement, the bill laid out a process by which NPS would transfer management authority to a unit of state or local government following completion of a comprehensive plan and adoption of satisfactory land use controls. From that point forward, a new organization, with representation

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<sup>131</sup> Jarvis, “Application of Strategic Management Theories.”

<sup>132</sup> Friends of Ebey’s, undated letter to supporters (c. 1980), box 3, folder: Misc. 1970s papers, Miscellaneous papers re: Saving Ebey’s Prairie and Landing, EBLA Collection.

from the NPS, Island County, the Town of Coupeville, and Washington State Parks and Recreation, would run the reserve.<sup>133</sup>

This model differed significantly from the Cape Cod formula. There, the federal government maintained a significant degree of control over activities within park boundaries with the ultimate goal of acquiring as much land as possible. At Ebey's Landing, by contrast, the approach more closely resembled the regional planning and coordination agencies described earlier in this chapter. For example, NPS had no broad agenda for land acquisition on Whidbey Island and ideally aimed only to purchase a few key parcels. Zoning and easements would make up the bulk of preservation efforts, thus allowing the landscape to remain "in use" by local residents, while also preserving historic structures, sensitive ecological areas, and the cultural landscape of the prairie. If successful, the reserve offered a new path forward for the NPS in its attempts to protect private lands.

In the immediate months following the reserve's creation, the Park Service's most pressing task was completing the statutorily required comprehensive plan. The document had to be approved by the Department of the Interior before any action could be taken on land preservation. This, in turn, meant that a year and a half at minimum would pass before the agency could finalize any real estate transactions, including at the Smith farm on Ebey's Prairie.

In early 1979, Reed Jarvis, an experienced planner who was then serving as assistant superintendent of Olympic National Park, became Park Service lead on the reserve. At around the same time, the mayor of Coupeville and the Island County Board of Commissioners appointed a 12-member Citizens Advisory Committee to ensure that local perspectives played a

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<sup>133</sup> National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, Public Law 95 – 625, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 92 (1978): sec 508, 3507 – 3509.

role in the planning process.<sup>134</sup> This committee would draft a conceptual plan that, in turn, formed the basis for the comprehensive plan written by Jarvis and other park service staff. A variety of perspectives were represented on the committee, including those of local farmers, the Smith family, and preservationists. Meetings were open to the public, which allowed for a great degree of input and transparency.<sup>135</sup>

In the early days, especially, the federal-state-local partnership, which had no real precedent in the NPS, proved challenging to both the Park Service and the appointees. The authorizing legislation contained no specifics for how to proceed, including the elements to include in the reserve plan. Instead, the 1978 bill simply called for the identification of three areas or zones: public use and development, historic and natural preservation, and private use subject to appropriate zoning ordinances.

Using these broad categories as a starting point, the NPS and the committee prioritized areas for land acquisition and / or protection by other means (i.e. easements).<sup>136</sup> Committee members felt strongly that they – not the NPS – should call the shots. “We wanted to retain the integrity of the area,” the chairman recalled in a later interview. “We didn’t want the National Park Service or any agency to be running the show in our particular area.”<sup>137</sup>

This view was most keenly expressed through a deliberate de-emphasis on recreation within the reserve – another element that differentiated Ebey’s Landing from the seashores and lakeshores created in the sixties and seventies. Committee members did not want to see tourism

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<sup>134</sup> “Reserve Puts Area in National Spotlight,” *Whidbey News-Times*, February 22, 1979, clipping found in box 3, folder: Post Legislation News 1979, EBLA Collection.

<sup>135</sup> McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 48; Reed Jarvis, “Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve: An Alternative to Traditional Federal Land Protection,” *Northwest Land Use Review* (October 1985): 7.

<sup>136</sup> Heather Goodson, “An Evaluation of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve: A Case Study in Cultural Landscape Preservation,” (MA Thesis, University of Oregon, March 2004), 43 – 44.

<sup>137</sup> Interview of Herb Pickard by Laura McKinley, May 15, 1992, as quoted in McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 48.

overrun their communities and instead prioritized the continuation of agriculture.<sup>138</sup> In the end, despite some early hiccups, the committee completed its conceptual plan within roughly a year. Then, in roughly four months, the NPS wrote and refined its comprehensive plan, which drew largely on the work of the committee.

At the same time that the NPS and the Citizens Advisory Committee worked to complete the required comprehensive plan, confrontations over the fate of Ebey's Prairie continued apace. Clyde Wagner, frustrated by delays and court proceedings, sought to take dramatic action, allowing earth-moving equipment to roll across the landscape in late September 1979. "I've had it," he told a local newspaper. "We have made every attempt to compromise but have failed with the county and the Friends of Ebey's."<sup>139</sup>

These machinations provoked still more lawsuits, injunctions, and eventually mediation. What had changed from the previous decade was the presence of the NPS. Now a key player in land-use disputes on Whidbey Island, the Park Service attempted to broker deals between the parties involved – though compromise proved elusive. At one point, the NPS even asked the Island County commission to put a temporary moratorium on development within the reserve as a means to ratchet down tensions.

Perhaps surprisingly, the federal government did not have as much leverage as one might expect. NPS could not rely on condemnation or its threat to achieve the agency's goals for land protection. Regulatory authority regarding land use remained in county hands. Instead, the Park Service would have to negotiate and hope that personal relationships and patience carried the day until funds for acquisition proved forthcoming.

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<sup>138</sup> McKinley, *An Unbroken Historical Record*, 51.

<sup>139</sup> Dave Pinkham, "Bulldozers Roll into Action," *Whidbey News-Times*, September 20, 1979, clipping found in box 3, folder – Post Legislation News 1979, EBLA Collection.

For many months, it seemed this strategy would be a failure. In early 1980, “For Sale” signs appeared on the Prairie, as the Smith family and Wagner sought at long last to sell their properties in 5-acre chunks.<sup>140</sup> “We’ve tried to go so many different ways with this thing, but the environmentalists keep suing us or threatening to,” Wagner complained to the *Seattle Times*. Not so, a member of Friends of Ebey’s retorted, Wagner is just “trying to play us all for fools.” No solution seemed forthcoming, leading a government official to lament, “I just wish Ebey’s Prairie would dry up and blow away.”<sup>141</sup>

At long last, in late spring 1980, the Department of the Interior approved the reserve comprehensive plan, which meant that land acquisition could begin. The 18 months since designation had been a difficult period for all involved and not just because of the Ebey’s Prairie debates. Public meetings of the Citizens Advisory Committee often became hostile, as the lack of visible progress precipitated more questions than answers. At one gathering held in August 1979, attendees interrogated the committee members with queries ranging from the basic such as “Why do we need this?” to the more specific, including how the NPS planned to address an expected influx of visitors “spilling over from the public areas to private lands adjacent to them.” One local elected official in attendance, state senator Pat Wanamaker, commented that he was “for preservation – but not when it means a hardship on the community.” Others at the meeting rebutted these view, even going so far as to ask critics like Wanamaker how they would go about addressing Whidbey Island’s rapid growth.<sup>142</sup>

By the late 1970s, federal funds for land acquisition had become scarce. The national economy was in a free fall, and the Carter administration faced a budget crunch. The Land and

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<sup>140</sup> Eric Payne, “Ebey’s Prairie Sprouts New Crop: Litigation,” *Seattle Times*, March 8, 1980, [www.newsbank.com](http://www.newsbank.com)

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Dave Pinkham, “Landowners Skeptical About Historic Reserve,” *Whidbey News-Times*, April 23, 1979, clipping found in box 3, folder – Post Legislation News 1979, EBLA Collection.

Water Conservation Fund, a discretionary item, saw its appropriations drop. For several months, it appeared that no monies would be forthcoming to complete land deals within the reserve. At this stage, the Washington congressional delegation once again became involved. Senator Warren Magnuson managed to secure \$2.4 million at the end of the session. The timing was critical. Given the election of conservative Ronald Reagan to the presidency the next year, it is likely that no money would have gone to the reserve the following year.

In October 1980, the Park Service purchased the 300-acre Smith farm. A public ceremony on the bluffs above Ebey's Prairie marked the occasion, bringing a formal end to what the *Seattle Times* called a "long and bitter environmental battle."<sup>143</sup> The land that set off a decade of controversy was now firmly in public hands. Yet much hard work remained. Island County would have to update its zoning laws to a standard acceptable to the Secretary of the Interior, especially as it applied to land within the reserve. The Park Service, in turn, would have to negotiate with dozens of property holders to ensure protection, largely through easements, for thousands of acres. The agency would also spend years working in partnership (via an inter-local agreement) with community members and state and local government to create a new innovative Trust Board to eventually oversee management of the reserve with limited federal oversight, a process completed in 1988.

Following this transfer of managerial authority, the Trust Board and the NPS signed a cooperative agreement, which laid out a division of authorities and responsibilities for each party, including funding levels. Up to 50 percent of the annual operating costs come from federal monies, for example. After the transition, NPS staff gradually decreased their management role

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<sup>143</sup> "Ebey's Prairie Observance Set," *Seattle Times*, October 25, 1980, [www.inforweb.newsbank.com](http://www.inforweb.newsbank.com).

and, within only five years, the agency no longer dedicated a fulltime employee to supporting the Trust Board.<sup>144</sup>

In an article summing up many of the early accomplishments of the reserve, former NPS manager Reed Jarvis cited its significance for changing modes of federal involvement in conservation efforts, “In the past, the public has often felt that when all else fails, the Federal Government should be called in... to save the day. However, this attitude is no longer appropriate for America’s land preservation problems,” he wrote. “If our goal is indeed to preserve our national heritage, cooperation at all levels of government, and between the public and private sectors is necessary.”<sup>145</sup> Jarvis’s analysis was prescient – with a few caveats. The era of federal officials coming in to “save the day” was indeed over by the 1980s – though one might argue whether many communities ever truly viewed the NPS or other public lands agencies as saviors. Partnerships would become far more important in the post-1980 period, a reality some in federal service accepted reluctantly. Local actors, along with their allies in Congress, often had to push the Park Service to move in a collaborate direction, even as budgetary and political realities made this the only feasible option for advancing a conservation agenda in many parts of the country.

### *Conclusion*

Prior to the establishment of Cape Cod National Seashore, the National Park Service had extremely limited experience with managing privately owned lands. Beginning in the 1960s, this situation began to change, especially within newly established units located in and near urban areas. At first, it was the Park Service itself that initiated this shift, as it pushed to create national seashores and lakeshores near the nation’s growing cities and suburbs. Concern over the

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<sup>144</sup> Orlando and Luxenberg, “Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, “ 95-96.

<sup>145</sup> Jarvis, “Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, 8.

disappearance of open space, coupled with an incipient environmental movement, drove much of this action, as did a federal policy to bring “parks to the people where the people are,” a slogan promoted by President Nixon’s first Interior Secretary, Walter Hickel.

Quickly, however, some in the Park Service and Interior Department leadership soured on this development, as it became clear that communities and their elected officials would not simply acquiesce to federal demands, especially in the realm of land use. Moreover, the costs of buying land were much larger than NPS anticipated. Property owners either would not sell or wanted high prices, and the NPS, in turn, resorted to condemnation and other unpopular practices. These stand-offs, in locations as varied as Point Reyes National Seashore in California and Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in Ohio, made for decidedly tense and acrimonious conditions in many of the new park units.

The experience at Cape Cod National Seashore offered a different path, one that proved influential in the creation of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve almost two decades later. Even more critical was the influence of the growing “quiet revolution in land use,” with its call for enhanced land use regulation and more centralized authority over planning decisions. The development frenzies of the fifties and sixties had spawned a powerful backlash, with many Americans, disillusioned by sprawl and pollution, seeking alternatives to unending growth. On Whidbey Island, this took the form of organized protest against the proposed destruction of a long-cherished local landscape, one linked to the identity of the area as a community which valued history, scenery, and agriculture.

In contrast to the early national seashores and lakeshores, which traced their origins to Washington, D.C., as a project of Park Service planners, Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve took shape as a result of local initiative and organization. In correspondence with Ken

House, a graduate student researching the history of the reserve, Kathy Jarrett, a onetime staffer of Congressman Meeds, emphasized that the “interest in preservation originated with local citizens – particularly an active few – who were pressing for it.” The aid of Representative Meeds, along with that of Senator Henry Jackson, was essential to the effort, but it came in response to local entreaties. This was a grassroots effort, albeit one that involved a relatively small – but determined - group of residents, landowners, and their allies.<sup>146</sup> Those advocating for land conservation made savvy use of new laws and regulations intended to control or limit growth, employing the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and its Washington State equivalent, as well as new local zoning ordinances, to slow the development process just enough to allow time for federal involvement.

In an era when big spending on parks was declining, the green-line model, which emphasized mixed property ownership, zoning, and intergovernmental collaboration, received the support of many in Congress, who viewed it as a novel way to protect land for a fraction of the price of a traditional national park. Jarrett, Meeds’ staffer, commented that the approach allowed for more “flexible financial management... than the traditional park concept.”<sup>147</sup> Moreover, while green-line parks did impose some new restrictions, they often did so without producing the same level of animosity as forced sales or condemnation. Ebey’s Landing, in particular, was acceptable to many people living on Whidbey Island because it only allowed the Park Service to acquire property or development rights from willing sellers.

While certainly complex to manage, especially over time as new residents arrived and development pressures increased, reserves like Ebey’s Landing appeared to offer a compelling model for the future of conservation in the United States - a template that could accommodate

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<sup>146</sup> Memorandum from Kathy Jarvis to Representative Al Swift, “Inquiry Regarding Ebey’s Landing,” June 4, 1986, box 2, folder: correspondence, EBLA Collection.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

private property, working lands, environmental stewardship, and historic preservation. Core zones would be prioritized for fee simple acquisition by the NPS, while other, outlying areas might be protected through some combination of local and state action. Yet, after 1978, the momentum of the green-line parks movement came to a halt. The election of Ronald Reagan, coupled with a growing backlash against federal action in the realm of environmental regulation, made government-backed land conservation of any sort, including national park designation, far less popular. Instead, advocates began experimenting with other models, often employing a mix of public – private partnerships as well as heightened emphasis on economic development in order to achieve their conservation objectives.

## Chapter Four

### *Parks to the People – Where the People Are*

On October 12, 1973, a group of congressional and National Park Service officials made a dramatic helicopter visit to Lowell, an industrial city of 92,000 residents situated at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers River in northeastern Massachusetts. An eclectic group of local boosters had planned the “red carpet” inspection, which also included a catered lunch and walking tour of the community’s historic canal network.<sup>1</sup> The scenery being assessed differed considerably from most existing NPS sites. No jagged mountains peaks, sparkling glacial lakes, or forest-covered hillsides were visible. Campgrounds and hiking trails were also not in evidence; nor were battlefields or military cemeteries. Instead, the helicopters buzzed over a scene that included divided highways, office buildings, parking lots, and apartment complexes, in addition to century-old red brick mills and industrial waterways.

Once home to some of the largest textile operations in the world, Lowell’s economy had been declining for close to fifty years, decimated by competition from low-wage, non-union mills and factories in rural New England and the South. For much of the 1970s, the city’s unemployment rate hovered at or above ten percent, the highest in the state. News of plant closings and layoffs appeared regularly in the pages of its daily paper, the *Lowell Sun*.<sup>2</sup> Efforts at urban renewal, such as highway construction and the demolition of tenements, had begun to remake Lowell in the years after World War II. A large part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century built

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<sup>1</sup> “Buzzing of Helicopters was Urban Park Tour,” *Lowell Sun*, October 12, 1973, newspapers.com; According to an account written by Robert Weible, one of the first National Park Service historians to work at the Lowell site, the early boosters included, “educators, history buffs, historic preservationists, neighborhood leaders, city planners, politicians, and citizens from backgrounds of just about every description.” Robert Weible, “Lowell: Building a New Appreciation for Historical Place,” *The Public Historian* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 29.

<sup>2</sup> Examples include: Carol Giacomo, “Plant Closing Could Make Dracut’s Unemployment Highest in Nation,” *Lowell Sun*, November 19, 1970, newspapers.com; Frank Phillips, “Swelling Unemployment Claims Force DES to Chance Schedules,” *Lowell Sun*, January 25, 1971, newspapers.com; Frank Scholz, “Area Jobless Engineers May Work for City,” *Lowell Sun*, November 19, 1970, newspapers.com; Norman Zamcheck, “Leasing Vacant Plant an ‘Impossible Dream,’ ” *Lowell Sun*, August 3, 1971, newspapers.com.

environment remained intact, however. This was much to the chagrin of many in city leadership who had long desired to see the old “eyesores” razed.<sup>3</sup> Most notably, several large mills as well as a 5.6-mile power canal system still dominated the downtown landscape. These structures dated to the decades before the Civil War, when Lowell first gained an international reputation as a center for cotton processing, earning the sobriquet “Spindle City” in recognition of its astounding success as a center of textile production.<sup>4</sup>

After completing the aerial tour, Stanley Hewlett, associate director of the NPS, professed to be “very impressed,” with all he had seen of the city and its environs.<sup>5</sup> According to one newspaper account of the visit, Hewlett stated that Lowell could be “the starting point of a new concept in urban park development,” one that brought local, state, and federal entities together to not only preserve and rehabilitate historic sites, but also stimulate economic revitalization.<sup>6</sup> Project supporters, of course, agreed, believing that national park designation would spur recognition of the city’s history and generate much needed public and private investment. An editorial in the *Lowell Sun* summed up these views, stating, “A National Cultural Park... would not only help develop pride in the city and its history but would attract people here who have heard of Lowell and its role in the industrial revolution, as well as tourists anxious to

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<sup>3</sup> The term “eyesores” comes from a speech delivered by Senator Paul Tsongas to a group of planners in 1979. In it, he reflects, “Like other mill towns of the Northeast, Lowell was a forgotten city... Lowell was so discounted that she couldn’t even get the money together to level the mills that were considered eyesores.” Born and raised in Lowell, Tsongas played an integral role in the creation of the Lowell National Historical Park. Paul Tsongas, “Urban Speech,” (speech, 1979), Paul E. Tsongas Congressional Collection, Digital Initiatives @ UML, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://libhost.uml.edu/items/show/47132>.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the mill girls of Lowell and their experiences, see Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). Widely portrayed as a model industrial city, visitors from around the world praised Lowell’s mill operators for their approach to factory labor. In particular, the treatment of thousands of young women from rural New England, often called “mill girls,” captivated contemporary observers.

<sup>5</sup> Alberta Cook, “U.S. Officials Impressed by Urban Park Project,” *Lowell Sun*, October 12, 1973, [newspapers.com](http://newspapers.com).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

visit places of interest such as Lowell.”<sup>7</sup> One Park Service official described the effort in slightly more dramatic terms, noting that residents were “using history to build community pride and rescue their city from over fifty years of economic and psychological depression.”<sup>8</sup>

Federal involvement in distressed urban centers like Lowell was not a new phenomenon in the early 1970s. Agencies like the Federal Housing Administration, the Public Housing Administration, and the Home Loan Bank Board, among others, helped shape urban landscapes since the Great Depression. Federal influence only expanded in the postwar period, as huge new sums of money, especially for infrastructure, became available.<sup>9</sup> Great Society programs started by the Johnson administration during the 1960s, including Model Cities, offered additional federal funds, with many of the initiatives targeted at communities experiencing high unemployment and poverty.<sup>10</sup>

Yet if federal interest in the economic development of American cities was relatively common by the time Park Service officials took their helicopter tour of Lowell, NPS participation in such activities remained both unusual and contentious. The Park Service had maintained a presence in cities since the New Deal, but its role was limited largely, with a few exceptions, to managing smaller historic sites.<sup>11</sup> Fostering downtown investment, for example, or contributing to job creation and the promotion of tourism did not generally enter into the duties of park staff. Indeed, as geographer Ronald Foresta has remarked in writing about internal NPS

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<sup>7</sup> “National Park Plan Hailed,” *Lowell Sun*, editorial, April 30, 1972, newspapers.com.

<sup>8</sup> Weible, “Lowell,” 29.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of federal involvement in American cities that begins before the 1960s, see Mark I. Gelfand, *A Nation of Cities: The Federal Government and Urban America, 1933 - 1965* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> Set to last 5 years, Model Cities provided a wide-range of social programs, economic development opportunities, and even political organizing. Scholars have offered mixed interpretations of the effort, with some highlighting its successes, while others emphasize its use as a tool to blunt the force of social movements. For a wide-ranging review of the literature on the program, see Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace, “Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program,” *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 1 (2012): 173 – 192.

<sup>11</sup> Foresta, *America’s National Parks and their Keepers*, 169 – 170.

opinions on urban sites prior to the 1960s, “The agency viewed Federal Hall, the Jefferson National Expansion Monument, and Independence National Historical Park as historic sites that happened to be in urban areas through accidents of history. They were not in the National Park System because they were in urban areas, but, if anything, in spite of it.”<sup>12</sup>

By 1980, however, cities had become far more integral to the Park Service. The number of units located in or very near population centers had grown dramatically. So, too, had the managerial responsibilities of NPS employees, who now oversaw a far more diverse array of programs than only a few decades earlier. Members of Congress, as well as residents, media, and local elected officials, also had more sweeping expectations of what Park Service involvement could mean for their communities. A new park unit, it was hoped, would not only provide recreation opportunities and protect open space, but also spur financial investment and renewed confidence in areas experiencing capital flight and outmigration. The *Boston Globe*, for instance, cited the Lowell park proposal as a potential harbinger of “brighter days” for the “industrially crippled city with high unemployment.”<sup>13</sup> The city’s mayor touted NPS and state involvement, saying he believed it might well be “the resurrection of our city,” while the city manager pronounced that the park plan had changed Lowell’s “confidence quotient,” and was nothing short of “sensational.”<sup>14</sup>

This chapter explores the expansion of the Park Service into cities in the decades after World War II, with a particular focus on the effort to create a new park unit in Lowell. It examines the motivations driving Park Service involvement as well as the shifts in agency policy regarding cities and urban sites. While metropolitan expansion did have the support of NPS

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>13</sup> John O’ Keefe, “Lowell May Become Prosperous Park,” *Boston Globe*, August 21, 1974, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>14</sup> “Amid Ruins of the Past, One Hope Glimmers,” *Boston Globe*, January 11, 1977, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

leadership for much of the sixties and early seventies, that backing proved tenuous. In the end, urban parks like Lowell generally gained designation as a result of local initiative and Congressional action, rather than a concerted push on the part of the NPS itself.

While Park Service involvement in metropolitan areas grew in the decades between 1950 and 1980, the process was by no means orderly or predictable. Indeed, the agency's actions often appeared almost haphazard, with enthusiastic forays into cities followed by indecision and retrenchment. Internal struggles over the merits of investment in urban areas meant that funding and staff levels remained erratic. Many long time Park Service employees often had ambivalent, if not outright hostile, opinions regarding the agency's growing presence in major population centers – feelings only heightened by the vacillating concerns of those in leadership. Only a small number of rangers and other personnel had ever worked in metropolitan settings, and many felt that the responsibility for recreation and historic preservation lay with local government, not a federal agency.<sup>15</sup> One retired NPS official speaking at a national recreation conference during the Ford administration summed up this perspective when he bluntly stated, in regards to urban parks, "Let's not trade Yosemite for a marina."<sup>16</sup>

Racial and ethnic diversity within the ranks of the NPS was also basically non-existent during this period – and, in fact, remains a significant issue.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, as late as the 1960s, only one of the Park Service's 474 rangers was African American. Herbert S. Cables, Jr., superintendent of Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City and one of the few African Americans in a leadership position offered a candid critique of his colleagues. "These people

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<sup>15</sup> A number of sources discuss the agency's conflicted views on urban parks. See: William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 68 – 71; Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 173 – 222; Paul Marcuse, "Is the National Parks Movement Anti-Urban," *Parks and Recreation* (July 1971), 15-21, 48 - 49; John G. Mitchell, The Re-Greening of Urban America, *Audubon* 80, no. 2 (1978): 29 – 52;

<sup>16</sup> US Department of the Interior et al., *Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Glenn Nelson, "Why Are Our Parks so White?," Editorial, *New York Times*, July 10, 2015.

[rangers] feel a lot more comfortable in the Western parks...they tend to worry about the negative things of New York life...They are not comfortable dealing with minorities.” Another Gateway staff member was even more scathing in his assessment of the predominately white, middle-class NPS workforce, stating that many park rangers had a “narrow perspective,” and held “contemptuous attitudes towards city people.”<sup>18</sup> Class and race continued to be animating issues at Gateway and other urban parks in the coming decades, as the NPS struggled to not only diversify its own workforce, but also appease white residents of nearby communities who fought public transportation efforts aimed at opening up parks to expanded visitation by low-income residents and people of color.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to discord within the NPS, a volatile national political environment also contributed to the agency’s decidedly unsystematic approach to cities. Rapid changes in executive branch priorities led to frustration and uncertainty, with one Park Service leader remarking, “I’m not against urban parks...but what the hell is our policy?”<sup>20</sup> Though initially championed by members of the Johnson administration, who viewed conservation as an integral part of the broader Great Society effort, urban parks faced a shakier future after Richard Nixon won the 1968 presidential election. In contrast to his Democratic predecessor, Nixon viewed NPS involvement in cities largely through an electoral lens. Sensing that parks could be a winning issue at the polls, he endorsed the idea at opportune moments, including the run-up to the 1972 election. At other times, however, his administration either ignored or pushed back against expanding the Park Service presence, leaving Congress and the public confused as to the

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<sup>18</sup> Philip Shabecoff, “Park Service Takes on City Sites and City Problems,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1980, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>19</sup> Foresta, *America’s National Parks and their Keepers*, 188 – 193.

<sup>20</sup> “I’m not against urban parks...” is quoted in Everhart, *The National Park Service*, 71.

wishes of executive branch leadership.<sup>21</sup> Presidential support for urban parks fluctuated still further during the Ford and Carter presidencies, with substantial cutbacks, followed by new spending in the decade's final years.

Equally disruptive, for the first time in NPS history, the directorship cycled quickly from one manager to the next. Between 1972 and 1980, five men held the position of NPS director, compared to only seven during agency's previous five decades. Moreover, a number of these directors came to the job with little direct Park Service experience, adding still more instability.

Opposition, or at least uncertainty, regarding the benefits of NPS involvement in metropolitan areas also came from many traditional supporters of the agency. In 1972, the influential Conservation Foundation, for example, issued a report entitled *National Parks for the Future*, which highlighted the agency's urban expansion. One contributor called for the NPS to be more accessible for city dwellers, but also cautioned that the "needs to be met are far greater than the Service's fiscal ability to meet them."<sup>22</sup> Another study participant questioned the growing diversification of park service programming, noting, in a largely critical tone, that during the summer of 1968 the Park Service had offered cultural enrichment activities and other similar classes in its Washington D.C. units as well as in other locations. These types of activities had led to a "diffusion of purpose" and a "diversity of emphasis from preservation." In the eyes of detractors, the mission of the NPS had grown muddled, with a proliferation of new sites leading to confusion both inside and outside the agency.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Rolf Diamant tracks the changing views of the Nixon administration in his Masters thesis on National Recreation Areas. Rolf Diamant, "Gateways to Nowhere: A Recent History of Federal Urban Parks," (Masters Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1975).

<sup>22</sup> John P. Keith, "Park Space for Urban America," in *National Parks for the Future* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1982), 185.

<sup>23</sup> Maitland S. Sharpe, "The National Parks and Young America," in *National Parks for the Future* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1982), 201 – 202.

Even amidst such internal and external protestations, the Lowell proposal, as well as a number of others targeted at cities, ultimately gained Congressional approval. Some of the new sites, especially the more urban-oriented national seashores and lakeshores, enjoyed a fair amount of agency support, and often gained park unit status in spite of opposition from local residents.<sup>24</sup> In other cases, however, especially beginning in the 1970s, community advocacy, in concert with support from influential elected officials, was decisive in winning federal recognition for urban parks. This echoed the pattern at Ebey's Landing explored in chapter 3, where it was local initiative coupled with timely action by the Washington State congressional delegation that ultimately made possible creation of the national historical reserve.

This combination of bottom-up and top-down organizing certainly influenced action at Lowell, where park boosters secured designation despite early opposition from the NPS and the Department of the Interior. Looking back on the city's push for legislation, Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas, himself born and raised in Lowell, recalled:

When the Lowell park legislation was introduced...the National Park Service opposed it. The Park Service was not interested in the far-out idea of a National Park in an urban area; there was no precedent for telling the story of the industrial revolution; and the magnitude of the restoration requirements in the historic preservation area reached far beyond their scope. This was massive urban revitalization, and the Park Service wouldn't touch it.<sup>25</sup>

In the end, it took a savvy lobbying campaign, along with the introduction of an innovative inter-governmental and public-private partnership model, for the NPS to back the Lowell effort. Even then, the Park Service pushed back against residents' plans to create a new type of unit, called a cultural park, which would have emphasized both past and present in its interpretive programming. As one park proponent explained at a 1978 Congressional hearing,

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<sup>24</sup> For two cases where seashore and lakeshore proposals aroused opposition, see Watt, *The Paradox of Preservation* and Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore*.

<sup>25</sup> Tsongas, "Urban Speech," 1979.

“What we are trying to portray here is a way of life. The way of life is dynamic. It is still going on. We are not trying to capture one particular period of time. We are trying to capture a process and the process of industrialism is still going on in the city.”<sup>26</sup> Instead, NPS officials successfully petitioned for Lowell to be designated as a historical park. This ensured that its emphasis would, for the most part, be limited to the industrial revolution rather than more recent economic and demographic changes, especially deindustrialization.<sup>27</sup>

Anthropologist Cathy Stanton documented the repercussions of this decision in her book *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City*. In Stanton’s view, the interpretation available at Lowell, though rich in analyzing the relationship between capital and labor in the nineteenth century, elides these same issues in regard to late twentieth and early twenty-first century economic transformations. “And despite the good intentions of many of the people who shaped these landscapes [the National Historical Park], they do not provide maps for actual participation in or conversation about the relationships of power and modes of production in the world we live in now,” she writes.<sup>28</sup>

The 1978 establishment of Lowell National Historical Park was a milestone for the NPS – even if the impetus for the change came largely from external pressure. Long committed to the management of rural landscapes largely under agency control, the Park Service entered a new phase at Lowell. It was now involved in overseeing an urban setting with only a minimal prior federal footprint. Moreover, the park relied heavily on partnerships to achieve the goals laid out

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<sup>26</sup> *Hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, S. 2817, Bill to establish the Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, Mass, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., April 8, 1978, 78.*

<sup>27</sup> The interpretation at National Park Service sites is, for the most part, limited to the period of significance outlined in authorizing legislation. In the bill creating the Lowell National Historical Park, the industrial revolution, along with the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, were highlighted. No mention was made of deindustrialization, for example, or the city’s more recent history.

<sup>28</sup> Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, 67.

in its legislation, namely the preservation and interpretation of sites associated with mass production and industrial labor – subjects rarely addressed at other NPS locations.

Cities and states around the country saw Lowell as a potential model for their own efforts at historic preservation and economic revitalization. New York, for example, launched a statewide urban cultural park initiative at roughly the same moment. At the federal level, however, Lowell would remain an outlier. The country's economic woes of the late 1970s, along with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, meant that neither financial nor ideological backing existed to support an expansion in Park Service urban programming. After close to two decades of fitful evolution, the agency would once again retreat in its attempts to diversify both its physical footprint and its visitor demographics.

#### *NPS Urban Involvement Before 1965*

The idea of urban national parks was not new when Lowell advocates began supporting the establishment of one in their city. The National Park Service had managed properties in metropolitan areas, most notably sites in Washington, D.C. and New York City, since before World War II.<sup>29</sup> However, earlier efforts, especially those focused on historic sites, were limited in scope and usually relied on demolition as a key element of their creation. For example, much of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhood surrounding Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia was razed following its 1948 designation in order to create Independence Mall, an open plaza seen as being more congenial to visitation by tourists.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in St. Louis, federal officials authorized the condemnation and removal of a large swath of properties along

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<sup>29</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 169 – 170. Some urban historic sites, along with the Washington, DC parks became part of the NPS system in the 1930s. In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt undertook a massive reorganization of the federal government. In August 1933, two executive orders took effect. These transferred the War Department's parks and monuments, including Civil War battlefields in the east and south, to the NPS. Also important, the NPS assumed management of all the national monuments then under Forest Service purview. Finally, the NPS also became manager of numerous parks in Washington, DC.

<sup>30</sup> For a history of Independence National Historical Park, see Constance M. Greiff, *Independence: The Creation of a National Park* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

the city's waterfront during the 1930s to make way for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (now part of the Gateway Arch National Park).<sup>31</sup> Ironically, in both these cases, the interpretation of one part of the past required the destruction of historic structures and communities from other eras (including the contemporary one), their stories deemed less worthy or significant of commemoration. In Lowell, the park was, in large part, intended to forestall the wrecking ball; though, even there, a particular moment in history, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, took precedence over more other, more recent epochs.

Beginning in the 1950s, the NPS took significant steps to grow its presence in more populated areas. As detailed in chapter 2, the most visible aspect of this expansion was the creation of more than a dozen new national seashores and lakeshores in the years between 1960 and 1980. These sites, though not usually within city limits, were explicitly justified as a means to provide recreation opportunities for urban and suburban residents. Indeed, the first four coastal parks established during this period were located within a few hours drive of Boston, San Francisco, New York City, and Chicago respectively.

This was a new development for not only the Park Service but also the federal government more generally. Prior to the postwar era, city parks had not been a major priority for policymakers and bureaucrats in Washington, DC. Responsibility for the provision of urban open space and playgrounds fell largely to municipalities, though some Depression-era programs did contribute to the construction of recreation facilities.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, a short-lived Technical Committee on Recreation, housed within the Interdepartmental Committee to Coordinate Health and Welfare Activities, looked at the issue of open space in cities as part of a New Deal

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<sup>31</sup> For more details on the Gateway Arch, see Tracy Campbell, *The Gateway Arch: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> For a history of urban parks in America before the 1950s, see Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 3 – 133.

initiative. However, its recommendations, condensed in a 1937 summary report, largely went unheeded following the United States' entry into World War II.<sup>33</sup>

A turning point came in 1958 with the creation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC). Created through Congressional legislation, the ORRRC conducted a systematic study of the nation's current and future outdoor recreation needs, and made a compelling case for the federal government's role – both as a funder and as a coordinating entity. Among its most important recommendations were the establishment of a massive new grant-in-aid program to the states, with an explicit focus on land acquisition near cities, as well as the creation of an independent Bureau of Outdoor Recreation housed within the Department of the Interior. By 1965, Congress and the Executive Branch had supported both proposals, creating a new federal recreation infrastructure that catered more than ever before to the needs of cities and suburbs.

Perhaps no public figure exemplified this change in policy more than Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall.<sup>34</sup> As secretary, he promoted a vision dubbed the “New Conservation,” which sought to link environmental concerns with social ills like poverty, poor health, inadequate education, and substandard housing. He also expanded Interior's operations beyond the agency's traditional focus on public lands in the West to including programming and grants in more populated areas. Udall saw his efforts as part of a “third wave” of environmental

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<sup>33</sup> Fitch and Shanklin, *The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation*, 53-55.

<sup>34</sup> Born in rural Arizona in 1920, Udall spent his youth working on a family farm in the small community of St. Johns. He began his studies at the University of Arizona just before the United States entry into World War II, but postponed coursework to complete a Mormon mission and a tour of duty in the Air Force. Following his return to Arizona in 1946, Udall earned a law degree (1948) and entered public service, winning election to a local Tucson school board in 1951. His profile in and around the state rose quickly, and he successfully ran for the US House of Representatives in 1954. An early supporter of John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign, Udall played an important role in securing Arizona's delegates for the Massachusetts senator. Following his victory in 1960, Kennedy rewarded Udall with the post of Interior Secretary. Biographical details from J. E. de Steiguer, *The Origins of Modern Environmental Thought* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 53 – 55.

awareness, which built on the legacies established during the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>35</sup>

Despite his deep admiration for earlier generations of conservationists, Udall had reservations about some of their goals. He questioned, for example, the benefits of a natural resource management regime that prized efficiency and utilitarian “progress” above all else.<sup>36</sup> In his 1963 bestseller, *The Quiet Crisis*, Udall linked the “successes of science,” including the automobile, atom bomb, and aircraft, to “a new set of problems that constitute the quiet crisis of conservation in this decade.” Quoting Rachel Carson, he lamented the arrival of “an age of poisons,” which threatened the country’s air, water, and land.<sup>37</sup>

In Udall’s view, rampant consumption had blinded Americans to the ongoing destruction of cities, suburbs, and rural landscapes. The solution to these ills, he argued, lay in the development of a “balanced conservation program” that valued preservation as well as profit.<sup>38</sup> Udall, it is important to note, did not oppose all development or resource use, only that which he deemed especially wasteful or wanton – and even then, he struggled to define precisely what these ideas meant to him.<sup>39</sup>

From the moment he took office, Udall took steps to challenge existing orthodoxies on both recreation and urban park management. In particular, he butted heads with longtime NPS Director Conrad Wirth, who did not share Udall’s passion for the New Conservation agenda, especially as it related to cities.<sup>40</sup> In response to what he viewed as Wirth’s intransigence, Udall

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas G. Smith, "John Kennedy, Stewart Udall, and New Frontier Conservation," *Pacific Historical Review* 64, no. 3 (August 1995): 353

<sup>36</sup> According to Smith’s analysis, Udall still believed in expertise, efficiency, and aesthetic conservation, but wanted these values expanded to new contexts, like cities. *Ibid.*, 334-340.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart Udall, *The Quiet Crisis* (New York: Holt, Reinholt, and Winston, 1963), 175.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Smith’s discussion of Udall’s views on dam building in the American West. Smith, "John Kennedy, Stewart Udall, and New Frontier Conservation," 357-358.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

championed the creation of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), which would assume at least some of the responsibilities for promoting recreation that had once been in the Park Service portfolio.<sup>41</sup> He and his sub-ordinates also privately and publically rebuked the NPS for – what they viewed, rightly or wrongly - as a tendency towards insularity, as well as its independence vis-à-vis the Interior Department.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, when in Udall’s view Wirth failed to praise Interior Department policy adequately during a magazine interview, the Secretary rebuked the NPS Director by writing, “To be quite candid, I must report that I read this article with amazement and chagrin...Any reader would inspect this article in vain for evidence that you are aware of any ties to this Administration, or that you have any serious interest in the new programs which it has presented to the Congress and the American people. If this article reveals your true state of mind, I would suggest that you get aboard - QUICK.”<sup>43</sup>

In late 1963, Wirth had had enough and tendered his resignation, ending a record setting 13-year tenure as the agency’s leader (it would be official in 1964). In his place, Udall supported the appointment of George Hartzog, Jr., an NPS veteran who had a reputation for supporting inventive projects, especially in metropolitan areas. The change was significant. Hartzog oversaw a significant expansion of NPS involvement in the nation’s cities during his nine-years leading the NPS.

### *Hartzog and the Great Society*

In his autobiography, *Battling for the National Parks*, George Hartzog commented that it was his “good fortune to become director at a most propitious time in the history of the National

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<sup>41</sup> Foresta, *America’s National Parks and their Keepers*, 67 – 68.

<sup>42</sup> As an example of these views, Conrad Wirth cites excerpts from a speech given by one of Udall’s subordinates shortly before Wirth’s somewhat forced retirement. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 308 – 309.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 297 – 298.

Park System.”<sup>44</sup> Though somewhat battered by the friction between Udall and Wirth, the agency still retained much of its prestige in Congress and with the American public. Indeed, it was just nearing the end of its 10-year Mission 66 construction boom, a time when the agency reached the apogee of its visibility. The continued popularity of outdoor recreation, along with an incipient environmental movement, what Hartzog described as “great tidal waves of environmental concern,” had the potential to raise the Park Service’s profile still further, especially if the Interior Department remained supportive.<sup>45</sup>

Known as a savvy political operator, the new Director hoped to capitalize on these forces to advance an ambitious and decidedly urban-centric agenda – one that would make the agency more relevant, more accessible, and, equally important, its units and its workforce more diverse.. As Hartzog himself explained in an interview following his retirement, “unless the urban people of America have a stake in the National Park Service, it’s not going to survive... You know, the top 1 percent of the financial world . . . will never save the National Park System. It’s the bottom 50% that are going to save it if it’s to be saved.”<sup>46</sup>

Born in 1920 in rural South Carolina, Hartzog came from a modest background. While still a teenager, he briefly became a Methodist preacher, before leaving school at the age of sixteen to aid his family during the Great Depression. The poverty he experienced and witnessed during these years, including the struggles of his mother who became the primary breadwinner after his father fell ill, left a lasting impression. In later years, Hartzog invoked their memory to explain his staunch support for many Great Society initiatives, especially those aimed at aiding

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<sup>44</sup> Hartzog, *Battling for the National Parks*, 88.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 88 - 90

<sup>46</sup> George B. Hartzog, Jr. interview by Kathy Mengak, July 30, 1998, as quoted in Kathy Mengak, *Reshaping our National Parks and their Guardians: The Legacy of George B. Hartzog Jr.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico press, 2012), 105.

women and children.<sup>47</sup> “Our family was saved by my mother, not by my father,” he explained. “Our family was saved by her. So I knew what women could do.”<sup>48</sup>

In the late 1930s, Hartzog began working in a local law office as a combination stenographer, typist, and general clerk. Over the next several years, he read and studied law at night, eventually passing the South Carolina bar exam in 1942 – without completing college or law school.<sup>49</sup> Following military service during World War II, he joined the General Land Office (soon to be re-organized at the Bureau of Land Management) as an adjudicator. He transferred to the NPS shortly thereafter; he remained there for some three decades, save for one year as executive director of Downtown St. Louis, Inc.

Initially, Hartzog worked at the Park Service’s central offices (temporarily located in Chicago as a wartime exigency). He moved to Lake Texoma National Recreation Area in Denison, Texas, in 1947 to manage a land-leasing program. In 1948, he was back in the main headquarters (now returned to Washington, D.C.) serving in the chief counsel’s office. Three years later, he became chief of concessions management. This was a politically sensitive position given the influence many Park Service concessionaires, private businesses under contract with NPS to provide services, have with local and national elected officials.<sup>50</sup>

Though Hartzog’s profile in the agency had been rising throughout the 1950s, he still lacked extensive field experience. In order to join the NPS’ senior ranks, it was usually necessary to work outside of headquarters at one of the western “crown jewel” parks. Accordingly, Hartzog

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<sup>47</sup> George B. Hartzog, Jr, interview by Janet McDonnell, September 25, 2005, October 5, 2005, November 3, 2005, McLean, VA, viii, interview made available online by the Crater Lake Institute, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.craterlakeinstitute.com/online-library/hartzog-oral-history/hartzog-oral-history.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, ix

<sup>50</sup> During this same period, Hartzog attended night school at American University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1953. *Ibid.*, ix, x.

successfully sought the position of Assistant Superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1955, followed by a similar posting, two years later, at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

In 1959, then Director Wirth named Hartzog superintendent of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis. The task set before him – to jumpstart construction of the stalled St. Louis Arch project – was daunting. Reflecting on his decision to take the job, he later recalled that, “when I got [there] I discovered that I was not the first choice for St. Louis. I got the position because I was the last guy who would agree to go. They had offered the job to any number of more senior people who turned it down. They didn’t want any part of it.”<sup>51</sup> Despite such warnings, however, Hartzog relished the challenge, explaining in an interview, “I wanted an opportunity in any shape, manner, or form. I was on the make.”<sup>52</sup>

The new superintendent made the most of his position, working with a host of partners including local residents and business owners, city officials, state government, labor unions, and railroad interests to get the project moving forward. A tough negotiator, Hartzog recalled arguing with one recalcitrant contractor after another to complete the project.<sup>53</sup> With construction well underway, Hartzog left the NPS in July 1962 to become executive director of Downtown St. Louis, Inc. Within a year, he returned to the agency at Udall’s request, first as an associate director, then as director in January 1964.

Hartzog’s desire for a more socially engaged Park Service had the support of his superiors at the Department of the Interior and at the White House. President Johnson, in fact, would soon make conservation a cornerstone of the Great Society, with urban parks serving as a key element of this effort. In May 1964, for example, when Johnson first laid out his vision for the Great Society during a commencement speech at the University of Michigan, he repeatedly

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.,. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> McPhee, “Ranger,” 78.

emphasized the connections between human health and wellbeing and that of the natural world. The Great Society, the President explained, was “a place where man can renew contact with nature...It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.” He then issued a call to action, exhorting Americans to protect the county’s natural environment before it was lost forever owing to sprawl and industrial development.<sup>54</sup>

In the coming months, Johnson’s rhetoric on conservation grew even more pointed, especially regarding cities. On February 8, 1965, he delivered a groundbreaking *Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty*. In this wide-ranging address, which covered all manner of environmental issues, Johnson repeatedly mentioned the unique challenges facing urban dwellers. “More of our people are crowding into cities and being cut off from nature,” the president explained. “Cities themselves reach out into the countryside, destroying streams and trees and meadows as they go...and people move out from the city to get closer to nature only to find that nature has moved farther from them.”

To address these ills, Johnson called for a novel approach to conservation, one that moved beyond protecting wild places far from population centers and instead centered on the preservation of close-to-home recreation opportunities. The president believed that conservation had to be more than a “holiday treat,” instead becoming “part of our daily life.” And, it had to be available to diverse groups of Americans, with “not just easy physical access, but equal social access for rich and poor, Negro and white, city dweller and farmer.” He promised that the sixties

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<sup>54</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," May 22, 1964, made available online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed January 6, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26262>.

would be a “Parks-for-America decade,” calling for the creation of more than a dozen new National Parks, Recreation Areas, Seashores, and Lakeshores, in close proximity to cities.<sup>55</sup>

For Johnson, like many others in his administration, the problems of urban America had a physical or material component. They believed that improving the landscape of the city, whether through beautification, new housing projects, or even trash pick-up would, in turn, lead to an amelioration of social and economic conditions. The drive for large-scale urban renewal rested, at least in part, on this view. Advocates argued that the razing of older homes and tenement buildings would precipitate a renaissance in the country’s struggling downtowns.<sup>56</sup>

Conservation constituted a key part of this agenda. Land cleared by urban renewal was often set aside for parks. Even as attention shifted towards structural inequities as a driving factor behind urban decline, especially those stemming from racism, many politicians still looked to outdoor recreation and protected areas as potential remedies. They saw a critique focused on a lack of parks and open spaces as far more palatable than other more penetrating assessments of the nation’s longstanding injustices. In the aftermath of a wave of civil unrest in Los Angeles during the summer of 1965, a presidential commission pointed to “poor recreation facilities and programs” as one the twelve most serious grievances cited by African American residents of the city. Findings like this, however debatable, were crucial in pushing the Park Service’s urban agenda forward, demonstrating that the agency could potentially play a pivotal role in advancing the aims of the Great Society.<sup>57</sup>

### *Rangers Become Activists*

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<sup>55</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty," February 8, 1965, made available online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27285>.

<sup>56</sup> For more on the idea that a change in physical conditions could affect social conditions, see Robert R. Gioielli, *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis: Baltimore, St. Louis, Chicago* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014).

<sup>57</sup> Mengak, *Reshaping our National Parks and their Guardians*, 101.

With the strong backing of Udall and President Johnson, Hartzog worked to transform the NPS and, by extension, American conservation practice more generally. In 1967, the NPS director re-organized his own staff to create a new Office of Urban Affairs.<sup>58</sup> In testimony before the House Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation, Hartzog justified this decision by explaining, “We [NPS] have become increasingly concerned with our responsibilities in urban matters...Most of America’s population resides in metropolitan areas, and here the National Park concepts and philosophies can be employed to help cities achieve more handsome, more livable environments, and the values of conservation can be more effectively communicated.”<sup>59</sup>

The Director also reached out to individual representatives and senators, hoping to win them over to his plans for an urban expansion. Among those he cultivated was Julia Butler Hansen, a Washington State representative who then chaired the House subcommittee responsible for NPS appropriations. Sympathetic to Hartzog’s entreaties, Hansen managed to secure \$575,000 for a targeted outreach effort in Washington, D.C. to be aimed at underserved communities, especially African American youth.<sup>60</sup>

Dubbed “Summer in the Parks,” the pilot program started up only a few weeks after the National Guard had been called in to quell an uprising by black Washingtonians angered by the devastating effects of systematic racism: poor living conditions, lack of employment opportunities, police violence, and, more immediately, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The mood in the city and the country was tense. The NPS effort was not planned as a response to these circumstances, but it did seek to address longstanding inequities in regard to recreation and open space. According to one of the organizers, Russel Wright, a well-known

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<sup>58</sup> *Hearing before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, National Park Service Briefing, 90<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., Jan. 18, 1968, 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> Mengak, *Reshaping our National Parks and their Guardians*, 106-107.

industrial designer turned parks advocate, Washington, D.C. was a “battleground for their (African American) rights...its (sic) been a very neglected community...and its (sic) so damn vital and exciting right now.”<sup>61</sup>

In Wright’s view, Summer in the Parks had the potential to transform Washington’s many NPS sites into vibrant, lively locations, catering to a wide range of city residents, not only those in well-to-do, predominately white areas. Much of the effort concentrated on serving youth, with transport and lunch provided. Each week, for example, children and their families were invited to board buses for an excursion to one of ten area NPS sites and then enjoy activities like fishing, swimming, and even meeting farm animals. Funds were also dedicated to improving more than a dozen small neighborhood green spaces managed by the agency, with additions like cooking grills, refreshment kiosks, volleyball courts, and performance stages.<sup>62</sup>

Despite its small scale, the program was a high profile success for Hartzog, serving as a justification, of sorts, for more expansive NPS offerings in other locations. Following its launch in 1968, Summer in the Parks continued for close to a decade, returning each year with innovative, community-oriented events ranging from large public concerts to week-long camping trips. Looking back, some within the agency remember the program as a moment when park rangers became activists. Russell Dickenson, who became NPS director in 1980, noted, “The whole idea [of urban parks] fused with the burning of Washington, it showed we could be activists.”<sup>63</sup> Summer in the Parks would also figure prominently in later debates over NPS involvement in urban centers, especially as the agency’s programming continued to expand and diversify.

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<sup>61</sup> Carol Honsa, “Designer Russel Wright has plan to put people in parks,” *Washington Post*, June 1968, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>62</sup> Yvonne Lanier, “Summer in the Parks,” *Trends in Parks and Recreation* 5, no. 3 (July 1968), 26 – 28.

<sup>63</sup> Russell Dickenson, interview with Ronald Foresta, April 3, 1981, as quoted in Foresta, *America’s National Parks and their Keepers*, 178.

## *Parks for the People*

The political landscape confronting Hartzog and other conservationists in the federal government changed dramatically in November 1968. Richard Nixon, a Republican with little documented history of environmental concern, especially in cities, defeated democratic presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey. This outcome marked the beginning of the end for many Great Society initiatives.<sup>64</sup> Urban park creation was an exception to this trend, however. Nixon, primarily for pragmatic reasons, was somewhat receptive to expanding NPS involvement in and around the nation's cities. Unlike other, more controversial regulatory measures, National Parks generally garnered the sympathy and support of a majority of the electorate. Correctly sensing the growing power of the environmental movement in American life, Nixon chose parks as a broadly acceptable way to act on the issue.<sup>65</sup>

After initial uncertainty, Nixon decided to retain George Hartzog as head of the NPS. As his first Secretary of the Interior, Nixon selected Alaska Governor Walter "Wally" Hickel.<sup>66</sup> His record on the environment at the time of his nomination did little to inspire the confidence of conservationists. Hickel had been an enthusiastic supporter of resource extraction, especially oil, as well as an opponent of pollution control and other regulations. A 1969 newspaper profile

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<sup>64</sup> On the responses of the Nixon and Ford administrations to the Great Society, see Roger Biles, *The Fate of Cities: Urban America and the Federal Government, 1945-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 160-221.

<sup>65</sup> For example, in his history of Nixon and the environment, J. Brooks Flippen recounts how Nixon visited National Parks as a feel good stop during his 1972 re-election campaign, without being committed to the issue himself. J. Brooks, Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2000) 176, ProQuest Ebrary.

<sup>66</sup> One of ten children born to a Kansas tenant farmer, Hickel arrived in Alaska practically broke at the age of 21. He worked odd jobs for several years, before making a fortune in construction and real estate. He then turned his attention to politics and the push for Alaska statehood. Biographical details from Janet Archibald, "Interior: Walter J. Hickel," *Washington Post*, December 12, 1968, Proquest Historical Newspapers; Jay Mathews, "Independent and Unconventional," *Washington Post*, February 23, 1991, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

described Hickel as “a hard slugger, a red-tape cutter, no bureaucrat. His motto for Alaska is more oil wells and less reindeer”<sup>67</sup>

Hickel’s confirmation hearings were contentious. Of particular concern was his apparent sympathy for corporate interests at the expense of environmental protections. Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire summed up these views when he said of the Alaska Governor, “based on his past record and on his statement I do not believe Governor Hickel can stand up to the enormous pressures the huge oil and gas lobby brings to bear on any Secretary of the Interior.”<sup>68</sup> After a bruising few weeks, Hickel finally gained Senate approval by a 73-16 vote - the only one of Nixon’s original cabinet nominees to face such stiff opposition.

Upon assuming office, Hickel set out to enhance his reputation among conservation advocates, choosing the national park system as a signature issue.<sup>69</sup> Not only did he propose to reinvest in existing parks, he also sought to build on the agency’s urban programs, calling for increased spending through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.<sup>70</sup> As early as March 1969, only a few months into his tenure, Hickel told attendees at the annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Washington, D.C. that, under his leadership, the Interior Department would be “turning more and more effort towards putting its money where the people are...working with the states and matching their money for central city swimming pools, urban area hiking trails and bicycle pathways, vest-pocket parks and the like.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson, "New Secretary of Interior Distrusts Conservation Efforts," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 6, 1969, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Scott, "Mr. Hickel Still Under Fire," *Guardian*, January 23, 1969, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>69</sup> Luther J Carter, "Hickel Controversy Points Up Environmental Quality Issue," *Science* 163, no. 3866 (1969): 455.

<sup>70</sup> Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 38-40.

<sup>71</sup> Gladwin Hill, "Hickel Sees a Growing Demand for Urban Parks Development," *New York Times*, March 4, 1969. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

The Secretary reiterated this message at a July meeting of Western State governors. Speaking at a hotel in downtown Seattle, Hickel lamented that many Americans living in eastern states could not access the great public lands west of the Mississippi. As a solution, he said, Interior would be expanding its “parks for people programs – to take the parks to the people.”<sup>72</sup> Cities would be among the agency’s top priorities, with the NPS leading in terms of programming aimed at urbanites.

Hickel followed up on these statements by issuing a new set of policy guidelines for the Park Service. In a memorandum directed to Hartzog, which was also released to the press, the Secretary called on the NPS to study “what opportunities exist for an expanded program of federal acquisition of park and recreation areas in the large urban centers of our nation.”<sup>73</sup> Emphasizing the urgency of the matter, Hickel wrote, “Time is of the essence in formulating an action program... Opportunities are being lost daily to acquire such lands. Once lost, these opportunities can seldom be retrieved.” As an example of the type of efforts he wished to see enacted, Hickel specifically cited Summer in the Parks, saying that other innovative programs needed to be implemented quickly.<sup>74</sup>

The Secretary’s invocation of the Washington, D.C. pilot, a favorite of Hartzog, was not coincidental. According to the NPS Director, he (Hartzog) had, in fact, authored much of the memorandum himself. “Hickel started reading this thing and his face lit up like a candle,” Hartzog recalled in an oral history interview. “I’ve never seen a man who was reading something and every word you could tell was penetrating and shedding new light that he had never seen

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<sup>72</sup> Lawrence Davies, "Hickel Tells Western Governors He'll Take Parks to the People," *New York Times* July 31, 1969, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>73</sup> William M. Blair, "Hickel Asks Parks for Urban Areas," *New York Times*, Jun 22, 1969, Proquest Historical Newspapers; James N. Smith, “The Gateways: Parks for Whom?” in *National Parks for the Future* (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1982), 218.

<sup>74</sup> Blair, "Hickel Asks Parks for Urban Areas,"; “Parks Guidelines Issued by Hickel,” *Washington Post*, Jun 22, 1969, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

before.”<sup>75</sup> Hartzog thus felt confident he had the Secretary’s support to advance his urban agenda.

Over the next year, Hickel worked hard on his “parks to the people” campaign. Most notably, he supported the establishment of large park units in New York and San Francisco – areas that would become part of the NPS system in late 1972. However, in his eyes, two new park sites were simply not enough. On September 14, 1970, he issued a press release with the headline, “Interior Department Launches Major Nationwide Urban Recreation Study Plan.” The release stated that the Department planned to create at least fourteen major public recreation areas in urban centers – a huge step for an agency with a limited urban footprint. Sites slated for consideration included the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in Washington, D.C. and Maryland as well as the Santa Monica Mountains outside Los Angeles. “Our existing National Parks are unique, strikingly beautiful, and absolutely necessary elements of nationwide systems... but they are located in areas remote from the less affluent members of our society,” the release stated. “Many of our people cannot get to the parks; therefore we must get parks to the people.”<sup>76</sup>

Other agencies within the Nixon Administration, however, were not as enthusiastic about the idea of bringing parks to people. Leadership at the newly created Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in particular, reacted harshly to the proposal and took steps to curtail the effort, including leaking a likely inflated estimate of its costs, \$2 billion.<sup>77</sup> Only a few months later, on November 25, 1970, the President fired Hickel, along with the Secretary’s top aides, in a purge of Interior leadership.

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<sup>75</sup> Hartzog, Jr. interview by McDonnell, 30.

<sup>76</sup> Diamant, “Gateways to Nowhere,” 23-35; U.S. Department of the Interior News Release, September 14, 1970 as quoted in J. William Futrell, “Park to the People: New Directions for the National Park System,” *Emory Law Journal* 25 (1976): 264; Al McConagha, “U.S. Parks Plan Includes Upper Mississippi River,” *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, September 1970, newspapers.com.

<sup>77</sup> Diamant, “Gateways to Nowhere,” 23-34.

In large part a result of Hickel's public criticisms of administration policies regarding student protests of the Vietnam War, the Secretary's independent streak also did not endear him to Nixon. NPS Director Hartzog managed to retain his position for the time being, but a year later, in December 1972, he, too, would be unceremoniously discharged. Hartzog's replacement, Ronald Walker, did not have an NPS pedigree, instead being a largely political pick: the first time in agency history that a Director had been selected in that manner. Reflecting on his career, Hartzog remarked with pride, "I brought parks to the people...[and] made them relevant to a changing urban population."<sup>78</sup> No other NPS director before or since has prioritized cities and their residents as so crucial to the Park Service mission.

Despite the turnover at Interior and the NPS, the idea of bringing parks to the people continued to generate interest in cities across the country. At a time when budgets were stretched thin, the possibility of federal government aid was especially attractive. Members of Congress also saw urban parks as a promising venture, a way to bring resources to their districts and respond to the growing environmental movement.

In some instances, most notably former military installations in New York City and San Francisco, NPS had previously been tasked with conducting feasibility studies. In other cases, however, cities just becoming aware of Park Service urban involvement avidly lobbied for agency attention. Lowell, Massachusetts, was one such location. Already benefitting from federal funding via Housing and Urban Development monies, as well as the Model Cities program, Lowell boosters and city leaders were adept at securing scarce resources. By October 1970, only a month after Hickel's press release, the Lowell Model Cities Agency began petitioning elected leaders in Washington, DC for inclusion in the NPS program. They argued

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<sup>78</sup> Georg Hartzog, interviews with Mengak, March 23, 1996 and May 12, 1996, as quoted in Mengak, *Reshaping our National Parks and their Guardians*, 94.

that the Park Service should develop a site focused on the city's history as a center of textile manufacturing.<sup>79</sup> A timely newspaper article touted the city's potential to be a "monument to the Industrial Revolution" and highlighted the work already done by some residents to promote the city's history.<sup>80</sup> Despite this enthusiasm, the project seemed far-fetched; not only did Lowell lack federal landholdings, it also had little in the way of grand architecture or majestic views. No mountains or seashores would greet visitors; instead red brick mills, canals, and even highways would be dominant vistas.

The second half of this chapter examines the drive to create a new type of National Park in Lowell. It draws on newspaper accounts, congressional testimony, and NPS documents, as well as a number of secondary sources. Owing to its rather unique status as one of the few Park Service sites with a focus on labor and working-class history, Lowell has been far better documented than many other units created in the 1970s. Dissertations by Loretta Ryan, Mehmud Ali, and Dane Morris Netherton all examine the political process leading to National Park designation in great detail. Cathy Stanton's book, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City*, takes an ethnographic approach to public history practice in Lowell and analyzes how park employees have and have not incorporated more contemporary stories and voices into their interpretive programs. Robert Weible, one of the first NPS historians hired to work at Lowell, also scrutinizes public history practice, along with the park's history more generally, while Paul Marion, a writer and community activist in Lowell, chronicles the park designation process and its aftermath in *Mill Power: The Origin and Impact of Lowell National Historical Park*.

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<sup>79</sup> "Paul Marion, *Mill Power: The Origin and Impact of Lowell National Historical Park* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>80</sup> "Model Cities Agency Proposes National Park for Lowell Area," *Lowell Sun*, October 23, 1970.

My work situates the Lowell designation process within the broader context of Park Service change and growth after World War II. Created the same year as Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, the new park in Lowell seemed to share few traits with a rural Washington landscape facing development pressures. Yet, both sites owed much to the shifting dynamics of public lands management, most notably the influence of outside groups on the NPS; the inclusion of private property within park boundaries; and the expansion of shared governance as a key trait of parks in metropolitan areas. Lowell stands out in NPS history because of its location and interpretive themes, but also fits within the broader pattern of power sharing and consultation that came to define many of the agency's late twentieth century endeavors.

### *New England's Spindle City*

Located at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers in northeastern Massachusetts, Lowell gained international renown as a center of textile manufacturing in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the first planned industrial communities in the United States, Lowell attracted visitors from across the country and even the world. Novelist Charles Dickens, for example, made a visit to the city in 1842. His later account of the trip, which was published as part of the travelogue *American Notes for General Circulation*, was largely admiring.

Such praise was not unusual during the early decades of Lowell's rise as an industrial center. Founded by a group of Boston-based investors in the 1820s, the city marketed itself as a humane alternative to English manufacturing. Mill owners (and their guests) regularly touted their paternalistic treatment of the largely young, female workforce. Dickens, for example, noted, "I solemnly declare, that from all the crowd I saw in the different factories that day, I cannot recall or separate one young face that gave me a painful impression; not one young girl whom,

assuming it to be matter of necessity that she should gain her daily bread by the labour of her hands, I would have removed from those works if I had had the power.”<sup>81</sup>

The women who initially labored in Lowell’s factories were, for the most part, migrants from nearby areas of rural New England, daughters of area farmers seeking independence and new opportunity. Their circumstances were far from idyllic, with twelve to fourteen-hour days and eighty-hour weeks the norm. Female mill operatives usually received lower wages than male counterparts and were expected to follow a strict moral code set forth by company leadership. Within only a few decades’ time, workers in Lowell had already begun to pursue collective action to improve working conditions and raise wages, including a series of “turn-outs” or strikes held during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>82</sup>

By the Civil War-era, the composition of Lowell’s workforce had changed dramatically. Immigrants, largely from Ireland or French Canada now dominated. Facing increased competition, mill owners lowered wages and demanded ever-increasing output. Labor unrest followed and life remained precarious even for skilled mill hands. Waves of newcomers from Greece, Poland, Portugal and elsewhere continued to arrive in the 1880s and 1890s. This gave the city one of the highest averages of foreign-born residents (40.9 percent in 1910) in the United States.<sup>83</sup> More than a dozen mills and associated shops operated along the city’s rivers and canals, employing thousands of men, women, and children in the years before World War I.

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<sup>81</sup> Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, vol 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Chapman and Hall, 1842), 157, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/americannotesfo07dickgoog>.

<sup>82</sup> For more on the history of Lowell, including its labor history, see: Dublin, *Women at Work*; Marion, *Mill Power*; Nancy Zaroulis, “Daughters of Freemen: The Female Operatives and the Beginning of the Labor Movement,” in *Cotton Was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, ed. Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1976), 105-126; Peter Blewitt, “The New People: An introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell,” in *Cotton Was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, ed. Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1976), 190 – 217.

<sup>83</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 1, Section: Neighborhood Nations.

These numbers plummeted in the coming decades, with all but one of the major mills out of business by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>84</sup> The first sustained signs of recession came in the 1920s, when several firms failed. Causes for the decline varied, but included “technological change, competitive shifts in the textile industry, and labor unrest,” according to one analysis.<sup>85</sup> Conditions grew especially dire during the Great Depression. *Harper’s Magazine* even published an expose on “tragic” Lowell.<sup>86</sup> Between 1914 and 1937, employment in manufacturing fell by about 50 percent and, by 1940, only a handful of larger companies remained in operation and most production work was now done by smaller firms.<sup>87</sup>

The mid-century economic boom that so radically reshaped American life largely passed Lowell by, at least in regard to job creation. The city experienced a substantial wave of suburban outmigration, especially among its college-educated youth. This led one scholar to comment that Lowell “hemorrhaged human talent” during the early postwar years.<sup>88</sup> From its peak in 1920 to its nadir in 1960, the city’s population declined by one fifth.<sup>89</sup> By the 1960s, median family income was \$3,000 lower than in comparable cities in Massachusetts, while unemployment remained well above the national average.<sup>90</sup> Textile employment, once so dominant, stood at only 3,000 by 1970.<sup>91</sup> “Lowell has no future,” an economist with the Bank of Boston starkly professed a few years later. “Government officials ought to stop wasting their time trying to save the city -- it has no hope.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Fidelia O. Brown, “Decline and Fall; the End of the Dream,” in *Cotton was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, ed. Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1976), 155-158; Loretta Anne Ryan, “Lowell in Transition: The Uses of History in Urban Chance,” (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1987), 23.

<sup>85</sup> Ross J. Gittell, *Renewing Cities*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 68.

<sup>86</sup> Cited in Brown, “Decline and Fall,” 157.

<sup>87</sup> Gittell, *Renewing Cities*, 68 – 69; Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 26.

<sup>88</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 1, Section: Running on Empty.

<sup>89</sup> Gittell, *Renewing Cities*, 69.

<sup>90</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 1, Section: Running on Empty;

<sup>91</sup> Gittell, *Renewing Cities*, 69.

<sup>92</sup> As quoted in Gittell, 71.

## *Urban Renewal and its Repercussions*

Amid such daunting conditions, Lowell's political and economic elites, as well as some blue-collar workers, embraced urban renewal as a potential revitalization strategy.<sup>93</sup> Like dozens of other communities across the United States, the city sought to expunge remnants of its industrial past by taking part in the federally funded demolition program. Urban renewal offered much needed public monies, close to \$10 million, for example, for just one of Lowell's projects. It was a means to erase visible markers of social and economic decline -- making way, it was hoped, for a new, more modern and prosperous future.<sup>94</sup> Demolition projects began in the late 1950s and continued into the early 1970s, ultimately leveling a significant portion of the city's older neighborhoods, most notably "L'ptit Canada" or Little Canada, home to many in the city's French Canadian community.<sup>95</sup>

Support for urban renewal was not universal, however. Dissent existed in Lowell as well as other sites around the country.<sup>96</sup> Too often, critics argued, it was deep-pocketed, well-connected developers, rather than low-income residents, who benefitted the most from bulldozing existing housing stock. Urban renewal eviscerated tightly knit communities and destroyed historically significant buildings, replacing them – if the projects ever got off the ground - with lackluster apartment blocks, vacant lots, and highway interchanges.<sup>97</sup> One prominent critic writing for the *New York Times* compared the renewal process to “blind

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<sup>93</sup> Robert Weible, “Visions and Reality: Reconsidering the Creation and Development of Lowell's National Park, 1966 – 1992,” *The Public Historian* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 69.

<sup>94</sup> "\$9.5 Million from Government Launches Lowell Renewal," *Boston Globe*, March 29, 1963, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>95</sup> Mehmed Ali, "To Save a City: From Urban Renewal to Historic Preservation in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1920 to 1978," (PhD Diss., University of Connecticut, 2006), 177 – 184; It is important to note that during the 1930s, Lowell's Greek community also experienced the effects of urban renewal when a section of a neighborhood called The Acre was razed as part of the North Commons Housing Project.

<sup>96</sup> For more on resistance to urban renewal, see: Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>97</sup> One of the most famous critics of urban renewal, Jane Jacobs, published her influential text, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, in 1961. This widely-read work galvanized opposition to demolition projects.

mutilation,” a “surgery carried out by plumbers,” which ultimately resulted in “a dull porridge of parking lots and cheap commercialism.”<sup>98</sup>

Passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 galvanized opposition still further. Historian Andrew Hurley has written on the important connections between the NHPA and souring views on urban renewal. He argues, “It is doubtful the law would have been passed at all had not urban renewal been severely discredited as a revitalization strategy.”<sup>99</sup> The bill offered new protections for structures over fifty years of age and gave developers tax credits if they chose to pursue restoration and re-use instead of demolition. Rather than being a liability, preservationists contended, historic neighborhoods could be re-imagined as tourist centers, offering a new way for cash-strapped municipalities to generate tax revenue. In communities like Lowell, sites once associated with industrial production, such as factories, mills and worker housing, might instead become locales of consumption, places where a visitor could spend time and money.<sup>100</sup>

In her writings on Lowell, anthropologist Cathy Stanton has used the British term “culture-led regeneration” to explain this phenomenon. She describes it as the use of heritage-oriented sites and events “to repair some of the social and infrastructural damage done by the loss of industries, and to draw new kinds of people and businesses into decayed and abandoned

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<sup>98</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Lessons in Urbicide." *New York Times*, Dec 22, 1968, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>99</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>100</sup> In her article “Revisions Waiting in the Wings: The New Social History at New England Textile Museums,” historian Mary Blewitt notes that the convergence of several trends in the 1970s, most notably the rise of social history and public history as well as an expansion in public funding for heritage activities, “transformed urban policy from renewal by wrecker to revitalization through adaptive re-use.” Mary Blewitt, "Revisions Waiting in the Wings: The New Social History of New England Textile Museums," in *The Popular Perception of Industrial History*, ed. by Robert Weible and Francis Walsh (Lanham, MD: American Association for State and Local History, 1989): 13. Andrew Hurley has made a similar argument in his book *Beyond Preservation*. For an overview, see pages 14 – 16. Hurley also critiques the links between historic preservation and gentrification on 16-31.

downtowns and industrial areas.”<sup>101</sup> Culture, whether tangible or intangible, becomes an asset or even a “brand” for communities to generate much-needed revenue. While potentially lucrative, the approach also often leads to a romanticizing of the past, especially insofar as abandoned sites of production could serve as a critique of capitalism and its destructive effects on community wellbeing.<sup>102</sup>

The shift from mass demolition to more preservation-oriented economic development did not happen overnight. In Lowell, the change ultimately took several decades; and even then, protection of historic structures and neighborhoods remained uneven. In their respective dissertations on what might best be described as the emergence of a more pronounced “historical consciousness” in the city, both Loretta Anne Ryan and Mehmed Ali emphasized that the transformation was very much contested. City leaders and others regularly changed their views to reflect public sentiment as well as shifting federal spending priorities.<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, preservationists and their allies in Lowell fought and lost several key battles with developers and local officials, including a bitter struggle in 1965 and 1966 over the city’s decision to bulldoze a group of early nineteenth-century brick row houses. A block long and three and a half stories high, the buildings abutted an industrial canal and constituted, according to one historian, “part of the original fabric of Lowell’s days of glory as the first planned industrial city.”<sup>104</sup> Erected by the Merrimack Manufacturing Company to house its young, female workforce, the structures (sometimes called the Dutton Street Row Houses) had more recently been home to low-income and elderly residents.

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<sup>101</sup> Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, 4.

<sup>102</sup> Much of Stanton’s important work addresses this phenomenon. Chapter 1 lays out many of the key ideas. Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, 3-28.

<sup>103</sup> Ali, “To Save a City,” and Ryan, “Lowell in Transition.”

<sup>104</sup> Ali, “To Save a City,” 217.

Advocates for downtown business maintained that the demolition was necessary to make way for a new highway interchange, part of the federally financed Northern Canal Urban Renewal Project. They also emphasized the difficult lives of the mill workers, arguing such a legacy did not warrant celebration.<sup>105</sup> In response to one preservation proposal, for example, a member of Lowell's city council stated that mills and worker housing should be forgotten.<sup>106</sup> An editorial in the *Lowell Sun* had similar sentiments. It began by making an unfavorable comparison between the Dutton Street Row Houses and the 19<sup>th</sup> century home of the artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (also in Lowell), noting of the former that "few architects of discernment have become enchanted with them." It then lamented that some in Lowell were proposing to dedicate limited resources to protecting such structures, "where hundreds of young women served their indenture as mill hands."<sup>107</sup>

Working to counter such claims was a diverse coalition of preservationists and their allies. It included the Lowell Historical Society, housing activists, clergy, and, to some extent, low-income residents. The group argued that historic structures like the row houses had social as well as aesthetic value. Not only did they represent the city's halcyon days as a center of technological innovation, but the row houses also continued to serve a vital civic purpose as affordable housing for needy residents.<sup>108</sup> These sentiments were captured in a letter written to the *Lowell Sun* by Reverend Francis B. Downs. In this piece, entitled "Elderly Flee the Bulldozer," Downs said the proposed demolition was "in the name of something which they nominate as progress and most of us feel is a bit of regression to the primitive times when the

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<sup>105</sup> Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 37-38.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>107</sup> "A Good Decision," *Lowell Sun*, editorial, December 18, 1965, newspaperarchive.com.

<sup>108</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, chapter 1, section Running on Empty and Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 36-33, 40-46. After almost a year and even a lawsuit, the row houses did get demolished in 1966. Several scholars (Stanton, Ryan) of Lowell have commented that the controversy over demolition of worker housing served as a precursor for the park-building process in that concerns and perspectives of working-class residents were gradually pushed out in favor of business interests and elite and middle class perspectives.

lord of the manor tore down the hovels of the peasantry.” He then went on to lament the fact “that elderly people are forced to move without any preparation or thought on the part of the rulers as to where the ruled are to go when they must flee the bulldozer.”<sup>109</sup>

In the eyes of preservationists, the city merited national, if not international, attention; its striking landscapes of brick mills and worker dormitories deserved further research and recognition not ignominious destruction. University experts, as well as staff from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, were invited to share their views on the city’s significance. Supporters hoped this would increase pressure on elected leaders to forestall demolition.<sup>110</sup>

Though unsuccessful in their immediate goals, namely the protection of historic structures like the Dutton Street properties (the structures were torn down during the summer of 1966), those arguing against urban renewal did manage to initiate a conversation, albeit a contentious one, over the significance of Lowell’s history. For decades, at least publicly, the dominant narrative had been one of shame and silence, with little attention paid to the city’s past as a manufacturing powerhouse, a phenomenon common in many deindustrializing areas.<sup>111</sup> Dr. Patrick Mogan, an educator in the city, who would go on to play a critical role in securing a National Park unit in Lowell, recalled, “It was difficult to be proud of your hometown if you came from Lowell...too many people inside Lowell viewed the city in a negative frame of reference.”<sup>112</sup> In this context, to assert that the city’s history not only had value, but also could be the source of a future revitalization, was, in many ways, a rather radical act.

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<sup>109</sup> Francis B. Downs, “The Elderly Flee the Bulldozer,” *Lowell Sun*, letter to the editor, October 15, 1965, newspaperarchive.com.

<sup>110</sup> Ali, “To Save a City,” 218; Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 52.

<sup>111</sup> For example, no general history of Lowell had been written between 1920 and 1976, which Marion attributes to a broader pattern of deliberate forgetting regarding the city’s past. Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 1, Section Running on Empty. Ryan also mentions that few people were talking about Lowell’s history before 1970. Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 86.

<sup>112</sup> Community Revitalization Project Interview with Patrick Mogan, Summer 1986, as quoted in Gittell, *Renewing Cities*, 71.

By linking their assertions of Lowell’s historical significance to the potential economic benefits of preservation, such as tourism and tax credits available after the 1966 passage of the NHPA, preservation advocates managed to undermine at least some of momentum behind the push for urban renewal.<sup>113</sup> Within only a few years, the city and state had released separate reports on the significance of the city’s built environment. For example, a 1969 document authored by the Greater Lowell Planning Commission referred to the city as a “monument to the industrial revolution,” while a 1970 brochure from the Massachusetts state tourism office highlighted Lowell’s architecture and canals as attractive to visitors.<sup>114</sup> Such rhetoric, still novel in the 1960s, would become increasingly common during the 1970s, as cities confronting deindustrialization sought to use existing infrastructure as a catalyst for investment.

In Lowell, the conversation around industrial heritage at times focused on the need to improve the attitudes of local residents, rather than the underlying structural causes of distress and inequality. Park proponents stressed the idea of “self-image” and critiqued the pessimism of community members. At a Congressional hearing on the park proposal, for example, Lowell Mayor Raymond F. Rourke described how reconnecting with the past could help residents shift their perspective, from “one of hopelessness to one of pride.”<sup>115</sup> These views were typical of 1970s-era redevelopment efforts. Residents of economically troubled areas often were portrayed as lacking in local pride of place, suffering from what some in Lowell called “negativism.” Mogan himself used the term repeatedly, including in testimony delivered to the U.S. Senate. “No matter how much Lowell tried to run away from itself, it continued to be an old industrial

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<sup>113</sup> Ryan provides a detailed and incisive summary of this process, documenting how both sides of the row house debate (preservationists and many favoring demolition) began to view historic preservation as an economic development tool. Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 46 – 64.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-89. “Monument” quote is on 87-88.

<sup>115</sup> *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*, S. 2817, To Establish the Lowell National Park in Lowell, MA, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., April 8, 1978, 73, Proquest Congressional.

city - a condition treated shabbily and negatively in our history books and a powerful factor in projecting the negativism of the industrial city to the country as a whole and telling the people and the city itself that they must become something else If they were to become something better.”<sup>116</sup>

Rather than solely center their critique on the actions of corporate capital or government, both of which contributed to the decline of many, if not most, manufacturing centers, advocates also chose to emphasize the individual psychology of unemployed workers and others affected by capital flight – making the case that parks, by ostensibly preserving and interpreting what was most noteworthy about the past, could at once lift local spirits and spur new investment and job growth. Critiques of capitalism and state action, in the contemporary context, thus remained somewhat muted in the historic preservation renaissance of the sixties and seventies.<sup>117</sup>

### *Model Cities as Catalyst*

Along with the burgeoning historic preservation movement, another key factor in transforming public opinion on Lowell’s historic landscapes was the federal Model Cities program. Authorized in 1966 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society initiative, Model Cities sought to empower local governments and community organizations to fight poverty through “widespread citizen participation.” In doing so, it built on the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, which called for the “maximum feasible participation” of the poor, particularly through the implementation of Community Action Programs. Over an eight-year period

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>117</sup> In her dissertation as well as a subsequent article on Lowell, Ryan makes a nuanced argument regarding interpretation. She notes that dissenting opinions on Lowell’s early history, especially, were present and, indeed, included in the run-up to designation and in the post 1978 National Historical Park. Much less was said though, about recent circumstances. For a summation of these views see, Loretta Ryan, “The Remaking of Lowell and its Histories: 1965 – 1983,” in *The Continuing Revolution: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, ed. Robert Weible (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1991): 377 – 395. Stanton also addresses this type of issue in her book on Lowell, though the emphasis is more on the post-1978 period. See, for example, Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, 52-67, 103-113, and 210-218.

beginning in 1967, roughly 150 cities received some level of Model Cities support, though much of this shifted to housing and other building projects, rather than capacity building or leadership development, following the election of Richard Nixon in 1968.

Lowell received almost \$5 million in federal Model Cities' monies for both planning and project implementation, largely concentrated in The Acre, a diverse neighborhood of roughly 13,000 residents just west of downtown.<sup>118</sup> Funds went to a variety of areas, but two predominated: 1) physical improvements, including new sidewalks, tree plantings, canal repairs, street lighting, and 2) education initiatives, with emphasis on local history and heritage activities.<sup>119</sup>

The concentration of resources in these areas was no coincidence. Program organizers, who made an attempt, with mixed results, to include the perspectives and participation of low-income residents, saw a linkage between a general lack of knowledge regarding the city's past and indifference towards its contemporary landscapes.<sup>120</sup> As one leader of the Model Cities effort commented, "There appeared to be a complete disassociation between the present and the past... This was very serious, for scholars have been saying for a long time that people need 'roots,' and a positive sense of being, as prime ingredients for development."<sup>121</sup> Reconnecting Lowellians with their history, especially the stories of industry and manufacturing still

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<sup>118</sup> Michael Edema Leary-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space: Differential Space in Three Post-industrial Cities* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press at the University of Bristol, 2016), 106-108; Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: Stairway to Park-Dom; Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 67;

<sup>119</sup> Nicholas Falk, "Baltimore and Lowell: Two American Approaches," *Built Environment* 12, no. 3 (1986):145-152; Leary-Owhin, "Exploring the Production of Urban Space," 106-108. Leary-Owhin also describes several Model Cities physical improvement projects in detail (109 – 118).

<sup>120</sup> For more on attempts to include low-income residents as well as people of color, see Leary-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space*, 106 – 108; Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 68 – 74; and Weible, "Visions and Reality," 69 – 74. Ryan especially details how Model Cities leadership was critiqued as being too white and too middle-class and therefore not representative of the Acre itself, 73-74.

<sup>121</sup> Patrick J. Mogan, "Renewal Process in Lowell, Massachusetts: Toward an Ecologically Sensitive Educational Model," University of Massachusetts–Amherst, 1975, 2 as quoted in Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 2, section, Model City.

represented in the built environment, was thus central to the mission of the Model Cities effort and drove much of its programming.<sup>122</sup>

The reference to the “roots” of Lowell residents and their potential significance to both individuals and the community as a whole echoes rhetoric common during this period. By the late 1960s and 1970s, family history, especially when connected to ethnicity and migration, had become a mainstream subject. Perhaps most famously exemplified in the 1977 television miniseries *Roots* (based on Alex Haley’s 1976 book), the trend towards uncovering and celebrating one’s origins received extensive coverage in the contemporary news media. This was especially so during the run-up to the bicentennial festivities of 1976. Many states, including Massachusetts, along with the federal government, sponsored new ethnic heritage programs as part of the celebration.<sup>123</sup>

For Lowell, “roots” and ethnic history included a wide diversity of stories, with the Model Cities organizers (and later national park supporters) making an attempt to include racially, religiously, and ethnically diverse voices in the various initiatives.<sup>124</sup> One set of stories that did not garner much interest from contemporary residents was that of the Yankee mill girls and Boston capitalists who had played such an important role in the founding of the city. As one historian of Lowell’s late twentieth-century change commented, “Ethnic heritage, not the city’s industrial history, was the source of pride for members of the Model Cities planning groups.”<sup>125</sup>

Building on the idea that Lowell’s residents both wanted and needed to develop “roots” and, by extension, pride of place in order to stimulate economic growth, the Model Cities

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<sup>122</sup> That the Model Cities program in Lowell would focus on historic preservation was in no way preordained. In his book on historic preservation in cities, Andrew Hurley discusses how a Model Cities organization in St. Louis actually tore down older, dilapidated structures. Hurley, *Beyond Preservation*, 62 – 63.

<sup>123</sup> For more details on these programs, see Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 117-118.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 68 – 74. In the *Lowell Experiment*, Stanton also details successes and failures in historians attempts to include diverse perspectives in their interpretation.

<sup>125</sup> Weible, “Lowell,” 31.

program drafted a plan to turn the entire city into a classroom. Daycare, primary school, remedial classes, vocational courses and more would be housed under a single roof, with opportunities for field trips to diverse neighborhoods, colleges, and a nearby state forest site. The program aimed to be educational as well as promotional, teaching existing residents about where they lived and enticing new residents and businesses to the city.<sup>126</sup>

Leading this ambitious effort was Patrick “Pat” Mogan, a former Assistant Superintendent of Schools who, in 1970, became director of the Model Cities Education programming. Born in Norwood, Massachusetts, Mogan arrived in Lowell after college to work as a teacher in the city’s public schools. He quickly moved into administration, serving as an assistant principal, principal, and then assistant superintendent before taking a position at the local teachers college. As the brother-in-law of a city council member, Mogan also had entrée to the city’s decision makers and elite as he moved his agenda forward.

In the late 1960s, Mogan joined the Model Cities agency and quickly showed an aptitude for grant writing and promotion. He believed that place-based education could catalyze Lowell’s revitalization, with the city’s deeply rooted ethnic traditions, along with its industrial history, critical to recovery. He believed Lowellians had a “proud and positive background,” and that their city could be a “living exhibit of the process and consequences of the American Industrial Revolution.”<sup>127</sup>

After the election of Richard Nixon in late 1968, however, Mogan’s plans to leverage Model Cities funding to transform Lowell seemed at risk. Since Nixon had little record of support for urban initiatives, it appeared unlikely that the program would continue under his

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<sup>126</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 2, Section: Model City; Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 80 – 85.

<sup>127</sup> Brief biographical sketch of Mogan is drawn from Ali, “To Save a City,” 311-313 and “Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 2, Section Model City; Mogan quotes are from Neil Peirce, “New Life Replacing Blight in Spindle City,” December 26, 1977, *Boston Globe*, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

watch. Looking elsewhere for monies to support his revitalization efforts, Mogan responded immediately to the Interior Department's September 1970 announcement regarding its new urban parks initiative. Gaining park status, he and other Model Cities organizers believed, would at once provide access to more funds and further the agency's goal of place-based education.<sup>128</sup>

### *From a Model City to a Cultural Park*

Shortly after Hickel's announcement, the Lowell Model Cities Agency began lobbying to join the program, arguing that the National Park Service should develop a site focused on the city's unique connection to the Industrial Revolution.<sup>129</sup> The city faced stiff competition. Other communities with industrial histories, like Patterson, New Jersey and Providence, Rhode Island, also wanted NPS attention.<sup>130</sup> Within Lowell, many people viewed the idea as a long shot, calling it "Pat's Folly," in reference to the chief proponent, Patrick Mogan. Others referred to Mogan as an "elixir salesman," and put little faith in his efforts.<sup>131</sup> While perhaps overly harsh, such criticisms did have some validity, given both the vagueness of Mogan's initial proposals and the lack of precedent for a site like Lowell gaining national park status.

Despite such disparagement, Mogan and his allies doggedly promoted the national park idea. Ironically perhaps, the idea gained traction as Lowell's economy slipped deeper into depression during the early years of the 1970s. Unemployment, already high relative to the rest of the nation, grew even worse, peaking at over 13 percent. Conditions became so dire in the city

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<sup>128</sup> Ali, "To Save a City," 314; Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park.

<sup>129</sup> "Model Cities Agency Proposes National Park for Lowell Area," *Lowell Sun*, October 23, 1970, newspapers.com; Ali, "To Save a City," 315; Marion, "Mill Power" Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park 315; Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 93; Weible, "Visions and Reality," 70.

<sup>130</sup> According to Ryan, the Human Services Corporation had a Congressional Fellow complete a report on NPS funding sources, which included information on potential competition for scarce funds. Ryan, "Lowell in Transition, 135.

<sup>131</sup> These terms are cited in Ali, "To Save a City," 311, 314. Ali conducted numerous interviews with associates and contemporaries of Mogan and presents a detailed and compelling picture of the man and his work over time.

that the local office of the Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Security had to stay open extended hours just to process the growing number of claims.<sup>132</sup>

In response, elected officials and civic leaders finally began to take seriously the idea of history as a revitalization tool. In July 1971, the city created a new Historic Districts Study Committee to look into which neighborhoods might benefit the most from protection.<sup>133</sup> This would be followed in 1973 by the creation of a Lowell Historic Commission, charged with overseeing preservation plans in the city (reviewing construction that might affect historic structures, like the canal, for example). A 1974 editorial in the *Lowell Sun* captured the shifting sentiments, admitting that “only a few years ago, an Urban National Park for Lowell was merely an idea belonging to one of the city’s more distinguished educators, Patrick Mogan...gradually the idea grew as more and more people began to adopt the idea and discover that Mogan had a good thing going...Lowell was looked at in a new light.”<sup>134</sup>

To generate more enthusiasm, the Lowell Model Cities Agency engaged Michael Southworth, a planner from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to issue a preliminary park proposal. Southworth had already published an article on the need to create a new “National Urban Service,” which would apply Park Service interpretive approaches to the city.<sup>135</sup> Funding for this work came from the New England Regional Commission, which also contributed \$100,000 to the creation of a new nonprofit in Lowell, the Human Services Corporation (HSC),

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<sup>132</sup> Ryan highlights this point in her work. She emphasizes that the declining economy coupled with federal austerity instituted during the Ford administration made Mogan’s ideas more attractive to the business community and local elites, looking for ways to address the city’s unemployment crisis. Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 132.

<sup>133</sup> Leary-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space*, 116.

<sup>134</sup> “Urban Park” *Lowell Sun*, editorial, August 21, 1974, newspapers.com.

<sup>135</sup> Lloyd Rodwin and Michael Southworth. "Needed: A National Urban Service." *Educational Technology*, October (1970): 54-57.

with Pat Mogan serving an unpaid executive director. Dedicated to the park idea as well as Lowell's revitalization more generally, the HSC was critical in promoting NPS involvement.<sup>136</sup>

After several months of study, Southworth, along with co-author Jim Zien, issued a report entitled *Learning Environments in Lowell*. The document offered a compelling portrait of the city and its "educative potential," emphasizing the natural and built environments, as well as the heritage of area residents. Lowell, they argued, had "an important story to tell about man and his environment...Lowell today is a living exhibit of the process and consequences of the Industrial Revolution" they wrote, a place worthy of ongoing study and substantial investment.<sup>137</sup> Education, they argued, especially of youth, could counter the contemporary view of Lowell as a site of economic, physical, and social decline. It would only be through understanding the past, Southworth and Zien emphasized, that solutions to present challenges might better come into view.<sup>138</sup>

Despite such optimistic assessments, the park idea continued to have detractors, even beyond those who still favored the demolition of older properties. In her dissertation on Lowell, Loretta Ryan explored the viewpoints present in the *The Communicator*, a small radical publication known for its support of labor unions and tenant rights. Though it did not dedicate extensive coverage to the national park campaign, those articles that did address the initiative contained important critiques. For example, one piece from the early 1970s complained that:

The plan here is to make Lowell some kind of tourist center, thus prompting other development. The main problem is that virtually the only other development prompted by tourism is more tourism: restaurants, motels, etc. These not only provide no decent paying jobs, but have a tendency to push working-class Lowellians a bit farther out of the

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<sup>136</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 2, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park; Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 99-102.

<sup>137</sup> Michael Southworth and Jim Zien, *Learning Environments in Lowell* (Lowell: Human Services Corporation, June 1971), 2

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7.

picture. Beautifying the city and restoring the old mills is a fine idea, but let's be a little more honest about the motives.<sup>139</sup>

More than any other publication, *The Communicator* highlighted the connection between historic preservation and gentrification, as well as the low wages of service sector employment common in tourism-based economies. These opinions did not manage to gain much traction with either media outlets or politicians, remaining largely muted during the push for park designation. The possibilities for economic development in a city experiencing severe unemployment and capital flight, coupled with increased support from the city establishment, obscured the critiques found in the *The Communicator* and other, more leftist sources. Additionally (and importantly) as Ryan argues, the Lowell project did incorporate a historic critique of corporate capital, specifically the actions of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century mill owners.<sup>140</sup>

With the growing acceptance of history and historic preservation as tools for economic revitalization, the Mogan-led Human Services Corporation and its allies began lobbying members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation to introduce a piece of legislation. Their efforts were successful and, in April 1972, Representative F. Bradford Morse introduced H.R. 14629, which sought to establish an “urban national park known as the Lowell Historic Canal District National Cultural Park.” Using language that echoed earlier Model Cities proposals as well as the Southworth report, the bill called for a site that would be “a unique urban environment for learning as well as recreation.” In addition to authorizing funds for the purchase of private property, Morse’s legislation also created a Lowell Historical Canal District Commission. This body, with local, state, and federal appointees, was to prepare a comprehensive plan for the park – therein assuming responsibilities often left to the sole

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<sup>139</sup> Excerpt from the November 1974 edition of *The Communicator*, cited in Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 167.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

discretion of the NPS. Indeed, as laid out in this initial bill, the commission had a large degree of management authority, far more than a typical Park Service site.<sup>141</sup>

The Lowell National Park bill was Morse's last noteworthy action in Congress. Roughly a week later, he resigned to take a position with the United Nations in New York. The *Lowell Sun* applauded the legislation as "the most important for the city filed by the legislator during his nearly 12 years in Congress."<sup>142</sup> Recalling Walter Hickel's exhortation to bring parks to the people, specifically urbanites, Morse described his proposal as being "not merely closer to the city, it is in the city." He also argued it would make Lowell's canal system a tourist destination, bringing "an environmental and cultural renaissance...where a walk or bicycle trip along their [the canal's] banks would provide a continuous series of educational events and recreational opportunities."<sup>143</sup>

Though his remaining time in Washington, DC was short, Morse promised to brief Massachusetts' two senators, Edward Brooke and Edward "Ted" Kennedy, on the proposal, as well as inform Interior Secretary Rogers Morton of the bill's significance. Calling Morton an "old friend," Morse hoped his intercession would convince the Secretary to speed up the Park Service study process, with a goal of gaining designation before the 1976 bicentennial – a year which would also mark the sesquicentennial of Lowell's establishment. The Congressman's personal connections initially appeared to pay dividends. Morton enthusiastically described the project as an "industrial Williamsburg" and professing to be quite interested in the idea.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *To provide for the establishment of an urban national park known as the Lowell Historic Canal District National Cultural Park in the city of Lowell, Mass., and for other purposes*, H.R. 14629, 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., introduced in House April 26, 1972 .

<sup>142</sup> Frank Scholz, "Morse Seeks Urban National Park in Lowell," *Lowell Sun*, April 25, 1972, newspapers.com.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> "Morton Promises Special Attention to Morse Bill to Create Lowell Urban Park," *Lowell Sun*, May 1, 1972, newspapers.com.

The growing enthusiasm in Lowell did not immediately translate into support from the National Park Service – Morton’s commentary notwithstanding. An NPS historian, Barry Mackintosh, for example, visited the city during the summer of 1972 and concluded that it did not meet agency standards, especially in regard to the integrity of the historic landscape. In a message to his supervisor, the Director of the NPS Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Mackintosh acknowledged Lowell’s significance to the industrial revolution, but then went on to say that, “The few remaining mill buildings and associated structures do not convey the impression of the industrial empire that was once here. With the company boardinghouses gone, nothing is left to interpret this distinctive aspect of the city’s early social development.”<sup>145</sup>

This analysis had lasting resonance within the agency, where many perceived the Lowell project to be essentially an attempt at urban renewal by another name – especially given the toll that demolition and neglect had taken on many structures from pre-Civil War era.<sup>146</sup> These views had some validity. Lowell boosters wanted to access federal funds as a means to stimulate investment and the entirety of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century built environment was not intact. However, for many involved in the park campaign, the city’s history also had a more profound significance. It was not simply a means to secure public monies. In their view (and the view of many supportive academics and public historians), Lowell’s rise and subsequent decline encapsulated the story of American industrialization – and the landscape of these experiences remained visible and visit-able.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, supporters argued, the many waves of immigrants

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<sup>145</sup> Quotation from Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park.

<sup>146</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park; Weible, “Visions and Reality,” 73 – 74.

<sup>147</sup> Weible, provides several examples of historians who rebutted NPS claims about the city’s period of significance as well as the physical state of the historic landscape. Weible, “Visions and Reality,” 74 - 75.

who had shaped the city also revealed important truths about the United States and deserved recognition by one of the nation's leading history agencies, the NPS.

The desire of park advocates to tell the story of the city's deterioration as well as their hope that ethnicity would be emphasized were important points of contention as the push to create a park in Lowell continued. In the eyes of many in the NPS, Lowell's significance lay in its early history, not in its more recent transformations – which, by their very nature (i.e. demolition), precluded NPS involvement.<sup>148</sup> This dispute reveals how the interests and priorities of affected communities frequently clashed with those of Park Service officials, who claimed to represent a national, rather than local, perspective. In an earlier era, NPS could largely ignore the needs of residents and landowners in and around park sites, but this attitude had become increasingly untenable after World War II as the political and legal environment changed dramatically. Federal action could be challenged in court or preempted in Congress to an extent not possible before the 1960s. In this way, the Park Service became just another stakeholder in determining the agency's future. This was especially true regarding the creation of new parks, where congressional will often overruled the recommendations of experts within the agency.

Though disappointed in Mackintosh's assessment, supporters of the Lowell park idea continued their public relations campaign. Tens of thousands of leaflets endorsing the proposal, courtesy of the HSC, were printed and delivered to households across the city. The pamphlets emphasized Lowell's unique history, arguing that it should be celebrated, rather than forgotten. HSC representatives, especially Mogan, talked to rotary clubs, ethnic organizations, and women's groups - any venue, large or small, that would have them. Mogan did a weekly radio

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<sup>148</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park.

program focused on the urban park idea, updating Lowell residents regularly on the proposal's progress.<sup>149</sup>

The area's new Congressman, Republican Paul Cronin, who had been on Morse's staff, also was a supporter, and sponsored a follow-up to Morse's bill. Introduced in February 1973, H.R. 4514 also had a companion bill sponsored by Senators Kennedy and Brooke. In explaining his support for the Park idea, Cronin argued that, "Modern technology and industrial change have led us to often neglect those sites and structures of the historic past. As a result, many of our cities have become cultural wastelands rather than the centers for cultural enrichment, which they have the potential to be." NPS involvement, he maintained, offered a "realistic way towards economic revival consistent with the city's deep cultural heritage. It represents a blueprint for the future, which builds on the past."<sup>150</sup>

With another bill now under consideration, efforts to sway Park Service opinion continued. The agency eventually sent another review team (discussed on p. 1-2 in this chapter) to the city. That group left with a far more positive impression than did Mackintosh, but offered little in the way of concrete support.<sup>151</sup> Invitations to tour the city also went to Congressional leaders and others with influence over conservation and preservation decision-making. For example, former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall came to Lowell during the fall of 1973 to visit the canals and address the local chamber of commerce. His stopover was part of a larger

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<sup>149</sup> Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park.

<sup>150</sup> Cronin quoted in "Cronin Files Bill to Create Lowell's Urban National Cultural Park," *Lowell Sun*, February 21, 1973, newspapers.com.

<sup>151</sup> 119 cities made an appeal to the NPS to be considered for park status following Hickel's announcement in 1970. 12 made it to a second-round review, including Lowell, indicating that the city's bid did have some supporters within the agency. Alberta Cook, "U.S. Officials Impressed by Urban Park Plan," *Lowell Sun*, October 12, 1973, newspapers.com.

celebration, National Urban Cultural Park Day, which included a number of public and private events dedicated to planning and promotion of the park idea.<sup>152</sup>

Lowell boosters, including members of the City Council, the Model Cities agency, and the Human Services Corporation, also lobbied Massachusetts elected officials for increased support, hoping that a tangible commitment of financial resources from the state would convince Congress to act on the proposal. In particular, they advocated for the creation of a state heritage park to jump start work on the type of projects that would eventually form the core of National Park activities – historic preservation, education, recreation, and limited land acquisition. Though it took some coaxing, the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources (soon renamed the Department of Environmental Management) completed a study, *A Proposal for an Urban State Park in Lowell* (1974), in partnership with a Local Advisory Committee. The document endorsed the park concept (though with some reservations about funding), highlighting the significance of the city’s canal system in particular.<sup>153</sup>

For their part, state leaders did not immediately back the idea. Republican Governor Francis Sargent remained noncommittal for several months, before publically committing nearly \$10 million in funding during a campaign swing through the city in August 1974.<sup>154</sup> Democrat Michael Dukakis, Sargent’s successor, also supported the plan and directed significant sums to the project while he was governor. During a 1975 speech urging austerity in state budgeting, he singled out the project, saying, “The urban park in Lowell is the only significant new park that I

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<sup>152</sup> “City Prepares for Udall Visit,” *Lowell Sun*, September 16, 1973, newspapers.com; “Convoy of Twelve Boats to Tour Canals During Udall Visit to City Tomorrow,” *Lowell Sun*, September 18, 1973, newspapers.com

<sup>153</sup> Lehry-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space*, 123 – 124; Ryan, “Lowell in Transition, 170 – 171, 175)

<sup>154</sup> John O’ Keefe, “Lowell May Become Prosperous Park,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 21, 1974, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*; “Lowell in Transition,” 177 – 178.

am prepared to recommend.”<sup>155</sup> Following up on this statement, in spring 1976, just in time for the US Bicentennial and a series of events dubbed “Lowell’s Bicentennial Summer,” Dukakis signed a memorandum of understanding with the city. It cleared the way for section of downtown Lowell to be recognized as the state’s first “heritage park,” a move that many hoped would speed along national recognition.<sup>156</sup>

As state support for the urban park idea coalesced, Congressman Cronin introduced a revised version of his legislation in May 1974. Rather than call for outright designation, the bill instead authorized the creation of a new commission to “prepare and implement a plan for the preservation, interpretation, development, and use, by public and private entities, of the historic, cultural, and architectural resources of the Lowell Historic Canal District.”<sup>157</sup> It thus set aside the issue of park creation for the time being, instead prioritizing further study of Lowell and its significance. The legislation did call on the commission to submit a plan to Congress within two years, a document which, barring any surprises, would likely recommend NPS involvement.

Following Cronin’s action, in April 1974, a group of representatives from the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation traveled to Lowell for a field investigation. Local boosters took the visit seriously and planned a busy day for the group. The tour included a boat trip, helicopter ride, and meetings with elected officials and residents. These efforts were to showcase striking industrial landscapes and a high level of local support. The city’s canals made

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<sup>155</sup> Alberta Cook, “Governor Dukakis Pledges Aid for Greater Lowell,” *Lowell Sun*, May 8, 1975, newspapers.com.

<sup>156</sup> “Dukakis Expected to Sign Heritage State Park Pact,” *Lowell Sun*, April 22, 1976, newspapers.com; Lehry-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space*, 124.

<sup>157</sup> *To provide for a plan for the preservation, interpretation, development, and use of the historic, cultural, and architectural resources of the Lowell Historic Canal District in Lowell, Massachusetts, and for other purposes*, H.R. 14689, 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., introduced in House May 8, 1974, Proquest Congressional.

an especially strong impression, though one representative could not avoid quipping that Lowell had more “Watergates than Washington.”<sup>158</sup>

In the end, the effort paid off. Visiting members of Congress offered positive assessments of the city’s historic landscapes and its initiative to establish a new park. Committee Chair Roy Taylor commented, “The local folks have initiated the initial leadership and that’s a good sign...there seems to be a good deal of state and local commitment to this.” As to designation as a national park, however, he remained noncommittal, noting, “We came with an open mind. The Park Service would have to examine the plan first to see how many people would be interested in coming and using the facilities.”<sup>159</sup>

For much of this early period, roughly 1970 to 1976, the NPS views on the proposal ranged from tepid to dismissive. During summer 1974 hearings on Cronin’s bill, Park Service Deputy Director Russell Dickenson testified that the agency would not outright oppose the commission idea, so long as another government body oversaw any “housekeeping” related to the new entity. The statement was “hardly a glowing endorsement” according to one Lowell reporter.<sup>160</sup> Additionally, Dickenson emphasized, “urban renewal had taken a heavy toll on the city,” with little remaining from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>161</sup> To add insult to injury, the National Park Service Advisory Board, which approved all National Historic Landmark designations (usually a necessary precursor to park status), rejected the Lowell Canal District as not meeting its criteria for national significance. This decision was reversed in December 1977

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<sup>158</sup> Quotes from Celestine Boblen, “Congressmen Praise Park Project,” *Lowell Sun*, April 27, 1974, newspapers.com.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Carolyn Miegel, “Action Likely Next Year,” *Lowell Sun*, August 21, 1974, newspapers.com.

<sup>161</sup> *Unpublished hearing before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, HR. 14689, A bill to provide for a plan for the preservation, interpretation, development, and use of the historic, cultural, and architectural resources of the Lowell Historic Canal District in Lowell, Massachusetts National Historical Park in Lowell, Mass, 93<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., August 19, 1974, 7, ProQuest Legislative Insight.

under an advisory board and Interior Department that reflected the priorities of the Carter administration.

The early to mid-1970s was a challenging time for communities seeking investment from the Park Service. Much of the difficulty stemmed directly from the White House. Facing impeachment, President Nixon and his team could take little decisive action. After Nixon's resignation in August 1974, Gerald Ford committed the executive branch to a path of austerity, especially cutting back on aid to cities. Future Secretary of the Interior James Watt, then serving as Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, spoke for the administration when he said at a national meeting on recreation, "Do cities have the right to ask Americans everywhere to pay their recreation bills? And let's not kid ourselves, that is exactly what happens when a federal recreation area is built to meet local, rather than national needs."<sup>162</sup> Ironically, I argue, Watt's acerbic comments revealed an important truth about many postwar parks – their fundamentally local origins. Sites such as Lowell did have national significance, but they also emerged as a result of on-the-ground organizing and initiative. NPS had an urban agenda, but it was not one that included Lowell. Instead, it took pressure from local advocates and congressional representatives to turn the idea of a federal industrial heritage park into reality.

The Ford administration's skepticism toward urban parks, coupled with an NPS bureaucracy that still largely viewed Lowell as lacking in sufficient integrity, meant that project backers had little NPS encouragement. Over time, many in the city grew frustrated with what they saw as Park Service intransigence. The *Lowell Sun*, by then a consistent booster of the effort, published numerous articles deriding the agency. In 1975, for example, it blasted NPS decision-makers by calling them, "wilderness-oriented National Park bureaucrats...reluctant to

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<sup>162</sup> US Department of the Interior et al., *Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation*, 20.

approve park proposals seen as expensive, historic, and located in or near a city.”<sup>163</sup> Park Service views on the project softened somewhat following the election of Jimmy Carter, but many within the agency remained unconvinced of the project’s merits.

At the same time that Congress considered Representative Cronin’s proposal, his own political fate hung in the balance. Having only entered office after Morse’s 1973 resignation, Cronin lacked the usual incumbent name recognition. Moreover, in 1974, the stain of Watergate hung over all Republicans, even those with clean records. Cronin also faced a tenacious opponent in Democrat Paul Tsongas. A former member of the City Council, Tsongas had been born and raised in Lowell. His father, a Greek immigrant, managed a successful family dry cleaning business. Tsongas grew up enmeshed in local politics, a witness to the city’s decline as well as various schemes for its revival. After college at Dartmouth, a tour in the Peace Corps, and Yale Law School, Tsongas returned to Lowell to begin his political career. He initially joined the Republican Party, like his father, but soon switched affiliation. After serving on the City Council, he became a Middlesex County commissioner, the position from which he launched his effort to unseat Cronin. Though he was initially viewed as a long shot, especially since Republicans had controlled the seat for decades, Tsongas’ skill as a campaigner, along with the general tenor of the times, narrowed the gap between the two contenders. Tsongas was victorious in November 1974.<sup>164</sup>

At first, Tsongas appeared to be a less-than-ideal candidate for advancing the urban cultural park proposal. While serving on the Lowell city council, he had not been a champion of historic preservation, supporting a highway project slated to destroy historic neighborhoods as well as a proposal to drain and then pave the city’s iconic canals to make way for new bus

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<sup>163</sup> Chris Black, “Still Barriers to Surmount,” *Lowell Sun*, January 8, 1975, newspapers.com.

<sup>164</sup> Biographical details on Tsongas drawn from multiple sources, including: Ali, “To Save a City,” 325-26; Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 2, Section: Revitalization.

routes.<sup>165</sup> Michael Southworth, the MIT planner who had helped frame the Lowell park idea in his 1971 report, recalled later that Tsongas was an early opponent of the idea.<sup>166</sup> This less than stellar resume, however, did not stop Tsongas from attacking his opponent for lack of progress on preservation issues. He said, for example, that Cronin had delivered “a lot of fluff and no money,” when it came to the national park.<sup>167</sup> Despite such rhetoric, Tsongas’ eventual victory left project proponents nervous – at least for a little while.

Quickly though, Tsongas put these doubts to rest. Like most other Lowell elected leaders, he could now see the potential in Mogan’s vision and wanted to be recognized as the individual responsible for taking the park to completion. During his first years in office, the park project consumed a significant amount of both his time and that of his staff. He asked to be assigned to the Interior Committee to better shepherd the process, making connections with the many western state representatives whose votes would be essential for passage. He also kept in close contact with National Park Service officials, urging them to move quickly on matters related to the Lowell proposal.<sup>168</sup> The new NPS Director (appointed in January 1975), Gary Everhardt, was more receptive than his immediate predecessors to the Lowell idea, seeing urban parks in general as a way to build a lasting conservation legacy.<sup>169</sup> This enthusiasm did not necessarily extend to his superiors at either Interior or the Office of Management and Budget, who still viewed NPS forays into cities as largely cost prohibitive.

Fortunately for Tsongas, Cronin’s bill to create a Lowell Historic Canal District Commission received Congressional approval in late 1974. President Ford signed it into law the

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<sup>165</sup> Ali, “To Save a City,” 336.

<sup>166</sup> Leary-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space*, 132.

<sup>167</sup> Chris Black, “Tsongas Hits Cronin, Asks Debate,” *Lowell Sun*, September 13, 1974, newspapers.com.

<sup>168</sup> Ali, “To Save a City,” 347 – 349; Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 327; David Sylvester, “What Comes Next for Lowell’s National Cultural Park,” *Lowell Sun*, March 8, 1977;

<sup>169</sup> Dane Morris Netherton, “Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment,” (PhD Diss. Washington State University, 2004), 80.

following January, only a few hours before a pocket veto deadline. The legislation had appeared stalled in the Senate with little hope of passage. Then last minute heroics by Washington Senator Henry Jackson, Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and a 1976 presidential hopeful, gave the legislation enough momentum to move out of subcommittee and onto the Senate floor for a vote.<sup>170</sup> Suddenly, what had once seemed distant fantasy, a National Park in Lowell, a down-on-its-luck mill town, now appeared increasingly possible. The bill authorized \$150,000 in federal funding and gave a two-year time limit for completion of the study.

Once appointed, the new, nine-member Lowell Historic Canal District Commission, which included local, state, and federal representatives, quickly hired a team of private consultants, David A. Crane and Partners, Celardin/Bruner/Cott, Inc., and Michael Sand and Associates. They helped create a detailed preservation plan, which would be released in early 1977. Colloquially called the “Brown Book,” from the color of its cover, the resulting 254-page document laid out an innovative vision – one that local boosters, including Governor Dukakis, were quick to promote. Dukakis said it made Lowell “a living laboratory about what is best in our history.”<sup>171</sup>

The report argued that Lowell’s landscape was nationally significant and had the integrity to join the NPS system as a unit. Its enthusiasm likely stemmed from a feeling that, according to

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<sup>170</sup> Chris Black, “Bill to Create Urban Park Commission Passed,” *Lowell Sun*, December 18, 1974, newspapers.com; Leary-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space*, 147 – 148.

<sup>171</sup> “Final Urban Park Report is Released,” *Lowell Sun*, March 7, 1977, newspapers.com; According to Dennis Frenchman and Jonathan Lane, two planner involved with the study, the color of the report was quite intentional. “This color was chosen with care; it is the same brown seen on every national park sign in America. Moreover, the cover bore the image of one of the last contemporary textile workers in the city, Albert Biro, whose open and honest expression communicates volumes about the dignity of work and the importance of Lowell workers’ story.” Dennis Frenchman and Jonathan S. Lane, “Discussion White Paper: Assessment of Preservation and Development in Lowell National Historical Park at Its 30–Year Anniversary, 2008,” 3, accessed January 8, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/lowe/learn/management/upload/Heritage%20Preservation%20and%20Development%20White%20Paper%20A.pdf>.

one of the planners, “NPS was predisposed against involvement in Lowell” and that a very strong case was needed to convince the agency otherwise.<sup>172</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, many Park Service leaders believed that Lowell’s downtown had been too transformed by urban renewal to qualify for designation. Moreover, they also feared that a new park unit in Lowell would open the floodgates to a slew of park proposals from other cities experiencing economic decline. The costs of urban parks also concerned NPS decision makers. The recently created national recreation areas in New York City and San Francisco were expensive. Adding another project to the list of NPS urban endeavors seemed risky, especially as there was a funding backlog across the entire system.<sup>173</sup>

Given all these concerns, it is not surprising that the commission’s report was both thorough and enthusiastic. It heartily recommended the creation of a Lowell National Cultural Park to “preserve Lowell’s major historical and cultural assets, and use them to interpret Lowell’s significant role in the development of our modern way of life.”<sup>174</sup> It emphasized that there were almost no NPS units “illustrating urban design, manufacturing, science and invention, energy, ethnic minorities, and economic classes.”<sup>175</sup> There would be a core intensive use zone managed, for the most part, by the Park Service and its state partners in downtown, along all the canals, and some riverbanks. This is where the majority of federal or state acquisition would occur. Outside of this area, but still within park boundaries, would be a preservation zone, with oversight provided by a new federal commission. As a key partner to the NPS, this entity would have wide-ranging responsibilities, including managing historic sites, raising money, and

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<sup>172</sup> Frenchman and Lane, “Discussion White Paper,” 2.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Lt. Governor Thomas P. O’Neill III, Chairman, *Report of the Lowell Historic Canal District to the Ninety-Fifth Congress of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 8.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 12.

providing interpretive programming. The report called for \$40 million in initial federal investment.<sup>176</sup>

In April 1977, a month after the report's completion, Tsongas introduced legislation to create a national cultural park in Lowell. He lobbied colleagues on Capitol Hill and within the NPS both to visit the city and to support the proposal. He argued that the park plan was not simply a new vehicle for an old idea – urban renewal – but rather an altogether novel approach to historic preservation, city planning, and education. “If the country is going to understand what the Industrial Revolution is all about, Lowell has to be preserved,” Tsongas contended.<sup>177</sup> Speaking passionately in support of the bill, Tsongas explained the need for a park saying, “This bill calls attention to a story not told in books alone, but in the mills, on the canals, in the boarding houses, in the court yards, in the markets, and in the neighborhoods by the people themselves...it is a living story, but is a story in danger of being lost, physically lost for all time.”<sup>178</sup> Only a commitment from Congress and the federal government, Tsongas maintained, could protect Lowell and its unique landscape from being destroyed.

To emphasize this last point further, Tsongas convinced members of the House Interior and Insular Affairs' Park Subcommittee, as well as new NPS director William Whalen, to visit Lowell in November 1977. Despite cold and rainy weather, they embarked on the water and

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<sup>176</sup> In her dissertation, Ryan critiques the process behind the Brown Book as not being sufficiently transparent, especially as compared to the more grassroots participation emphasized by Model Cities' organizers in the late sixties and early seventies. In contrast, in her estimation, public outreach by the Commission consisted largely of a newsletter (7,500 copies) distributed three times to various locations across the city. Ryan, “Lowell in Transition,” 309.

<sup>177</sup> “Final Urban Park Report is Released,” *Lowell Sun*, March 7, 1977, newspapers.com; David Sylvester, “What Comes Next for Lowell's National Cultural Park,” March 8, 1977, *Lowell Sun*, newspapers.com.

<sup>178</sup> Chris Black, “Park Legislation Introduced,” *Lowell Sun*, April 7, 1977, newspapers.com.

toured the city's canal system, coming away impressed by the resources and more aware of the threats confronting the century-old structures.<sup>179</sup>

In both public appearances and in congressional testimony, Tsongas emphasized the centrality of ethnic heritage to the park proposal. On one occasion, for example, he and Governor Dukakis sponsored an "ethnic" luncheon featuring foods from more than two-dozen groups as a promotional event for the park.<sup>180</sup> Tsongas, along with Mogan and most local supporters, strongly believed that the Lowell National Park needed to be more than an historical site. They argued that ongoing cultural practices and traditions were integral to its purpose. While the city's industrial past had value, so too did the stories of more recent immigrants and their families.

Arguments over this emphasis, which the NPS did not support, become contentious as debate over the designation bill heated up in Congress. The Park Service ultimately succeeded in limiting the park's scope and function to history rather than more contemporary issues.<sup>181</sup> Why did the NPS prefer the label "historical" to "cultural?" One former Park Service employee explained that, "...because there was simply no such thing as a *cultural* park in the National Park Service, NPS tried to force the Lowell proposal to fit the narrow specifications of a *historical* park."<sup>182</sup> Lowell was not the only site seeking designation as a cultural park. During the late 1970s, two other locations, one in Hawai'i and the other in Louisiana, also sought federal recognition under the "cultural" label. In all three cases, the preferred NPS nomenclature would ultimately be selected, with no cultural parks added to the system then or ever.

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<sup>179</sup> Description of visit drawn from Netherton, "Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment," 132.

<sup>180</sup>"A Proud Lowell Takes Step Towards U.S. Park Status," *Boston Globe*, September 18, 1977, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>181</sup> It is also important to note that the word "urban" had now been stripped from the proposal as well. Ryan argues that this was intentional. While proponents saw the bill as urban and city-focused, did not want to get caught up in broader debates over American cities or get tied to a bigger study then underway looking at the NPS and cities. Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 327. Bill supporters may also have changed the name to further buttress their claims that this was not an urban renewal bill.

<sup>182</sup> Weible, "Visions and Reality," 72.

Another element of Tsongas' bill that raised hackles within the Park Service was creation of the new Lowell National Cultural Park Commission. Drawn directly from the brown book recommendations, the commission loomed as a potential rival to Park Service authority. Such views were nothing new within the agency. Many in NPS leadership had chafed at added levels of oversight and review since the 1961 creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission, arguing that they were the ones with the requisite level of expertise for decision-making.

Even as Tsongas' bill and a companion piece of legislation in the Senate gained momentum, the Park Service continued to critique this element of the proposal. In its place, NPS and the Interior Department proposed having the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS), a new agency created by President Carter, take over administrative functions as well as preservation responsibilities outside the core zone largely under NPS control. Lowell residents and elected officials disliked this approach, feeling it would take too much authority out of their hands and vest it in the federal bureaucracy.<sup>183</sup>

Despite NPS criticisms, Tsongas included the commission provisions in a revised bill (H.R. 10970) submitted in February 1978. In this legislation, its role remained robust. The new entity would have oversight of the broad preservation zone, including much of downtown and adjacent areas, with responsibilities such as a historic site inventory and interpretive programming. It could also make loans to the Lowell Development and Financial Corporation to preserve and restore significant properties.

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<sup>183</sup> *Hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation*, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, S. 2817, Bill to establish the Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, Mass, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., April 8, 1978, 47.

Tsongas' views on the bill and on NPS involvement in Lowell evolved over time, however, owing, in large part, to the realities of congressional politics.<sup>184</sup> The Lowell park proposal had local support secured; but, to be designated, it also had to appeal to a broad range of senators and representatives. Many of these officials either wanted a park in their own districts or opposed Park Service expansion on ideological grounds. Even sympathetic Democrats, like Phil Burton of California, Chair of the House committee that oversaw National Parks, remained skeptical that the Lowell effort really had merit.

The idea of creating a park in a New England mill town was simply too new and too novel not to occasion questions and reservations. As a result, as Dean Netherton and Loretta Ryan have both pointed out in their research on the Lowell legislation, Tsongas realized he had to move beyond an emphasis on economic development and instead focus on more traditional NPS priorities, such as history and heritage, in order to gain backing. To this end, he no longer highlighted the potential fiscal implications of the plan as being integral, instead shifting to Lowell's unique cultural and historic resources as the primary reason for park designation.<sup>185</sup>

On February 17, 1978, the House Interior and Insular Affairs' Park Subcommittee held hearings on the revamped Lowell legislation. Tsongas organized supporters to testify in favor of the bill. His staff also lobbied the NPS heavily, urging them to not make any ill-advised statements.<sup>186</sup> NPS Director William Whalen, a Carter appointee, offered his approval during prepared remarks. Later, while taking questions, he called the park proposal, "a very exemplary project" and promised that the NPS was committed to working collaboratively. "I want to make

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<sup>184</sup> In his account of the bill passage, Netherton traces Tsongas' evolving strategy. For example, he describes a meeting between Tsongas and other members of the House Democratic caucus where they pressed him to justify why Lowell deserved recognition as opposed to other cities also experiencing industrial decline. These discussions played an important role in Tsongas' approach to promoting the legislation. Netherton, "Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment," 107 – 108.

<sup>185</sup> Netherton, "Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment," 107 – 108; Ryan also discusses the shift in emphasis, Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 341 -342.

<sup>186</sup> Netherton, "Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment," 134.

everyone aware that we are not going to come in there with a heavy hand. It will be done in a very sensitive way. We want to work with the people. There will be no dictatorial approach. We want to cooperate all the way. We feel with the good vibrations of the people of the area and the State, we certainly want to keep those good feelings going.” He did reserve criticism for the proposed commission, which remained the biggest sticking point for the agency.<sup>187</sup>

After Whalen had completed his prepared remarks, Tsongas praised the NPS and its director. “What we have today is a remarkable awareness on the part of the Park Service as to its responsibility which it has outlined to tell the story of the Industrial Revolution...I must say the comments you have made in support of the Lowell National Historical Park are music to my ears.”<sup>188</sup> The congressman acknowledged that differences still remained between his ideal bill and that desired by the NPS, but nonetheless sounded a hopeful note overall.

Over the next month, Tsongas met with NPS officials to try and seek a compromise. On March 9, the subcommittee scheduled a vote on the legislation. A nervous Tsongas was surprised when Congressman Burton described the Lowell bill as not at all controversial.<sup>189</sup> Tsongas testified on his ongoing discussions with the NPS, followed by a unanimous vote in favor of the proposal. Only a few weeks later, on April 3, 1978, the full Interior and Insular Affairs Committee also passed the bill without dissent, meaning it now moved on to the full House for consideration. Speaking before the committee, Tsongas linked his own experiences as a child in Lowell to the contemporary need for a park. He recalled, “In school I learned about the purple mountains majesty. About truthfulness and cherry trees. And about many wars. I do not regret

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<sup>187</sup> *Unpublished hearing before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, HR. 6230, To provide for the Establishment of the Lowell National Cultural in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and other purposes, 95<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., February 21, 1978, 38, ProQuest Legislative Insight.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 – 14.

<sup>189</sup> Netherton, “Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment,” 135.

that education. What I do regret is that I never learned about Lowell... We did not know that Lowell, a model for hundreds of new cities, had changed the face of a nation... This was left out of our history books. The past we were ashamed of.” Now, however, the situation had changed. The city’s history, in Tsongas’ telling, had become central to Lowell – and to all Americans. “Twelve years ago Lowell decided that its identity was important. Important to its people and to the Nation... Lowell is offering to share its identity with the Nation. We can help many Americans rediscover a much neglected past. We do not come here looking for a handout. We come looking for a partnership”<sup>190</sup>

This final step was difficult, despite the strong support of Massachusetts Representative Thomas “Tip” O’Neill, the powerful Speaker of the House. Fearing the addition of amendments that might derail his effort, Tsongas introduced the Lowell bill under special rules that prevented any alterations, but also required a 2/3 majority for passage. On the initial tally, the Lowell measure failed by six votes (228-132). Budget-minded Republicans opposed the effort, claiming that it was simply a ruse to procure more federal monies. Others who voted in opposition disliked the suspension of rules used to introduce the bill.<sup>191</sup>

In response to this defeat, Tsongas quickly asked NPS Director William Whalen to emphasize publicly that the Lowell proposal did not represent urban renewal.<sup>192</sup> Then, the Congressman had his staff prepare a detailed brief to be distributed to those members who had voted against the measure. The result, a dense, single-spaced memo made its way to O’Neill, who, in turn, substantially revised the document. The final message was only one sentence. It read, “Paul Tsongas and I would appreciate it if you would vote for the Lowell National

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<sup>190</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1978, House, vol. 124 (1978) :8478 – 8479.

<sup>191</sup> This brief account of the politics behind the bill’s initial failure is largely drawn the detailed analysis offered in Netherton, “Paul Tsongas and the Battles over Energy and the Environment,” 135-137.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

Historical Park legislation.”<sup>193</sup> The Speaker’s arm-twisting, along with Tsongas’s persistence paid off and the bill passed by a wide margin.

On the Senate side, the bill faced less opposition. In early April 1978, the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation held a non-contentious hearing on the proposal that featured little direct criticism except from one speaker who worried about other cities seeking to follow Lowell’s lead and seek park status. Massachusetts Senators Kennedy and Brooke each offered glowing testimony in favor of the legislation, highlighting the city’s significance to American history as well as the paucity of working class sites within the national park system as prime justifications for passage. “Those working men and women who built Lowell played a vital role in the building of America,” Kennedy explained. “All Americans will have the opportunity to appreciate this by visiting the Lowell National Historical Park.”<sup>194</sup> Similarly, Brooke noted that Lowell “is offering herself to the Nation as a living lesson about the roots we all share.”<sup>195</sup>

By the spring of 1978, Park Service opinion on the bill had evolved considerably. Some agency veterans still did not want the park, but the 1977 Brown Book study, along with survey work completed by Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), had answered questions regarding the city’s significance to U.S. history. The HAER study completed in 1975 offered compelling evidence of the uniqueness of the canal system as well as its relatively high-level of physical integrity, serving as a rebuttal to earlier NPS assessments of the area. Lowell had transformed in the century and a half since textile mills first began operations, but much remained of the historic landscape.

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<sup>193</sup> Details of the edits made by Tip O’Neill to the memo draft prepared by Tsongas’ staff are found in multiple sources, including Ali, “To Save a City,” 349 and Marion, *Mill Power*, Chapter 3, Section: From Alternative School to Urban Cultural Park.

<sup>194</sup> *Hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation*, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, S. 2817, Bill to establish the Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, Mass, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., April 8, 1978, 60.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

The change in presidential administration was also significant. Jimmy Carter and his Interior Secretary, former Idaho governor Cecil Andrus, did not have the same passion for urban parks as Stewart Udall and Lyndon Johnson, but they did express an openness to park innovation not present during the Ford years. Thus, by 1977, the path to designation for Lowell appeared much more promising. Tsongas realized this and, as explained earlier, adapted his language to appeal to a wider audience. He and other park supporters also made important concessions to the NPS, most notably not pushing for the cultural park appellation. They held firm on the need for the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, as a device to maintain some local control and also ensure that the effects of the park were felt well outside the core zone largely overseen by the Park Service.

The House passed its version of the Lowell park bill on April 11, 1978. The Senate followed on May 18, 1978. Within a few days, the House agreed to the Senate version and the legislation went to President Carter, who signed the legislation on June 5, 1978. It created the first NPS unit dedicated to telling the story of industrial workers in America. The newly enacted law called Lowell the “the most significant planned industrial city in the United States,” and recognized the cultural heritage of its current and former residents. It authorized more than \$18 million for land acquisition in the city and another \$20 million for grants and loans aimed at educational and cultural programming, an impressive sum. “This is the proudest achievement of my congressional career,” Paul Tsongas said. “Lowell had a dream, a dream of a city built upon its past to assure its future. Today, that dream has come true.”<sup>196</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In the decades after the designation of Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961, interest in the development of new types of parks and protected areas surged, with attention particularly

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<sup>196</sup> “Lowell’s Park is Established,” *Boston Globe*, June 6, 1978, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

focused on cities and suburbs. The push to expand the number of sites available for recreation and leisure, already growing in response to the postwar population boom, garnered additional momentum following President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 announcement of his Great Society initiative. This effort explicitly sought to employ parks as urban anti-poverty measures, viewing access to open space as an equity issue for low-income communities and communities of color. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and National Park Service Director George Hartzog shared Johnson's views, arguing that the federal government had an essential role in meeting the conservation needs of America's diverse metropolitan regions. Later, even Richard Nixon, no friend of the environment or of cities for that matter, yielded to the energy of the urban parks movement, supporting the creation of large new national recreation areas in New York Harbor and San Francisco. Walter Hickel, Nixon's first Secretary of the Interior, hoped to expand these actions by creating an entire system of city-centric recreation sites. In 1970, he announced that the NPS would be pursuing a policy of bringing "parks to the people," arguing that public access and enjoyment should be the agency's core mission.

In contrast to the earlier push for national seashores and lakeshores, the drive to create new urban park sites began, to a great extent, in the cities themselves, rather than from planners working in NPS headquarters. This was especially true in Lowell, a town that had likely never garnered much attention from officials in the Department of the Interior. George Hartzog did champion the cause of cities within the agency, but his tenure ended before many of the new urban sites gained designation.

Like Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve in Washington State, the Lowell effort succeeded as a result of a dogged local activism coupled with ongoing congressional support. The impetus to turn 150-year old canals and mill buildings into a park originated with organizers

from the city's Model Cities program, especially its charismatic education director Patrick "Pat" Mogan. At times single-handedly, Mogan, a savvy political operator, built a broad coalition of support for the park idea, tapping into the national urban recreation movement as well as local and regional desires to revitalize New England's declining manufacturing centers. The novel idea of an urban cultural park captured the imagination of Lowell residents and politicians alike, who hoped to see the once model city on the Merrimack return to some semblance of its former glory.

The Lowell legislation was unique in federal conservation history. It relied heavily on partnerships to achieve its goals with little emphasis on direct federal ownership. The NPS would be working with nonprofit and private sector organizations and would be judged not only on the quality of its interpretation and historic preservation, but also – rightly or wrongly - on the degree to which Lowell's economy revived over the coming decades.

The stories the agency would be telling also presented challenges. Industrialization, the experiences of working-class people, women's' history, were all still new topics for the Park Service. Public historians, who had recently received PhDs in social history, were critical to the park, possibly more than at any NPS site before or since.<sup>197</sup> All these factors, in addition to its location in the heart of an urban center, set Lowell apart from earlier efforts.

Yet, like Cape Cod National Seashore and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, the creation of Lowell National Historical Park did not immediately lead to a change in how the NPS established new sites. No other Lowells were in the offing. The Park Service did not welcome any urban parks or locations telling stories of labor and industry for some time after Lowell's designation. The 1980s would bring dramatic changes to the agency and conservation

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<sup>197</sup> For more on the connections between academic historians, public history, and Lowell National Historical Park, see Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, especially chapters 1, 6 and 7.

policy more generally in the United States. Cities like Lowell and regions such as the textile belt of New England could no longer look to the NPS as a source of millions in funds. Instead, new strategies and approaches emphasized collaboration, the private sector, and tourism to a far greater extent than earlier efforts.

## Chapter 5

### *This Isn't a National Park*

During the spring of 1992, the fledging Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program held its first annual conference in the small city of Altoona, a once thriving railroad town that had hit hard times in the decades after World War I. Over the course of two days, several hundred participants jammed into a local Ramada Inn and eagerly took part in a series of panel discussions and workshops focused on the connections between economic revitalization and cultural and environmental conservation. Speakers from local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations, shared their experiences, all in the hopes of successfully jumpstarting the new initiative.<sup>1</sup>

A highlight of the gathering was its keynote address, given by historian and geographer David Lowenthal. Long interested in the topics of heritage and historical memory, Lowenthal invited his audience to consider both the pitfalls and the possibilities of “living with and making a living from what we’ve gotten from the past that defined us and brings us together.”<sup>2</sup> For example, he questioned whether the concept of authenticity truly had a place in interpretive programming, arguing that heritage is “always in flux” and “defies static purism.”<sup>3</sup> He also stressed the need for dissenting viewpoints and perspectives by emphasizing that a historic site should address “memories of strife as well as those of sylvan security.”<sup>4</sup> Though critical of commercialization, Lowenthal generally struck a positive tone in his remarks, emphasizing the

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<sup>1</sup> Notes covering the planning of the event, along with draft program recommendations, are found in carton 2 (Subject Files, 1981 – 1996), folder 4 (Heritage Parks Conference 1992), Record Group 34 (Department of Community Affairs, Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission), Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA (hereafter cited as DCA-PHAC Files).

<sup>2</sup> David Lowenthal and the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, *Holistic Heritage: Problems and Promises for Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, 1993), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

potential economic, psychological, and political gains to be had by taking heritage seriously - a message that surely resonated with many of those in the audience.<sup>5</sup>

Lowenthal's decision to take part in the Altoona event might at first seem surprising, especially since he traveled from his home in England to participate. What drew him to Pennsylvania? Why travel across the Atlantic Ocean to attend a regional meeting far from the nearest major city? What was so significant about the heritage parks effort that an internationally known scholar might feel compelled to participate in its inaugural conference?

Established in 1989, the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program bore little resemblance to typical American park systems. The initiative sought to protect landscapes associated with industry, including steel mills, lumber camps, coal mines, navigation canals, and even oil wells. Economic revitalization, especially through increased tourism, was a central aim with preservation and adaptive reuse of former industrial sites also primary goals. The effort offered, in the words of one official, a "means of economic survival" for regions devastated by capital flight and job loss.<sup>6</sup> These emphases set heritage parks apart from the vast majority of conservation initiatives in the United States, which tended to elide or erase the effects of work on the environment rather than stress its varied legacies.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to its distinctive subject matter, the Pennsylvania program had other important features. Heritage parks, for example, had no clearly marked boundaries with entry and exit

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<sup>5</sup> Brenda Barrett, phone interview by author, April 19, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Shalom Staub, "Cultural Conservation and Economic Recovery Planning: The Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program," in *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*, ed. Mary Hufford (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 229.

<sup>7</sup> White " 'Are You An Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?' Work and Nature," 171 – 185. For a few examples of how specific parks (local, state, national) have dealt with the issue of "work" within their boundaries, see: Constance C. Bodurow, "A Vehicle for Conserving and Interpreting Our Recent Industrial Heritage," *The George Wright Forum* 20, no. 2 (2003): 68-88; Scott See, "Keweenaw National Historical Park: Heritage Partnerships in an Industrial Landscape," (PhD Diss: Michigan Technological University, 2013); Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*; Thaisa Way, "Landscapes of Industrial Excess: A Thick Sections Approach to Gas Works Park," *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 8, no. 1 (2013): 28-39.

stations. They encompassed entire landscapes (usually several counties in size) rather than just one or two outstanding features. Most of the land within a heritage park was private property and could include homes, businesses, factories, parking lots, natural areas, roads, and more.

Designation as a heritage park also did not translate into added restrictions on land use. Inclusion in the program meant that a region could receive additional state funding, but did not have any immediate regulatory or legal implications.

Inspired by a growing historic preservation movement as well as a surge in environmental awareness, heritage park supporters sought to create a new model of protected area that centered on living and lived-in places rather than wilderness or Olmsted-inspired urban green space. Perhaps the best way to think of a heritage park during this initial period is as a loose zone of concern or emphasis - a place where the human, environmental, and economic stories of industry remained visible and potentially visit-able by both residents and visitors. This was not an ordinary park system and its distinctiveness no doubt played a role in attracting David Lowenthal to the 1992 Altoona gathering.

Studying the creation of the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program in the late 1980s reveals key insights about the trajectory of conservation practice in the United States during the latter decades of the twentieth century. Before World War II, parks and other protected areas, whether in cities, suburbs, or rural areas, were largely intended to serve as a respite from urbanization and industry.<sup>8</sup> Owned and managed by government agencies, these sites deliberately erased diverse effects of human settlement, both past and present. The uses of particular locations varied tremendously. Some hosted playgrounds and others were given over

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<sup>8</sup> For a history of urban parks during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early twentieth centuries, see: Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design*, 3 – 133; For a detailed overview of National Parks during this same period, see Runte, *National Parks the American Experience*.

to hiking and camping. In almost all cases though, habitation and continued productive use ceased following designation. These were not places where people lived and worked.

This approach began to change in the 1960s. Experiments took place at all levels of government, often as part of the so-called “quiet revolution in land use” detailed in chapter 3. Gradually and haltingly, protected areas, including some in the national park system, grew to encompass lived-in landscapes. Small towns on Cape Cod, farms on Whidbey Island, and mills in Lowell all gained recognition and some measure of protection, often as a result of local initiative. The Pennsylvania State Heritage Park Program, however, with its focus on industry and embrace of the “total landscape,” represented an evolution from these earlier efforts – a transformation that the NPS played an integral part in nurturing.

The Park Service did not create the Pennsylvania program, but it did provide funding as well as critical technical support and expertise. Perhaps even more important, many of the Pennsylvania heritage parks also pursued recognition as national heritage corridors or national heritage areas, a designation that came with additional financial and planning assistance. Without the early and ongoing aid of partners at the NPS, the Pennsylvania initiative might never have come to fruition. Larry Williamson, a leader in one of the state agencies charged with developing the program, recalled that NPS staff people, especially planners, “were with us from the beginning. They were spectacular.”<sup>9</sup> Pennsylvania heritage parks (even those with dual federal-state status) did not qualify as official National Park Service units, but the agency certainly influenced the scope and intent of the program.

Beginning in the late 1970s, NPS officials, along with staff from the closely aligned Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS), expressed interest both in protecting Pennsylvania’s industrial landscapes and in expanding urbanites’ access to green space and

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<sup>9</sup> Larry Williamson, phone interview with author, August 18, 2016.

recreation. Attention continued to grow throughout the early 1980s, even as funding for other conservation efforts decreased. In contrast to sites directly managed by the National Park Service, the Pennsylvania heritage parks, like similar efforts in other states, required a less substantial, potentially time-limited financial investment by the federal government. This endeared the concept to conservative officials in the Reagan administration, who hoped to stop the Park Service's expansion into urban and suburban areas. Even Interior Secretary James Watt, a staunch opponent of most federal environmental initiatives, viewed the heritage park approach positively, describing a similar effort in Illinois as "daring and precedent setting."<sup>10</sup>

The Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program benefitted from a new emphasis in the NPS, and the federal government more generally, on intergovernmental cooperation and less-than-fee approaches to land acquisition.<sup>11</sup> These trends had been gaining supporters among both Democrats and Republicans since at least the creation of Cape Cod National Seashore, but the country's economic stagnation, coupled with a conservative executive branch, spurred additional attention from officials at all levels of government. No longer would Congress appropriate tens of millions for park creation as had been common in the sixties and even early seventies. Instead, the final decades of the twentieth century saw a shift towards austerity regarding protected area management. Partnerships and, in many cases, proxy action by the NPS became the norm as other avenues for action, especially direct federal management, became increasingly tenuous.

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<sup>10</sup> Watt quoted in Bob Wiedrich, "A National Park for Illinois," *Chicago Tribune*, December 11, 1981, newspapers.com.

<sup>11</sup> The term "less-than-fee" refers to the use of conservation mechanisms beyond outright purchase (whereby a seller grants all rights, title, and interest in a property to a buyer). Common "less-than fee" approaches include: zoning restrictions, various types of conservation easements, granting of a life estate, mutual covenants, deed restrictions, and purchase of development rights. On the history of private land trusts, which have been key to the development of many of these tools, see Richard Brewer, *Conservancy: The Land Trust Movement in America* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2003). For more on the National Park Service's use of less-than-fee simple approaches, see Charles Little, "Alternatives for Land Protection: A Review of Case Studies in Eight National Parks," (Bethesda: American Land Forum, 1982).

The Pennsylvania program, with its inclusion of private property and its emphasis on economic development, became a national model for this type of Park Service involvement.

This chapter traces the development of the Heritage Park idea. It examines how the concept evolved in Pennsylvania, as well as in Illinois, where Congress designated the first national heritage corridor in 1984. In both states, the role of the NPS was a catalyst rather than a long-term manager. The agency provided critical technical and financial assistance as a partner but did not lead either effort. Indeed, at the federal level, legislation creating national heritage corridors specifically circumscribed the NPS role, limiting not only the time and money it could dedicate to projects, but also any restrictions or regulations it might wish to impose.<sup>12</sup>

This evolution created both opportunities and risks, especially concerning land use. When it worked collaboratively, as a funder, an advisor, or as one partner among many, the Park Service did not possess significant authority to condemn land or enforce zoning measures. Local residents thus did not need to fear a forced sale of their property at the hands of NPS officials. At the same time though, they also could not rely on the agency to prevent or even curtail activities that might cause environmental harm or damage historic and cultural sites. The Park Service could make recommendations to a state, local, or nonprofit partner, but ultimately lacked legal authority to dictate terms as it could within a federally owned property.

Cooperative ventures, like the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program or federally designated national heritage corridors, thus provided the NPS a new way to influence but not determine conservation policy. Instead, local actors largely decided the geographic scope and interpretive focus of a proposed protected area. Even in cases where project supporters pursued

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the legislation creating the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor in 1984 (the first such effort to gain Congressional approval) included a 10-year sunset provision for the federal commission tasked with managing the effort. It also limited the annual appropriations available to the commission to a maximum of \$250,000 / year. *Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor Act of 1984*, Public Law 398, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., (August 24, 1984).

federal designation as a national heritage corridor or area, the Park Service's control over designation process remained limited. In many instances, Congress passed authorizing legislation without the approval of NPS.

Diverse regions, including many in Pennsylvania, now had entrée to Park Service expertise, but could not access either the large sums of funding or the potential regulatory protections that National Park Service units enjoyed. The huge increases in funding and federal involvement that had begun in the fifties with Mission 66 and the ORRRC and continued into the sixties and seventies during the heyday of NPS expansion had now come to an end. The eighties were a new era for the NPS and conservation more generally - one defined by austerity and, out of necessity, adaptability and innovation in preservation strategies.

#### *Urban National Parks After Lowell*

The creation of a new National Park Service unit in Lowell during the summer of 1978 sparked interest and excitement in dozens of other towns and cities across the country.<sup>13</sup> For a community struggling with capital flight, population decline, and high unemployment, the possibility of millions in federal investment was enticing. If NPS involvement could be justified in Lowell, it stood to reason that other sites with prominent ties to the history of industrial production - the mills of Paterson, New Jersey, for example, or the auto factories of southeast Michigan - might also qualify for park status and, by extension, substantial investment by the NPS.

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<sup>13</sup> In Massachusetts, for example, the state sought to leverage the momentum generated by the Lowell designation to create an entire system of heritage parks. The Department of Environmental Management invited applications from a number of communities, including Lynn, Lawrence, and Holyoke, all locations that, like Lowell, had high unemployment linked to the decline of manufacturing. Neighboring states also sought to launch similar initiatives. In New York, the legislature, which had passed a study bill five years earlier, formally established a system of thirteen urban cultural parks in 1982. For more on the New York effort, see Paul Bray, "The New York State Perspective: Urban Cultural Parks," in *Proceedings from the Greenline and Urbanline Parks Conference* (Albany: Department of Environmental Conservation, Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation, State of New York, 1983), 11-14; New York Urban Cultural Park System, *Technical Plan: Submitted to Governor Hugh L. Carey and the New York State Legislature* (Albany: New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, 1981).

Park Service leaders, for their part, had long feared just such a phenomenon. In the run-up to Lowell's designation, agency officials warned of a possible ripple effect, arguing that an urban park in Massachusetts could open a "Pandora's Box," of proposals for parks in "Dallas Stockyards or Ohio rubber tire factories."<sup>14</sup> According to one official involved with the Lowell planning effort, much of the agency's hesitancy in recognizing the mill town's significance stemmed from anxiety that "other depressed cities" would soon "seek park status as a disguised form of urban renewal."<sup>15</sup>

Such dire predictions were unwarranted. In the final months of 1978, a parks omnibus bill, which included several new urban and suburban national park units, passed Congress, but none of the included sites sought either to replicate Lowell's emphasis on economic revitalization or to preserve landscapes affected by deindustrialization.<sup>16</sup> In fact, for decades after its establishment, Lowell was largely on its own as a Park Service site focused on the Industrial Revolution and labor history.<sup>17</sup> Stories of union organizing, in particular, remained especially scant, with little mention of the subject at other Park Service facilities.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, during the 1980s, no other urban site, industrial or otherwise, managed to achieve designation as a National Park unit – despite the strong desire of many cities to gain federal recognition and financial support.

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<sup>14</sup> Ryan, "Lowell in Transition," 328.

<sup>15</sup> Quote from Michael Knight, "U.S. Park Will Memorialize Cotton Mills," *New York Times*, May 31, 1978, Newspapers.com.

<sup>16</sup> *National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978*, Public Law 625, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., (November 10, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> The next NPS unit to be created with an explicitly industrial (though not urban) focus was the Keweenaw National Historical Park in Calumet, Michigan in 1992.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to clarify that the NPS was involved with other industrial sites through the National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks program. These sites, though, do not require Congressional approval and are not visitor-oriented in the same manner as a National Park Service unit. For more on various NPS programs and their connections to labor history and the history of unions, see Rachel Donaldson, "Placing and Preserving Labor History," *The Public Historian* 39, no. 1 (2017): 61-83.

For nearly twenty years, the NPS had prioritized agency growth, much of it in or near cities. Between 1960 and 1980, the number of sites in the park system rose an astounding 70 percent, from 187 to 333.<sup>19</sup> This expansion took many forms, ranging from the protection of coastline, to the conservation of agricultural lands, and the preservation of historic structures. The Park Service also experimented with new types of programming, most notably the Summer in the Parks initiative described in chapter four.

In many ways, the sixties and seventies were an era of trial and error for the agency, as it broadened and diversified its geographical footprint and tested out – sometimes unwillingly – different approaches to park management. Advisory commissions, for example, became far more common, as did partnerships with local and state government. Historic preservation became central to the NPS mission, with Park Service staff overseeing the National Register of Historic Places, among other duties. Also significant, the 1970 passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The law mandated a much greater level of public involvement in federal government decision-making. All manner of stakeholders now had the ability to engage with NPS staff – a huge change from past practices.

Land acquisition, especially, represented a key element of the Park Service’s post World War II expansion strategy. Between roughly 1965 and 1980, the NPS went on a buying binge spending \$1.6 billion on acquisition.<sup>20</sup> Prior to the sixties, the agency rarely – if ever – purchased land outright; indeed, it did not have the authority to do so in most cases. Its properties were, for

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<sup>19</sup> The Conservation Foundation, *National Parks for a New Generation: Visions, Realities, Prospects: A Report from the Conservation Foundation* (Washington, DC: Conservation Foundation, 1985), 233.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

the most part, donated or part of the public domain. Condemnation was used to acquire land for some parks, but states, rather than the federal government, oversaw this process.<sup>21</sup>

Beginning in earnest with the Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961 and continuing with other sites such as the Redwoods National and State Parks and the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, the Park Service became more directly engaged in creating parks through land purchase and / or use of eminent domain. These activities were mainly concentrated in regions of the country where limited amounts of property remained in public hands.<sup>22</sup> Specific provisions in a new park unit's authorizing legislation usually outlined procedures for land acquisition but rarely included a mechanism for determining the priority of different parcels.<sup>23</sup>

This shift allowed for the establishment of new national park sites, but the costs, whether financial or political, were substantial. Procuring properties in coastal areas and near major cities cost millions, spawned lawsuits, and created ill will with many local residents. Problems rarely encountered at older parks now vexed NPS staff working in highly populated areas. New urban parks also often came with a significant number of historic structures. These quickly became expensive to maintain and / or adapt for new uses, though critics of NPS metropolitan involvement at times exaggerated these costs.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For more on NPS land acquisition policies, see Sax, "Buying Scenery," 709 – 740 and Sax, "Do Communities Have Rights?" 499-511.

<sup>22</sup> Even before the creation of Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961, Congress had included language allowing for condemnation as well as land acquisition (with millions of dollars authorized) by the NPS in the 1959 legislation creating Minute Man National Historical Park in the Boston suburbs. For more on the early legislative history of Minute Man National Historical Park, see Joan Zenzen, *Bridging the Past: An Administrative History of Minute Man National Historical Park* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2010), 52 - 57.

<sup>23</sup> The Conservation Foundation, *National Parks for a New Generation*, 240-259; Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 254 – 292; US Government Accountability Office, *Federal Land Acquisition and Management Practices* CED-81-135 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1981), accessed May 11, 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/140/135287.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> "Urban Parks: Are they Successful or Unrealistic?" *Conservation Foundation Letter* (July 1982): 1-8; Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 219 – 222;

By the time Gerald Ford became president in 1974, a backlash to NPS expansion was gaining momentum both within and outside the agency. The Ford administration favored austerity for most domestic programs, including parks and recreation. It aggravated matters that the agency's land acquisition backlog in 1976 topped \$500 million, and that only included areas already authorized for purchase, not the millions of additional acres potentially eligible for purchase.<sup>25</sup> As one scholar of the NPS has noted, "There came to be a feeling in the Park Service and among the agency's supporters that heavy reliance on direct acquisition was a luxury that neither the Park Service nor the nation could afford any longer."<sup>26</sup> Jimmy Carter's election in 1976 offered a brief reprieve for those looking to continue the agency's growth. Several new urban and suburban sites, including Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve and Lowell National Historical Park, did become part of the NPS system during the Carter presidency, but these would be the last such units added for more than a decade.

The victory of Ronald Reagan, and his selection of James Watt as Interior Secretary, brought an abrupt end to debates over NPS expansion.<sup>27</sup> Not only would urban sites no longer be added to the National Park System, new parks of any sort now faced intense scrutiny. Only three new units were designated during President Reagan's first term. Watt even wanted to abolish some existing sites, including Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in southern California and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore outside Chicago.<sup>28</sup> A fierce skeptic of federal action more generally, Watt had long shown a special distaste for the urban mission so central to

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<sup>25</sup> "Many Environment Programs Face Budget Scissors," *Conservation Foundation Letter* (February 1976): 8.

<sup>26</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and their Keepers*, 238.

<sup>27</sup> For a good summary of James Watt's views on conservation, see Hal Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation: Environmentalism in the United States since 1945* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 169 – 174.

<sup>28</sup> "Not Planning to Abolish Any Parks, Watt Says," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1981, Proquest Historical Newspapers; "Disposing of Federal Land Holdings Was One of Watt's Primary Goals," *Conservation Foundation Letter* (May 1982): 1-8; "Federal Land Sales Stir Up Turf Disputes," *Conservation Foundation Letter* (April 1982): 1-8;

an earlier generation of conservation leaders like George Hartzog and Stewart Udall.<sup>29</sup> His selection as Secretary of the Interior ensured that Lowell would remain the sole industrial history site officially within the NPS system – at least for the foreseeable future.

Despite the actions and ideological leanings of Interior Department leadership, some communities pursued a relationship with the NPS.<sup>30</sup> Local and state elected officials often supported these efforts, which they hoped would result in federal investment and increased tax revenues from tourism. Political realities, however, meant that agency involvement would be quite different from previous decades. Federal ownership, in particular, seemed unlikely, as did large investments for staff and programs. Instead, the types of partnerships that had taken shape at units such as Cape Cod, Ebey’s Landing, and Lowell, would have to be modified to meet the exigencies of a new era. If the NPS did not manage a landscape directly, it might still advise, working collaboratively to promote conservation, historic preservation, outdoor recreation, and, increasingly, economic development, at sites and in settings outside its immediate control.

*Pennsylvania Heritage Parks: A Concept with Applications*

As noted earlier, the push for and eventual designation of Lowell National Historical Park generated interest across the country. Many other American industrial centers had experienced economic hardship and were hoping to pursue a similar path towards revitalization. Officials in nearby states, especially, wondered if the approach might be appropriate for their jurisdictions. New York, for example, took quick action to establish a system of “Urban Cultural Parks,”

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, his comments presented at a 1975 National Symposium on Urban Recreation: US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, National Park Service, *Nationwide Symposium on Urban Recreation*, 19-20.

<sup>30</sup> In her dissertation, “Heritage Partnerships: National Designation, Regional Promotion and the Role of Local Preservation Organizations,” Elizabeth Morton explores the reasons why communities might seek national affiliation, especially the perceived prestige and validation attached to such relationships. This discussion is primarily centered in chapter 5, “The Impact of National Designations on Local Preservation Organizations.” Elizabeth Morton, “Heritage Partnerships: National Designation, Regional Promotion and the Role of Local Preservation Organizations,” (PhD Diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), 124 – 155.

passing legislation to fund a study process in 1977. Like Lowell, most of the New York sites were relatively compact, comprising one or two neighborhoods, and featured a rich mix of social, cultural, and architectural history. In a few cases though, multiple cities joined together to form a larger park with the aim of telling a regional story, often centered on a waterway or particular industry.<sup>31</sup> This approach caught the attention of officials in Pennsylvania, who used it as a model for their own work.<sup>32</sup>

During the spring of 1978, at about the same time Congress passed a final version of the Lowell bill, the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs began its heritage parks planning process. The mission of Community Affairs, created in 1966, was to assist local governments and expand intergovernmental cooperation. Its focus ranged from urban renewal to recreation, and federal grant assistance to housing. What united these sundry foci was an emphasis on quality-of-life and community well being. To be effective, agency employees had to work across political boundaries – an ongoing challenge in Pennsylvania with its close to 5,000 units of local government. Over the next ten years, Community Affairs took the lead in establishing and later administering the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program.

In May 1978, Community Affairs invited David A. Crane and Partners, a planning and architecture firm with ties to both the Massachusetts and New York programs, to make a presentation on their work to state government staff in Harrisburg. “I’ve become increasingly interested in the relationship between historic preservation, urban cultural parks and

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<sup>31</sup> For more on these efforts see: Bray, “The New York State Perspective,” and Bray, “The New Urbanism: Cities as a Collection of Natural and Cultural Resources,” in *Partnerships in Parks and Preservation: Proceedings and Bibliography* (Albany, NY: US National Park Service, New York (State) Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, National Parks and Conservation Association, 1991), 23-28. One example of a multi-city urban cultural park was RiverSpark, which featured 6 municipalities, including Troy and Cohoes. For more on RiverSpark, see Brian O'Donnell, "Memory and Hope: Four Local Museums in the Mill Towns of the Industrial Northeast," *Technology and Culture* 37, no. 4 (1996): 824 – 828.

<sup>32</sup> Larry Williamson, a longtime manager within Community Affairs, remembers his staffers discussing whether the models in neighboring states might be applied in Pennsylvania. Larry Williamson, phone interview with author, August 18, 2016.

neighborhood preservation,” wrote Jerry Wettstone, an agency manager who organized the visit. “I would like to invite you to attend this meeting to learn more about how we might consider applying some of the concepts of this program to our own historic preservation and neighborhood preservation efforts in Pennsylvania.”<sup>33</sup>

Shortly after this presentation the federal government became directly involved in the Pennsylvania effort. Every five years, all states had to complete a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (often called a SCORP) as a requirement for receiving monies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This document outlined a state’s current and future recreation needs and proposed projects for support. In their 1980 - 1985 plan, which had been in the works for several years, Pennsylvania officials cited cities as a key target of their efforts. More specifically, the document called for an increase in “close-to-home” recreation opportunities in or near urban centers, especially activities that could make a community more attractive to new residents or businesses.<sup>34</sup> This proposition, which garnered support and funding from the National Park Service, became the basis for the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program.

While the NPS, via the Land and Water Conservation Fund, was the major financial backer of the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Planning Project, as it came to be known, state politics also were important. Republican Governor Richard “Dick” Thornburgh, who served from 1979 to 1987, felt strongly that Pennsylvania needed to revamp its approach to economic development. The state had shed an estimated 190,300 manufacturing jobs between 1970 and

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<sup>33</sup> Jerry R. Wettstone, “Briefing on Urban Heritage / Cultural Parks,” May 1, 1978, carton 3, folder 1 (Plans and Studies), Pennsylvania Heritage Area Program Files, Record Group 65 (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA (hereafter cited as PHAP Files); Eleanor Mahoney, “History of the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas,” (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 2014), 15-16.

<sup>34</sup> Pennsylvania Bureau of Environmental Planning, *Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan, 1980-1985*, (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, 1981), 13, 95-96, 109.

1980, resulting in a jobless rate well above the national average.<sup>35</sup> Thornburgh believed public/private partnerships could jumpstart investment and, by extension, employment and made this a central focus of his administration. He directed the State Planning Board to complete a comprehensive study of job opportunities in the Commonwealth, especially in growing sectors like tourism. Completed in 1981, the document, entitled *Choices for Pennsylvanians*, “highlighted the state’s history as an industrial powerhouse and, among numerous suggestions, advocated for adaptive re-use of existing infrastructure.”<sup>36</sup>

The same state agencies engaged in the development of the Outdoor Recreation Plan and, by extension, the heritage parks effort, also had to report on how their work advanced the goals of *Choices for Pennsylvania*. They sensed an opportunity in doing so. Like the governor’s plan, the heritage parks program was a response to changing social and economic conditions, especially deindustrialization. Economic development had always been envisioned as a key aspect of the heritage park idea, but to make significant progress on issues as challenging as unemployment would require substantial investment. By connecting their work in preservation and conservation to Thornburgh’s agenda, heritage park proponents hoped to leverage additional funding for their efforts. They frequently mentioned *Choices for Pennsylvanians* in both internal communications and external publicity materials to link the two efforts and secure support from the state executive.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Pennsylvania State Planning Board, *Choices for Pennsylvanians: Final Report of the Pennsylvania State Planning Board* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania State Planning Board, 1981), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Mahoney, *History of the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas*, 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> For example, in a 1984 summary report describing the goals of the heritage parks planning project, the authors stated, “While this planning element will implement the 1980 State Recreation Plan policy to place emphasis on close-to-home recreation programs and facilities, it is also designed address the *Choices for Pennsylvanians* policy to support the formulation of local and area wide strategies for economic development and community conservation.” (1) US National Park Service, Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks: A Concept with Applications* (Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1984).

Between 1980 and 1984, the Heritage Parks Planning Project focused almost entirely on urban areas. It sought to address the needs of the Commonwealth's most economically distressed towns and cities by creating a network of small neighborhood parks. The sites would be delineated on a map but have no official entry or exit points. Instead, the entirety of a particular setting would be considered part of the protected area. Cultural and historic sites within the boundaries could be preserved and promoted, in hopes of generating investment and tourism.<sup>38</sup>

In this, the effort resembled both the new national park in Lowell and the New York Urban Cultural Parks system. Seeing this connection, the Park Service was a liaison between Pennsylvania officials and their counterparts in other states, hoping to stimulate an exchange of expertise. "We mostly wanted them (the NPS) to help us get a foot in the door with Massachusetts and New York because they were helping those two states," explained Larry Williamson, a manager in the Department of Community Affairs. "They set up meetings with New York officials and they would take several of us up to New York for two or three days. We never made it to Massachusetts, but had a lot of telephone conversations with them."<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the Department of Community Affairs, the state Department of Environmental Resources (DER) and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), played critical roles during this early period. Working together they conducted a detailed survey of every town or city in Pennsylvania designated as "distressed" by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. In order to qualify for the label, a community had to have high unemployment, a large number of low-income households, older housing stock, and an inadequate tax base. About 500 towns and cities in Pennsylvania met these requirements and thus were considered for inclusion in the initial Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks study.

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<sup>38</sup> US National Park Service, et al, *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks*, 1984.

<sup>39</sup> Larry Williamson, phone interview with author, August 18, 2016.

Using a mix of factors, such as the integrity of historic buildings and recreation potential of existing open space, the three departments created detailed profiles of each municipality. Surveyors also noted when a community had an opportunity to link resources together, through a walking tour, for example, or development of a canal towpath trail. Feasibility, defined as a strong level of local support, also played an important role in the screening process. Some forty sites merited further review, culled from hundreds of locations identified at the start of the process.<sup>40</sup>

The municipal profiles also included information on a theme or themes that might be explored at each location. Industrial heritage, though important, was not the only subject emphasized. Instead, a host of possible interpretive foci, ranging from “War and Defense” to “Commerce and Immigration,” received attention from the planning team. The goal, at this early stage, was to select sites that represented the full range of Pennsylvania’s urban history. Staff people involved with the project remember that histories of industry and labor had especially high priority. Brenda Barrett, then serving as Bureau Director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, recalled that in the early 1980s, “Pennsylvania was a real hub of industrial archaeology research...there was a lot of conversation about the larger industrial landscape.”<sup>41</sup>

The decision of which interpretive themes to associate with a community was difficult and created divisions among those working on the survey. Some members of the team argued that the sites under consideration had rich and complex histories that could not be distilled down to just a single topic, resource, or event.<sup>42</sup> As a corollary to this, an internal debate developed over whether the Heritage Parks were, in fact, being developed for tourist enjoyment or for the

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<sup>40</sup> US National Park Service et al, *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks*, 3 – 6.

<sup>41</sup> Brenda Barrett, phone interview by author, April 19, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> “Introduction to urban cultural park reports,” carton 1, folder 3, Heritage Park Planning Project, Urban Cultural Parks System, 1980-1984, Record Group 13 (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission), Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA (Hereafter cited as PHMC Files)

benefit of residents. Was the aim to promote a singular feature or was the totality of the landscape under consideration? As one staff member of the PHMC commented in an internal memo, if the program “is to benefit primarily the tourist, then the first alternative [a singular feature] appears to be more attractive. Tourists usually like to visit specific attractions and not often a total environment...[but ]if the primary beneficiary of the urban cultural park concept is to be the citizens themselves, then clearly the second alternative is more attractive. It focuses attention on all the existing cultural resources and seeks to provide appropriate avenues for their expression in the present.”<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, members of the survey team made the decision not to limit a proposed Heritage Park to a single theme or characteristic. Instead, sites could address as many topics as deemed applicable.<sup>44</sup>

In 1984, the Heritage Parks Planning Project issued a summary of their findings entitled *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks: A Concept with Applications*. The report included a detailed matrix that documented the data collected on each municipality (or section thereof) as well as a short narrative overview. For example, for the town of Easton in northeastern Pennsylvania, planners considered whether a canal-side park and nearby historic district might qualify for inclusion. Themes such as “transportation and commerce” were well represented, and the town had an impressive amount of “magnificent architecture.” Additionally, local support was rated “high,” a positive indicator of the feasibility criterion.<sup>45</sup> Easton, it seemed, had a good chance of being selected for the program, though the report did not feature final conclusions.

In laying out the goals of the study and of heritage parks more generally, the authors highlighted two elements. First, the heritage parks concept addressed both conservation and

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<sup>43</sup> Tom Deans to Pat Buckley and Stan Brosky, May 2, 1983, “Thematic Content for the Urban Cultural Parks Program,” carton 1, folder 3, PHMC Files.

<sup>44</sup> US National Park Service et al, *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

economic development. It would not only protect sites with historic and natural significance, it would also generate revenue for depressed communities. Second, the program was cost effective. “The increasing scarcity of resources at all levels of government demands that existing state efforts and investments produce the maximum possible benefit per dollar spent,” the report explained on its introductory page. “A Heritage Parks Program will make better use of existing state and federal resources in a complementary manner to revitalize Pennsylvania’s older urban and rural centers.”<sup>46</sup>

These two emphases were related. Deindustrialization and the country’s changing economy were closely tied to the onset of government austerity measures, included reduced support for conservation. The heritage park model, which promised to boost investment in distressed cities, for a fraction of the cost of a traditional protected area, thus cannot be disentangled from its particular historical context. This innovative approach to preserving and interpreting the past would not have emerged in an era when funds were more readily available or the material effects of economic change not so visible.

As described in the study, the initial plan for heritage parks was modest. City neighborhoods or towns would receive limited funds to protect and promote historic and natural resources of interest with hopes of stimulating private sector investment. The emphasis would be on 1) leveraging the monies provided and 2) selecting locations that represented a diverse portrait of Pennsylvania’s urban development.

In addition, the program had a strong focus on building “community pride.” Heritage parks could “contribute to the economic climate of a community by improving the image of a community in the minds of residents and outsiders,” the 1984 report explained. In making these claims, heritage park proponents placed at least partial responsibility for revitalization on the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1.

attitudes of those living in distressed areas.<sup>47</sup> This idea, also present in much of the contemporaneous literature on Lowell and the New York program, assigns at least some responsibility for decline on those most affected by economic restructuring. Focusing on the perceived viewpoints of residents was easier than critiquing the actions of government and corporate capital.

As laid out in the 1984 report, the heritage parks initiative had the potential to bring new resources and expertise to dozens of communities across the state. While funding would be far below the level of Lowell, the idea of celebrating the heritage and built environment of historic city centers had real potential to attract investment. Yet then the effort stalled. According to one Community Affairs staff person, this was due to the effort's urban emphasis. By the mid-1980s, cities were simply not as high a priority in either Harrisburg or Washington, DC as they had been only a few years earlier. When the heritage parks idea did eventually re-gain traction several years later, it did so with a much broader, regional focus. "What we realized...was that we had to go beyond urban areas. We could not just make this a program for cities," Department of Community Affairs manager Larry Williamson recalled.<sup>48</sup>

The role of the NPS also changed during this period. The agency became far more invested in the heritage park approach, supporting the Pennsylvania effort as well as similar initiatives in other states. In addition to funding, Park Service staff also provided technical expertise in areas such as planning, interpretation, and resource management.

In 1984, the same year Pennsylvania completed its initial heritage park assessment, Congress established the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. One of only a few federal conservation efforts to gain support from the Reagan administration, the Illinois and

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Larry Williamson, phone interview with author, August 18, 2016.

Michigan Canal designation was a turning point for the NPS. Since the sixties, the agency had been experimenting (at times reluctantly) with new approaches to preservation. These efforts, which were concentrated in metropolitan areas, emphasized less-than-fee ownership and collaborative administration. In most cases though, the Park Service still pursued at least limited land acquisition and sought to play a leading role in park administration. Regulation of varying degrees also figured prominently, especially the use of zoning as a means to control land use.

The new national heritage corridor model initiated in Illinois featured none of these elements. The NPS would neither acquire land nor be the principal manager. Federal financial support would be modest and time limited. The Park Service was truly one partner among many with no regulatory authority. This was a significant change from past precedent and represented the culmination of more than twenty years of give-and-take with residents, landowners, members of Congress, nonprofit organizations and other park stakeholders. In the coming decades, heritage corridors, heritage areas, and heritage parks (different names for a similar concept) exploded in popularity as dozens of cities and regions pursued the designation. Of all the interested jurisdictions, it would be in Pennsylvania where the idea generated the most interest and support.

*“This Isn’t a National Park”*

The Illinois and Michigan Canal connected the Chicago River to the Illinois River in 1848. Hand dug from limestone and clay by mainly Irish immigrant labor, the waterway extended almost 100 miles into downstate Illinois. Traveling through the Des Plaines and Illinois River valleys, it joined the Great Lakes to the Mississippi and played a critical role in establishing Chicago as the trade and manufacturing capital of the Midwest. For roughly fifty years, the canal was a vital link in the transportation of commodities such as grain and lumber.

By 1900, traffic had slowed considerably and by World War I the canal ceased its commercial functions.<sup>49</sup>

Shortly thereafter, local, state, and federal officials recognized the canal's historic significance and its potential as a site for recreation. Pleasure boats cruised up and down the waterway during the 1920s, taking riders to nearby amusement parks. During the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps, working in partnership with the NPS, stabilized the massive structure, with special attention paid to the locks. The CCC also developed much of the towpath as a hiking trail.<sup>50</sup>

By the 1960s, however, the canal had fallen into disrepair. One account described it as “fragmented, partially abandoned, and badly in need of assistance.”<sup>51</sup> In many locations, the water, if there was any, had a stagnant, rotten odor and attracted mosquitos. Neighbors viewed the aging waterway not as an asset but as an eyesore. The state of Illinois appeared ready to abandon the canal altogether, with plans made to sell its holdings and “dry it up and do away with it.”<sup>52</sup>

Not only was the waterway itself in poor shape, the surrounding towns of the Upper Illinois and Des Plaines Valleys were also suffering. Unemployment in the region hovered at 25% during the seventies. Facilities owned by multinational corporations like U.S. Steel and

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<sup>49</sup> The history of the Illinois and Michigan Canal is explored in Michael P. Conzen, “The Historical and Geographical Development of the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor,” in *The Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor: A Guide to its History and Sources*, ed. Michael P. Conzen and Kay J. Carr (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), 3-25.

<sup>50</sup> Gerald W. Adelman, “A Preservation History of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor,” in *The Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor: A Guide to its History and Sources*, ed. Michael P. Conzen and Kay J. Carr (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), 43 – 44.

<sup>51</sup> Gerald W. Adelman, “Infrastructure and Spirit: The Philosophy Behind the Nation's First Heritage Corridor,” in *Regional Heritage Areas: Approaches to Sustainable Development*, ed. T. Allen Comp, special issue, National Trust for Historic Preservation Information Series, no. 88 (1994): 6.

<sup>52</sup> “The Illinois and Michigan Canal: The First National Heritage Corridor,” *The Nature of Illinois* 5, no. 1, (1990): 1.

Texaco shut their doors. These closures “sent shock waves through the community” according to one scholar.<sup>53</sup> What had been an active manufacturing zone now faced an uncertain future.

The conditions in towns and cities along the Illinois and Michigan Canal mirrored those found in hundreds of communities across the United States. Deindustrialization, coupled with a decline in union membership, left workers unemployed or underemployed, looking for work or working for low wages. Responding to these problems on a regional scale was challenging, especially in Illinois with its fragmented local government. Though municipalities in the region around the Canal had common needs, meaningful cooperation on a large scale across 50 jurisdictions seemed unlikely.

In the mid-1970s, when conditions had reached a nadir, a movement to protect the waterway finally gained momentum. Fearing that the entire expanse might soon be paved over, advocates of preservation - including residents, historic preservationists, and environmental groups - began lobbying state government. In response, the state of Illinois formed a taskforce to look into the issue. Based on feedback from public meetings and the advice of consultants, the taskforce recommended transferring management of the Illinois and Michigan Canal and adjoining towpath to the Illinois Department of Conservation.<sup>54</sup> In addition, in 1974, the southernmost 60 miles of the waterway became the I & M Canal State Trail. This designation offered some security – though funding was lackluster for several years. The northern portion of the canal nearest to the industry and sprawl of metropolitan Chicago remained unprotected and thus vulnerable to development.<sup>55</sup>

Among the organizations advocating for preservation was the Openlands Project (Openlands). Founded in 1963 as a program of the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, the

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<sup>53</sup> Adelman, “Infrastructure and Spirit,” 6.

<sup>54</sup> Adelman, “A Preservation History of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor,” 45.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Chicago-based nonprofit sought to protect open space and promote recreation in and around the fast-growing city. In 1966, Openlands created the I&M Canal Coordinating Committee, which played a pivotal role in the 1974 state park establishment.<sup>56</sup> In 1978, hoping to jumpstart restoration efforts in the northern section, Openlands applied for a grant from the Department of the Interior. The proposal called for a comprehensive inventory of the historic, natural, cultural, and archaeological resources for a 25-mile section just north of the I & M Canal State Trail. Though Interior did not award the grant, the preparation process was invaluable in preparing for later action, federal recognition as the country's first National Heritage Corridor.<sup>57</sup>

In 1980, Openlands hired Gerald Adelman to run its Des Plains Valley Project, which sought to complete much of the work laid out in the unsuccessful 1978 grant application. A sixth generation resident of the canal-side town of Lockport, Adelman had a strong personal connection to the region. He also had long-standing interests in historic preservation and planning and knowledge of current trends in protected area management.<sup>58</sup> These varied influences came together in his idea for a new type of National Park, dubbed a National Heritage Corridor.<sup>59</sup> The concept, he hoped, would not only bring new investment and attention, but also be a unifying force for the otherwise divided municipalities along the canal.<sup>60</sup> It would be a platform for action, not a tool to institute new regulations or limits on development. As Adelman explained to one interviewer, "National Parks usually mean very strict environmental

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<sup>56</sup> Canal Corridor Association, *Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor: A Roadmap for the Future, 2011 - 2021*, 3-1, accessed April 2, 2018, [http://canalcor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/roadmap3-corridor\\_history.pdf](http://canalcor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/roadmap3-corridor_history.pdf); Adelman, "A Preservation History of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor," 45 – 49; "The Illinois and Michigan Canal: The First National Heritage Corridor," *The Nature of Illinois* V, no. 1, (1990): 1.

<sup>57</sup> Adelman, "A Preservation History of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor," 46.

<sup>58</sup> Tara McClellan, "The People of the Canal," *The Nature of Illinois* 5, no. 1 (1990): 29.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* Judith Stockdale, then Director of Openlands, also played a key role in developing the corridor idea.

<sup>60</sup> John Husar, "Smokestacks, Fences, Hide a Wilderness in our Midst," *Chicago Tribune*, September 21, 1980, newspapers.com.

and zoning codes and I can understand businessmen getting nervous about the area's economy...but this isn't a national park; in fact, we want to revitalize the area's economy."<sup>61</sup>

Using heritage as a means to promote revitalization was not new. The coalition behind the establishment of Lowell National Historical Park had been promoting such ideas for at least a decade. What was novel was the scope of the Illinois project. It did not concern a single neighborhood or town. Instead, Openlands and Adelman proposed the creation of a 450-square mile corridor, stretching 120 miles long, 6-miles wide, and encompassing more than 40 municipalities. It included private property and public lands, prairies, factories, forests, highways and subdivisions. New land acquisition by the state or federal actors would be minimal or nonexistent. Instead, the focus would be on regional planning and cooperation, with affected communities coming together to prioritize preservation projects, promotional materials, fundraising, and more. The corridor, to quote one account of its creation, would be a "framing entity," to "devise a broad agenda of infrastructural redevelopment incentive programs, and schemes to foster new consciousness of the region's rich pioneer and industrial past as a platform for heritage tourism."<sup>62</sup> A contemporary newspaper story called this "a new type of cultural park – one that would employ the whole valley, industry and all, in an unprecedented cooperative venture."<sup>63</sup>

Initial response to the proposal was mixed, especially from the businesses still active in the corridor, which worried that a federal designation might limit their prospects. Yet Adelman and other supporters continued to court them, eventually creating a nonprofit organization that

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Art Bamum, "Watt Backs National Recreation Area Plan for Illinois," *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 1982, newspapers.com.

<sup>62</sup> Michael P. Conzen & Brian M. Wulfestieg, "Metropolitan Chicago's Regional Cultural Park: Assessing the Development of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor," *Journal of Geography* 100, no 3 (2001): 113.

<sup>63</sup> John Husar, "Smokestacks, Fences, Hide a Wilderness in our Midst," *Chicago Tribune*, September 21, 1980, p. 1, 16, newspapers.com, June 1, 2018.

included on its board representatives of manufacturing and industrial concerns. Advocates also lobbied the Illinois congressional delegation, knowing that their support would be essential if the corridor had any hope of viability.<sup>64</sup>

Efforts to achieve federal recognition would have to engage the National Park Service.<sup>65</sup> Fortunately, the agency already had some knowledge of the area. In 1963, a significant portion the Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Historic Landmark, a process overseen by the NPS. Then, in 1977, the Park Service and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation featured the waterway in a national report on outdoor recreation. Finally, in 1979, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) completed a detailed study of Lockport (Adelmann's hometown). As the former headquarters for the canal, Lockport had a rich architectural and historic legacy, including the oldest extant building along the entire canal route.<sup>66</sup> Thus when the Illinois Congressional delegation along with new governor James Thompson requested a study of the corridor for consideration as a new park unit in 1980, the agency already was familiar with the landscape and its breadth of resources.

The NPS completed two studies of the region between 1980 and 1982. The first, described as a reconnaissance survey, evaluated the national significance of the corridor to determine whether it was eligible for inclusion in the National Park System. The second document, entitled *Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor: A Concept Plan*, outlined various strategies for preservation, recreation, and economic development within the corridor. Beyond the immediate environs of the canal and canal towpath, it examined the adjacent communities

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<sup>64</sup> "The Illinois and Michigan Canal: The First National Heritage Corridor," *The Nature of Illinois* 5, no. 1, (1990): 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> In addition to Adelmann, a recent plan completed by the Canal Corridor Association, the nonprofit organization now managing the national heritage corridor identifies Ottawa, Illinois resident Leonard Lock as being a key advocate for federal study of the I&M Canal. Canal Corridor Association, *Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor: A Roadmap for the Future, 2011 - 2021*, 3-2, accessed April 2, 2018, [http://canalcor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/roadmap3-corridor\\_history.pdf](http://canalcor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/roadmap3-corridor_history.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Adelmann, "A Preservation History of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor," 46.

and nearby state and local parkland, offering a truly regional perspective.<sup>67</sup> While these studies were underway, local organizing continued within the corridor with a series of meetings supported by the Illinois Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.<sup>68</sup>

The *Concept Plan* was a significant document. Drawing on the contributions of over 100 area residents, it proposed a National Heritage Corridor in the Upper Illinois Valley.<sup>69</sup> Management would rest with a new federal commission, with local, state, and federal representation. NPS would offer modest technical and financial support (\$250,000/year) and provide staffing to the commission if needed. The *Concept Plan* called for no federal land acquisition. It also did not advocate for any enhanced environmental regulations. A new nonprofit organization, the Canal Corridor Association (originally the Upper Illinois Valley Association), would assist with interpretation, preservation, and marketing activities.

Following completion of the *Concept Plan*, members of the Illinois congressional delegation, along with local corridor supporters, drafted a designation bill. First introduced in 1982, the legislation had the support of Interior Secretary James Watt. Though he attempted to halt NPS land acquisition and new park creation, and even wanted to de-designate some older sites, Watt found the national heritage corridor idea appealing. It did not create substantial new financial or staffing responsibilities for the Park Service – in fact, quite the opposite. The bill’s sponsor hailed it as an example of Ronald Reagan’s “new federalism,” which called for states to assume powers (and responsibilities) now held by the federal government.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> US National Park Service, Denver Service Center, *Reconnaissance Survey: Illinois and Michigan Canal, Illinois* (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1980); US National Park Service, Ann Arbor Office, *Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor: A Concept Plan*, by John D Peine and Debora A Neurohr, (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Office, National Park Service, 1981).

<sup>68</sup> Canal Corridor Association, *Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor*, 3-1.

<sup>69</sup> U.S. National Park Service, Ann Arbor Office, *Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor: A Concept Plan*, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Tom Towslee, “Canal Corridor Backers see it as a boon,” *The Daily Chronicle* (De Kalb, Illinois), December 1, 1982, newspapers.com

In contrast to Lowell National Historical Park, the Illinois and Michigan Canal would not be an official “unit” of the national park system. This meant it was outside the federal agency’s core portfolio and funding streams. Watt also approved of the proposal because it emphasized economic development rather than environmental protection. As Thomas Corcoran, the bill’s House sponsor, explained, “Watt sees the concept as a basis for expanding nationally designated historic areas...Unlike the traditional national parks and trails, the improvement of local economics would be a major thrust of any action.”<sup>71</sup>

The bill failed in 1982, but Corcoran and his co-sponsors re-introduced it early the following year and it passed. On August 24, 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed Public Law 98-398, creating the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. As laid out in the legislation, the corridor’s purpose was “to retain, enhance, and interpret, for the benefit and inspiration of present and future generations, the cultural, historical, natural, recreational, and economic resources of the corridor, where feasible, consistent with industrial and economic growth.”<sup>72</sup> Under the law, the NPS would provide up to \$250,000 per year for planning and other start-up activities. Compare that to Lowell, for example, where the initial funding authorization was for over \$20 million and it becomes obvious why Watt and other fiscal conservatives and/or de-evolution advocates were so attracted to the heritage corridor idea. Finally, the bill also had a sunset clause. After 10 years, annual federal funding would discontinue. Although many programs authorized by Congress require periodic renewal, it was relatively rare for a Park Service project to include such language. The sunset signified another concession to the 1980s

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<sup>71</sup> As quoted in Art Bamum, “Watt Backs National Recreation Area Plan for Illinois,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 1982, newspapers.com.

<sup>72</sup> Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor Act of 1984, Public Law 398, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., (August 24, 1984).

conservative political moment as well as changing views on the role of government more generally.

The designation of the Illinois and Michigan Canal sparked interest in other regions facing similar economic travails. Two years later, Congress established another heritage corridor along the Blackstone River in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. This region also had high unemployment linked to deindustrialization, especially in the textile sector.<sup>73</sup>

Officials in Pennsylvania, who had only recently completed their urban-centric heritage parks study, now had an altogether different approach to consider. It was regional, not neighborhood or city-based, and offered the potential for limited federal funding and national recognition via Congressional designation. National heritage corridors encompassed huge stretches of land and water, far larger than any of the sites identified in the 1984 Pennsylvania report. The idea intrigued many of the agency staffers involved in the heritage parks survey, but it would require a wholesale re-imagining of the scale, scope, and potentially even thematic focus of the initiative in order to reach fruition.

#### *Pennsylvania's National Heritage Corridor*

Illinois was not the only state shaped by the construction of canals in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pennsylvania was also home to hundreds of miles of industrial waterways, including an impressive canal network built in the Delaware and Lehigh Valleys north of Philadelphia. The 46-mile Delaware Canal and the 60-mile Lehigh Canal (sometimes referred to as the Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canals – as opposed to a “power canal” as in Lowell) were especially

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<sup>73</sup> For an overview of the study process that led to designation of the Blackstone River Valley as the second national heritage corridor, see Cecily Corcoran Kihn, J. Glenn Eugster, Frederick Steiner, Margaret Judd, Rolf Diamant, and Nadine Gerdtz, "Conservation Options for the Blackstone River Valley," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 13 (1986): 81-99.

important; their completion led to the rapid development of manufacturing hubs including Allentown and Bethlehem.<sup>74</sup>

Built to bring valuable natural resources, such as Anthracite coal, timber, and iron, to market in coastal ports, the system began in the foothills of the Poconos and continued to the outskirts of Philadelphia. At their peak in the 1850s, the two canals transported hundreds of thousands of tons of coal, with mule teams pulling the loads on barges measuring over eighty feet. Communities on or near the routes attracted immigration, as people from around the world flocked to the region for work in coal mines, steel mills, quarries, and textile mills. The small community of Mauch Chunk (later renamed Jim Thorpe), for example, had two iron foundries and several factories making everything from shoes to steam engines during the canals' heyday.<sup>75</sup>

By the beginning of the Civil War, railroads had largely eclipsed canals as the preferred means of moving high volumes of goods and people. In eastern Pennsylvania, however, the railroads and canals often operated in tandem, particularly the Delaware and Lehigh, allowing the waterways to remain active for a longer period than elsewhere. The two canals carried limited commercial cargo until the Great Depression, making them some of the longest running towpath canals in the United States.<sup>76</sup>

After World War II, the canals and the infrastructure built to support them were largely abandoned. Other industries continued to operate in the region with mixed success. Cotton and

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<sup>74</sup> The two canals were, in fact, part of the same system with the Lehigh Canal running from Jim Thorpe in the mountains to Easton in the Lehigh Valley below and then the Delaware Canal running from Easton to Bristol near Philadelphia.

<sup>75</sup> Scott Burris, "On Track in Pennsylvania," *New York Times*, October 25, 1992, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>76</sup> Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission, Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program, State Heritage Parks Interagency Task Force, US National Park Service, and Mary Means & Associates, *Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage and State Heritage Park: Management Action Plan* (Bethlehem, PA.: Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission, 1993), x.

woolen mills closed as most firms moved to the non-union South or abroad. Anthracite coal mining, long a leading source of employment, lost its preeminence as cheaper areas with lower labor costs and fewer environmental regulations gained market share. Oil and natural gas also became more popular, lowering demand for coal. By 1982, only 3,400 Pennsylvanians worked in the state's mines, down from 187,972 in 1939 – a 98 percent reduction.<sup>77</sup> Steel production waned too, though more slowly than coal. Lay-offs in the sixties and seventies were followed by the outright closure of mills in the eighties and nineties. The reasons for this shift were varied. Increased international competition and lackluster domestic investment both played significant roles.

In these conditions, many of the communities initially considered for inclusion in the state's heritage parks program were on or near the historic canal routes. The Lehigh Valley towns of Bethlehem, Easton, and Allentown all rated highly on the state's 1984 assessment, *Pennsylvania Heritage Areas: A Concept with Applications*, as did the nearby town of Jim Thorpe in the Pocono Mountains.<sup>78</sup> These locations had striking civic architecture (owing to the fortunes built by coal and transportation companies), significant industrial sites, and recreation potential, such as hiking, biking, and paddling. They also had older housing stock, high unemployment, and pockets of poverty. These were precisely the types of locations that program supporters had envisioned being aided by the effort.

Also important, interest in the region's historic landscape had been growing for some time. In the early 1970s, philanthropist Hugh Moore, founder of the Dixie Cup Company, donated a substantial sum for care of the Lehigh Canal in and around the city of Easton. These

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<sup>77</sup> Bruce Bomberger and William A. Sisson, *Made in Pennsylvania: An Overview of the Major Historical Industries of the Commonwealth* (Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1991), 12.

<sup>78</sup> US National Park Service et al., *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks*, 9.

monies galvanized the city and nearby areas to acquire a 15-mile section of the waterway and towpath. In addition, Moore supported the creation of a citizens' group dedicated to preserving and interpreting canal history.<sup>79</sup>

Hoping to support additional restoration efforts, officials with the state Department of Community Affairs held meetings with local elected leaders and residents in other communities with canal frontage. Unlike the Delaware Canal, much of which had become a state park in the 1950s, the Lehigh Canal enjoyed few formal protections. Some stretches had no water at all, while others resembled a swamp. In one location, the canal had become part of a sewage plant. In another, it had been paved over into a parking lot for a shopping center. Moreover, many of the dams and locks used to control water levels were in poor condition, with millions of dollars needed for repair. Such challenges notwithstanding, the possibility of revitalization interested many government leaders. In 1975, six towns in Carbon County had used matching funds from Community Affairs to purchase an 8-mile section of the canal to jointly manage for recreation. These types of partnerships built trust between state agencies, local government, area residents, and the private sector.<sup>80</sup>

The federal government was also active in the Lehigh Valley and other parts of northeastern Pennsylvania, working closely with both the Department of Community Affairs and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. In 1978, the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, a short-lived bureau of the Interior Department, completed a study of the

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<sup>79</sup> Deidre Gibson, Willis M. Rivinus, C. Allen Sachse, and Isodore C. Mineo, "The Delaware Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor: Community-Based Partnerships and their Impacts," in *Partnerships in Parks and Preservation: Proceedings and Bibliography*, Albany, NY, September 9-12, 1991 (Albany, NY: National Park Service, New York (State) Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and National Parks and Conservation Association, 1991), 61.

<sup>80</sup> Gibson et al, "The Delaware Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor," 61 – 66.

Lehigh Canal to evaluate its potential as a long-distance trail. Over 30 miles gained the National Recreation Trail designation the following year.

The National Parks Advisory Board approved the Delaware Canal as a National Historic Landmark in 1978, further raising the region's profile. A large number of Park Service staff also came to the area in the 1980s to work on a project that eventually (1995) became Steamtown National Historic Site in the city of Scranton. Though not directly tasked with canal revitalization, the NPS planners interacted extensively with representatives of Community Affairs and the Historical and Museum Commission, creating important and lasting partnerships.<sup>81</sup>

By the mid-1980s then, eastern Pennsylvania, especially the Lehigh and Delaware Valleys, enjoyed a relatively high profile with state and federal conservation and preservation agencies. Research had been completed on many of its towns and cities. The historic significance of the Delaware and Lehigh Canals was well-documented, with much of the latter protected as a state park. The wide-ranging 1984 heritage parks report featured information on the region's economic circumstances, including the potential economic impact of historic preservation and outdoor recreation.

Federal elected officials paid attention to these developments. Democratic member of Congress, Peter Kostmayer, whose district included large portions of the Delaware Canal, began considering national park status for the waterway, imagining a project that resembled the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park in Washington, DC and Maryland. However, the C&O Canal became a park unit in 1971, a period when NPS was still expanding. Now, more than a decade later, Kostmayer's plan appeared unlikely to succeed. Then, in 1984,

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<sup>81</sup> Brenda Barrett, phone interview by author, April 19, 2018; Larry Williamson, phone interview by author, August 11, 2016.

President Reagan signed legislation creating the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. This action created a new category of protected area. Communities and their elected leaders hoping to gain a connection to the NPS had another option – one that Kostmayer decided to pursue.

In his bid for national heritage corridor status, Kostmayer made an unlikely alliance. He joined forces with his Republican colleague, Representative Donald Ritter, whose adjoining district included the Lehigh Canal with its boundaries. The move surprised local observers. One paper referred to the lawmakers as “political enemies.”<sup>82</sup>

In February 1988, the two men jointly introduced H.R. 3957, calling for the creation of the Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canal National Heritage Corridor. The bill had an ambitious plan of action. The heritage corridor would stretch roughly 100 miles, with exact boundaries to be determined later through a community planning process. Its interpretive focus would include not only the canal systems but also the stories of the nearby communities, whose histories were so intertwined with the region’s development as a transportation hub and industrial powerhouse. A 21-member federal commission would manage the corridor, with delegates from all levels of government as well as eight individuals from the “general public” representing affected communities. Funding up to \$350,000 for a period five years before sunset was also authorized, though there was no guarantee that this amount would be received given the vagaries of Congressional budgeting.

Congressman Ritter called the plan an “experiment in regionalism.”<sup>83</sup> He believed it would revitalize communities along the Lehigh Canal, while limiting federal investment and

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<sup>82</sup> Scott Higham, “Canal Corridor Bill Passes; \$1.7 million earmarked,” *Morning Call* (Allentown), October 21, 1988, newspapers.com.

<sup>83</sup> Scott Aiges, “Ritter, Kostmayer, Team up on Canal Legislation,” *Morning Call* (Allentown), July 8, 1988, newspapers.com

funding to levels far below a traditional national park. In remarks to his House colleagues, Ritter emphasized the multi-dimensional aspects of the project – recreation, tourism, economic development, and history. “I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to help our local citizens help themselves rejuvenate a beautiful area for recreation as well as to enlighten all our citizens about the historic roots of our industrial democracy.”<sup>84</sup>

Pennsylvania Senator H. John Heinz III, who sponsored a companion bill (S. 2578), made similar claims. Not only would designation as a Heritage Corridor bring added recognition to the area, it would also create “...a cooperative atmosphere in a region which can sometimes be faced with the conflicting interests of historic preservation, recreation, business, outdoor sportsmanship, and tourism.” A national heritage corridor, Heinz explained, could unite the public and private sectors to provide jobs for communities suffering the effects of deindustrialization. To highlight this point, which would appeal to fiscal conservatives and the White House, the Senator cited a success story from the recently designated Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. There, an abandoned steel site had recently been turned into a heritage business park with the possibility of 1,500 permanent jobs and increased tourism. This was exactly the type of project that Delaware and Lehigh advocates hoped would soon come to their region.<sup>85</sup>

With bipartisan support, the bill moved quickly through the hearings process, earning unanimous backing from the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. The Executive Branch, however, came out against the proposal.<sup>86</sup> In testimony delivered in July 1988, NPS

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<sup>84</sup> Representative Donald Ritter, speaking on the Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canal Heritage Corridor Act of 1988 HR 3957, on September 13, 1988, 100<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., *Cong. Rec.* 134, pt. 16: 23646, Hein Online.

<sup>85</sup> Senator H. John Heinz III, speaking on June 28, 1988, 100<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., *Cong. Rec.*, vol. 134, part 11: 16143, Hein Online.

<sup>86</sup> Melissa Robinson, “Panel Backs Measure on Canal Proposal,” *Morning Call* (Allentown), September 8, 1988, newspapers.com

Associate Director for Cultural Resources Jerry Rogers said the administration opposed the effort because the project was of local, rather than national, concern. The Park Service was sympathetic to its aims, but did not feel it merited national heritage corridor designation. Rogers also doubted the constitutionality of the management structure laid out in the bill, in particular a provision that gave the Pennsylvania governor authority to appoint (rather than simply recommend) commission members.<sup>87</sup>

Lack of NPS support was disappointing, but the bill's sponsors nonetheless moved forward. In August, only a month after Rogers' testimony, Representative Ritter invited Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, a fellow Republican, to tour his district. The trip focused primarily on Easton with an itinerary that included a towpath bike ride, a boat cruise down the Lehigh Canal, a helicopter flight, and a museum stop.<sup>88</sup> According to reports in the press, the visit paid off. Hodel recommended that the Office of Management and Budget sign off on the proposal. Additionally, Ritter and Kostmayer changed the bill language to allow the governor only to recommend rather than to appoint commission members.

The legislation passed both houses of Congress by October 1988, despite a last minute attempt by a few senators to attach unrelated amendments concerning commemorative coins.<sup>89</sup> Representative Ritter called the process "an odyssey," while Kostmayer reflected that "...it shows when you bury the partisan ax you can get a lot done." Election year politics played a role, with both representatives claiming credit for the effort in their competitive races. A few weeks later,

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<sup>87</sup> Scott Aiges, "Canal Proposal Meets Resistance in Washington," *Morning Call* (Allentown), July 8, 1988, newspapers.com.

<sup>88</sup> "Secretary of the Interior to tour canals in Easton," *Morning Call* (Allentown), August 30, 1988, newspapers.com.

<sup>89</sup> Scott Higham, "Canal Corridor Bill Passes; \$1.7 million earmarked," *Morning Call* (Allentown), October 21, 1988, newspapers.com.

in November, President Reagan signed the bill into law, creating the nation's third National Heritage Corridor.

Local newspapers celebrated. The *Morning Call*, a paper in Allentown, dubbed the corridor “a "national park of the future.”<sup>90</sup> It explained that the designation would bring “national recognition,” without being “owned and operated by the federal government.” The heritage corridor designation generated interest from the national media as well. The *New York Times* described the region as a place “where the industrial revolution is unraveling without rust.”<sup>91</sup> Visitors from around the country, it was hoped, would come to the area, drawn in by its historical significance and recreation facilities. Residents would benefit from increased tax revenues and new employment opportunities. “In terms of creating the kind of...quality of life that we all like to see in the future, this program is going to play a heck of a role,” Congressman Ritter commented. “The counties, cities, townships and boroughs all are going to have to work together on this.”<sup>92</sup>

### *Made in Pennsylvania*

The burgeoning national heritage corridor movement had a profound effect on the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks program. Not only did it offer a new and potentially lucrative source of funds, it marked a significant departure from both Lowell National Historical Park and the New York Urban Cultural Parks System. Heritage corridors were far bigger in geography and interpretive scope. Recreation was more central, especially long-distance trails, as was the promotion of tourism for economic development. These were large-scale undertakings driven

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<sup>90</sup> Randy Kraft, “L.V. in Towpath of National Canal Park of Future,” *Morning Call* (Allentown), January 22, 1989, newspapers.com.

<sup>91</sup> Burris, “On Track in Pennsylvania,” October 25, 1992, *New York Times*, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>92</sup> Pete Leffler, “House Backs Delaware Canal Funds,” *Morning Call* (Allentown), July 13, 1989, newspapers.com.

almost entirely by partnerships and collaboration. It is no coincidence that Congress established the first three national heritage corridors in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New England - locations known for fractured local government. Indeed, Illinois and Pennsylvania rank #1 and #2 respectively in terms of the total number of jurisdictions.<sup>93</sup> In order to affect change on any sort of scale, a regional platform or coordinating entity was necessary. Given the political tenor of the times, regulation like that proposed by advocates of the “quiet revolution in land use” had almost no chance of success. The heritage corridor model, by contrast, did not rely on legal measures such as zoning and was thus a far more attractive idea.

Following the release of the urban-centric *Pennsylvania Heritage Parks: A Concept with Applications* report in 1984, the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks program lost momentum. For several years, there was little effort to advance the initiative. Cities no longer garnered the same attention as in the sixties and seventies, and heightened federal austerity meant that dollars for urban park planning were scarce. For a time, the entire effort looked in jeopardy.

With a limited budget, the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs sustained the initiative through a series of small and medium-size grants. In 1985, the agency awarded \$10,000 to support completion of a Susquehanna Heritage Park study - the first time formal heritage park planning had been undertaken in Pennsylvania. Over the next few years, Community Affairs granted funds for heritage-oriented planning. Of particular importance was a sum of roughly \$1.5 million for “heritage park-type programs and initiatives.” Four regions across the state benefited from these resources, which went primarily towards planning and small-scale projects. Three of the four locations also pursued national designation as a heritage corridor or heritage area via the

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<sup>93</sup> According to the U.S. Census bureau, Illinois leads the nation with 6,968 local governments — approximately 2,000 more than second-place Pennsylvania. “Census Bureau Reports There Are 89,004 Local Governments in the United States,” accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/governments/cb12-161.html>.

National Park Service. First to succeed was the Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canal National Heritage Corridor in 1988, followed shortly by a project in and around Scranton (the Lackawanna Valley) and another in southwestern Pennsylvania (America's Industrial Heritage Project).<sup>94</sup> All three received substantial planning assistance from the NPS, in addition to financial and technical aid from Community Affairs and other Pennsylvania state agencies.

A meeting in Scranton in July 1988 illustrates the close working relationship between the Park Service and Pennsylvania state agencies. Hoping to galvanize interest in heritage parks, representatives from Community Affairs and the Historical and Museum Commission, joined with NPS and local organizations, like the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce and the Lackawanna County Commissioners, to offer a one-day seminar on the topic. Organizers billed the event as a chance “to investigate the heritage park concept, which has created new economic, recreational, educational, and preservation activity.”<sup>95</sup>

Creation of a national heritage corridor in Pennsylvania, along with NPS support for similar efforts in other regions, sparked a renewal of interest in the state program. Having a federal partner helped state agencies make their case in Harrisburg. So too did the new regional, rather than neighborhood or city, approach. Among other benefits, working on a regional-scale stimulated more elected leaders to be supporters. Larry Williamson emphasized this point in an interview, commenting that, “We thought going regional would provide us more support with the general assembly and the Governors office.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Raymond Angeli, Lisa Yaffe, and Larry Williamson to Honorable Karen A. Miller, “Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Workgroup,” August 29, 1988, carton 4, folder 1 (Heritage Parks Program), DCA-PHAC Files.

<sup>95</sup> C. Allen Sachse, Recreation and Park Advisor, to Alan Chace, Recreation and Park Advisor, memorandum, “Heritage Park for Lackawanna Valley,” July 1, 1988, carton 1, folder 1 (Heritage Parks), sub-folder (Lackawanna HP Planning), PHAP Files.

<sup>96</sup> Larry Williamson, interview with author, August 11, 2016.

As interest and excitement in the regional approach to heritage parks grew, the state reconstituted its multi-agency planning body now known as the Heritage Affairs Workgroup. In addition to the three original agencies, a fourth partner, the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, also joined. In a memorandum describing their goals sent to the Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, one organizer described heritage parks as a “revitalization strategy... a comprehensive effort to coordinate natural and cultural conservation, historic preservation, recreation development and services, and community awareness and education. The program is linked to an economic development process which provides the framework for public / private partnerships essential for community and economic revitalization.”<sup>97</sup>

In 1989, Governor Robert Casey Sr. included \$550,000 in his yearly budget request to launch the program. Funds would be directed toward eight regions across the state, all of which had strong connections to industry and industrial production.<sup>98</sup> Within two years, the program’s appropriation grew to \$2 million, with the number of sites increasing to nine. The initial funds went largely for planning and public outreach, assessing whether the eight regions under consideration were appropriate sites for heritage parks and had local support. One common activity was the completion of resource surveys. In the proposed Lackawanna Valley Heritage Park near Scranton, researchers documented dozens of historic sites, including railroad facilities, silk mills, iron furnaces, coal mines, breweries, a black powder shop, lumber company

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<sup>97</sup> Memorandum from Larry Williamson, Director Bureau of Recreation and Conservation to Working Committee and other Interested Parties, Subject: PA Heritage Parks Program, September 24, 1987, Carton 1, Folder 1 (Heritage Parks), PHAP Files.

<sup>98</sup> Of the \$550,000 allocated, \$400,000 went to support management planning efforts in the Lackawanna Valley Heritage Park, the Delaware and Lehigh Canal Heritage Park Corridor, and the Johnstown-Windber-Altoona Heritage Park Corridor. “Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program Awards Grants to Eight Regions,” *Penndustry: Newsletter of the Industrial Survey of Pennsylvania* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1990), 1, carton 2, folder 31, PHAP Files; Mahoney, *History of the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks*, 23.

operations, a piano factory and a meat packing plant. In this and other instances, NPS frequently provided aid, often through the HABS and HAER programs.<sup>99</sup>

It was during this second stage of development (the first being 1980 – 1984), that the program acquired its distinctive interpretive focus on the history of work and industry. Rather than look at the entire range of urban history, program managers instead decided to prioritize stories related to production. All potential heritage park regions had to address one of the following topics or themes: iron and steel, coal, textile, machine and foundry, transportation, lumber, oil, or agriculture.<sup>100</sup>

The new emphasis on work and industry was tied, in large part, to a multi-year study by the Historical and Museum Commission. The research, captured in a 1991 report entitled *Made in Pennsylvania: An Overview of the Major Historical Industries of the Commonwealth*, documented the course of industrialization in the Commonwealth over roughly three centuries. It looked at the factors that led to Pennsylvania's dominance in so many areas (coal, steel, agriculture, lumber) as well as some of the causes of the state's economic decline in the late twentieth century. Besides providing a detailed summary of individual industries, the report suggested a roadmap for preservation.<sup>101</sup>

In April 1991, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley became the first official state heritage park. Within a few years, the number grew to eight, with more than half already designated as federal heritage corridors / areas or seeking the label. The NPS and state of Pennsylvania continued to maintain a close partnership for decades to come, with cooperation the primary basis for action on conservation, recreation, and preservation priorities.

### *Conclusion*

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>101</sup> Bomberger and Sisson, *Made in Pennsylvania*.

The creation of heritage parks, corridors, and areas at the state and national levels capped a new phase in postwar conservation. Between 1960 and 1980, partnerships had become more important in the management of many national parks and other protected areas. Advisory commissions played an increasingly essential role, especially at sites that included significant amounts of private land within their boundaries. In addition, economic development emerged as a primary justification for park creation, especially in locations experiencing the effects of deindustrialization.

The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan accelerated these trends, though not always in the direction desired by conservation advocates. Cooperation became even more central to the NPS, but often out of necessity. Interior Secretary James Watt did not support the creation of new park units, so any additions to the agency's portfolio would have to be collaborative. National heritage corridors, along with state-centric programs like the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks, fit within these parameters. The federal government would have a limited financial role, usually focused on early planning rather than long-term administrative support. There would be no new environmental regulations and land acquisition ranged from minimal to none. Though in many ways inspired by the approaches used at sites like Cape Cod, Ebey's Landing, and Lowell, heritage parks advocates had to work on a broader scale, with less money and little in the way of statutory authority.

Tourism and the concomitant potential for new investment and enhanced tax revenues also figured prominently in heritage development projects. Such goals endeared the efforts to fiscal conservatives, who might not have supported a program dedicated solely to conservation or historic preservation – though, especially in the western U.S. many politicians remained skeptical of any federal intervention. At a moment of profound political and economic change,

heritage parks, areas, and corridors emerged a novel means to address deindustrialization and resource protection. The approach was exciting, but lacked the substantial funds made available to an earlier generation of protected areas. This made program outcomes harder, though by no means impossible, to achieve.

## Conclusion

### *New Eras, New Approaches*

On August 25, 2016, the National Park Service celebrated its centennial to considerable fanfare. In honor of the anniversary, the NPS offered free admission to over 400 park units for three days. Major newspapers and television stations featured stories on the event. President Barack Obama used the occasion to designate a new site, the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in northern Maine.<sup>1</sup> Earlier that summer, during a visit to Yosemite National Park, Obama had delivered a glowing speech in honor of the centennial, paying homage to National Parks and the Park Service as “a true expression of our democracy -- the notion that we all look after ourselves and our families, and we work hard, and we make money, and we have our own homes and apartments and cars and televisions, but then there’s this part of us that is part of everybody, something we have in common, something we share -- a place where we connect with each other, and to connect to something bigger than ourselves...What a precious thing we have to pass on to the next generation.”<sup>2</sup>

One hundred years earlier, in 1916, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act into law, there had been considerably less pomp. At the time, fewer than three dozen sites fell under Park Service jurisdiction, with most situated in hard-to-reach locales scattered across the intermountain west.<sup>3</sup> Funds for staffing and management were

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<sup>1</sup> “Fact Sheet: President Obama Designates National Monument in Maine’s North Woods in Honor of the Centennial of the National Park Service,” Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, accessed July 27, 2018, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/24/fact-sheet-president-obama-designates-national-monument-maines-north>.

<sup>2</sup> “Remarks by the President at Sentinel Bridge,” Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, accessed July 27, 2018, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/18/remarks-president-sentinel-bridge>.

<sup>3</sup> In 1916, there were 14 national parks. The other sites were classified as national monuments. National monuments are almost always designated by the President via the Antiquities Act, while National Parks are established by an act of Congress. National monuments can be administered by any of the federal public lands

minimal. Even with the new bill, appropriations remained low, with only modest sums allocated for the positions of Director, Assistant Director, Chief Clerk, draftsman, and messenger.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless expectations for the new NPS ran high. Remarking on the Organic Act's passage through Congress, for example, a *New York Times* article optimistically commented that, at long last, "America's scenic wonders" would be "made ready for sightseers." Then, the piece continued, "It is to be hoped that the parks may become in a true sense the playgrounds and meeting places of the country."<sup>5</sup>

In regard to priorities for the newly-formed agency, a 1918 letter sent by Interior Secretary Franklin K. Lane to the inaugural Park Service director, Stephen Mather, identified several key areas for action. In particular, Lane's dispatch emphasized that parks should be "maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of future generations as well as those of our present time; second, that they are set aside for the use, observation, health, and pleasure of the people; and third, that the national interest must dictate all decisions affecting public or private enterprise in the parks." The Secretary also called for all private holdings to be "eliminated," as well as for the NPS to have exclusive jurisdiction over park lands.<sup>6</sup> In his view, National Parks were to be scenic, unchanging oases, set aside from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. These were landscapes best enjoyed as part of a brief sojourn away from the sights, sounds, and smells of the city. The newly established Park Service would be the guardian of these experiences, ensuring that the parks remained little changed from year-to-year and decade-to-decade.

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agencies. For more on the confusing distinctions between national parks and national monuments, see Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 191.

<sup>5</sup> "A National Park Service," *New York Times*, May 30, 1916, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>6</sup> The text of Lane's letter is reproduced in Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 194 – 195.

For the next fifty years, Lane's policy prescriptions, likely written with or even by Mather himself, stayed largely in place.<sup>7</sup> Tourist infrastructure, such as roads, lodges, and visitor centers, did affect park landscapes, but these activities were justified by agency leadership as a means of ensuring the "pleasure" of people touring park sites.<sup>8</sup> Those locations established within or near urban areas, like Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., were intended to function as respites from urbanization and industry. They had little connection to the surrounding streetscape. People came to parks to visit and left when their sojourns were complete. The Park Service determined how its sites were managed, allowing little tangible input from most local stakeholders.

After World War II, these patterns began to change, though the shift happened in an uneven and often unpredictable manner. Between 1960 and 1990, dozens of new urban and suburban sites came under Park Service administration, upending the agency's longstanding reputation as an entity dedicated primarily to overseeing public lands in the rural West.<sup>9</sup> In a number of metropolitan locations, residents and business owners retained the ability to live, work, and even own property within park boundaries, though the rights were not without restrictions.<sup>10</sup> This was a huge change for the agency, which had very limited experience managing non-federal property. As late as 1959, only 32,000 acres, about 50 square miles, of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 195. In his account, Ise speculates that Mather was, in fact, a co-author of the letter as it reflected many of his views on the proper role of national parks.

<sup>8</sup> The term "pleasure" comes from Lane's letter. Debates over road-building, especially during the New Deal, were one of the flashpoints in pre-World War II park management. Paul Sutter explores this issue in great detail in *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*. In it, Sutter argues that it was federally sponsored infrastructure, especially roads, that drove the wilderness movement, not intrusions by corporate actors.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the 1930s were also a period of expansion for the NPS, especially in regards to historic sites. The agency assumed management of the War Department's parks and monuments as well as all national monuments then under Forest Service purview. The NPS also became manager of numerous parks in Washington, D.C.

<sup>10</sup> The restrictions varied by location and were a function of two major factors – 1) the park's authorizing legislation and 2) the laws or regulations passed at the local or state level to implement the authorizing legislation. Thus, those living within the boundaries of Cape Cod National Seashore faced different restrictions than residents or businesses in Lowell National Historical Park.

land within the boundaries of all NPS units remained under private control: a stunning figure considering the many millions of acres then included in the park system.<sup>11</sup>

Also significant, park units created after 1960 often had provisions in their legislation mandating the creation of advisory boards or commissions. These bodies, which varied in their level of authority, served as a restraint on federal managerial prerogative, especially when local voices had representation. The Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission, for example, included four outspoken critics, referred to as “die-hard foes” by the *Boston Globe*, among its ten inaugural members.<sup>12</sup>

Opposition to the NPS was nothing new.<sup>13</sup> But the statutorily authorized ability of critics to affect policy certainly represented a profound shift for the Park Service and American public lands management more generally. As I have argued in this dissertation, the growth of advisory commissions was part of a much broader evolution in how federal conservation agencies interacted with stakeholders. No longer able to issue dictates, the NPS now had to collaborate and cooperate, especially if it hoped to maintain the support of elected officials.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in many cases, especially when it came to the designation of new park sites, Park Service personnel found themselves on the outside looking in, bystanders to the evolution of their own system.

Why did the National Park Service undergo such a profound transformation during this period and how did such radical changes ultimately affect the agency’s approach to managing its (as of 2018) 417 units? My dissertation answers these questions in new ways by examining

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<sup>11</sup> Sax, “Buying Scenery,” 714.

<sup>12</sup> “Cape Park Board sets 2<sup>nd</sup> Session,” *Boston Globe*, March 6, 1962, Proquest Historical Newspapers; Foster, *The Cape Cod National Seashore*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Hampton, “Opposition to National Parks,” 36 - 45.

<sup>14</sup> Hal Rothman looks at this evolution in the context of wilderness designations in a national park unit and a national forest in New Mexico in his article “The End of Federal Hegemony: The Wilderness Act and Federal Land Management on the Pajarito Plateau, 1955-1980.” Joseph Sax addresses similar themes in the article, “Do Communities Have Rights: The National Parks as a Laboratory of New Ideas.”

multiple sites across time and geography, prioritizing debates in urban and metropolitan areas rather than those that occurred in the context of new wilderness designations. It also moves beyond the national park system to include the national heritage areas program, a partnership endeavor that increasingly represents the future of the Park Service. As Reed Jarvis, the first NPS manager at Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve wrote in an essay reflecting on the changes in conservation practice he witnessed during a long career with the agency, "In the past, the public has often felt that when all else fails, the Federal Government should be called in... to save the day. However, this attitude is no longer appropriate for America's land preservation problems...If our goal is indeed to preserve our national heritage, cooperation at all levels of government, and between the public and private sectors is necessary."<sup>15</sup>

The initial impetus for managerial change came from within the NPS itself. During the New Deal, the agency completed a series of studies aimed at assessing nationwide outdoor recreation needs and identifying specific sites, like coastal areas, where the Park Service might expand its own footprint. These efforts mostly came to naught once the United States entered World War II, but many of the planners and officials who had been involved with the effort, most notably future director Conrad Wirth, remained committed to putting at least some of the findings into practice. As Wirth commented in regard to seashore conservation in his autobiography, "The war had come and gone, and the Cold War had set in and was tapering off. The time seemed right to get back to progressive and much needed conservation programs."<sup>16</sup>

The economic boom of the late fifties also gave new life to the depression-era proposals. Visitation to National Park units increased substantially, while the agency budget stagnated. The degradation in conditions at iconic sites like Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks garnered

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<sup>15</sup> Jarvis, "Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve," 8.

<sup>16</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 196.

significant public attention, though it took a decade for Congress and the Executive to address the situation via the massive Mission 66 funding program. Significantly, the decision to invest substantial sums in the Park Service was not solely a result of dirty privies and potholed parkways. Instead, as I have shown, broader cultural forces were at play. The first, a linkage of the outdoors to romantic notions of American identity, specifically that of middle and upper class white men, had deep roots in U.S. history. The second, a mounting concern over how declining levels of open space might impact quality-of-life (especially for suburbanites) was more recent. In making the case for added monies as well as expanded land holdings, Wirth and others within the NPS readily drew these themes. The eventual results, especially the growth in urban units, would be far beyond what any park advocate could have predicted (or might have even wanted) in the mid-1950s when Mission 66 initially took off.

National seashores and lakeshores marked the first significant NPS expansion of the postwar period. With their roots in the 1930s, the coastal parks had many of the hallmarks of established Park Service sites. These were striking natural settings, with sandy expanses, dunes, cliffs, waterfowl, and other flora and fauna. But, in many cases, the beaches were also near rapidly expanding cities. Moreover, much of the shoreline was in private hands. This posed challenges to an agency used to owning its properties outright with little input from residents and other landowners.

The innovations that eventually led to the establishment of thirteen new national seashores and lakeshores came partly from within government and partly from outside influences. This mix was visible in the eventual form the new parks took, with each one reflecting the particularities of local as well as national politics. The major development with federal origins was the funding system for land acquisition in coastal areas. Before 1960, the

NPS had only rarely purchased parkland. In 1964, however, Congress (acting on a recommendation of the ORRRC) passed legislation creating a new Land and Water Conservation Fund. These monies, which arrived via earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing, allowed the Park Service to increase its acquisition of private property. It could now, in theory, create parks out of non-public lands, though, of course, not all residents and business owners were eager to sell off their holdings.

This tension contributed to the second major change in postwar conservation practice, the use of zoning or other regulations to ensure preservation and also to allow for the continuation of some (non-park) uses. Cape Cod National Seashore was the initial location where this approach was put into practice at the federal level. The Interior Department and local municipalities worked together to draft land use controls. An advisory commission with local, state, and federal representation monitored the process.

These developments did not quickly lead to widespread changes across the national park system. I believe that several factors led to this outcome. First, the Park Service itself was not fully committed to sharing managerial authority. This is evident in the actions of leadership as well as in the legislative approaches contained in subsequent park designation bills.<sup>17</sup> Second, the agency continued to prioritize national needs, for example access to recreation, over what it viewed as more parochial local requests, such as the perpetuation of agriculture or the continuance of visitation by summer residents – all activities that might impede the experience of

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<sup>17</sup> Then serving as the Massachusetts Commissioner of Natural Resources, Charles H.W. Foster became the first chairman of the Cape Cod Advisory Commission in 1962. He later authored a book based on his experiences entitled *The Cape Cod National Seashore: A Landmark Alliance*. For that text, Foster interviewed the now retired NPS director Conrad Wirth. Wirth shared that he had always opposed advisory commissions, dating back to his father's own experiences as director of municipal park systems. Wirth's views suffused the NPS. Foster, *The Cape Cod National Seashore*, 7. Also telling, the NPS did not readily advocate for most units created after Cape Cod to follow the commission approach.

outside visitors.<sup>18</sup> Third, the environmental community was divided over how public lands should be managed. Some organizations, for example, advocated for more stringent environmental regulations at the expense of communities in or near park boundaries.<sup>19</sup> These complex debates centered around the pursuit of wilderness designation and the potentially deleterious effects of productive activities on natural and historic resources.<sup>20</sup> Fourth, funds for land acquisition were not as plentiful after the 1960s. Disputes arose over whether new sites were draining monies from the longstanding “crown jewels” resulting in animosity among various stakeholders.

By the mid to late seventies conditions had changed still further. The American economy was shedding jobs, especially in manufacturing. The federal government no longer had millions to expend on land conservation. The NPS was also struggling to meet the needs of all its new units, particularly those in urban areas. As a result, the Cape Cod formula began to appear more attractive. Albeit updated to reflect the lack of money for private property acquisition.

The new strategy, often referred to as green-lining or green-line parks, drew on the momentum of the environmental movement to make the case for regulation as a solution to

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<sup>18</sup> For more background on these tensions, see Feldman, *A Storied Landscape*; Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore*; Kalt, *Sixties Sandstorm*; and Watt, *The Paradox of Preservation*.

<sup>19</sup> Balancing the perspectives of diverse constituencies who all cared deeply about a particular place proved difficult. On the one hand, traditional allies, like The Sierra Club, often felt the Park Service was dragging its feet in regards to implementing wilderness protections. This reflected a culture clash between longstanding management norms within the agency and newer views on ecology and environmental policy more generally. On the other hand, residents and other longtime users of areas slated for park designation (or areas recently designated) fought back against what they perceived as federal overreach, often (though not always) in regard to wilderness policies. The agency found itself caught in the middle, usually without adequate guidance from Congress on how to act. Rothman “The End of Federal Hegemony,” 41-59; Sax, “Do Communities have Rights?,” 499 – 511; and Runte, *National Parks*, 197 – 208.

<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that the disputes surrounding management of newly created parks in metropolitan areas differed from those that affected public lands in the rural west, most notably the Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s and 1980s. The latter largely centered on a desire to shift managerial authority from the federal government to the state and involved lands managed already managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. The postwar parks discussed in this dissertation were carved primarily out of private lands and, in many cases, NPS involvement was desired – it was a question of how best to intervene in a way that allowed for power sharing. For more on the Sagebrush rebellion see R. McGreggor Cawley, *Federal Land, Western Anger: The Sagebrush Rebellion and Environmental Politics* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

problems associated with sprawl and unchecked development. Rather than have the NPS or another public entity buy up all the property within a particular area, different levels of government would cooperatively determine the preferred level of growth. Some sections might have more, others less. The purchase of easements, especially for agricultural land, was also a popular option.

Multiple attempts to pass a National Land Use Bill that included these principles came up short in Congress, de-railed, in part, by the politics of Nixon's impeachment. In the wake of these defeats, individual senators and representatives pursued green-line parks for their own districts, often against the wishes of the NPS, which remained concerned about the costs of managing any new units. Despite the opposition, several of the proposals, including Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, did gain designation, remaining some of the most innovative sites in the National Park System.

The economic downturn of the seventies and early eighties, coupled with the rising importance of the service industry, also had a profound effect on the NPS. Beyond smaller budgets, more and more prospective parks, and later national heritage areas, justified their existence in terms of fiscal impact. These sites almost always also had significant historic and natural resources, as well as recreation opportunities, but increasingly that was not enough. The ability to be a job creator, to generate tax revenue via tourism, gradually became the *raison d'être* of many conservation initiatives.

Such validations were a far cry from those given in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the NPS first began its expansion. In publications like *Our Vanishing Shoreline* (1955), the market, especially the real estate market, had been presented as an imminent danger to coastal areas. "Beachfront holdings respond to the inevitable law of supply and demand...the march of

progress and people's hunger for a cottage by the sea rapidly consumes the gleaming stretches of unoccupied beach that seemed almost inexhaustible only a few decades ago," the report's authors argued.<sup>21</sup> By the time the Illinois and Michigan Canal gained Congressional designation as a National Heritage Corridor In 1984, the rhetoric surrounding NPS involvement had changed dramatically. Now, the Park Service would be a mechanism to jumpstart investment, rather than one to control its effects.

The changes that began in the 1960s dramatically transformed the national park system. I would go so far as to argue they resulted in the creation of multiple park systems. One includes sites established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These usually bear the name "National Park" and have not been as affected by the post-World War II conservation revolution described in this dissertation. By and large, they are still managed according to the principles laid out in the 1916 Organic Act as well as Secretary Lane's later memorandum. These ideas have, of course, been updated to reflect a greater awareness of ecology as well as best practices in historic preservation. But the fundamental idea that sites should be "unimpaired" with little obvious human intervention, save for tourist infrastructure, remains dominant.<sup>22</sup> Partnerships and cooperation with nearby communities and other stakeholders have also become more significant, owing both to changes within the NPS as well as regulations like National Environmental Policy Act.

Many of the park units established after 1960 have followed a different pattern.

Collaboration is legally mandated. Residency and other longstanding uses are statutorily

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<sup>21</sup> US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> The phrase "unimpaired" comes from the National Park Service Organic Act. "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 purposes 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." National Park Service Organic Act, *Public Law 235*, 64<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (August 25, 1916), 535.

permitted. And the relationship between human and non-human nature is not only acknowledged, it is heralded as being central to the landscape's significance. In national heritage areas and at sites like the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks, partnerships are even more central. With little to no regulatory authority, progress on issues like environmental quality and protection of historic sites can only be achieved through relationship building.

Another element that distinguishes many late twentieth century parks from their predecessors is location. More than one-third of national park units are now located in cities. Forty of the fifty largest cities in the United States have a park site within their boundaries.<sup>23</sup> This is a significant change from the pre-World War II period and, in theory at least, should have made national park units more accessible to a broader range of Americans.<sup>24</sup>

The parallel development of these two "systems" has been far from neat and tidy. Many national park sites reflect elements of both approaches. Over time though, the NPS has moved more towards acceptance of collaboration and away from the unilateral management that defined much of its early history. This is a result of politics, history, and environment. As this dissertation demonstrated, Congress, along with local stakeholders, came to play an often times decisive role in Park Service governance beginning in the 1960s. The agency simply could not act with the same latitude it once did. The role of history is also important. Interpretation at sites has become more reflective of academic scholarship and experiences of constituents near and far. Diverse voices are included in crafting educational programming and determining the scope of historic preservation activities. Finally, evolving understandings of ecology have made it clear

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<sup>23</sup> "Urban Matters: The Call to Urban Action," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, March 2015, 7, accessed July 25, 2018, [https://www.nps.gov/subjects/urban/upload/UrbanAgenda\\_web.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/urban/upload/UrbanAgenda_web.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> True accessibility has not yet arrived, however. As the agency approached its 2016 centennial, a significant number of commentators noted the troubling lack of diversity among visitors and park staff. A widely circulated opinion piece in the *New York Times*, for example, was provocatively titled "Why Are Our Parks so White?" It highlighted the need for new outreach strategies and the lack of diversity in hiring. Glenn Nelson, "Why Are Our Parks so White?," Editorial, *New York Times*, July 10, 2015.

that managing a unit solely with federal lands is not a viable conservation strategy. Flora and fauna do not recognize jurisdictional or property boundaries. Approaches like national heritage areas, which encompass the total landscape, have grown in number and sophistication in order to act on issues such as adaptation to climate change.

The dominant narrative of the national parks as wilderness landscapes devoid of human intervention remains potent, but is belied by the current system of Park Service sites. This dissertation has shown that in many park units created after World War II, living landscapes came to be valued and protected precisely because of the ongoing interaction of human and non-human nature. A result of congressional action and local initiative, these projects challenged norms within not only the NPS, but also federal public lands management more generally. Ideas of what a park can be and what it can do are changing, with people distinctly at the center of the evolution.

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