



The Wilderness Concept— Our National Parks, History and Issues. Prospectus-April 24, 1990

Curriculum Unit 90.03.01

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This unit consists of three parts. The overall objective is to give the students a foundation and an introduction to the ideas of wilderness, of conservation and of preservation in the United States. This foundation will enable the students to approach many different issues which generate from these concepts from several different perspectives: historical events, political climates which influenced policy formation regarding wilderness and National Park areas, social ethics, ecological significance, among others.

Part one will be an exploration of the evolution of ideas, beliefs and emotions surrounding the concept of “wilderness”. The foundation for this section springs from Roderick Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind*.¹ The following ideas will be presented:

1. Greek and Roman mythology relating to wilderness.
2. Judeo-Christian ideas of wilderness as a biblical theme.
3. European influences on how Americans look at wilderness.

Possible student activities for this section will include:

1. Suggested readings from Greek/Roman mythology with discussion topics.
2. Biblical passages referring to wilderness with an examination of descriptive adjectives used.
3. Haiku or representative Eastern nature writing. Students will write their own poetry on their personal experience or feeling about nature.

Part two is an overview of the history of conservation and preservation in the United States. Conservation will

be defined as being founded on three ideas:

1. Resources are finite, limited and potentially non-renewable.
2. The belief that “wise” management and control can extend and/or renew resources.
3. A commitment to supply resources to future generations.

Other topics which will be discussed in part two include:

1. The perspectives of early American settlers and the idea of utilitarianism.
2. The early American Diest scientists and their view of the human relationship to nature.
3. The birth of the idea of natural resources having limits and the role of Thomas Jefferson in the promotion of this idea.
4. The influences of literature, art and philosophy to the ideas of preservation and conservation.
5. The importance of George Perkins Marsh to the ideas for preservation and conservation.
6. The effect of the timber industry’s practices on the need for conservation.
7. The role of Gifford Pinchot.
8. The Hetch-Hetchy controversy.
9. The formation of the National Park Service.

Some possible activities for this part might include:

1. A field trip to the British Art Museum and to Yale Art Museum to view and compare representations of wilderness themes in art, both by British and American artists.
2. Selections of writings from the Romantic Movement with nature themes.
3. Examination of specific laws such as the Wilderness Act.

management strategies employed by the Park Service in response to the particular environmental concerns of a particular park unit. Examples of well-managed areas, such as Cape Cod National Seashore will be given as well as park areas which have been seriously impacted.

Activities pertaining to this section might include:

1. A simulated model of the effects of soil compaction and erosion.
2. The creation of an acid-rain environment and its effects on plant life.
3. A management exercise on balancing the best interests of a Park area while trying to meet the needs of Park visitors.

Part One: The Nature of the Beast or the Beast of Nature?

how great are the advantages of solitude!-How sublime is the silence of nature's ever-active energies! There is something in the very name of wilderness, which charms the ear, and soothes the spirit of man. There is religion in it. ²

this Countrey being verie full of Woods and Wildernesses, doth also much abound with Snakes and Serpents of strange colours and huge greatnesse . . . ³

The descriptions above would seem to represent two very different environments: one pleasant, familiar, and welcoming while the other is forboding, dark and terrible. How could it be that both of these are descriptions of the same subject—that subject being wilderness? It is clear that the word “wilderness” suggests at least two contrasting connotations.

The definition of wilderness, as given in a modern dictionary, also demonstrates seemingly conflicting explanations of meaning:

Wil-der-ness n [ME, fr. wildern wild, fr. OE wildeoren of wild beasts] 1 a (1):a tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings b: an empty or pathless area or region c: a part of a garden devoted to wild growth (2): an area essentially undisturbed by human activity together with its naturally developed life community 2 obs: WILDNESS 3 a: a confusing multitude or mass b: a bewildering situation ⁴

Many images are created by this definition alone: wild beasts, a land untouched by human hands, a garden allowed to become wild, a confusing situation. The concept of wilderness probably has almost as many unique images of its character as it has individuals who feel compelled to find a definition which expresses their personal experience with it.

There have been several metamorphoses of cultural attitudes and conceptions of wilderness over recorded time. In classic mythology there are many references to wilderness and nature. Evidence of the fear wild lands stirred in the hearts of ancient peoples is the belief in the character Pan—Lord of the Woods who cast fear into

wilderness travellers. It is from the name “Pan” that the word “panic” is derived. At the same time, the pastoral variety of nature was cause for rejoicing and celebration. Wilderness, when tamed and useful, was a friend of man’s. ⁵

At the time of the Middle Ages, Europeans often viewed wilderness with fear, creating monsters and demons to occupy uninhabited areas. Semi-human wild men who would consume children and ravish women were believed to dwell in these areas. These wild men had supernatural powers and superhuman strength. It was these types of early folk beliefs—of devils and spirits and wild men—which were partially responsible for setting the tone for negative attitudes about wilderness.

Wilderness was frequently referred to in literature of the Judeo-Christian tradition. It was typically described as a barren place, devoid of human value, except in the context of spiritual purification and renewal. Considering the dry, sparsely vegetated lands of the Middle East, it is understandable why wilderness was not considered a hospitable place. But the biblical writings and descriptions in literature of wilderness areas as forbidding places had an influence on how the religious colonists of the New World viewed the wilderness with which they were confronted.

Hebraic folk images concerning wilderness were numerous. Creatures such as Tan the howling dragon, Lilith, the winged female monster of night, and Azazel, the arch-devil were examples of the evil that the wilderness held. The idea of a “scapegoat”, where the sins of man were ritualistically placed onto a goat which was then cast out into the wilderness, supported the idea that wilderness was a cursed land.

Wilderness was not without value, however. It was also seen as a sanctuary from persecution and oppression. Wild places were viewed as the dwelling place of God. They were also “testing grounds” of faith. After the Exodus, the Jews were punished and tested by God and wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Later, in Christian times, John the Baptist went into the wilderness to prepare himself. Christ was also led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.

Christianity retained the concept of wilderness as a place of purification with the idea of monasticism. Wilderness value was in escaping a corrupt world. During the 4th and 5th centuries, The Desert Fathers were but a few of the many men who escaped society in search of religious values. Some were actually persecuted by the Church for advocating Christian asceticism and the surrender of all worldly possessions.

In the Middle Ages, Christians viewed wilderness as a place in which to atone and achieve grace. Appreciation or enjoyment of natural beauty was not of value. An exception to this was found in the person of St. Francis of Assisi. He believed wild creatures had souls and should be viewed as equals. In his mind, man is “of” the natural world, not “above” it. The Church responded to his radical philosophy by condemning him as a heretic. The Church preached the domination of Man over Nature and was threatened by his dissent from this belief. ⁶

There were places in the world, however, where Man’s relationship to Nature was seen in a loving, mutualistic context. In the Far East, Man was regarded as a part of nature. Wilderness was a place to attain harmony of soul. In Japan, the Shinto religion actually worshiped nature, deified mountains and forests. A love of wilderness was clearly encouraged.

The greatest impact on American thought and attitudes toward wilderness were from European influences. It is clear that European views were developed, at least in part, by religious perspectives, folkloric legends and fears created by the encounters with the unknown. But at the time that the colonists settled in the New World, Europeans, who no longer had any real wilderness left, romanticized wilderness. They were not in battle with

it—Europe had long ago been tamed and cultivated. It was from this vantage point that wilderness held a mystique. Perhaps there was a Paradise yet to be discovered.

From the perspective of the colonists, however, the New World and the wilderness thereof was a desolate, difficult battleground. Diaries from colonists in the early days repeatedly spoke of their struggles against the wilderness in militaristic terms. The battle was real—survival was the primary objective in the face of many obstacles presented by the wilderness condition. The creation of civilization was a formidable task. As such, the wilderness was a place to be conquered, tamed and cultivated.

During the colonial days, the wilderness was a metaphor for the savagery within every man. Wilderness lacked societal pressures to check the innate wildness within man. And without rules imposed by society man had license to behave like a savage. The wilderness provided an opportunity for temptation.

The creation of a pastoral setting out of wilderness was a frequently repeated theme. Supporting this idea were the many biblical references of the desirability of taming the wilderness, such as:

Increase and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it.

Genesis 1:28

At the same time there was recognition that civilization was the harbinger of corruption and pagan values. Puritans fled to the wilderness to escape the evils of corrupt, European civilization. But their mission was to carve a garden out of the chaos of wilderness, not to appreciate it in any intrinsic way. The hardships presented by the wilderness condition provided a vehicle by which they could draw attention to their accomplishments. They took pride in being conquerors of this untamed, wretched land. This was a place that they could bring “light into darkness” ⁷

Part Two: History of Conservation in the U.S.

Conservation is founded on three legs. The first is the recognition that our resources are finite, limited and potentially nonrenewable if mishandled. The second is the belief that certain “wise” methods of management and control can extend and/or renew resources. The third leg is the commitment to ensuring a stable supply of resources to future generations. ⁸

Since Americans held, until at least the 1890’s, none of these three assumptions, the history of conservation as an actively practiced cultural and political movement does not really start until then .

The early settlers of America viewed Nature’s resources as unlimited, infinite, and forever renewable. Although often it was a struggle to extract natural resources, few if any worried about their depletion. The New England Puritans, in fact, saw wilderness as evil—a dark, untamed lair for demonic energy—and hence made it a moral duty to conquer and dominate nature. Neither enjoyment of wild nature, for example during hunting, nor consumeristic waste of resources, were permitted. Humanity’s relationship to nature was strictly one of utility.

Other early settlers, e.g. the Pennsylvania Quakers and the Anglicans of the South, had a less severe notion of humanity’s relationship to nature. Anglicans luxuriated in the relatively hospitable environment in the South. There, they enjoyed outdoor hunting sports. In such an environment, nature did not seem so threatening.

In Pennsylvania, the people combined city and pastoral life. They despised wasting of natural resources. They allowed an acre of woods to remain on every five acres for relief. The Quakers advocated gardening and also wanted air to circulate between the houses. They essentially created a park-like setting. But despite of their less-hostile approach to Nature, the Quakers along with the Anglicans shared the lack of concern over any type of depletion or resource damage .

Deism is the belief that Nature proves the existence of God. It was not a “formal” religion. In fact, Deists believed that formal religion was not necessary and may even be harmful. God set the world in motion and the world runs itself afterward in accordance with natural law. Deists were followers of Newtonian physics. They relied on reason for their religious truths.

Early American Deist scientists revolutionized the vision of the Human-Nature relationship in that they found it interesting and rewarding to appreciate Nature in and of itself in addition to any utility natural resources might offer. Although Deism waned after the Revolution, the effects of its philosophy persisted. Deist beliefs were partially responsible for reducing fears of Nature and wilderness.

In the early 18th century, John Bartram, the King’s botanist, established America’s first botanical gardens in Philadelphia. Ben Franklin, having moved to Philadelphia to escape the Boston Puritans, rejoiced in the exploration of Nature’s laws on a scientific basis, indulging his curiosity with the wonders of God’s creation. As a Deist, he believed Nature to be God’s perfect creation, a creation which man must study and follow in its laws if we are to truly obey God. William Bartram, son of botanist John Bartram, became a naturalist and explored America’s wildlands, publishing his journal entitled *Travels* in the late 18th century. ⁹

The significance of these scientists is that they expressed, and made marginally popular, interest in Nature for itself—wonder at Nature’s works and beauty over and above its utility as a resource. A botanical garden, a scientific law, and a naturalist’s journal each rejoice in Nature’s intrinsic value.

Yet no one expressed any worry over the limits of such wonders until Thomas Jefferson. In the late 18th century, he published *Notes on Virginia*¹⁰ , a pioneer work on American geography. He believed that America’s virtues could only be maintained if we retained an agrarian lifestyle. Yet, the beginnings of industry and urban life were threatening that lifestyle. Jefferson thought it was crucial to maintain a balance between man and Nature, a balance which population and industry was threatening. As a result, he bought the Louisiana purchase, doubling the amount of land in the country. It is important to note that Jefferson was not promoting conservation measures but simply expanding the available frontier ¹¹ .

Unfortunately for Jefferson’s agrarian ideal, industry took hold in America throughout the 19th century. Industrial development itself was not the entire problem. Rather it was the failure of industrialists to recognize the future ramifications of the exploitation of resources. The dominant belief among Americans was still that Nature’s resources were unlimited, and that there was no need to worry about the future.

One of the most telling signs of this attitude can be seen in various popular biographies of Daniel Boone circulating in the early 19th century. Boone is portrayed simultaneously as a lover of nature par excellence and conquering hero of nature ¹² . This reveals a naive American faith that we can constantly mold our characters by doing battle with Nature—a belief that rests on a view of nature as infinite. No one noticed a conflict between loving Nature and conquering it—a conflict that could only go unnoticed if Nature was seen as unlimited in scope.

There were, however, small voices in the crowd who began to attest to the limitedness of Nature’s beauty and

resources during the early 19th century. Appreciation for Nature and wilderness began in cities during the Romantic period of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Educated people began to regard wilderness in favorable terms in Europe. This sentiment slowly caught on in America.

Conservation begins to appear in 1864, when George Perkins Marsh, a scientist and American diplomat, published *Man and Nature*. Marsh witnessed severe deforestation during his travels in Italy and Turkey as a U.S. Ambassador. As a result, he thought it was time for America to slowdown ¹³.

George Perkins Marsh grew up near a river area in Vermont. Being wealthy, Marsh was afforded the luxury of enjoying rather than battling with Nature. He developed a scientific eye with interests in Geography as well as in studying local flora and fauna.

During Marsh's time a progressive influence was taking hold in America. Civilization was on a crusade across the continent, taming the beasts and the wild forests. Technological wonders such as locomotives and telegraphs were created. Marsh noticed that in America development was so fast that it did in decades what Europe did in centuries.

In *Man and Nature* Marsh's thesis was as follows: Man disrupts the fundamental harmony of Nature. Man must use caution in his dealing with Nature, slowing down our consumption and restoring some areas if possible. Marsh linked the philosophy of the Transcendentalists (that of Nature's harmony) with concrete suggestions concerning political solutions to threats to that harmony.

In the early 1800's, the westward movement of civilization along with industrial fervor was marked by wanton destruction of many natural resources. Post-civil war mining and timber companies consumed resources at a furious rate. Unlimited abundance of natural resources was soon discovered to be a fallacy.

At the time in Europe, an advanced type of forest management system was in play. European governments controlled portions of the forests, thereby protecting them from unchecked exploitation. Forest silvicultural practices and the idea of a sustained yield of timber protected the forest resources.

In the U.S., however, the government had not followed the European example. No forest areas were conserved by government. Forests were being razed at a tremendous pace to meet the demands for homebuilding materials, naval construction, and firewood.

The value of timber was widespread. As timber depletion took place on the public domain the abuse of the resource was soon recognized. Inferior wood had to be substituted for better quality wood due to the extinction of various tree species.

Marsh advocated the necessity of government control of forests to safeguard them from destruction. Yet Marsh's views are ahead of their time. Neither the public, nor the government, was ready to embrace such suggestions quite yet.

Fortunately for the future of the forests, the use of coal began to replace wood for energy purposes. Had coal use not come in at this time the devastation of America's forests may have been complete. But the important result of these events was the recognition for the need to regulate and manage America's natural resources for the future.

In literature, Romantics such as Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper ¹⁴ distinguished themselves as

authors. At this point in history Americans were desperately searching for something truly “American” which could proclaim to the world that the New World was at least as important as Europe. These writers helped to spread the view that American wilderness was unique and a source of national pride.

Perhaps the first American writer who was respected in Europe was Washington Irving. Irving contrasts the calm, serene qualities of Nature with the bustling, frenetic pace of New York City during the Industrial Revolution. Irving accomplishes this comparison through his description of characters in his book *Sleepy Hollow Tales*. In *Sleepy Hollow* Irving depicts Nature as gentle and serene, but paints Icabod Crane, the lone city-bred character, as nervous, jumpy and bustling.

Irving’s writings and his notoriety were a source of American pride. He helped to affirm the importance that the new nation held in the world. Early Americans used Irving’s praises of the virtues of Nature in America to uphold America’s virtues to the rest of the world.

James Fenimore Cooper was a native New Yorker who’s writings were inspired by the Catskill Indians. He deplored the destruction of mountain and forest areas. Cooper favored intelligent use of natural resources, believing that towns should be built steadily and carefully. He also condemned the wanton slaughter of birds, e.g. the passenger pigeon, and other creatures for the sake of “progress”.

Cooper wrote *Deerslayer*, *Pioneers*, and *The Last of the Mohicans* among others. In his books he deplores destruction of mountain areas, forests, and the Indian way of life. Cooper promotes the idea that wilderness has aesthetic value and value as a moral influence. Nature was both a source of wisdom and of beauty. Thus Cooper and Irving, together with other Romantic writers, helped to promote a sense of value and pride in America’s natural resources ¹⁵.

In the art world, the Hudson River Valley School of Art began painting landscapes, which was unheard of before 1830. Before then, only portraiture would sell. But these artists began calling attention to the vanishing pastoral way of life along the Hudson. Their paintings began to sell resulting in some recognition of the limit of Nature’s endurance ¹⁶.

Philosophy brought forth the Transcendentalists: Emerson and Thoreau. This group fought against materialism; against the Protestant work ethic; and against money-making. They saw Man’s highest call as loving Nature. Nature served as an intermediary between man and God. It connects us to God and therefore ought to be contemplated. Life should be simple, and exist within Nature’s law’s. Thoreau tried to live this way at Walden Pond. His one and one-half year experiment was a popular failure ¹⁷.

The census of 1890 declared the frontier to be officially closed. Suddenly, infinity had borders. This had great impact on how wilderness was viewed.

The Father of Conservation: Gifford Pinchot.

The abuse of timber products was the first form of waste to create any kind of large public concern. Both farmers and industry cut forests at a furious pace throughout the 19th century. Since the value of trees was fairly widespread as it was needed for fuel, homebuilding shipbuilding, etc., the rising prices made people’s heads turn. Much of the timber depletion took place on the public domain, so it was conceded that government had some responsibility to curb the exploitation.

Europe already had in place a professional art of forestry. Therefore, the need for timber conservation was

apparent and readily understood by the end of the century. In 1889 the American Association for the Advancement of Science recommended to Congress the withdrawal of all forest land from sale. Congress gave the President the power. Presidents Harrison and Cleveland pulled some forest lands from sale. Enter Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt in 1900. ¹⁸

Gifford Pinchot was a German-trained forester. He was convinced that sustained yield of timber could enable trees to be cut and the forest preserved at one and the same time. Sustained yield means that annual cutting should never exceed growth. Waste materials should be utilized. Disease and fire should be actively combatted.

Pinchot caused suspicion. Many felt that these ideas were not in tune with a fluid economy in the 19th century. Many saw it as an impossible dream. The preservationist group (among them John Muir) were against it. Some foresters argued that sustained yield wouldn't be profitable and therefore professional forestry could not take hold.

Pinchot was an optimist. He went to Germany to study their system of forestry. When he returned in 1892, he became the forester of Vanderbilt's Biltmore Estate in North Carolina. There, he tried to follow the models that he had learned in Germany and show that trees could be cut while forests were preserved. He then tried to gain recognition by publishing his results at Biltmore and contracted himself out as a private consultant, lecturer, etc. on forest management.

Pinchot was appointed to the National Forest Commission. This gave him a foothold in a formal conservation movement and in May of 1898 he became the Chief of Forestry Division in the Department of Agriculture. Pinchot managed to change the emphasis of the Forestry Division from that of a dispenser of information on trees to an educator of the public on scientific management of forest. This shift helped to link government with private sector forestry.

Many other events not mentioned here also happened at this time. By 1908, with President Roosevelt's help, Pinchot succeeded in convincing the nation that:

- a. Conservation and planning was a matter of national interest.
- b. Conservation and planning means efficient and good business.
- c. Management of Nature is scientific and technological.
- d. Conservation is a matter not just for timber but for all natural resources including water, soil, etc.

"The central thing for which conservation stands is to make this country the best possible place to live in, both for us and for our descendants. It stands against the waste of the natural resources which cannot renewed, such as coal and iron. It stands for the perpetuation of the resources which can be renewed, such as food-producing soils and forests; and most of all it stands for an equal opportunity for every American citizen to get his fair share of benefit from these resources both now and hereafter." ¹⁹

(Gifford Pinchot, 1908)

Conservation versus Preservation.

Originally, during the late 1800's and into the early 1900's, there was no clear-cut distinction between "preservationists" and "conservationists". There was simply an ever-growing body of individuals who advocated the protection of wilderness areas in the U. S. Eventually, a disagreement of goals and philosophies caused a clear-cut (sic) distinction to be made.

John Muir was the spokesman for the preservationist camp. It was his view that wilderness areas should remain untouched and unexploited for the benefit of all citizens. While he initially recognized the rights of both the progress of civilization and the protection of wilderness, he eventually took a clear stand as an advocate of nature untampered by man.

Muir was well-known as a writer and his works were influential among the public at large. He founded along with others the Sierra Club in 1892. Muir fought for the preservation of many wilderness areas, particularly in California.

At the helm of the other camp was Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot's philosophy of "wise-use" of natural resources and the idea of sustained use credits him as the main founder of the conservation movement. Given his position in the Federal Government, Pinchot was also a man of influence.

Pinchot and Muir were initially allies. Eventually, Pinchot's conservation ideas clashed with Muir's preservation beliefs and a rift came between them. This conflict crystallized during the damming of the Hetch-Hetchy Valley. From 1906 to 1913 the debate over Hetch - Hetchy raged ²⁰.

Hetch-Hetchy was a valley in Yosemite parallel to the Yosemite Valley. As the city of San Francisco grew, so did its need for water. After studying the area around the city, officials proposed to the U.S. government that a dam project be allowed in the Yosemite National Park. The issue became: Should the beautiful valley be preserved, or should Nature be manipulated to serve human needs?

Pinchot was in favor of the dam. In his view, "the fundamental principle of the whole conservation policy is that of use, to take every part of the land and its resources and put it to that use in which it will serve the most people." ²¹ Muir was opposed, calling the pro-dam faction "temple destroyers." ²² After an ardent battle, the conservationist side won and the valley was turned into a reservoir for the San Francisco area.

The importance of the debate is that it forced the articulation of philosophies which distinguished the conservationist movement from the preservationist movement. It became clear that preservationists advocated the conservation of natural value while the conservationists believed that Nature could be wisely used and managed in order to serve human needs.

An important result of this distinction between conservation and preservation (while it must be stated that these definitions are simplistic and that a great deal of overlap of principles exists), was the creation of a government agency dedicated to preservation—The National Park Service. The National Park Service, a branch of the Department of the Interior, was created in 1916 during the Woodrow Wilson administration.

One of the authors of the National Park Service Act of 1916 was Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the son of the Connecticut landscape architect who's most well-known accomplishment was the design of Central Park in

New York City. Together with an outspoken preservationist, J. Horace McFarland, Olmsted helped to rally nature enthusiasts from around the country linking patriotism with the protection of scenery ²³.

Part three: Park Profiles and Problems.

The National Parks are areas of diverse interests: recreational, aesthetic, inspirational and scientific. This section will look at certain Parks and some scientific considerations regarding these areas.

It is precisely because the National Parks enjoy a tremendous popularity that many of the scientific issues have come to the fore. The ultimate result of our love-affair with the Parks has been that with ever-increasing use of these areas the very problems of urban living—air and water pollution, over-crowded areas, noise and trash—have found their way into the Parks. The irony is that these areas were originally thought of as places to escape the pressures and problems of civilization. Popularity has its price.

In the early days of the National Parks, there were considerable efforts made to encourage visitation to the Parks. Many of the Park areas were in fairly remote areas away from large centers of population. In order to promote public and ensuing Congressional interest for resource protection and financial support, the public needed to visit these areas. It was felt that once Americans experienced THEIR Parks they would be committed to the values that they (the Parks) represented.

With improvements in road building and public transportation there was increased access to Park areas. The park service's first director, Stephen T. Mather, encouraged development of roads, campgrounds and other public facilities which would make the parks more comfortable and attractive to visitors and thereby increase the numbers who would visit. With the automobile allowing mobility to the average American family, the parks became popular vacation areas.

Presently, park areas around the country receive millions of visitors annually. Certain park areas such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, Everglades, Cape Cod and the Grand Canyon are popular and have high visitation. Other park areas are less visited, perhaps due to more difficult access or distance from centers of population. But regardless of their location or popularity, park areas are experiencing increasing pressures and impacts on their resources from visitors ²⁴.

Two park units located in the northeast are Gateway National Recreation Area near New York City and Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts. Both of these areas are highly visited and are located near densely populated areas. Due to their locations, these areas provide an important role in the National Park System. And also by virtue of their locations have problems which result in part from the pressures of urban neighbors.

The concept of urban parks originated in the 1960's during the time of the Civil Rights Movement. It was felt that people living in or around the great population centers on the East Coast were not being properly served by the National Parks. Most of the big, well-known parks—Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, were in the West. Urbanized America needed and demanded contact with parks which were more accessible. A coalition of recreation, conservation and civil rights groups successfully lobbied for the creation of several park units located within or close to urban areas ²⁵.

Twenty-seven new recreation-type urban park areas were created between 1964 and 1972. One of these is Gateway National Recreation Area just outside of New York City. Gateway was authorized by Congress in 1972. Since that time it has become the eighth most-visited park area in the system. In 1988, there were approximately eight million visits this area.

Gateway N.R.A. comprises four distinct units: Jamaica Bay, Breezy Point, Sandy Hook and Staten Island. This represents a patchwork of areas, 26,000 acres total, each with its own special features. Each unit also has unique problems.

On the southeast shore of Long Island is the Jamaica Bay Unit. Within this unit is the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. This large, man-made area consists of marshland and woods. Here is habitat to more than 326 bird species and other animals.

Jamaica Bay is a saltmarsh. A saltmarsh is an important breeding area for fish and birds. The primary objective of the National Park Service in this area is to conserve and protect bird life and other natural resources.

A problem to be tackled at Jamaica Bay is the pollution of land and water. Landfills were active in this area as recently as 1986. Within these landfills are chemicals and toxins which leach out and poison the water, killing fish and birds. This was once a prolific oyster bed. The area has been closed to fishing since 1921 as a result of sewage contamination. One of the many jobs of National Park Rangers is a clean-up program in this area.

The other three units, Breezy Point, Staten Island and Sandy Hook are seen primarily as recreation areas. Breezy Point contains one of New York City's most popular beaches. On a given summer weekend, up to 200,000 visitors come to enjoy sand and surf. Endangered birds are also in residence at Breezy Point.

Sandy Hook, on the New Jersey shoreline, includes miles of beaches and coves. Thousands come to the area for recreation. Also located at Sandy Hook is Fort Hancock—the oldest operating lighthouse in the country.

At Staten Island, restoration of a swamp white oak forest is taking place where vandals damaged the area by toppling trees. This unit also contains a former landfill which is being allowed to return to its wild state. This area is habitat for rabbits, birds and many other animals. Monarch butterflies also stop here on their migratory journey. The water at the beach areas is sometimes polluted to the level that swimming is prohibited.

When wildlife areas have such a great number of visitors, it is often difficult to avoid or minimize resource damage and the effect that it has on the wildlife populations. Disposal of human wastes is a sizeable task. Wildlife may eat garbage and plastics which have potential to compromise their health. Animals who build their nests on the ground may have their young trampled by unaware hikers. Vegetation may not be able to grow in certain areas which are highly trafficked by visitors due to the soil compaction and erosion which may result.

Urban park managers are confronted with some unique management problems. Visitors to many of the wilderness-type park areas often come in search of vistas, wildlife and a nature experience. Often, these visitors are reserved about venturing into the wilderness and tend to actively seek out guidance and instruction from park rangers. By contrast, visitors to the urban parks are frequently only concerned with recreation. They are either unaware or unconcerned about wildlife or fragile ecosystems. Some come with the attitude that it is their park and nobody better tell them what they can or cannot do. City visitors may value these areas for the recreational opportunities available to them but have little understanding or appreciation for aesthetic or biological values.

The corruptions of city life spill over into the urban parks. At Gateway, vandalism is a major problem and a source of discouragement to park rangers. When a walkway was built to protect the Dunes, an arsonist burned it down a few weeks later. Monuments are also frequent targets of vandalism. Issues related to drug and alcohol use by visitor must be contended with by park officials. As a result of these and other problems, many

rangers do not want to return to the park.

Other environmental problems result from the proximity of the urban park to industrial and commercial areas. Jamaica Bay falls victim to dumping of industrial chemicals and old cars. Run off of oil from road areas and from Kennedy International Airport pollutes water areas. Air pollution and acid rain have had impacts on park resources and upon the quality of the park experience. Park officials are in constant battle to reduce the effects of some of these problems, many of which are beyond their control.

The value of Gateway National Recreation Area, despite its problems, is immeasurable. Here, a person living in the congested concrete and asphalt areas of New York and New Jersey, places where the noises of the city are never stilled, can escape to a different reality. Children in particular are in awe of what they can discover in the “wilds” at Gateway. Many inner-city children would otherwise never contact and experience Nature and its elements without the urban park experience. At Gateway the wilds are at their own doorstep.

In the context of educational value that places such as Gateway have tremendous importance. If upcoming generations are to feel any future commitment to conservation of environmental resources they must have personal involvement and/or understanding of wilderness values and concepts. Educational programs offered at Gateway and other urban parks sensitize children to the wonders and revelations of Nature and help to eliminate myths and misconceptions that many city people have about Nature.

Cape Cod National Seashore was established in 1961. Its beginnings were nontraditional in that the government purchased the entire park area from the onset rather than providing a portion of the funding and relying upon outside sources for the remainder ²⁶.

The Seashore had to be created out of land which included six towns. These towns were enclosed within the Park's boundaries and provide some of the character of the landscape. About 600 homes became a part of the Park.

The Cape Cod National Seashore has great significance in that the Park is within a day's drive of a large percentage of the American people. About as many people visit the Seashore annually as visit Yosemite and Yellowstone combined. This area serves an important recreation need in the northeast.

The Park's resources have the potential to be severely impacted because of such heavy visitation. Issues of resource protection include water quality and quantity, beach migration, erosion and acid rain. These are difficult problems to deal with as often they originate from areas outside park boundaries.

Park areas such as Cape Cod, which emphasize resource use over preservation, are faced with a particularly hard task of minimizing the impacts of the very use which they are also promoting. Here, education of Park visitors plays a crucial role in the prevention of resource destruction.

One issue at Cape Cod related to resource protection was the use of ORVs (off-road vehicles) on the fragile dune areas. Heavy traffic on the dunes had severely impacted vegetation. The vegetation on the dunes helps to prevent sand migration and erosion. The result was that the natural processes of sand migration were accelerated. At first, the response by officials was to allow ORV use in areas where resources would not be impacted or park values compromised. Eventually, certain areas of the Park were closed off to ORV users.

This action outraged both the drivers of ORVs who felt that their rights were being denied and many environmentalists who wanted ORV use banned completely. Several environmental advocacy groups filed a

suit against the plan on the premise that ORV use conflicts with the other recreational uses of the Park and also does extensive resource damage. In June of 1984, the court decision was that the park service's plan should stand but that more information was needed to determine whether or not motor vehicle use had a legitimate place in National Park or Recreation areas.

The importance of the plan by the Park Service is in showing the balance it tries to keep between the values of resource integrity and serving the public recreational needs. The Park Service strives to not only serve the public's desire for entertainment or recreation but also to educate and promote public understanding of the complex and fragile balances of the Seashore's ecosystem. Compromises often need to be made but not at the expense of the integrity of the resource itself.

Notes

1. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed., 1982, Yale University.
2. Evans, *A Pedestrian Tour of Four Thousand Miles Through the Western States and Territories During the Winter and Spring of 1818* (Concord, N.H., 1819), pp. 6, 102.
3. Francis Higginson, *New England's Plantation (1630) in Force*, I, No. 12, 11-12.
4. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, (G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., 1977), p. 1341.
5. See Nash's chapter entitled "Old World Roots of Opinion".
6. *Ibid.*, for more on this idea, see p. 19.
7. *Ibid.*, see Nash's Chapter—A Wilderness Condition.
8. For an indepth look at this topic, see Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., *Man & Nature in America* (Columbia University Press, 1973). See also Alfred Runte, *National Parks, The American Experience* (University of Nebraska Press, 1987).
9. For more on these scientists see Ekirch, pp. 13-15.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-21.
11. See "Notes on Virginia", Query XIX, *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, (Washington, D.C., Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903).
12. See Ekirch, p. 29.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-80. Ekirch discusses Marsh in detail in this chapter.
13. See Nash, pp. 75-78, for more on Cooper, and on Irving, pp. 72-74.
15. See Ekirch's chapter—The Romantic View for more details.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 27
17. *Ibid.*, Ekirch devotes a chapter each to Emerson and Thoreau. See pp. 45-69.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-99.
19. See Samuel P. Hayes, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, (Harvard University Press, 1959, Cambridge, Mass.), p. 123; Pinchot, *Fight for Conservation*, p. 79.
20. See Nash, Chapter 10: Hetch Hetchy, pp. 160-181.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
23. See Runte, pp. 88-89.
24. See *National Parks for a New Generation: Visions, Realities, Prospects, The Conservation*

Foundation (Washington, D.C.) 1985, pp. 118-129.

25. The source of the following information on Gateway is from Andrew Lachman's article—Gateway Offered New Yorkers a Taste of Wilderness, *National Parks* (magazine) Nov/Dec 1989, pp. 31-36.

26. The information on this section on Cape Cod was referenced from *National Parks for a New Generation*, pp. 157-169.

Bibliography-Teacher

Bates, Marston. *The Forest and the Sea*. New York: 1960.

A descriptive, philosophic and scientific discussion of Nature and Ecology. Examines the range of ecosystems and a wide variety of topics relating to biological communities. Excerpts may be useful in class.

Ekirch, Arthur A., Jr. *Man and Nature in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

Outlines the history of American views toward Nature from Thomas Jefferson through recent history and the birth of the conservationist ideology.

Harmon, David. *Mirror of America: Literary Encounters with the National Parks*. National Parks Foundation: 1989.

Readings on the National Parks by American authors from before 1950.

Certain readings may be very useful for class.

Hayes, Samuel P. *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.

Lachman, Andrew. *Gateway Offers New Yorkers a Taste of Wilderness*. *National Parks*. Nov/Dec. 1989.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Wonderful, descriptive essays on Nature and one man's view of it.

Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. Third Edition. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982.

A comprehensive view of the evolution of attitudes toward wilderness and America's responses to these attitudes.

National Parks for a New Generation: Visions, Realities, Prospects. The Conservation Foundation, 1985.

A detailed overview of our National Park System with discussions of policy, management, and goals.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on Virginia*. Washington D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903.

Reiger, John, F. *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*. New York: Winchester Press, 1975.

History of the roles of hunters and fishermen in the environmental movement. Includes a picture album of sports and conservation.

Runte, Alfred. *National Parks: The American Experience*. Second Edition. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1977.

Other Resources:

This Land is Your Land : Public Lands Belong to All of Us.— This is a slide presentation available from the National Wildlife Federation which may be a good introduction to a lesson on the National Parks with the idea of public ownership of lands.

National Parks —This is a magazine available by subscription or in the public library which profiles different park areas and discusses current research and problems as well as giving profiles and pictures of park units.

Sierra —Another very good resource for information on National Park and wilderness issues. Also, great photos of areas.

National Wildlife —Discusses many environmental issues relating to National Park and wilderness areas. The students will be interested in the pictures and discussions of mammals, birds, etc.

Local Newspapers—Often cover issues relating to the National Parks.

Videos—Many video stores carry PBS specials on National Park and wilderness areas and well as specific environmental issues.

Maps, maps and more maps. A plethora of very valuable information on every national park. Write to the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C., 20013-7127.

Bibliography-Student

Callenbach, Ernest. *Ecotopia*. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

A science fiction novel of the future in America which may raise some questions in your mind about the present.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1966.

Nature writings by a man who lived in the early part of our century which transport you to a place very different from the city.

Mills, Enos A. *The Spell of the Rockies*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

Adventures of a man who lived in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.

Muir, John. *The Yosemite*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988.

Adventures of John Muir in Yosemite in California.

Schullery, Paul. *Mountain Time: Man Meets Wilderness in Yellowstone*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1984.

Have you ever wondered what it might be like to live and work in the wilderness? Read this and find out.

Turner, Frederick. *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985.

A biography of the founder of the Sierra Club.

Sample Lesson: Field Trip

Wilderness Themes in Art

Objectives The students will:

1. examine and describe various paintings by British artists with Nature themes.
2. compare descriptions of painting made by student groups.
3. identify commonality of descriptions.
4. discuss the mood that the painting seems to elicit and the possible explanations for this as related to the particular period in time in which it was painted.

Vocabulary *pastoral, utilitarian, mood, theme*

Procedures

1. On the first floor of the British Art Center, have student groups rotate to each of the following paintings and describe what they see in their notebooks:
 - A Highland Landscape* by Sir Edwin Henry Landseer
 - Harvest* by John Frederick Herring, Sr.
 - The Painter's Holiday* by Frances Danby
 - Evening Pasture* by James Smitham
2. After each group has viewed and described each painting, use one description from each group for each painting and see if the class can identify the painting from the description.
3. Make a list of the adjectives used to describe each painting and note the frequency that each was used.
4. As a group, go back to each of the paintings and discuss the mood which is created by the Nature scene.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In which of the paintings, if any, was Nature seen as:
 - a. romantic
 - b. frightening
 - c. garden-like/ pastoral
 - d. tame
 - e. “useful” or utilitarian
 - f. other?
2. If you were to paint a picture of Nature, how would you describe it?

Related Activities:

1. If art materials are available, have students illustrate their own view of Nature/ wilderness.
2. Visit the Yale Art Gallery and compare the paintings of Homer, Remington, Tait and Bierstadt with those seen at the British Art Center. (See related lesson plan.)

Sample Lesson: Field Trip

Wilderness Themes in Art—Part Two

Objectives The students will:

1. examine and describe various paintings by American artists with Nature themes.
2. compare descriptions between student groups about specific paintings.
3. describe the mood or feeling that each painting portrays Nature.
4. compare the painting with those of British painters.

Procedures:

1. At the Yale Art Gallery, find the following paintings and describe what you see and how the painting makes you feel about Nature:

Below Zero by Winslow Homer

What an Unbranded Cow has Cost by Frederic Remington

A Good Chance by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait

The Trapper’s Camp by Albert Bierstadt

American Frontier Life by Arthur Tait

Valley of the Yosemite by Albert Bierstadt

2. As a group, discuss the descriptions of each painting.
3. Describe how these paintings compared to those at the British Art Center.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In which painting did you feel that Nature was the most beautiful? What colors were used (primarily) by the artist? How were light and color used to create a particular mood?
2. Which painting seemed most like those of the British artists? When was it painted? In what ways was it similar? different?
3. In which painting did Nature seem the most formidable and powerful? Why do you think this is so?
4. Of all of the paintings that you saw which were our favorite? Why?
5. Which scene in all of the paintings would you most like to visit?

Related Activities:

1. Choose several of the artists of the American School and research their histories.
2. Do a report on the Hudson River Valley School of Artists.
3. Find out about Weir Farm (Weir Preserve) in Wilton, CT. Who was J. Alden Weir? Why is he important?

Sample Lesson

Nature as a Biblical Theme

Objectives The students will:

1. use Old Testament passages to compare views of Nature with religious themes in biblical passages.
2. list and compare the descriptive adjectives used in the selected readings.
3. discuss the relationship of the Jewish people to the wilderness from positive and negative perspectives.

Materials Old Testament Bibles

Procedures

1. Have the students form into small groups. Have some of the groups search through *Genesis* and choose particular passages in which Nature is a central theme. The other groups will use *Psalms* and do the same.
2. Have students read examples of individual passages.
3. Based on what was read, discuss how the author depicted wilderness and why you think that he/she may have seen wilderness in this light.

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