

File

PROPOSAL

WILDERNESS RESEARCH CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

INTRODUCTION

WILDERNESS RESEARCH

There is increasing awareness of, and concern for, man's abuse of the land. Laymen, as well as scientists and professionals representing a wide range of disciplines, are voicing alarm over the rapid deterioration of our environment. Land, water, and air alike are feeling the onslaught of a technology which is guided largely by economic considerations alone. We appear destined to alter and destroy the very resource base which has made the nation prosperous. With this destruction goes the loss of any possibility of a quality way of life.

A House-Senate Colloquium¹ in July, 1968, discussed the need for a national policy for the environment. The colloquium consisted of statements and responses by leading officials of the Executive Branch; speeches, questions, and challenges by congressmen, and, later, questions and comments by leading scientists. Science, the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in reporting on the colloquium, stated "The efforts of the government and people of the United States to prevent degradation of their natural environment have usually been too fragmented and too late. The public and its governmental representatives are becoming concerned about their inability to foresee and forestall the nation's environmental erosion".

Participants to the colloquium were in agreement that more knowledge of unaltered environments must be gained in order that sound decisions may

¹House-Senate Colloquium - The need for a national policy for the environment. Senate Interior Committee, 3106 New Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C.

be made. Aldo Leopold, in 1949², stated the case for ecological studies quite well and his thoughts apply even more so today: "A science of land health needs, first of all, a base datum of normality, a picture of how healthy land maintains itself as an organism.

"The most perfect norm is wilderness. Paleontology offers abundant evidence that wilderness maintained itself for immensely long periods; that its component species were rarely lost, neither did they get out of hand; that weather and water built soil as fast or faster than it was carried away. Wilderness, then, assumes unexpected importance as a laboratory for the study of land-health."

It is painfully obvious that research on such unaltered areas must be undertaken. The AAAS Council Study Committee on Natural Areas as Research Facilities³, in its 1965 report, pointed out the urgency of such research. The committee defined a natural area as "Areas where, at least at present, natural processes are allowed to predominate, not significantly influenced by deliberate manipulation or accidental interference (to any great extent) by man".

The report goes on: "Much of the research use of natural areas is by colleges, universities, and specialized research institutions. Conveniently located areas, representing as wide a diversity of natural ecosystems as is available in the region, is a basic necessity for such research. Because of the cost of land and the great demands on the

²Leopold, Aldo. 1949. A Sand County Almanac. Oxford Univ. Press.

³1965. AAAS Council Study Committee on Natural Areas as Research Facilities. Report. AAAS, Wash. D. C.

available funds of such institutions, it is often not feasible for them to acquire the needed areas while they are available, or there may be such delay that the price of the land will make acquisition impossible when resources do become available. The Committee feels that acquisition of such 'outdoor laboratories' is fully as appropriate a use for public funds as is the building of cyclotrons, radiotelescopes, or physiology laboratories".

"..... it is a sure thing that, as time goes on and the earth becomes more and more completely covered by agriculture, concrete, and impounded, evaporation-proofed, mosquito-proofed water, scientists in these fields will more and more converge on the few protected natural areas for their material for study".

S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian, commented in the July House-Senate Colloquium "..... what the scientists should really be doing is training people for grass roots work in ecology, biology, and the other relevant scientific disciplines." Recent developments in ecological research point toward an awareness of the need for the kind of research and training Mr. Ripley advocates. The International Biological Program (IBP), a worldwide multidisciplinary approach to ecological problems, is gaining momentum. Numerous colleges and universities, as well as private research organizations, have initiated programs oriented toward the basic ecological approach.

This is the area in which the University of Idaho believes it can make a significant contribution. Much work has been done at the University concerning wildlands and wildland management in the past and this research and training will be continued. Increased emphasis, however, will be placed

on an interdisciplinary approach to basic research in wilderness environments. To facilitate this program, the University proposes to purchase, equip and staff a Wilderness Research Center in the Idaho Primitive Area.

JUSTIFICATION

The Idaho Primitive Area, located in central Idaho, is a 1,232,744-acre tract administered by the U. S. Forest Service for wilderness values. The area is currently classified as "Primitive"; however, hearings concerning reclassification to "Wilderness" status are tentatively scheduled for 1971. It appears likely that this reclassification will be accomplished, as provided for by the Wilderness Act of 1964. A 65-acre ranch, located in the geographical heart of the Primitive Area, is offered for sale to the University for use as a center for wilderness research.

The concept of a Wilderness Research Center would unify under one research authority the disciplines of the University of Idaho and its co-operators. The Center, located strategically in the principal wild areas of the Western United States, would provide a major research fund solicitor, intellectual resource pool, and a well equipped agency for broadly-conceived research into the descriptive and functional nature of wilderness and man.

Almost 3,000,000 acres of national forest lands in Idaho are dedicated as wilderness. In no other place in the United States, other than Alaska, does there exist such a large and continuous block of land relatively undisturbed by humans. These wilderness lands provide a set of standards against which resource scientists can measure success or

failure of man in the manipulation of his environment.

It is impossible to anticipate all of the types of research or educational efforts that can or will be conducted in this area. Major effort, at least in the first years of the Center's operation, is expected to be concentrated in the following areas of research:

Dynamics of unexploited wildlife populations.

Ecology of unaltered vegetation types.

Ecology of unexploited aquatic environments.

Impact of human use and resultant ecologic changes.

The Nature and Design of the Center:

The future for the Center rests upon the unusual opportunity to obtain this unique property, the willingness of the owner to sell to the University, and the timely combination of interests, funds, and owner-purchaser compatibility. The Center will encompass 64.84 acres together with 4 buildings and an airstrip along Big Creek, a major tributary of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. Directions are related to the accompanying map. The Taylor Ranch is situated in the heart of the Idaho Primitive area and is accessible only by air or trail. The most ready access is by air. The 2300 foot airstrip accomodates the Travelaire, Cessna or similar sized aircraft with 4-6 passenger capacity. Radio-telephone communications are available through the Oberbillig Radio Service in Boise, Idaho. The Service is maintained daily from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. A weekly star-route mail service is maintained by a chartered plane service out of McCall, Idaho during the summer months and bimonthly after November first.

Description

The four buildings are of sound log construction with aluminum roofs. The Taylor home is a 3 room house with bath. A second cabin contains two bedrooms and adjoining bath. These two cabins have modern plumbing with septic tanks. The third cabin is a single unit without bath and the fourth T-shaped cabin is a combination sleeping, kitchen and dining area. This cabin is not modern. Water for domestic use as well as for irrigation comes out of Pioneer Creek and is piped down to the dwellings. The intake is sufficiently far upstream to provide a satisfactory pressure. The water lines were installed by a competent plumber and can be drained if necessary.

The Taylor Ranch is a forest homestead entirely surrounded by the Payette National Forest. The property was patented in 1927 and purchased by Jess Taylor in 1935, who has lived on the ranch since 1950. Mr. Taylor, a 70-year-old retired building contractor, wishes to remain on the property. He prefers to sell his property to the University of Idaho for use as a headquarters for wilderness research rather than have it developed into a guest ranch. Mr. Taylor would be willing to act as a caretaker as long as he retained his home on the ranch. This arrangement would have practical values to the University particularly during the first years of operation of the Wilderness Research Center. The house would be retained by the owner as long as he lived but upon his death would revert to the University.

There is no electricity at present. There is a potential site for a Pelton Wheel on Pioneer Creek. The alternative is a diesel power plant. The U. S. Geological Survey is currently examining the Idaho Primitive Area

for minerals. Preliminary reports state that no minerals of economic value are present that would justify excluding the area from wilderness classification on the basis of mining potential. Four black and white pictures attached to this report show the nature of the ranch and the surrounding terrain. The property is at 3,760 ft. elevation along Big Creek. The surrounding country is forested at the higher elevations with interspersed meadows from 5,000 to 8,000 feet. The rugged granitic country in the Bighorn Crags to the east abounds in lakes.

There is little danger of erosion affecting the Taylor Ranch from the surrounding Primitive Area country. There are no roads which could add rock, silt and debris to the stream. Only a very high intensity rain-storm would likely cause any flooding of the airstrip. The surrounding country in the lower Big Creek drainage is important big game winter range. No erosion on the shrub and grass-covered winter range is apparent in this vicinity. A small spot of over-use exists on a south facing slope across the creek from the ranch. This comes from past horse use during the years when the owner was an active guide and outfitter.

Available lands, airstrips and buildings within the large wilderness areas in Idaho usable for headquarter sites for wilderness research are almost nonexistent. None is known to combine the qualities of the Taylor Ranch for desirable location and access to the extremes in elevation.

General Statement of Purpose

The Center is proposed as a multi-disciplinary center for research of wilderness ecosystems. Scientists from the University, as well as those from other institutions, would be provided with facilities for the

study of environments in a relatively pristine condition. Objectives of the Center would in no way conflict with principles set forth in the Wilderness Act.

"Outside" Research

It would be expected that staff members of the University of Idaho, at least in the first years of the Center's operation, would conduct the bulk of the research. Scientists from other institutions in the United States and abroad would, however, be encouraged to undertake certain problems, depending upon available space and facilities.

Policy Toward Use

Pressures from the public to "use" the landing field and other facilities must be expected. To avoid situations which might detract from the Center's intent and purpose, firm guidelines must be established. Visitation would be by permission only. Use of the landing field by hunting and fishing parties and other recreationists would be prohibited. Commercial operations such as mining interests and hunting and fishing guide services would be denied use of the landing field and other facilities. The same rules and regulations would apply to University personnel---visitation would be on a "business only" basis. The University does not intend to "lock up" the area to the public---official visitors and those with a genuine interest in viewing research activities and facilities would be welcomed.

Administration

The Center would be administered by a University-wide committee,

appointed by the President. The committee would be responsible for the operation of the Center in keeping with University goals and policies. It would screen proposed research projects, assign priorities, make budget decisions, and in general, supervise the overall research program. A director hired for on-the-ground operation of the Center would work with this committee.

Staff

It is anticipated that the interests, talents, and skills of the entire staff of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences as well as those of faculty and staff of the Water Resources Institute, and the disciplines of botany, zoology, soils, geology, sociology, recreational psychology, nutrition and others will be centered in this common research endeavor. Support of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Idaho Cooperative Fishery and Wildlife Research Units is assured.

A. Administration

Ernest W. Hartung, Ph. D. President

J. W. Watts, B.S. Business Manager

H. Walter Steffens, Ph. D. Vice President, academic affairs

Ernest W. Wohletz, M.S.(For.) Dean, College of Forestry, Wildlife
and Range Sciences

Boyd A. Martin, Ph. D. Dean, College of Letters and Sciences

James E. Kraus, Ph. D. Dean, College of Agriculture

Rolland R. Reid, Ph. D. Dean, College of Mines

H. Sidwell Smith, Ph. D. P.E. Dean, College of Engineering

Melbourne L. Jackson, Ph. D. P.E. Dean, Graduate School

B. Housing and Maintenance

George Gagon, B.S.(C.E.)P.E. Director, Physical Plant

C. Research staff available

Forest Management - Merrill E. Deters, Ph. D. Prof. of Forestry
Frederick D. Johnson, M.S. Ass't Prof. Forestry
Franklin H. Pitkin, B.S. Ass't Prof. Forestry
Forest Recreation - Howard R. Alden, M.S. Ass't Prof. Forestry
Forest Genetics - Chi-Wu Wang, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Forestry
Forest Entomology - John A. Schenk, Ph. D. Ass't Prof. Forestry
William F. Barr, Ph. D. Prof., Entomology
Forest Pathology - Arthur D. Partridge, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Forestry
Range Management - Edwin W. Tisdale, Ph. D. Prof. Range Management
Lee A. Sharp, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Range Management
Minoru Hironaka, Ph. D. Ass't Prof. Range Management
Wildlife Management Maurice G. Hornocker, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof.
Wildlife Management
Richard R. Knight, Ph. D. Ass't Prof.
Wildlife Management
Kenneth E. Hungerford, Ph. D. Prof. Wildlife
Management
Elwood G. Bizeau, M.S. Ass't Prof. Wildlife
Management
Fishery Management- Donald W. Chapman, Ph. D. Prof. Fishery Management
T. C. Bjornn, Ph. D. Ass't Prof. Fishery Management
Craig MacPhee, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Fishery
Management
Soil Science - Howard Loewenstein, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Forestry
Roger W. Harder, M.S. Assoc. Prof. Agr.
Biochemistry and Soils
Maynard A. Fosberg, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Agr.
Biochemistry and soils
Water Resources and- Calvin C. Warnick, M.S.(C.E.)P.E. Prof. Civil
Management Engineering
George H. Belt, Ph. D. Ass't Prof. Forestry
Gilbert L. Cory, M.S. P.E. Prof. Agr. Engineering
Geology - Peter L. Siems, S.C.D. Ass't Prof. Mines
William B. Hall, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Geology
Botany - Alvin R. Aller, Ph. D. Ass't Prof. Botany
Lorin W. Roberts, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Botany
Edmund E. Tylutki, Ph. D. Assoc. Prof. Botany
Zoology - Stewart C. Schell, Ph. D. Prof. Zoology
Earl J. Larrison, M.S. Assoc. Prof. Zoology
Anthropology - Alfred W. Bowers, Ph. D. Prof. Anthropology
Psychology - Victor E. Montgomery, Ph. D. Prof. Psychology
Radioisotopes - Peter K. Freeman, Ph. D. Prof. Chemistry
Chemistry - Malcolm M. Renfrew, Ph. D. Prof. Chemistry

Proposed Cost

The cost of the Taylor Ranch is \$100,000. The University, in March, 1967, placed \$5,000 down on an option to buy. This option expires in March, 1969. For the Taylor Ranch to become functional within the first year the sum of \$20,000 should be added to the purchase price.

It is difficult to appraise a property of this nature because there is nothing comparable available for purchase. The current price of unimproved land along the Salmon River within the Idaho Primitive Area is \$1,000 per acre and up.

The University of Idaho placed in its 1967-69 budget the following operating funds.

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| Salary, Administrator - wildlife ecologist | \$28,000.00 |
| Clerical Assistance | 4,200.00 |
| Immediate Capital investments | 9,000.00 |
| Travel | 2,800.00 |
| Other Expense | 2,000.00 |
| Irregular Help | <u>3,000.00</u> |
| Total | \$49,000.00 |

Additional operating and research funding as needed will be sought from other fund granting foundations.

Request

The Board of Regents of the University of Idaho requests, from privately endowed funding organizations, \$120,000 for the purpose of purchasing the property described (\$100,000) and providing \$20,000 for the construction and provisions necessary to make the Wilderness Research Center functional in the first year following acquisition.