

OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES REVIEW COMMISSION

WHAT IT IS and DOES

Read carefully



March 15, 1960
Washington 25, D.C.

OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES REVIEW
COMMISSION

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Introduction

This document sets forth the basic purposes, the organizational structure and the responsibilities of the Outdoor Recreational Resources Review Commission. The concepts and philosophies which it expresses have been evolved during the life of the Commission since it was established by the 85th Congress.

This document addresses itself to the history and basic philosophy of the Commission. It is not an effort to report on our completed, current or proposed work. This will be done in subsequent publications.

It is hoped that "What It Is and Does" will serve as helpful background information for those interested in the work of the Commission. At appropriate later dates it will be supplemented by reports on our studies, and of course the Commission's full views and findings will appear in its final report.

This material was made available to the Advisory Council as background material for its meeting with the Commission on January 25-26, 1960.

Laurance S. Rockefeller
Chairman

Origin

What is the future of outdoor recreation in the United States? During the rest of the present century, what opportunities will people have to enjoy the host of outdoor recreational activities which they are seeking in rapidly increasing numbers? Will the supply, as many fear, fall far short of the demand? Just what are the facts; and if the prospect is disturbing, just what can be done to improve the situation?

Questions such as these led Congress, through passage of Public Law 85-470 of June 28, 1958, to establish an Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, with instructions to identify the problems and to recommend solutions. This action was taken after thorough consideration and with the virtually unanimous approval of federal and state governmental agencies, private organizations representing a wide variety of interests, and individuals from many walks of life.

The Act made the Commission an independent body, without administrative duties or authority, but with broad investigative and advisory responsibilities in an important, complex, and relatively unexplored field. An appropriation of \$2,500,000 was authorized and the Commission was instructed to submit its report by September 1, 1961.

The preamble to the Act indicated the goals which Congress had in mind:

"To preserve, develop, and secure accessibility to all American people of present and future generations such quality and quantity of outdoor recrea-

tion resources as will be necessary and desirable for individual enjoyment, and to assure the spiritual, cultural, and physical benefits that such outdoor recreation provides.

"To inventory and evaluate the outdoor recreation resources and opportunities of the Nation, to determine the types and location of such resources and opportunities which will be required by present and future generations.

"To make comprehensive information and recommendations leading to these goals available to the President, the Congress, and the individual States and Territories."

Congress clearly recognized that in this mechanized and urbanized twentieth century man cannot afford to ignore the relationship between himself and the world of nature, and that outdoor recreation constitutes a valuable means of enjoying and benefiting from that experience.

Organization

The commission consists of two majority and two minority members of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs appointed by the President of the Senate, two majority and two minority members of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs appointed by the Speaker of the House, and seven citizens appointed by the President, including the Chairman.

It held its first meeting on September 25, 1958. The following year was devoted to the recruitment and

organization of a staff, to the establishment of contacts with public and private agencies interested in outdoor recreation, to program planning, and to the initiation of basic studies. Substantial funds for the prosecution of the Commission's work did not become available until September 1959.

The staff consists of a relatively small but highly competent group, including an Executive Director and a Deputy Director for Studies, under whom are men in charge of inventory and government relations and of forecasts and economic studies, with a supporting force of professional and clerical assistants. Among the fields represented are economics, political science, public administration, sociology, law, statistics, planning, and resource management. These men are responsible for execution of the program of studies approved by the Commission, with which they will continually maintain close relations. They will conduct investigations of their own, will supervise studies handled by other agencies under grants or contracts, will analyze, interpret, and evaluate the material obtained, and will prepare the results for consideration and action by the Commission.

The Commission is assisted by an Advisory Council consisting of twenty-five members appointed by the Commission and fourteen liaison officers appointed by the head of each federal department or independent agency which has a direct interest and responsibility in any phase of outdoor recreation. The liaison officers facilitate contacts with the federal agencies and provide an effective means of assuring full use of their records and other resources.

The members of the Council appointed by the Commission were chosen, as provided in the Act, as representative of major geographical areas and also a wide variety of state organizations, private organizations, industries, and interests which are directly

engaged in or affected by outdoor recreational activities. The Commission purposely included representatives of widely diverse interests and points of view in its chief advisory body in order to assure full consideration of all facets and relationships of outdoor recreation, including those that may be regarded as adverse to other uses.

The Advisory Council attends at least two meetings a year at which it advises on programs of studies, questions of policy, and other similar matters. In the interim its members provide a useful channel of communication between the Commission and the agencies, organizations, and interests represented. The service of the Council is increasing in value as the Commission's work progresses.

At the request of the Commission, the Governors of each of the fifty states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have designated Contact Officers who provide a practical and appropriate source of information and cooperation. They will prove a great asset in helping the Commission to make full use of the wealth of data and experience which is available in the various states.

Participation by the interested public in the work of the Commission will be sought through national and regional hearings. These hearings will provide opportunities for organizations and individuals to express their views and to make recommendations. The Commission is also arranging for round-table discussions, seminars, and conferences with experts in the subjects which it is studying.

Scope

The Act defined outdoor recreation resources as meaning the land and water areas and associated

resources which provide or may in the future provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, irrespective of ownership. Although recreation facilities, programs, and opportunities usually associated with urban development are excluded from our studies, we must take into account the relationship which urban facilities may have on the demand for developments outside the city limits. While the Commission is not directed to recommend ways and means of making adequate provision for urban recreation, that field must be studied because of its interrelations with "outdoor recreation".

The scope of the Commission's responsibilities is broadened by the fact that "recreation" has a dual meaning. It is the activity which uses leisure time for relaxation and enjoyment; and it is the refreshment of body and spirit (the re-creation) which results from that activity. It is both a means and an end. One undertakes the activity of recreation for the purpose of obtaining the result of re-creation.

This distinction is important from the standpoint both of the individual and the community. The activity has direct economic effects which can be measured in dollars and cents. The result of the activity may benefit the recreationist physically, mentally, aesthetically, and spiritually, and thus make him a better rounded individual and a more useful citizen. These benefits, which can be measured in monetary terms only imperfectly, if at all, have a value as real as it is "intangible".

As a use of limited means, recreation imposes a responsibility for the wise allocation of scarce resources among alternative uses; and as a source of personal satisfaction and development to those who engage in it, recreation imposes the further responsi-

bility of exercising policy in such a manner that the widest possible dispersion of benefits is achieved.

In addition to the general orientation of the Commission's activities provided by the preamble, specific instructions concerning subjects to be covered are included in the body of the Act. The entire program provides for the first time for a national and comprehensive study of all aspects of outdoor recreation--picnicking, camping, fishing, hunting, swimming, skin diving, water skiing, boating, hiking, motoring, and so on-- with a view to proposing plans for coordinated action by public and private agencies in providing adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation for all Americans. The emphasis is on people and on ways and means of meeting their prospective desires and needs as individuals and as members of society.

To handle successfully the large and complex undertaking assigned to the Commission, in the short time and with the limited funds specified by the Act, will require intensive effort, with widespread cooperation and full use of information already available from every possible source.

Inventories

Congress directed the Commission to prepare a "nationwide inventory of outdoor recreation resources and opportunities." Such an inventory is an essential accompaniment of the estimates of prospective requirements, which are of little significance without knowledge of the means to meet them. It is being approached from three angles:

1. Inventorying and evaluating public parks, forests, lakes, streams, reservoirs, and other land and water areas already available and designated for

recreational use. The necessary data will be furnished chiefly by appropriate federal, state, and local agencies. Two pilot studies -- in Washington and Pennsylvania -- have laid the foundation for more comprehensive national studies which will provide detailed information on such items as location, size, characteristics, use, management, administrative problems, and plans for future use.

2. Developing a broad picture of the capacity of other land and water resources, irrespective of ownership, to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. This information will necessarily be much more general than that for public areas already devoted to recreational use, but will give a fairly accurate picture of the areas' availability to meet mounting pressures. Special attention will be paid to lands accessible to major centers of population. Full use will be made of data already available through various public agencies and private landowners.

In estimating the ability of land and water areas in both this and the previous category to support recreational activities of different kinds, consideration must be given to the "carrying capacity", that is, the number of people for whom such areas can provide satisfying recreational experiences. This capacity will vary both with different conditions of soil, topography, precipitation, and vegetative cover and with the kind of recreation involved. It is much greater, for example, with picnic and camp grounds than with wilderness areas.

3. Studying special regions and special kinds of recreational areas. Alaska, for example, will receive particular attention because of the inadequacy of present knowledge of the extent, character, accessibility, present and prospective use, and potential economic importance of its recreational resources.

The wholly different recreational opportunities and problems of Hawaii also merit a close look.

Intensive and objective studies of wilderness problems will provide a sound basis for recommendations in a field marked by strong partisanship and widely varying viewpoints. They will deal with such matters as the definition of wilderness, the character and significance of wilderness values, criteria for comparing wilderness and other values (both recreational and commercial), the justifiable extent of wilderness areas (how much is enough?), and problems of administration and management.

Shorelines and beaches on salt water and the Great Lakes are a unique recreational asset which warrant special studies. These will determine the location, character, and availability of areas suitable for recreational use, means of preventing pollution and other damage, and measures needed to assure public access to them. Inland lakes and streams, which comprise one of the greatest unrealized opportunities for recreational use, will receive comparably intensive study.

Pressures

Since the value of natural resources to people lies in their actual or potential use, Congress instructed the Commission to "determine the amount, kind, quality, and location of such outdoor recreational resources and opportunities as will be required by the year 1976 and the year 2000"; and also to plan for providing "such quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources as will be necessary and desirable for individual enjoyment, and to assure the spiritual, cultural, and physical benefits that such outdoor recreation provides."

Compliance with these sweeping mandates will require an intensive study of past, present, and future trends, in which both history and prophecy will play a prominent part. A first step is to determine what the American people now "require" in the way of outdoor recreation, recognizing that "requirements" result from a desire, or preference, for a particular form or forms of outdoor recreation plus the means and the time to translate the desire into action.

The Commission has consequently initiated a nation-wide survey to find out the ways in which people of every sort and description actually spend their leisure time, in what other ways they would prefer to spend it if they had the means, the reasons for their preferences, and their evaluation of the benefits derived. The data will be so collected as to provide information concerning the relationship between recreational activities and such items as occupation, age, sex, income, marital status, size of family, length of vacation, and place of residence (city, farm, East, West, etc.). It will also determine about those who participate in outdoor recreation, where they go, how often and for how long, how far they travel, what means of transportation they use, where they stay (hotels, motels, camps, etc.), how much they spend, what facilities they prefer for different kinds of recreation (hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, skiing, boating, etc.), why they chose the form and place of recreation which they did, and what they feel they got out of the experience.

The results of the survey will be statistically significant for the country as a whole. They will also have considerable validity for major regions and perhaps for smaller geographical divisions.

Since the great bulk of the population now lives in urban and suburban centers, more intensive studies

will be made in several representative metropolitan areas. Because of the large number of people involved, it is essential to have accurate information concerning their "requirements" for outdoor recreation, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and concerning the factors which influence these requirements. These studies also will have statistical significance.

Understanding of present and probable future activities and preferences in outdoor recreation will be sharpened by historical studies of past trends and of the factors chiefly responsible for them. The road we have already travelled gives at least some indication of the road we are likely to travel in the future. Even more important in projecting "requirements" is a rigorous analysis of the factors by which they are controlled. These include the number, character, and location of the population in 1976 and 2000, the amount and distribution of leisure time, the per capita disposable income, the transportation facilities available, and the costs of travel. Determination of the changes that will take place in these factors in the next forty years is difficult. Still more difficult is interpretation of the probable influence of these changes on the uses which people will choose to make of their leisure time and of their preferences within the field of outdoor recreation when that field is their choice. Both difficulties increase as the period under consideration is extended, but within limits can be overcome.

This situation has led the Commission to initiate a study of the social and economic trends and of the patterns of living that have affected the use made by Americans of their leisure time in the past and that are likely to do so in the future. Growing urbanization, technological developments in transportation and other fields, foreign travel, advertising campaigns by equipment manufacturers, transportation agencies, tourist bureaus, and Chambers of Commerce, changes

in educational standards and content, expansion of cultural interests, and modification or elimination of old recreational opportunities or development of new ones, may all have a material impact on the kind and amount of outdoor recreation that people will seek.

Closely associated with these trends are the spiritual, cultural, and physical benefits derived from outdoor recreation. Does it make the recreationist healthier, more vigorous, more cooperative, more efficient, more appreciative of the finer things in life, more conscious of his civic responsibilities? These are important questions, since in a maturing society people will, and should, turn more and more to uses of leisure time which yield lasting rewards in personal and social development, rather than to those which afford only temporary enjoyment.

Identification of the character and duration of these values, so far as practicable, their measurement, and ways and means of enhancing them will be examined by experts in such fields as psychology, sociology, anthropology, medicine, and education. Suggestions for practical programs that will teach people how to behave and to take care of themselves in the open, how to safeguard the recreational resources which they use, how to appreciate the myriad geological, physical, and biological manifestations of nature, how to imbibe spiritual inspiration from the outdoors -- in short, how to obtain maximum satisfactions from outdoor recreation -- may well be important products of such studies.

Investigations along all of these lines, as instructed by Congress, are essential for a reasonably reliable estimate of prospective pressures and for an intelligent appraisal of the benefits to be expected from various forms of outdoor recreation. Combined with the inventories and with studies of competing uses, they will provide the basis for estimating the

kind and amount of land and water and of streams and shorelines needed and available to meet anticipated pressures.

Alternative Uses

Recognition of the importance of the country's land and water resources for uses other than outdoor recreation is contained in the statement by Congress that "sound planning of resource utilization for the full future welfare of the Nation must include coordination and integration of . . . multiple uses."

A zooming population and steadily rising standards of living will inevitably exert increasing pressures on natural resources of all kinds, including space itself. We shall need more minerals, more wood, more livestock, and perhaps more agricultural crops. The expansion of urban and suburban centers, highways, and airports will remove much land from other uses. Demands will mount for the use of water for municipal and industrial purposes, for irrigation, and for power.

How will outdoor recreation fare in competition with these other pressures? The answer will depend in part on the compatibility of recreational use with other uses and in part on the value placed on recreation by the American people in comparison with other products and services obtainable from land and water.

"Multiple use" has gradually come to be regarded by some as the solution for all of our land-use problems, although there is wide difference of opinion as to its meaning, application, and practical significance. In essence, it aims to manage all of the varied resources of an administrative unit in a way that will best achieve the objectives of the owner. It may pro-

duce a more varied and larger joint product than "single use", but it cannot do away with the facts that not all uses are compatible and that all of several products or services cannot be maximized on any given area, no matter what its size.

The conditions under which and the extent to which recreation and other uses are compatible or incompatible will be studied by the Commission. In other words, it will explore the potentialities and the limitations of multiple use as a means of providing adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation in competition or in coordination with other uses. Where irreconcilable conflicts between uses exist, the decision as to which should dominate must be based on relative values. Here the economic and social studies already discussed have an important contribution to make.

Responsibilities

The Commission is enjoined by Congress to "recommend what policies should best be adopted and what programs be initiated, at each level of government and by private organizations and other citizen groups and interests, to meet future requirements."

This charge raises the whole question of the responsibility of different levels of government and of private interests to provide the recreational opportunities and facilities which will be needed in the next fifteen to forty years. What do the past records and present activities of different agencies (federal, state, county, and private) indicate as to their relative effectiveness in providing the needed quantity, quality, and distribution of recreational opportunities and facilities? What are the prospects for the future? Why have public agencies so far taken such a major

part, and private owners such a minor part, in this particular field?

Answers to such questions as these, which will be sought by the Commission, will throw light on the principles and the practical considerations which should govern the assignment of responsibility. They will be helpful to the Commission in proposing criteria for determining where responsibility should be assigned as between and within different levels of government.

The potential role of private lands is of particular importance because they occupy three-fourths of the land area of the country and because they comprise the great bulk of land ownership in the East where the density of population is greatest. The Commission will therefore pay special attention to ways and means of using a larger part of this tremendous area in such a strategic location for recreational purposes. Will private owners voluntarily go much further in this direction than they have in the past as a means of reaping a financial profit or of building up goodwill? If not, what can be done to increase their interest? For example, would some public encouragement in such forms as subsidies, tax remissions, leases, or the construction of recreational improvements be both desirable and effective?

The institutional and legal framework within which lands and waters are managed has an important influence on the problem of responsibility which the Commission must study. What, for example, are the laws governing public waters and the rights of riparian owners in different parts of the Country? What are the legislative provisions for land management encouraging or controlling the practice of forestry on private lands and the use of such land for recreation? What is the influence of zoning on recreation? What is the constitutional and statutory au-

thority of various levels of government in this field?

With respect to programs, what should be the practice of government agencies and private owners in such matters as fees, facilities, and education? How should these practices vary with the different kinds of recreation? How can overcrowding which is detrimental from both the physical and the aesthetic standpoints be avoided? These are questions on which information will be obtained from some of the studies previously described, but in the answering of which opinion will still have to play an important part.

Looking Ahead

Congress' final instruction to the Commission was to recommend "means whereby the review may effectively be kept current in the future."

The Commission is a temporary body which ceases to exist not later than one year after submission of its final report. That report will cover all of the subjects assigned to it by Congress. It will contain an analysis and interpretation of the numerous studies which it undertakes, together with recommendations as to policies which it believes should be adopted. These recommendations will be based on thorough study of the information and of the views which it has been able to obtain from all possible sources. It will represent the Commission's best judgment as to the policies and programs which should be adopted in the field of outdoor recreation in the best interests of "all American people of present and future generations."

Obviously, however, no report on so broad, complex, and controversial a field can be 100 percent complete in its coverage or command universal sup-

port, nor can all of its recommendations, either as submitted or revised, be effectuated immediately by the appropriate legislative and administrative bodies and other agencies. Time will be required to find and to apply solutions to many current problems, and new problems will keep appearing. Continuing change is inevitable.

The Commission will therefore devise and recommend a plan which will aim to assure continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated consideration and study of problems in the field of outdoor recreation by appropriate public and private agencies.

STATE CONTACT OFFICERS

(At our request the Governors of the fifty States have appointed contact officers to work with the Commission. This provides an orderly and effective means of communicating with the State governments in our work. The following are the contact officers as of March 1, 1960.)

Alabama:

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Alaska:

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Joe Clark, Superintendent
State Park Commission
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"Recreation promotes health and health means strong people upon which the future of our nation depends. Our recreation resources are as much a part of our national resources as are our minerals, our fuels and our forests."

--Dwight D. Eisenhower