

FUTURES AGENDA FOR WILDERNESS IN THE NATURAL RESOURCE PROFESSIONS¹

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ABSTRACT.--Natural resource management professionals must expand their leadership in wilderness matters, bringing their reasoned, data-based and ecologically based approach to bear on wilderness related issues. I propose a future agenda that would expand resource professionals involvement beyond wilderness management to also pursue balance in completing wilderness allocations, expand wilderness science, develop the international implications of wilderness, and celebrate wilderness experiences and their meaning as one of the driving forces behind the wilderness movement. A key could be an expanded wilderness science program, allocating funds to land grant universities according to the wilderness acreages in each state, and thus underwriting environmental monitoring and assessment and meeting the research needs of all the wilderness management agencies.

Wilderness, especially during the past 25 years under the Wilderness Act, has dramatically influenced our nation's resource management. It's important this year, the 25th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, to review our wilderness accomplishments, to reflect on the future's unfinished wilderness business, and to plan forestry's role in that future. I'll address the past 25 years under the Wilderness Act to identify some trends, and then identify 5 major items I think we need to pursue in a future agenda for wilderness in the natural resource professions.

The agenda I propose would expand activity beyond the resource profession's usual focus on wilderness management, because such an expansion is necessary if we are to provide leadership and be a major influence on the future. What we have to offer is process—a reasoned approach, data-based and ecologically based, an approach that is urgently needed in all wilderness issues.

The issues I think we need to include in our future's agenda and provide leadership for are:

1. Strengthen wilderness management—especially public involvement and the training of agency managers.
2. Pursue balance in completing the wilderness system, in enhancing qualities of the system and balancing the impacts.
3. Expand wilderness science by initiating a new research program that would allocate funds to the nation's land grant universities

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based on each state's wilderness acreage, and focus on environmental assessment and monitoring and wilderness management needs of all the agencies.

4. Develop the international implications of wilderness as a concept inspiring conservation efforts worldwide.
5. Acknowledge and celebrate the values of wilderness experiences. That spiritual enrichment from wilderness experiences, that so many people seek and that many organized programs advertise, is a major force in the wilderness movement. We need to acknowledge such personal enrichment as one of the wilderness values that can be protected and enhanced by wilderness management.

WILDERNESS BEFORE 1964

As you ponder the need for our involvement in things beyond wilderness management, I want you to think about how the wilderness movement and system have evolved.

Our country's wilderness movement did not begin with the Wilderness Act, but that legislation was a lever for action. It put the force of law behind efforts by wilderness advocates and public agencies to protect as wilderness the best of our nation's remaining roadless lands. Just as important, it established some standards and procedures under which remaining eligible lands would be considered for wilderness designation. The Wilderness Act also gave birth to public involvement in natural resource management as we know it today—with the act's requirements for public hearings on wilderness proposals.

Wilderness has been an important part of our nation's history from its earliest habitation by indigenous peoples to the landing of the pilgrims and the westward exploration and settlement. During this time, wilderness has come full circle in human perceptions,

from the perspective of indigenous people who saw wilderness as natural human habitat, to the view by early settlers that wilderness was a hostile environment to be overcome. Now a common view is that wilderness symbolizes a natural balance made possible only through the absence of human influence and development.

Several writers and artists, then photographers and, more recently, musicians have led, documented and interpreted this evolution in western human perception of wilderness, from that of an environment to be conquered to one to be protected.

Like every social change, this transition from an increasingly shared cultural perception to government action was led by intensely motivated people of vision and determination. Their names are familiar, and they were natural resource leaders—Aldo Leopold, Arthur Carhart, Howard Zahniser, John Marshall, Olaus and Margaret Murie, and many others. Their vision, their zeal and their commitment to the ideal of permanent wilderness protection, and the leadership they provided toward that goal, are what ultimately led to passage of the Wilderness Act. I marvel at the magnitude of their accomplishment, which was no less than getting congressional agreement to exclude large areas from development in a rapidly developing nation. The 25th anniversary of the Wilderness Act should be dedicated in part to the memory of these people.

I wonder if the early leaders of the wilderness movement understood the power of their vision. I wonder what they would think about the progress of the past 25 years. I think they would be amazed! They struggled for decades to legitimize the idea of legislative protection for wilderness. Then they nurtured 8 years of debate over 66 separate wilderness bills. Would they believe that during the next 25 years, more than 102 additional pieces of wilderness legislation would be passed to create a national wilderness preservation system of 90.8 million acres and 474 areas? Who would have dreamed all that would happen? Has any issue been the subject of so much legislation during the past 25 years? Would the early leaders believe that now a major issue is releasing national forest roadless lands from wilderness consideration—not getting them considered?

During 25 years far more acreage has been allocated to the national wilderness preservation system than the original authors anticipated. A dozen years ago, as the trajectory for the size of the Wilderness System was beginning to unfold in earnest, I had the good fortune to serve as a Congressional Fellow on the staff of Senator Frank Church of Idaho. Senator Church, one of the congressional wilderness leaders, was floor manager of the Wilderness Act when it passed the Senate in 1964. I heard Senator Church express surprise at the expanding scope of the Wilderness System. He stated privately, and at the First Distinguished Wilderness Resource Lecture at the University of Idaho, that "altogether, a wilderness system of 40-50 million acres was anticipated (by congress)" (Church, 1977).

But, the Wilderness Act set the stage for wider application of the wilderness idea through subsequent legislation that would expand its application and further define its meaning (Browning, Hendee and Roggenbuck, 1989). For example, the Wilderness Act established a standard of 5,000 acres as the minimum size for wilderness consideration, with some exceptions such as islands. In 1975, the so-called "Eastern Wilderness Act" expanded wilderness in the East, and established several areas less than 5,000 acres; in 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act expanded eligibility for wilderness study and classification of lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management; in 1978, the Endangered American Wilderness Act established that wild areas previously influenced by man were eligible for wilderness consideration and, by precedent and regulations, supported a less stringent view of wilderness classification and management criteria; in 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) added 56 million acres to the wilderness system and further demonstrated

congressional willingness to address unique local conditions with special provisions such as allowing certain motorized uses, maintaining cabins for public use, providing for subsistence uses of natural resources and allowing structures for aquaculture. Also in 1980, the Colorado Wilderness Act and its Committee Reports provided additional wilderness management direction, specifically for livestock grazing, but generally providing for a more flexible approach, making possible consideration of additional areas.

Thus, while the Wilderness Act was an important benchmark in our wilderness policy and system, the wilderness movement has continued to evolve. If the past is any guide to the future, the next 25 years will see significant additional expression of our nation's interest in wilderness and continuing evolution of the wilderness movement. We need to look to the future and commit energies from the resource management professions to providing some direction. What better way to honor the accomplishments of the past 25 years than to apply the professional's reasoned and data-based approach to an agenda seeking the most from an enduring resource of wilderness. Establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System is one of our nation's crowning achievements. It has made a major impact on the natural resource professions and land allocations. We need to do those things that will redeem our professional leadership responsibilities and opportunities in wilderness.

Here are five goals in a leadership agenda I think we should pursue:

1. Strengthen Wilderness Management

First, we must strengthen wilderness management, our significant progress notwithstanding. With a current wilderness system of 90 million acres, and a likelihood of its completion with 20-30 million acres more in the next 25 years, the protection and enhancement of wilderness values will depend more and more on wilderness management. By now we've seen general acceptance of the idea that merely drawing a line around an area won't preserve the naturalness and solitude the Wilderness Act calls for. Management is required.

The 25 years under the Wilderness Act have given birth to wilderness management as a new field of forestry. Specialty classes on wilderness management are now taught in many forestry schools; there is a textbook on the subject; the Society of American Foresters has published a Wilderness Management Task Force report, has organized a standing working group on the subject, sponsors technical sessions at every annual convention, and has sponsored several special conferences on wilderness management. This month the Second National Wilderness Management Conference convened in Minneapolis.

Although wilderness management is growing rapidly as a resource management specialty, public understanding and public involvement in wilderness management must be strengthened. As the wilderness fires of 1988 and the aftermath of political and public reaction illustrate, we have a long way to go in achieving public understanding and even professional agreement about how fire in wilderness is to be managed. Less visible, but equally challenging wilderness management issues include: regulations for outfitters and guides that protect the wilderness while at the same time embrace the needs of a long-standing clientele; coordination among users of wilderness resources such as state departments of fish and game, downstream water users, and owners of winter range adjacent to wilderness and used by wilderness wildlife in their seasonal migrations. We need more public involvement and help developing coherent, acceptable wilderness management plans with clearly stated standards and methods for monitoring progress.

Strengthening wilderness management will require that agencies commit to more wilderness management training for their personnel

and that wilderness users and groups expand their involvement. Resource management professionals must lead the way.

2. Pursue Balance In Completing The Wilderness System

Second, we need to provide more leadership in pursuing balance and a reasoned approach in completing the wilderness system. The Wilderness Act was driven by the need to balance land use. Indeed, wilderness, in symbol and fact, has represented the concept of balance; it is a place where natural balance remains. We need to lead the search for balance in completing wilderness allocations by advocating and demonstrating a reasoned approach to enhancing desirable qualities of the wilderness system and balancing associated impacts.

Reflecting on the 474 existing wilderness areas now found in 44 states and in every region, are there possibilities for improving biodiversity and the representation of ecosystems now excluded or inadequately represented? Are there opportunities to increase the diversity of appropriate wilderness recreational opportunities? Could we improve the opportunity of urban populations for wilderness experiences? The wilderness system will be completed during the next 25 years, and resource managers should provide leadership with a reasoned approach toward balancing and enhancing the recreational, scientific, educational and historic values that the Wilderness Act mentions.

Of course, the hardest thing of all to balance will be the opportunity costs of Wilderness System additions that will foreclose options for other activities. But we must have a reasoned and data based approach to identifying and balancing potential impacts of wilderness additions on the lives of people and local economies. This will be the greatest challenge—and resource managers must provide more leadership to meet that challenge.

3. Expand Wilderness Science

Third, we must expand wilderness science. The use of wilderness for scientific purposes, including environmental monitoring and assessment, was part of the original vision for the wilderness system. But we've not taken full advantage of the tremendous opportunities to use our wilderness resources to learn more about the natural world and how it compares to developed areas. The wilderness system contains the most natural remaining areas in our nation; from these baseline areas we can explore such things as the environmental effects of global climate change, how we are affecting natural processes in managed areas, how natural ecosystems really function. This information is basic to using and protecting our natural environments everywhere. But it will take expanded funding for research and environmental monitoring and assessment to gain these values from wilderness.

The Forest Service has an outstanding research branch, and I spent most of my 25-year Forest Service career in that organization. Among their distinguished efforts has been a modest but outstanding wilderness research program that began when wilderness was first classified in the mid-60s. I don't want to overlook the wilderness research efforts by other agencies, but they have generally focused on management problems.

Now there are nearly 90 million acres of wilderness in a diverse system managed by four federal agencies and located in every region of the country and 44 states. We need a wilderness research program directly applicable to all the agencies and all the wilderness in every region of the country. A new program might follow the model of the McIntire-Stennis research program in the nation's land grant universities, but with new research authority and funding allocated proportionately to each state's classified wilderness acreage. Research could be directed toward environmental monitoring and assessment and the wilderness management needs of each agency, in each state and region. We need such a program

to harvest the scientific values of our wilderness system and to support its management. In a time of concern about global climate change, one of the most important uses of wilderness could be to assess and monitor change.

4. Develop The International Implications Of Wilderness

The creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System is one of our nation's crowning achievements. This achievement has international implications—not that all countries should do the same, but in the fact and symbol that the most economically developed country in the world recognized the importance of balancing development by protecting some naturalness. Several countries have also set aside areas in wilderness-like reserves to protect natural values and biodiversity in significant portions of ecosystems.

Such countries have often been moved to action or encouraged and inspired by our example of the NWPS. Some countries, like South Africa, may be ahead of us in some elements of wilderness management. In a trip to South Africa last year, I was impressed with fire management on the 200,000-acre Mkamazi Wilderness, beautiful Montana-like alpine rangeland which is prescribed burned on a 4-year rotation.

The Fourth World Wilderness Congress, held in Colorado in 1987, drew 1,700 delegates from 65 nations—and they reminded all of us that wilderness has symbolic meaning for conservation in the broadest sense.

I certainly don't know all the elements of an international outreach linked to the wilderness concept, where it should focus, or what it should include. But I do know that the establishment of our Wilderness System and its management and use for scientific, recreational, cultural and all other uses is an innovation of world-wide significance in resource management and conservation. We need to develop the international implications of this U.S. conservation achievement.

5. Celebrate The Values Of Wilderness Experiences

Fifth, and finally, in our leadership we need to celebrate the perceived benefits of wilderness experiences to people. The original proponents of wilderness frequently referred to the inspirational and recreational benefits of wilderness experiences. They were right! The past 25 years have seen a dramatic increase in wilderness recreation use and in programs offering wilderness experiences for personal growth, therapy and education. These human uses of wilderness document the spiritual values of wilderness experiences—the "S" word that so many resource professionals seem reluctant to acknowledge in our focus on the technology of managing wilderness.

The growing popularity of programs offering wilderness experiences for personal development reflects a belief in their value. Some of the programs have become household words, such as Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School, but scores of lesser known programs and schools include wilderness experiences in their curricula. Those who promoted the Wilderness Act would be amazed, and I think pleased, that some of our nation's leading business organizations now send executives to the wilderness to enhance their self-esteem and confidence, to learn about teamwork and leadership, and to think clearly about their personal goals in an inspiring place. They would also be pleased at the growing belief in the therapeutic values of wilderness as a place where troubled people can clearly address the central issues in their lives—such as addiction, delinquency, psychological disease or emotional trauma, career direction, and personal relationships.

The jury may still be out on the hard scientific evidence of benefits from wilderness experiences, and how wilderness

experiences provide them, but Americans clearly value wilderness as an inspirational and therapeutic place.

Haven't all of you discovered or rediscovered something about yourself or a companion in wilderness—or in some other wild place away from the social intensity and distractions of daily life? And have you wondered about the inspirational or healing powers of such an experience? I certainly have. We need to accept the public's growing belief that the exposure to primal influences distinguishes the wilderness as an extraordinary place for personal growth compared to other locations such as a playground, counseling center, classroom or retreat facility (Hendee & Brown 1988). In wilderness, we must pay close attention to what is going on around us and continually adapt and respond to changing circumstances. Our awareness must be focused on the basics, on the primal truths of existence. We confront the natural world and sense its indifference to us, regardless of our status back home. We feel insignificant in the face of nature's awesome, unforgiving power—the perfect antidote for a self-absorbed ego. Such primal influences permeate the wilderness experience, constantly reminding us of our humble place in nature's order. We experience an awareness that is fully present to the moment. We are alive. This is how all creatures in the wilderness survive.

This, too, is our potential: to experience the world in a primal, immediate, undistorted way. For a moment in wilderness, we take our rightful place beside the creatures of the wild. Our original selves reemerge, long buried beneath the artificial constructs and patterns of society and culture. We sense the mystery of the natural world. This is the real meaning of recreation and renewal: to be reborn with renewed perspective about who and what we are. Such moments of realization are extraordinary when they happen, are

never forgotten and can inspire lives of meaning and accomplishment.

Such spiritual enrichment from wilderness experiences is at the core of the wilderness movement yesterday, today and tomorrow. We need to acknowledge and address that force in our professional activity, lest we be convicted of claims that wilderness resource professionals are only wildertechns, wildercrats and wilderprofs—and are not concerned with such values. If spiritual enrichment, personal growth and therapy are wilderness outputs, shouldn't we apply a professional, reasoned approach to managing wilderness to increase those outputs, too, and maybe even reducing the costs of producing them?

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