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THE ECOLOGY OF THE POLITICAL/ ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS FOR WILDERNESS CLASSIFICATION

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Federal wilderness occupies approximately two percent of the United States;¹ it is located in national parks, national forests and national wildlife refuges, and other public lands. Under the Wilderness Act of 1964, wilderness and potential wilderness areas are now being considered for classification as legal and permanent wilderness.² Wilderness, however, means many things to many people. The Wilderness Act defines it as a natural community that is untrammelled by man who is regarded as a visitor. When man adapts a wilderness area to meet his civilized needs, it can no longer be considered a wilderness, i.e., the natural area and biotic community has been modified by man. Thus with use and development (lumbering, mining, mass recreation), an ecological and cultural resource of wilderness is removed forever.

According to Professor Gilligan, Director, Wildlands Research Center, University of California, Berkeley, much of the wilderness today remains only because it has been uneconomical so far to develop it or because recreational pressures have not yet been strong enough.³ The far greater percentage of wilderness is located in the mountainous public lands of several western states. Wilderness classification studies are currently under way by the United States Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, and Bureau of Land Management on lands under their jurisdiction. Organizations such as the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society with local chapters and local ad hoc wilderness organizations are also conducting studies on federal lands of the above agencies. In many cases, the agencies and organizations are coming up with different boundary recommendations for wilderness proposals.

On the basis of these studies, public hearings will be conducted by the federal agencies concerned within the next two or three years. After the public hearings, the agencies will then determine how much legal and permanent wilderness will be recommended to Congress for

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1. 102 Cong. Rec. 12313-12316 (1956).

2. 16 U.S.C. § 1131 (1964).

3. I. J. Gilligan, *The Development of Policy and Administration of Forest Service Primitive and Wilderness Areas in the Western United States, 1953* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan).

final inclusion in the National Wilderness System. Specific wilderness proposals are considered individually by Congress on a committee procedure basis before being brought before the main bodies. On September 21, 1970, the Omnibus Wilderness Bill, combining 26 areas and 201,000 acres, passed the House of Representatives and the Senate has passed most of the 26 proposals at this time.⁴ In total terms, however, this is a small proportion of the potential wilderness in the United States (1½%). In New Mexico alone, there are some 42 potential wilderness areas according to the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee; many of these areas may or may not have public hearings on them.⁵

Since a deadline of 1974 is included in the Wilderness Act,⁶ the wilderness classification process is definitely pressed for time. Although many public hearings are scheduled for the next two or three years, some of the agencies are behind schedule in doing comprehensive surveys of potential wilderness areas. Much of this is due to the cutback in federal funds as well as severe demands on the United States Geological Survey; this agency is required to study potential wilderness areas for mineral content before recommendations are made. Although the Wilderness Act permits mining of legal wilderness until 1983,⁷ potential wilderness areas may be excluded if sufficient mineral resources are found in them by the United States Geological Survey or private corporations. Much of this, however, will place wilderness in value conflict areas. The discovery of a large mineral deposit in a prime wilderness area may mean mineral exploitation of the area which would destroy a major scenic portion of it with obvious value implications.

In the final analysis, the amount and preservation of wilderness will be determined by the values of human beings including organizational values as they interact in the political/administrative process and power struggle for legal and governmental status (including the private sector). It is realistic to recognize that wilderness needs political and public support based on values that empiricists more often argue are of an emotional rather than "rational" nature. Wilderness preservation, in many cases, is dependent on the recognition of intangible and qualitative values as opposed to tangible or quantitative values as dollars or numbers of people. Yet federal agencies and many aspects of society are committed to values of the first order (progress, materialism, tangibles) as contrasted to values of

4. The Wilderness Society, *Newsletter*, Oct. 1970.

5. Interview with Correy McDonald, Vice President, New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Aug. 20, 1970.

6. 16 U.S.C. § 1131 (1964).

7. *Id.*

the second order (quality, intangibles, ecological considerations) which are advocated by the preservationists and other aspects of society.

Professor Gordon W. Allport, a social psychologist and noted authority on values, considers values to be unattainable goals that exert an important and dynamic influence on conduct and on the process of becoming (some analogy to a conscience). According to Allport, values may serve as internalized images and criteria which project a creative pressure when applicable. Numerous educators agree that values, in many instances, cannot be taught, but that they must be learned by the individual through inspiration and experience. Philosophers note that a value(s) may not consciously emerge until one becomes angry by having certain sensibilities affected, as an example, by a bulldozer plowing through a scenic natural area. Given the complexity of value identification and allocation, it should be recognized that values will be the determining force in the wilderness classification process.

It is realistic to recognize that value determinations are already being made in the study process on the assumption that it is impossible to do a completely "objective" study, particularly in formulating alternatives, inferences, and recommendations. Regardless of study reports from wilderness organizations and public hearings, the federal agencies will be making the *final* recommendations and proposals to Congress on how much wilderness the United States is to have. Regardless of areas of responsibility or clientele, government administrators usually claim that their decisions are in the public interest. This vague concept is often associated with assumed public benefits or needs of a tangible and pragmatic nature. But like any other concept, the public interest is subject to opinions which are based on the values of individuals. Because public opinion is seldom fully understood or expressed, subjective (value) interpretations are made by the government administrator in defining the public interest.⁸

In a typical public hearing on wilderness, agency personnel actually sit in judgment of their own case interests and alternatives. Relative to public participation, public hearings are not called until the agency has formulated a "plan" for the wilderness. Although the agency proposal for the wilderness classification may contain alternatives, it is obvious that the agency has formulated its views based on its own study and vested interests. Thus it cannot make the claim of being an objective and uninterested judge for the public hearings.

8. Henning, *Natural Resources Administration and Public Interest*, 30 Pub. Ad. Rev. 134-140 (1970).

The same administrators who initiate and argue in support of a particular proposal are not good judges in evaluating public criticism, opinions, or alternatives. Professor Reich notes, "Lawyers know from long experience that disinterested, well-considered decisions are most frequently reached by clearcut separation between those who advocated and those who decide."⁹ Thus new types of organizations or institutions may be needed at this level.

Some agencies, particularly the Forest Service, are basing their studies on ecological and regional approaches and orientations, i.e., wilderness areas are not considered as separate entities under "systems" approach. Given the advantages of this, multiple use is still very much a working concept. With attention to economic interests of clientele groups, multiple use can serve as a "smokescreen" in conjunction with "ecological" orientations. Under the broad and general legislative and administrative guidelines, large amounts of discretion are available to agencies and administrators in the wilderness classification process; this discretion naturally involves values and vested interests with tendencies toward economic development and mass recreation of wilderness.

An unreleased Forest Service study noted the high percentage of foresters committed to utilitarian values (logging, grazing, mining) associated with local communities as contrasted with appreciative values of urban communities. Yet, in the wilderness classification and studies process, they are charged with the general public interest for national public lands. Forestry schools, professional and agency indoctrinations *are oriented to producing a timber-management orientation* in many governmental foresters. Although the claim of professionalism and agency objectivity is made by many resource managers and administrators in the wilderness classification process, value considerations pertaining to economics and mass recreation are obvious. Consequently, a "halo" effect cannot divorce these government officials from the political ecology.

With the environmental movement of the last two or three years and the consequent public attention, agencies and their personnel are becoming more responsive to public opinion, ecology and environmental quality. The latter factors are naturally positive to wilderness preservation. The forestry profession, in recent years, has increasing numbers of members who are questioning the dogmatism and commitments to timber management and economic assumptions of the profession.¹⁰ Yet agencies and personnel involved in wilderness are

9. C. Reich, *Bureaucracy and the Forests at Santa Barbara, Cal. 1962* (Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions).

10. Recent issues (within the last several years) of the *J. Forestry* reveal this trend, particularly in calling the profession to be more responsive to public opinion. An excellent

slow to change within the framework and discretion of existing legislative and administrative directives.¹¹ Agency dogmatism, vested interests, limited value bases, and "first order" considerations of society prohibit many immediate positive actions in the wilderness classification process. Unfortunately, almost all of the major decisions on wilderness will be made by 1974 and they will be based on recommendations of the agencies after the public hearings.

Due to geographical factors, valuable public input is being lost in the public hearings which are usually near the proposed wilderness. Much of the support for wilderness comes from urban and eastern areas. Little organizational or individual representation is present from various segments of society, including students. With the advantages of location and obvious economic motivations, adequate representations from local individuals and organizations associated with development is seldom a problem at public hearings on wilderness. Agency personnel are also given adequate input from these individuals and organizations throughout the study process. This is not to say that the agency personnel have not received inputs from wilderness advocates during this process. But the pragmatic and utilitarian value orientation of many resource managers would make them more responsive to similar inputs.

A major problem in the wilderness classification studies is the drawing of boundaries for the proposed wilderness areas. Ecological criteria may or may not be a factor in this. Agencies and wilderness organizations recognized that natural and definite boundaries are an objective relative to enforcement, particularly for motorized vehicles. There is also the problem of interpretation of the Wilderness Act relative to how pure and untrammled the wilderness should be in order to qualify. The Forest Service has issued directives which call for a very strict interpretation of wilderness. This will permit the exclusion of marginal or "grey areas" with minor indications or past developments to be omitted through boundary surveys. Any man-made disturbance or evidence of the biotic community may disqualify an area on this basis, and hence limit the amount of wilderness to smaller portions of "pure" wilderness. Yet Professor Murie noted, "... the feeling we get from wilderness does not depend primarily on beauty but upon the absence of human occupation and

example of this is R. W. Behan's *The Myth of the Omnipotent Forester*, 64 *J. Forestry* 398-401 (1966).

11. In December, 1969, Senator Lee Metcalf (D-Montana) requested Dean Arnold Bolle of the Forestry School at the University of Montana to head a special study committee of faculty on Forest Service Policy. The study, which was released by Senator Metcalf on November 18, 1970, concluded that the Forest Service is preoccupied with timber production and archaic organization and that it is "completely out of step with the interests and desires of the American people." *The Billings Gazette*, Nov. 18, 1970.

upon space. The more space, the deeper does the wilderness spirit become, and the more color is given to an experience and adventure in it."^{1 2}

Although many of the public hearings and agency proposals may not come out in favor of wilderness, there is obviously the Congressional decision-making process after agency recommendations are received. Professor Daniel H. Ogden notes, "Opposition to particular preservation proposals usually is local. Support is national. If decision-making can be placed at the national level, preservation can usually win."^{1 3} Under the committee system of Congress, this observation may or may not be true after the formulation stage in field. Congressman Wayne Aspinall, for example, Chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, has a strong value commitment and record for economic development of public lands. Congressman Aspinall was a major force in opposing the enactment of the Wilderness Act, and managed to attach a mining clause which is presently delaying and complicating wilderness classification.^{1 4}

Industry, moreover, has allocated millions of dollars in opposing wilderness classification on the local and national level. At the same time, conservation organizations are crippled in their lobbying activities by internal revenue rulings. Obviously, the political processes and pressure group struggles will produce some legal and permanent wilderness. But the questions appear to be how much and of what size? Essentially, the wilderness classifications and controversies call for value decisions involving wilderness *per se* as opposed to development and utilitarian use to meet common recreational and economic demands. A certain amount of this value conflict will be the determination of how much the ecological message has really been received by the American people and their decision makers. It appears that "control" or management of the environment through science and technology only, based on "nonecological" values, is not working. Stewardship of the environment calls for value recognitions, changes, and increases on a sound ecological basis.

Value decisions for wilderness call for recognition of quality, intangibles, future generations, and other forms of life. Wilderness values for man are numerous: stress removal, personal achievement, spiritual, nature appreciation, esthetic, quality recreation, fishing,

12. Murie, *More on Wilderness*, 34 J. Forestry 642 (1936).

13. Daniel H. Ogden, *The Struggle for a Redwoods National Park*, (Unpublished manuscript presented at the Western Political Science Association Conference, Sacramento, California, Apr. 4, 1970).

14. Henning, *The Public Land Law Review Commission: A Political and Western Analysis*, 7 Idaho L. Rev. 78-79 (1970).

creativity, science, etc.¹⁵ But the major value is an ecological orientation that man is a part of nature or the biosphere and hence has responsibilities thereof. Professor Stanley Cain states, "Wilderness areas are the only yardsticks we have or can have of the long interactions of natural ecological laws in the absence of man."¹⁶

Ecological recognition of this is more than survival; it is also recognition of quality for man and other forms of life. Wilderness provides an undisturbed area and habitat where animals and plants can live in a natural world without manmade modifications; many animals cannot survive without wilderness.¹⁷ In this sense, wilderness recognition and preservation may be the highest form of an ecological conscience and ethic,¹⁸ in that it provides that plants and animals have "natural rights" of their own.¹⁹ It provides that man can recognize his responsibility as the dominant animal of the biosphere without measuring living things for his own interests or utilitarian values, i.e., that other living things may have a life of their own without man's interference.

15. Henning, *Wilderness—Its Meaning to Man*, Naturalist (Spring, 1967).

16. Cain, Conservation Quotes (U.S. Dept. Int. 1955).

17. In the United States alone, the U.S. Department of the Interior reports that 40 species of wildlife have become extinct in the last 150 years (e.g., eastern elk, and prairie wolf) and that 60 more are on the endangered list (e.g., wolverine, keydeer, grizzly bear).

18. See A. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* 217-219 (1966).

19. Ecologists definitely recognize the complexities of man's role in changing and influencing the earth and its life by the term "noosphere." This term (from the Greek word, *noos*, mind) implies a world dominated by man rather than a biosphere or a naturally evolving world. Noosphere is also referred to as "Anthroposphere" which essentially means the part of the global environment under influence of the human mind. Both terms can be correlated with the "Cornucopian" philosophy that man, through science and technology, will be able to produce the type of controlled environment or world which will do nothing but serve his needs and values.