

8th Biennial Scientific Conference on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

GREATER YELLOWSTONE PUBLIC LANDS

A Century of Discovery, Hard Lessons, and Bright Prospects



Proceedings

Edited by
Alice Wondrak Biel

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Progressivism Comes to Yellowstone: Theodore Roosevelt and Professional Land Management Agencies in the Yellowstone Ecosystem

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Abstract

This paper will examine Theodore Roosevelt's involvement in the creation of professional governing agencies to manage the Yellowstone ecosystem in the spirit of progressivism. Throughout the Progressive Era, many professional governing agencies were created to regulate the basic economic and social needs of the American nation. This movement was evident during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt and would have a lasting impact on the Yellowstone ecosystem. In 1905, Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot created the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The following year, Roosevelt appointed retired army general S. B. M. Young, the park's first civilian superintendent since the U.S. Cavalry assumed the management of Yellowstone. Roosevelt instructed Young to work on plans to create a civilian park guard; however, Roosevelt later rejected this idea, and with Pinchot's support, planned to place Yellowstone National Park under USFS control. This idea was unsuccessful, however, and Yellowstone remained under military supervision until the creation of the National Park Service in 1916 (an agency that Roosevelt fully supported). The attempt to organize land management agencies for Yellowstone reflects the efforts of Progressives to create professional agencies to handle governmental issues such as the management of federal lands. By examining the origins of the USFS and the National Park Service in relation to the Progressive Era and the Roosevelt Administration, we can understand the commonality of these two differing agencies that share the task of managing the Yellowstone ecosystem.

Introduction

Throughout the Progressive Era, many professional governing agencies were created to regulate the basic economic, social, and political needs of the American nation. This movement toward professional federal government agencies was evident during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909), and left a lasting impact on the Yellowstone ecosystem. In 1905, Roosevelt placed the nation's forest reserves under the direct supervision of Gifford Pinchot and created the modern U.S. Forest Service (USFS). In the following year, Roosevelt appointed retired army general Samuel Baldwin Marks Young to be the first civilian superintendent of Yellowstone National Park to serve in that position since the U.S. Cavalry had assumed the management of Yellowstone in 1886. Roosevelt instructed Young to work on plans for a civilian park guard that would manage the park; however, Roosevelt later rejected this idea and, with Pinchot's support, planned to place Yellowstone under forest service control. This idea was unsuccessful, however, and the park remained under military supervision after Roosevelt's term of office ended. Roosevelt's hand-picked successor, William H. Taft, continued

to support the creation of a civilian park guard, but the park remained under military control until the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, under the administration of Roosevelt's political opponent, Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt fully supported the creation of a civilian park guard, even if it was achieved during Wilson's term of office.

Roosevelt's efforts to create a civilian park guard, and his later support of the National Park Service (NPS), reveal a side of the president that is rarely revealed in the history of the environmental movement. Many historians and environmental writers have classified Roosevelt as a conservation-minded environmentalist who argued for scientific use of the land—not as a preservation-minded environmentalist who favored protection of the aesthetic landscape. Roosevelt's involvement in the creation of the NPS and USFS, however, clearly indicated that he supported not only the conservation movement as advocated by Gifford Pinchot, but also the preservation movement as advocated by John Muir. Theodore Roosevelt can not be characterized as a sole supporter of any side of the early environmental movement in the Progressive Era.

Urbanization and its impact on the West

The forces that would transform the administration of Yellowstone National Park did not emerge in the canyons of the Yellowstone River, but within the canyons of the tenements, factories, and mansions lining the streets of the nation's rapidly expanding eastern cities. In the aftermath of the Civil War, America's economy shifted away from rural agriculture and toward the industry concentrated in the nation's urban centers. Having profited from the production of munitions and other materials during the Civil War, small factories grew into major international corporations, trusts, and monopolies that dominated the American economy. The tentacles of these massive corporations, in the form of railroad tracks, reached deep into the American West to devour its vast natural resources (Cashman 1984; Painter 1987; Summers 1997; Trachtenberg 1982; Wiebe 1967).

Eventually, only small pools of America's wilderness remained, one of which was the Yellowstone ecosystem. Congress offered some protection to this area in 1872, by setting aside Yellowstone National Park as a "pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Congress took another major step toward saving the natural resources of the West with the passage of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which granted presidential authority to establish national forest reserves. That year, President Benjamin Harrison used this newly acquired power to set aside the Yellowstone Park Timberland Reserve, expanding federal protection of the Yellowstone ecosystem to the south and east of Yellowstone National Park.

Unfortunately, the new political status of these lands did not mean they were spared from demands on the resources within them. Timber disappeared in fires started by careless tourists and at the hands of timber thieves. Wildlife numbers declined from market hunting. Geysers and hot springs fell prey to visitors who collected natural specimens for souvenirs, soaped the geothermal features for entertainment, and slaughtered countless numbers of wildlife and fish for their meals. Developers claimed large tracts of land and constructed various grades of concessions to profit from the increasing numbers of visitors to the region. Due to the lack of a professional land management agency or police force, visitors, market hunters, and developers continued their despoliation of the lands for personal gain at great expense to the natural features of the region (Bartlett 1985; Haines 1977 v1; Schullery 2004).

Theodore Roosevelt fully understood the trans-

formation brought on by the shift from agronomy to industry, as well as its impact on the demand for natural resources, writing:

The growth of this nation by leaps and bounds . . . has been due to the rapid development, and alas . . . to the rapid destruction of our natural resources. Nature has supplied to us in the United States . . . more kinds of resources in a more lavish degree than has ever been the case at any other time or with any other people. Our position in the world has been attained by the extent and thoroughness of the control we have achieved over nature; but we are more, and not less, dependent upon what she furnishes than at any previous time of history since the days of primitive man (Roosevelt 1927 v16, 121–122).

Another emergent force from the eastern cities that would impact the management of the Yellowstone ecosystem was the political corruption and ineptitude arising from machine politics, known as the "spoils system." Before the age of civil service, government representatives did not hire or appoint employees on the basis of their skills, education, or previous employment; rather, it was a job candidate's political connections that were important. A lack of secret ballots clearly identified supporters and non-supporters, allowing the bosses to reward voter support with patronage positions. The spoils system also had a hold on the federal government—especially the executive offices (under presidential authority) that managed the newly created federal public land reserves—which helped ensure that the management of federal lands in the Yellowstone ecosystem would not be very effective. Presidents and their cabinet members rewarded their political supporters with patronage positions while non-supporters—even individuals within their own political parties—were fired regardless of their management skills, knowledge of the areas they were charged with protecting, or previous service.

Leaders of industry quickly realized how to use this system to their advantage, promoting their own economic goals via machine politics and increasing their monopolistic hold on the nation. For instance, *Crédit Mobilier*, a "dummy" construction company associated with the Union Pacific Railroad, was used to bilk millions of dollars out of the federal government coffers under the Pacific Railway Act. It became the center of public attention when a key stockholder, Congressman Oakes Ames, used *Crédit Mobilier* stock to influence the passage of

favorable legislation. The *Crédit Mobilier* scandal clearly reflected the power and control that large corporations wielded over both the legislative and executive branches of the federal government, and railroads used this influence to expand their hold on the West. This was never more evident than in the Northern Pacific Railroad's attempts to direct the creation and future of Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding region (Runte 1990).

Many of Yellowstone's early civilian superintendents, appointed by the secretary of the interior under the spoils system, came from territorial offices that were ripe with incompetent or corrupt appointees. Often, these appointees also had strong political and economic ties to the railroad corporations. Yellowstone's first superintendent, Nathaniel P. Langford, who enjoyed strong Republican connections and was a former territorial officer from Montana, clearly served the Northern Pacific Railroad's interest more than the public's interest. In fact, after the construction of the Northern Pacific stalled due to the collapse of Jay Cooke's finances (precipitating the Panic of 1873), Langford essentially abandoned his position as park superintendent. During his tenure, Langford visited Yellowstone only one time (Bartlett 1985; Haines 1977 v1; Langford 1972; Schullery 2004).

Patrick H. Conger, Yellowstone's third superintendent, reflected the ineptitude fostered by the spoils system. Early park historian Hiram Chittenden noted, "Of this Superintendent, it need only be said that his administration was throughout characterized by a weakness and inefficiency which brought the Park to the lowest ebb of its fortunes, and drew forth the severe condemnation of visitors and public officials alike" (Chittenden 1964, 112). Conger and the assistant secretary of the interior allowed the Northern Pacific (which finally completed its tracks in the early 1880s), operating under the guise of the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company, to claim thousands of acres in government leases and establish monopolistic control over the main attractions of the park. This company also began logging operations and slaughtered wildlife to feed its workers.

In 1884, Robert E. Carpenter replaced Conger as superintendent of Yellowstone through the political connections of his brother, who was the governor of Iowa. According to Chittenden, the new superintendent viewed Yellowstone National Park as "an instrument of profit to those who were shrewd enough to grasp the opportunity. Its protection and improvement were matters of secondary consider-

ation" (Chittenden 1964, 116). Carpenter attempted to further the hold of the Northern Pacific Railroad on the park by lobbying for some of the lands within its boundaries to be opened for private occupancy by the railroad.

The forest reserves also suffered under the spoils system. In 1880, the Division of Forestry, led by Franklin Hough, was created under the Department of Agriculture with the purpose of making recommendations regarding the administration of the national forest reserves, which at that time were under the domain of the Department of the Interior (Steen 1991). Three years later, the capable Hough was replaced by Dr. N. H. Egleston, whom famed forester Gifford Pinchot described as "one of those failures in life whom the spoils system is constantly catapulting into responsible positions" (Pinchot 1947, 135).

Pinchot also noted many problems within the Department of the Interior, one in particular: "Since jobs on the Forest Reserves were for distribution to politicians, Commissioner Binger Hermann of the General Land Office was careful to get his while the getting was good. The average appointee was plenty bad enough, but Binger's personal appointments were horrible," he wrote (Pinchot 1947, 162). Pinchot went on to describe numerous instances of incompetent employees hired under the spoils system. Many forest supervisors, hired due to nepotism and patronage, were too old, frail, corrupt, and ignorant of forestry to perform the basic tasks required of their positions. "An elderly man," wrote Pinchot, "who had been cashier in a bank, was a close friend of the Commissioner. He frankly admitted he had no knowledge of forest conditions and didn't know one tree from another. But Binger made him Forest Inspector, the most important and responsible post of all" (Pinchot 1947, 163-164).

Influential congressmen also forced their appointees onto forest reserves. "Uncle" Joe Cannon, Speaker of the House, appointed several men whom Pinchot deemed ineffective; he described one individual as "a one-lunger with one leg" (Pinchot 1947, 164). Some appointees collected paychecks from the Department of the Interior without setting foot onto the forest reserves. Pinchot summed up the effect of these supervisors and rangers:

Take it by and large, the Interior Department's field force on the Forest Reserves was enough to make angels weep. Naturally it aroused strong opposition to the whole Reserve System. However lightly the Western men

of those days may have held the land laws, they had high standards of personal courage and hardiness, and they were not lazy. Such men could have nothing but contempt for a service manned by the human rubbish which the Interior Department had cheerfully accepted out of Eastern and Western political scrap heaps and dumped into the Forest Reserves (Pinchot 1947, 167).

Surprisingly, some effective individuals were appointed to Yellowstone National Park and the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve. Famed artist and rancher A. A. Anderson, placed in charge of the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve, was one such supervisor. Anderson limited grazing on the forest lands, worked to enlarge the boundaries of the reserve, and established an efficient administrative organization to manage the vast lands under his control. Anderson later recalled,

Gifford Pinchot, after accompanying me on a tour of inspection, reported to the President that the Yellowstone Reserve was one of the best organized, patrolled and managed forest reserves in the country. It was indeed gratifying to receive a letter from President Roosevelt saying in part: 'Mr. Anderson, I believe you have the right ideas in forestry matters. Go ahead and carry them out, knowing you have the Department of the Interior and the President solidly behind you' (Anderson 1927, 385).

Likewise, Philetus W. Norris served as an effective superintendent of Yellowstone. Norris explored and mapped new areas in the park, studied the park's geological and archeological resources, wrote the park's first detailed set of rules and regulations, and attempted to establish a functional administrative organization to manage the park. Norris's administration made significant strides in protecting Yellowstone; unfortunately, Norris soon ran afoul of the Northern Pacific Railroad's interests in the park, and of local residents who were angered by Norris's involvement in changing a mail route. Norris's political enemies moved quickly to replace him with Patrick Conger, who quickly demonstrated his intentions to promote the railroad's interests in Yellowstone.

It should be noted that both Anderson and Norris were unusual public servants for their time, being wealthy men who did not need a government salary in order to survive. Both were well-connected politically, although a political struggle cost Norris his job. Their most unusual characteristic, however, was that they both had a strong personal desire to protect the

lands under their direct supervision. This was especially true of Anderson, whose ranch bordered the forest reserve—a fact that may have increased his motivation (Anderson 1933; Haines 1977; Schullery 2004).

Congress provided some legislative protection to the Yellowstone ecosystem under the spoils system, but it tended only to respond to blatant problems, rather than providing preventive measures to avoid future problems. This process was slow and relied on active individuals and organizations, such as the Boone and Crockett Club, to identify the problems and lobby for legislative action (Haines 1977 v1; Reiger 1975). For instance, when the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company moved to establish a monopoly over Yellowstone during Patrick Conger's administration, General Phil Sheridan generated enough publicity that Congress made provisions under the Sundry Civil Appropriations Bill of 1883 to limit the size of leases. More importantly, the bill contained a provision wherein the U.S. military could assume the management of Yellowstone upon the request of the secretary of the interior. When Congress subsequently failed to appropriate any funds for the management of Yellowstone in 1886, the U.S. Cavalry was sent to the park. When a writer from *Forest and Stream*, the literary voice of the Boone and Crockett Club, reported on a blatant case of poaching in Yellowstone, Congress responded with passage of the Lacey Act. The Lacey Act established fines and penalties to punish poachers in Yellowstone, as well as a court system to prosecute accused poachers and other criminals. In 1894, Congress created further provisions restricting leases and their operations within Yellowstone National Park with the passage of the Hayes Act (Chittenden 1964; Haines 1977 v1).

Machine politics impacted federal management of the Yellowstone ecosystem through the end of the nineteenth century. Fortunately, the U.S. Cavalry protected the park from most of its immediate threats. The Yellowstone Timberland Reserve, however, endured mismanagement under the spoils system until Theodore Roosevelt became president and expanded Pinchot's authority over the forest reserves.

The Progressives and the creation of professional government agencies

While the spoils system negatively impacted the Yellowstone ecosystem, another force from the cities brought positive change to the region:

Progressivism. The Progressive Movement emerged as a combination of a number of reform movements that were active in the 1870s and 1880s. These groups included urban reformers, women's suffragists, members of the Populist Party, and prohibitionists. Beginning in the 1890s, middle-class America fought to save American capitalism from the unregulated industrialists, the corrupt spoilsmen, and the radical labor union leaders who threatened social revolution. The Progressives adopted many reforms from earlier political movements—especially the Populist Movement—as their own and pushed them onto the national scene as a collective political movement (Cashman 1984; Chambers 1992; Cooper 1990; Diner 1998; Gould 2001; Hofstadter 1955; Link and McCormick 1983; McGerr 2003; Painter 1987; Summers 1997; Sullivan 1996; Trachtenberg 1982; Wiebe 1967).

Progressive reforms included the end of the spoils system and the tight control held by political bosses, through increased and uninhibited political participation of the electorate. Democratic reforms such as initiatives and referendums allowed more direct participation in the creation of legislation. The electorate was expanded through women's suffrage, and the use of the secret ballot prevented party bosses from knowing who voted for which party and which candidates. Progressives also hoped to replace the inept political officeholders appointed under the spoils system by creating both a merit system guided by a civil service process and strong executive federal powers that bypassed the kinds of legislative political squabbles that were responsible for slowing administrative responses to social problems. Progressives strongly advocated the creation of more professional government bureaucracies staffed with professionals appointed on the basis of their educational background and work skills instead of their political connections. Progressives hoped that these professional government employees would successfully manage much-needed social and economic reforms as well as the conservation of public lands.

Progressives successfully implemented many of these reforms at various local levels of government. After a major hurricane destroyed the city of Galveston, Texas, in 1900, killing at least 6,000 people, its citizens created a commission of professional city administrators to assume the duties and responsibilities of an elected mayor. The movement to create more professional governing agencies also took hold at the state level and became popularly known as the "Wisconsin Idea." The "Wisconsin Idea" was the

brainchild of Wisconsin governor Robert "Batling Bob" LaFollette, who recruited a "brain trust" from the University of Wisconsin to help his administration address the new demands placed on the state by the rise of urbanization and industrialism.

At the same time when local and state governments desired to increase professional standards, many occupational fields increased their level of professionalism through licensing and self-regulation administered by professional associations. Doctors, for instance, began to rely more and more on the American Medical Association for licensing standards and guidelines. Lawyers, engineers, and other professionals also developed closer working relationships with their respective associations. By virtue of their licensing processes, those associations also assumed more authority within government. One association that greatly benefited from the closer relationship of government and professional agencies was the American Forestry Association (AFA), founded in 1875. The AFA enjoyed political influence throughout the Progressive Era by working with the forest reserves and later, the USFS (Diner 1998).

Theodore Roosevelt praised the Progressives and their efforts to alleviate America's political, social, and economic problems, likening them to America's pioneers. In a 1910 article for *The Outlook*, he expressed his hope that the spirit of Progressivism could also address resource conservation:

The same qualities that have enabled Americans to conquer the wilderness, and to attempt tasks like the building of the Panama Canal and the sending of the battle fleet around the world, need to be applied now to our future problems; and these qualities, which include the power of self-government, together with the power of joining with others for mutual help, and, what is especially important, the feeling of comradeship, need to be applied in particular to that foremost of national problems, the problem of the preservation of our natural resources.

The question has two sides. In the first place, the actual destruction, or . . . at any rate the needless waste, of the natural resources must be stopped. In the second place . . . these resources must be kept for the use of the whole people, and not handed over for exploitation to single individuals or groups of individuals (Roosevelt 1927 v16, 23–24).

Indeed, the conservation movement benefited

greatly from the end of the spoils system and the creation of professional land management agencies, brought about because many Progressives feared that continued waste and mismanagement of America's natural resources would spell an end to the United States. George Perkins Marsh's 1864 book, *Man and Nature*, strongly influenced this sense of doom, painting a gloomy picture for the future of the U.S. if its natural resources continued to disappear. The goal of Marsh's book was "to indicate the character and, approximately, the extent of the changes produced by human action in the physical conditions of the globe we inhabit; to point out the dangers of imprudence and the necessity of caution in all operations which, on a large scale, interfere with the spontaneous arrangements of the organic or the inorganic world." Marsh hoped his book would "suggest the possibility and the importance of the restoration of disturbed harmonies and the material improvement of waste and exhausted regions; and, incidentally, to illustrate the doctrine, that man is, in both kind and degree, a power of higher order than any of the other forms of animated life, which, like him, are nourished at the table of bounteous nature" (Marsh 2003). To demonstrate his points, Marsh examined the decline of ancient civilizations in connection with environmental destruction. He also compared these ancient civilizations to events that were occurring in modern nations across the globe.

Theodore Roosevelt: conservationist and preservationist

An assassin's bullet brought Progressivism to the federal arena. On September 6, 1901, President William McKinley, a conservative Republican with strong ties to the industrial giants of his age, was shot and fatally wounded by Leon Czolgosz at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. After lingering for a few days, McKinley passed away and Theodore Roosevelt became the next president of the United States. Roosevelt received the news of McKinley's declining condition during a hunting trip in the Adirondack Mountains—a portentous setting, given that his administration would do more to save the wilderness areas of North America than any presidency before or since. Unfortunately, Roosevelt's conservation record is often boiled down to numbers, and not enough historians have gone beyond those numbers to examine his other contributions to the movement. The numbers, however, are indeed impressive. During Roosevelt's term of office, 150 forest reserves, 51 federal bird preserva-

tions, 18 national monuments, 5 national parks, and 4 national game preserves were established—a total of more than 230 million acres. This amounted to 84,000 acres set aside per day of Roosevelt's administration (Gable 1984).

Roosevelt later reflected on the reasons why he supported conservation during his administration. His remarks reflected concerns similar to those of Marsh:

I have always been fond of history and of science, and what has occurred to Spain, to Palestine, to China, and to North Africa from the destruction of natural resources is familiar to me. I have always been deeply impressed with [Justus von] Liebig's statement that it was the decrease of soil fertility, and not either peace or war, which was fundamental in bringing about the decadence of nations. While unquestionably nations have been destroyed by other causes, I have become convinced that it was the destruction of the soil itself which was perhaps the most fatal of all causes. But when, at the beginning of my term of service as President, under the influence of Mr. Pinchot and Mr. [Frederick H.] Newell, I took up the cause of conservation, I was already fairly well awake to the need of social and industrial justice; and from the outset we had in view, not only the preservation of natural resources, but the prevention of monopoly in natural resources, so that they should inhere in the people as a whole (Roosevelt 1927 v17, 317).

Roosevelt's conservation record has sometimes been unjustly characterized as demonstrating an attempt to instill conservation policies at the expense of preservation policies. The growing split between the two sides became evident during Roosevelt's administration, but was more reflective of the attitudes and beliefs of Gifford Pinchot and John Muir than those of Roosevelt, himself. These two men and their ideas came to the public forefront during a clash over the future of a reclamation project located within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. As the city of San Francisco expanded, developers searched for ways to improve the water supply into the city. The major fire resulting from the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 greatly intensified the clamor to bring an effective water system to the city, even if it came at the expense of damming Yosemite's scenic Hetch Hetchy Valley. Roosevelt deeply believed in preserving the national parks, but also could not turn his back on San Francisco's water problem. He asked the city to search for another dam site, but when

none was found, Roosevelt hesitatingly indicated his support for the dam to be constructed in Yosemite. He later told Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *Century Magazine* and a strong opponent of the dam, that the decision to support Hetch Hetchy was one that he extremely doubted. Still, the damage was done, and the conservation movement split into two opposing factions, the conservationists under Pinchot and the preservationists under Muir. The issue of Hetch Hetchy was finally settled when President Woodrow Wilson signed the bill authorizing the construction of the dam within Yosemite (Huth 1990; Nash 1967).

Theodore Roosevelt's involvement in the Hetch Hetchy controversy has clouded many interpretations of his conservation and preservation work. Often overlooked, for example, is that his administration brought progressive reform to the Yellowstone ecosystem by creating the professional land management agencies that continue to administer our public lands today. Roosevelt took considerable personal interest in the Yellowstone region, which helped motivate his desire to properly protect both the lands within the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve and Yellowstone National Park through professionalization of their management. He became acquainted with the problems impacting the region through his connections with famed naturalist writer George Bird Grinnell. Together, the two men formed the Boone and Crockett Club and dedicated its membership to the protection of the Yellowstone National Park. They campaigned to end poaching in the park and fought attempts by the railroads to build inside its boundaries.

Roosevelt visited the region on two separate trips in 1890 and 1891. The first trip was a sightseeing expedition with his wife and sister, both of whom he entertained by pretending to be a bear late at night. The second trip was an elk hunting expedition near the Two Ocean Pass area, south of Yellowstone National Park. Through his visits to Yellowstone and his work with the Boone and Crockett Club, Roosevelt came to see Yellowstone as a wilderness preserve and wildlife refuge (Benson 2003; Collins 1989; Cutright 1985; Cutright 1956; Johnston 2004a; Johnston 2004b; Johnston 1993; Parsons 1993; Reiger 1972; Reiger 1975; Schullery 1978; Ward 1993; Ward and McCabe 1988).

Roosevelt and the creation of professional land management agencies

To preserve the Yellowstone ecosystem and to

protect and properly manage its natural resources, Roosevelt needed to create a professional government agency. Roosevelt realized that the military was not the appropriate organization for the task, and that the spoils system had led to ineffective land management. His background made him well suited to create an agency to remedy the situation. In the 1880s, President Harrison had appointed Roosevelt to the Civil Service Commission. Democratic president Grover Cleveland had kept Roosevelt, a Republican, working on the commission during his administration. This experience allowed Roosevelt a close view of the inefficiency of the spoils system and the benefits of a merit system accomplished by civil service reform.

After his stint on the Civil Service Commission, Roosevelt had served as New York City Police Commissioner. As commissioner, Roosevelt continued to advocate governmental reform and worked tirelessly to create a more professional standard of law enforcement for the New York Police Department. He advocated testing police candidates, pushed for the creation of an academy to promote specialized training in law enforcement, supported new technological advances in law enforcement, and recommended physical and pistol training for policemen. Roosevelt's efforts represented the beginnings of modern professional law enforcement.

Later, as governor of New York, Roosevelt pushed for the modernization of the New York Fisheries, Forest, and Game Commission. Working with Gifford Pinchot and Frederick H. Newell, future director of the Bureau of Reclamation, Roosevelt worked to preserve forests, game, and fish within New York State. He urged the recruitment of professional foresters and game wardens to achieve this goal (Roosevelt 1913, 323–325). In his 1900 annual address, Governor Roosevelt praised the commission for its achievements and urged the New York Assembly to continue its support, echoing the words of the Yellowstone National Park Organic Act: “The subject of forest preservation is of the utmost importance to the State. The Adirondacks and Catskills should be great parks kept in perpetuity for the benefit and enjoyment of the people” (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 54).

Roosevelt also recognized the connections between a strong “national character” and scientific conservation of water, game, and timber. A forest, for instance, was a

. . . great sponge which absorbs and distills the rain-water; and when it is destroyed the

result is apt to be an alternation of flood and drought. Forest-fires ultimately make the land a desert. . . . Every effort should be made to minimize their destructive influence. We need to have our system of forestry gradually developed and conducted along scientific principles. When this has been done it will be possible to allow marketable lumber to be cut everywhere without damage to the forests. . . .

Forests also offered valuable habitat for a variety of game, as well as opportunities for recreational activity:

A live deer in the woods will attract to the neighborhood ten times the money that could be obtained for the deer's dead carcass. . . . Hardy outdoor sports, like hunting, are in themselves of no small value to the national character, and should be encouraged in every way. Men who go into the wilderness, [or] . . . who take part in any field-sports with horse or rifle, receive a benefit which can hardly be given by even the most vigorous athletic games (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 54).

To accomplish these goals, Roosevelt recommended that greater numbers of professional game wardens be trained and hired, and that "none save fit men must be appointed and their retention in office must depend purely upon the zeal, ability, and efficiency with which they perform their duties" (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 53–54).

Upon assuming the presidency, Roosevelt quickly began working on the creation of a professional land management agency for the conservation and preservation of the national forest reserves and their vast natural resources. He recommended the transfer of the forest reserves to the Department of Agriculture and requested that certain areas of forest reserves be set aside as game preserves. Roosevelt also recommended the promotion of public recreation within the forests and parks by establishing free campgrounds "for the ever-increasing numbers of men and women who have learned to find rest, health, and recreation in the splendid forests and flower-clad meadows of our mountains. The forest reserves should be set apart forever for the use and benefit of our people as a whole and not sacrificed to the short-sighted greed of a few," he wrote (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 102–104). In his second annual message, delivered on December 2, 1902, Roosevelt again recommended legislation for the protection of big game on forest reserves—especially for elk, which

were being slaughtered for their antlers (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 161).

In 1903, Roosevelt visited Yellowstone National Park as part of a larger western tour. The few days he spent in the park offered Roosevelt the opportunity to examine its management under the U.S. Army. Famed naturalist writer John Burroughs, who accompanied Roosevelt on this visit, noted, "Near the falls of the Yellowstone, as at other places we had visited, a squad of soldiers had their winter quarters. The President called on them, as he had called upon the others, looked over the books they had to read, examined their housekeeping arrangements, and conversed freely with them" (Burroughs 1907, 72–73).

This may have been when Roosevelt became concerned regarding the future management of Yellowstone and began formulating ideas for replacing the military police force with a professional civilian agency. Perhaps Roosevelt noted in his visits the conditions that S. B. M. Young would note later, in 1907:

[In Yellowstone,] regimental and squadron organizations are not only disturbed, but the troop organization is largely demoralized by subdividing the men into small parties far separated for indefinite periods of time without the personal supervision of an officer. . . . The enlisted men . . . are not selected with special reference to the duties to be performed in police patrolling, guarding, and maintaining the natural curiosities and interesting 'formations' from injury by the curious, the thoughtless, and the careless people who compose a large percentage of the annual visitors in the park, and in protecting against the killing or frightening of the game and against forest fires (Young 1907, 25).

In the national forests, Roosevelt recommended more professionalism from the rangers appointed to watch over them. In a letter to a former Rough Rider and newly appointed forest ranger, Roosevelt outlined the qualities he desired in such men: "You have been appointed a Forest Ranger," wrote Roosevelt.

Now, I want . . . very seriously to impress upon you that you have got to do your duty well, not for your own sake, but for the sake of the honor of the [Rough Rider] regiment. I recommended you because under me you showed yourself gallant, efficient and obedient. You must continue to show these qualities in the government service exactly as you did [in] the regiment. You must let no

consideration of any kind interfere with the performance of your duty. You are to protect the government's property and the forests and to uphold the interests of the department in every way. Now, remember that I expect you to show yourself an official of far above the average type; and you are to stand or fall strictly on your merits (Roosevelt 1951 v3, 130).

In Roosevelt's fourth annual message, December 6, 1904, the president praised the Department of Agriculture for its development into an educational institution with 2,000 specialists advocating forestry practices for the forest reserves, and stressed that the reserves, themselves, needed to be moved to Department of Agriculture, where the knowledge and skills were located. "I have repeatedly called attention to the confusion which exists in government forest matters because the work is scattered among three independent organizations. The United States is the only one of the great nations in which the forest work of the government is not concentrated under one department, in consonance with the plainest dictates of good administration and common sense," said Roosevelt (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 237). Roosevelt noted that the results of the transfer would be better forest work; forests would be handled by men in the field, and forests would become self-supporting. He also emphasized the need to maintain public lands as game refuges, recommended that continued support be given to preserving Yellowstone wildlife, and urged that the park's boundaries be expanded southward and that additional parks be added to the system to provide more protected habitat to wildlife.

As Roosevelt began his second term in office, he continued arguing for the professional management of federal lands. In his fifth annual message, December 5, 1905, Roosevelt commended the new U.S. Forest Service and noted that through this agency, the usefulness of the forest reserves greatly expanded. Roosevelt also suggested the transfer of the national parks to the new forest service, so the parks could benefit from the protection of the new agency (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 315). Roosevelt continued pushing for new national parks, arguing that Yosemite should be accepted from the state of California and the Grand Canyon should be set aside as a national park, and again argued that parks were necessary wildlife refuges. He proposed bringing back buffalo, through parks or refuges, for economic interests, and again called for the expansion of Yellowstone National Park's boundaries to the south and to the east for the protection of winter ranges

for elk (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 326–327).

Congress finally responded to Roosevelt's wishes regarding the forest reserves by passing legislation that provided for the transfer of 63 million acres of forest land from the Department of the Interior to the Bureau of Forestry under Gifford Pinchot in the Department of Agriculture. The lands were officially transferred on February 1, 1905. Later that same year, the Bureau of Forestry changed its official title to the United States Forest Service, and Pinchot began expanding an agency staffed with professional foresters and rangers to carry out the responsibilities of managing the forest reserves:

Supervisors and Rangers are appointed only after civil-service examinations. They must be residents of the State or Territory in which the National Forest is situated and between the ages of 21 and 40. . . . The life a man has led, what is his actual training and experience in rough outdoor work in the West, counts for more than anything else. Lumbermen, stockmen, cowboys, miners, and the like are the kind wanted. Forest Guards are appointed from those who have passed the ranger examination (Pinchot 1907).

Throughout the remainder of his term, Roosevelt continued calling for the increased protection of the forest reserves and national parks. In his sixth annual message, December 3, 1906, Roosevelt noted the progress being made to benefit the West with irrigation and forest preservation through his conservation programs, and called for the further expansion of forest reserves (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 376). In 1907, Congress responded negatively, with legislation preventing the president from setting aside any further forest reserves, now called national forests, in six western states. Roosevelt signed the legislation only after he set aside a great number of new reserves, many of which further protected the Yellowstone ecosystem.

In 1907, Major John Pitcher, who was Roosevelt's friend and Yellowstone's acting superintendent, retired from military service, thus creating an opening for the position of park superintendent. Roosevelt viewed Pitcher's retirement as an opportunity to create a professional agency, similar to the USFS, to manage Yellowstone National Park. To achieve this goal, Roosevelt appointed the first civilian superintendent of Yellowstone to serve since the military had begun to manage the park in 1886. Roosevelt's replacement was his old friend and fel-

low officer from the Spanish–American War, Samuel Baldwin Marks Young. In the Civil War, Young rose from the status of private in the Pennsylvania Infantry to general in the Pennsylvania Cavalry. After the war, he was reassigned to military campaigns against American Indians in the West. Young was appointed acting superintendent of Yellowstone Park in 1897, but served in that position for only a few months (Haines 1977 v2). In 1904, Young retired from the military after a successful career. Because Young had previous experience with the position of superintendent, Roosevelt wanted him back in the park.

With Young's acceptance ("I am always ready to be of service to you and your administration," he told Roosevelt, "and the proper maintenance and protection of the Yellowstone park and wildlife is of much interest to me"), the position of park superintendent reverted back to civilian control (Roosevelt Papers, 3/28/1907). Choosing a former military man with previous experience in the position was wise on the part of Roosevelt, as it smoothed the transition from military enforcement to civilian control. Young was also a good friend of Roosevelt's, which made it possible for Roosevelt to influence park policy.

Young's main task as superintendent was to oversee the transfer of power from military to civilian control. In a letter to William Loeb, the president's secretary, Young presented his "scheme for the organization of a . . . 'National Park Guard'" (Roosevelt Papers, 9/7/1907). His proposal called for a chief inspector, four assistants under the inspector, and 20 full-time men, with an additional seasonal crew of 15 men in the summers. In addition, Young wanted to hire a clerk, a buffalo keeper and assistant, a blacksmith, and a driver. Young estimated the annual cost of the new civilian force to be \$50,000. That figure excluded his salary as superintendent, which he agreed to waive, and Young called it a bargain: "the cost of maintaining the troops here far exceeds the amount estimated as the cost of maintaining a park guard," he wrote (Roosevelt Papers, 9/7/1907).

In December 1907, Roosevelt wrote to Young supporting his idea of an independent park guard, which Roosevelt wanted to be administered by the U.S. Forest Service (Roosevelt Papers, 12/11/1907). The president expressed regret that he could not make anything happen before the end of the year; he wanted to wait until he could find a congressman willing to sponsor the move—possibly Senator Thomas H. Carter from Montana (Roosevelt Papers, 12/11/1907).

During the following summer, an event trans-

pired that caused Roosevelt and Young to press even harder for a civilian park force. On August 24, 1908, 17 stagecoaches were held up, and the passengers robbed. The perpetrator had waited until the cavalry patrol, traveling in front of a line of 25 stages, had passed, then proceeded to hold up stage after stage. The passengers, angered over their losses, met at the Lake Hotel to voice their concerns over the inability of the military to keep gun-toting bandits out of the park. They also expressed anger at the soldiers' inability to catch the criminal responsible for the act. In concluding the meeting, the victims drew up a petition demanding that the government reimburse them for losses of more than \$2,100. They also criticized the army's effectiveness at policing the park; thus, the military came under close public scrutiny (Haynes 1959, 15–20). When Young informed the president of the situation, Roosevelt responded, "I am sorry to say that it simply strengthens the impression that I had already gained. I fear that the only solution is to take the army out of the Park and have rangers of the [James] McBride [a civilian park scout] type do all the work" (Roosevelt Papers, 9/12/1908). In a following letter, Roosevelt re-emphasized his desire to establish a national park guard under Young's command (Roosevelt Papers, 9/15/08).

In the end, Roosevelt's and Young's plan to create a civilian park guard did not succeed, and in 1908, Young left Yellowstone—not, as some historians have concluded, because of the stagecoach robbery, but rather to become governor of the U.S. Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt, who accepted Young's resignation reluctantly, informed Young that he intended to replace all of the park's current army staff with new soldiers to ease public criticism and appoint Major Lloyd Benson to the superintendent position. With Benson's acceptance, the park was again placed under the control of an acting military superintendent (Roosevelt Papers, 10/16/1908).

Roosevelt did not give up his hopes for a civilian park guard easily. In his last annual message to Congress, he advocated placing all national parks adjacent to national forests under the exclusive control of the U.S. Forest Service, rather than maintain them under the current, disjointed management scheme:

I urge that all our national parks adjacent to national forests be placed completely under the control of the forest service of the Agricultural Department, instead of leaving them as they now are, under the Interior Department and policed by the army. The Congress should provide for

superintendents with adequate corps of first-class civilian scouts, or rangers, and, further, place the road construction under the superintendent instead of leaving it with the War Department. Such a change in park management would result in economy and avoid the difficulties of administration which now arise from having the responsibility of care and protection divided between different departments. The need for this course is peculiarly great in the Yellowstone Park (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 525–526).

With Roosevelt's request to place some of the national parks under the control of his friend Pinchot, preservationists feared they would lose out to the conservationists yet again. Although this plan would have accomplished Roosevelt's goal of placing Yellowstone National Park under the control of a professional land management agency to protect its resources, it would have greatly exacerbated the stress between advocates of differing management policies for national parks and national forests. Preservationists feared that national parks would come to be managed as national forests and, as such, preservation-based management of federal lands would be replaced by conservation-based economic development, which very well could destroy the sanctity of national parks as scenic playgrounds. Was that what Roosevelt wanted?

Roosevelt himself said no, clearly stating his desires to keep national parks in a natural condition: “[Yellowstone], like the Yosemite, is a great wonderland, and should be kept as a national playground. In both, all wild things should be protected and the scenery kept wholly unmarred” (Roosevelt 1927 v15, 525–526). In addition, with the parks controlled by Pinchot, Roosevelt was likely to retain his influence to direct park policies. However, Congress did not act on his request, and the national parks remained under the army's supervision until 1916, when the National Park Service was finally created.

Taft and Wilson under Roosevelt's shadow

As Roosevelt left the office of the presidency, he handpicked his successor, William H. Taft. Taft quickly alienated the former president by firing his star conservationist, Gifford Pinchot, in the aftermath of a historically notorious spat between Pinchot and Interior Secretary Richard Ballinger. Progressives concluded that Taft was returning control of the country to the conservative Republicans whom Roosevelt had kept at bay. In the area of preservation, however, Taft's administration con-

tinued to work to achieve Roosevelt's original goal of establishing a civilian park guard to oversee the national parks. In his annual message to Congress in December 1910, Taft explained his reasoning: “Our national parks have become so extensive and involve so much detail of action in their control that it seems to me there ought to be legislation creating a bureau for their care and control.” He also reiterated Roosevelt's earlier call for the Grand Canyon to be given national park status (Taft 1910).

Based on the recommendation of J. Horace McFarland, president of the American Civic Association, Interior Secretary Ballinger called together a number of park supporters to meet in Yellowstone in 1911 to discuss the future of the national parks. On the basis of their report, Taft again requested Congress to create a civilian agency, or National Park Service, to oversee the parks. Roosevelt proffered a written treatise in support of the idea:

There are in the United States thirteen National parks. . . . At present, as the Secretary of the Interior has pointed out . . . each of these parks is a separate and distinct unit for administrative purposes. Special appropriations are made for each park, and the employment of a common supervising and directing force is impossible. . . . A bill is before Congress for the creation of a Bureau of National Parks, the head of which shall have the supervision, management, and control of all the National parks and National monuments in the country, and shall have the duty of developing these areas so that they shall be the most efficient agencies possible for promoting public recreation and public health through their use and enjoyment by the people. . . . The new bureau should be called the National Park Service. . . . The establishment of the National Park Service is justified by considerations of good administration, of the value of natural beauty as a National asset, and the effectiveness of outdoor life and recreation in the production of good citizenship (Schullery 1986, 141–142).

Despite the support of Roosevelt and Taft, who had become political enemies due to an emerging split between progressive and conservative Republicans, Congress did not pass a bill creating a National Park Service. The new bureau would have to wait for a few more years. In the meantime, the presidential election of 1912 proved to be one of the most interesting elections ever held in the United States. The Democratic Party nominated the progressive Wood-

row Wilson, while Roosevelt and Taft campaigned against each other under the banners of the Republican Party and the newly formed Progressive Party (also known as the Bull Moose Party), as well as against their other rivals, Wilson and Socialist Party candidate Eugene V. Debs.

With the campaign focused primarily on economic reform, Roosevelt and Taft split the Republican vote, and Woodrow Wilson won the presidency. Wilson, who did not have much of a conservation record going into his presidency, did not contribute much to the conservation/preservation movement until he signed the National Park Service bill in 1916. It is worth noting that the agency's creation appears as little more than a footnote in many histories of the time; Wilson's biographers have tended to focus more on Wilson's economic reform and his international struggles, largely ignoring the creation of the National Park Service. Park service framer Horace Albright confirmed that Wilson himself did not consider conservation to be of primary import during his presidency:

. . . President Woodrow Wilson was totally uninterested in conservation, national parks, or anything that pertained to the great outdoors. Whatever fine things occurred during his administration, like the creation of the National Park Service, came through [Interior] Secretary Franklin Lane. Neither of them should be counted as conservationists, but Lane let us [Albright and NPS Director Stephen T. Mather] have free rein for the most part and in general didn't care to interfere with our judgments. Wilson just wasn't a conservationist in any sense of the word (Albright and Schenk 1999, 301).

In fact, Albright actually claimed to have “snuck” the park service bill through for Wilson's signature by placing it in the same folder with an army appropriations bill, hoping Wilson would sign both:

[At] . . . the Capitol . . . the enrolling clerk . . . said they hadn't had any call for th[e NPS] legislation and the President signed bills only on certain days. As we were talking, the phone rang. I gathered from the conversation . . . that it was the White House . . . and that they wanted some bill sent over to be signed. When the . . . clerk hung up, I asked politely if that was the White House, and the clerk said yes, adding they wanted the army appropriations bill sent over. I said, “Be a good fellow and stick the Parks Act in the same envelope.” He did, and I hopped a street car and got to . . . [legislative clerk Maurice] Latta's office before the

bill arrived. . . . Latta said he would see if he could get it to the President some time during the evening . . . so I gave him the phone number where I could be reached. About 9:00 P.M. the phone rang and it was Latta, who told me: “the President signed the bill.” I went right down town to the postal telegraph office and sent Mather a night letter . . . : ‘PARK SERVICE BILL SIGNED NINE O'CLOCK LAST NIGHT. HAVE PEN USED BY PRESIDENT IN SIGNING FOR YOU’ (Albright and Cahn 1985, 42–43).

Despite Albright's account, it is hard to believe that Wilson would have signed any piece of legislation without knowing its details and implications—especially one that created a new bureaucratic agency. Given his scant interest in conservation affairs generally, one could surmise that Wilson signed the bill for political reasons. According to Wilson biographer Arthur S. Link, Wilson signed much of his progressive legislation in 1916 to win Progressives over to the Democratic Party (Link 1954). The timing was appropriate, for by that time Roosevelt had requested that Progressive Party members return to the Republican Party to defeat Wilson and the Democrats. Clearly the bill was supported by many Progressive conservationist and preservationists; first NPS director Stephen T. Mather, for instance, was a former Progressive Party member who supported Wilson after the signing of the bill. Signing the bill also gave Wilson a measure of accomplishment in the conservation arena. He may have seen it as a way to counter the environmental legacy of Roosevelt and the Republicans, thus reducing the possibility for criticism of his conservation record in the upcoming presidential election debates.

However, as in the 1912 election, conservation was not a major campaign issue in 1916. The Democrats re-nominated Wilson; Roosevelt agreed to campaign for Republican Party nominee Charles Evans Hughes. Both candidates focused more on international issues regarding the expanding war in Europe, with domestic policies remaining in the background and conservation receiving only brief mention. The Republican Party platform simply stated: “We believe in a careful husbandry of all the natural resources of the nation—a husbandry which means development without waste; use without abuse” (Republican Party platform 1916). The 1916 Democratic Party platform on conservation was almost as brief:

For the safeguarding and quickening of the life of our own people, we favor the

conservation and development of the natural resources of the country through a policy which shall be positive rather than negative, a policy which shall not withhold such resources from development but which, while permitting and encouraging their use, shall prevent both waste and monopoly in their exploitation, and we earnestly favor the passage of acts which will accomplish these objects, reaffirming the declaration of the platform of 1912 on this subject (Democratic Party platform 1916).

The nation re-elected President Wilson, perhaps in part because, according to Link, Wilson had adopted most of Roosevelt's Progressive platform and instituted its policies during his administration before the 1916 election in order to win over more votes from alienated progressives (Link 1954). Journalist William Allen White noted: "Naturally [the Progressives] turned to Wilson. He, at least, had Progressive achievement; not what they had hoped for, but something upon which to build. So the Progressives, looking at his liberal record, gave the election to Mr. Wilson" (White 1929, 316–317).

The Progressive Movement came to an end in the aftermath of World War I. By 1920, most Americans were willing to follow Warren G. Harding's "return to normalcy." Progressive reform remained idle until the Great Depression brought about the ascension of another Roosevelt, as well as progressive reforms under the New Deal. Yet the reforms enacted during the Progressive Era continue to impact the United States today. This is no more evident than in the Yellowstone ecosystem. The U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, professional land management agencies conceived by Roosevelt, continue to monitor and protect this vast wilderness area. Although the evolution of both agencies would lead to the practice of different forms of land management, both remain a lasting monument to Theodore Roosevelt's conservation leadership and the Progressive Era.

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