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### WHERE WE LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY

There was tension and excitement in the conference room at the Washington Court Hotel on Capitol Hill when Dana Alston stepped to the podium. Alston was to address an audience of more than 650 people, including 300 delegates to the first national People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. Delegates included grassroots environmental activists from across the country: African-Americans from “cancer alley” in Louisiana; Latinos from the cities and rural areas of the Southwest; Native American activists such as the Western Shoshone, who were protesting underground nuclear testing on their lands; organizers of multiracial coalitions in places such as San Francisco and Albany, New York. The purpose of the summit, held on October 24–27, 1991, was to begin to define a new environmental politics from a multiracial and social justice perspective. The delegates sought to address questions of agenda, organizational structure,

movement composition, and social vision: issues central to the definition of environmentalism in the 1990s.

The delegates had just heard speeches by leaders of two important national environmental groups. The first, Michael Fischer, executive director of the Sierra Club, admitted to the summit delegates that his organization had too often been “conspicuously missing from the battles for environmental justice,” but argued that the time had come for groups to “work and look into the future, rather than to beat our breasts about the past.” “We national organizations are not the enemy,” Fischer claimed, warning summit participants that conflict between grassroots activists and national groups would only reinforce the divide-and-conquer approach of the Reagan and Bush administrations. “We’re here to reach across the table and to build the bridge of partnership with all of you,” Fischer insisted.<sup>1</sup>

Fischer’s remarks paralleled the comments of John Adams, executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a prominent, staff-based group of lawyers and other environmental professionals. Adams recited how the NRDC, during its twenty-year history, had “relentlessly confronted the massive problems associated with air, water, food and toxics” and had challenged the “disproportionate impacts on communities of color” of a wide range of environmental problems. “I believe the efforts we’ve engaged in are significant,” Adams declared, and he offered, like Fischer, to facilitate a “partnership” between the national and grassroots groups. “You can’t win this battle alone,” Adams concluded, underlining Fischer’s warning about the consequences of disunity.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the delegates felt that the speeches by these environmental chief executive officers, or CEOs, were not responsive to the criticisms they and their communities had directed at these groups. Activists had complained about the absence of people of color in leadership and staff positions of the national groups, the failure of these groups to incorporate equity or social justice considerations in selecting the issues they fought, and the disregard for local cultures and grassroots concerns in the positions these national groups took with regard to environmental conflicts. But beyond these specific complaints, delegates to the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit were seeking a redefinition of environmentalism to place the concerns, methods of organizing, and

constituencies of the grassroots groups at the center of the environmental discourse. They wanted to redefine the central issues of environmental politics, not just to join a coalition of special interest groups.

When Alston, a key organizer of the summit, took the stage to respond to the speeches of the environmental CEOs, there was a great deal of anticipation about what she might say. Alston symbolized the new kind of environmentalist the summit had sought to attract. Born in Harlem, she first became active in the mid-1960s in the black student movement, addressing issues of apartheid and the Vietnam War. Pursuing an interest in the relationship between social and economic justice issues and public health concerns, Alston completed a master's degree in occupational and environmental health at Columbia University. She subsequently took a series of jobs that extended those interests, from the Red Cross, where she dealt with the new emergency issues associated with toxics and nuclear power problems, to Rural America, where she organized conferences on pesticide issues. As part of her work, she frequently encountered staff members from the national environmental groups. It was at these meetings and strategy sessions that Alston, an African-American woman, was struck by how she was consistently the only person of color in attendance and the only participant to press such issues as farmworker health or the discriminatory effect on communities of color of the location of hazardous waste sites.

In February 1990, Alston joined the staff of the Panos Institute, an organization that deals with the intersection of environment and development issues from the perspective of Third World needs and concerns. Alston was hired to develop a program related to the rise of domestic people-of-color organizations concerned with environmental justice. In that capacity, she was invited to be part of the planning committee organizing the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. A thoughtful speaker, Alston had been asked to respond to the presentations of the environmental CEOs, given her background and familiarity with both the national and grassroots groups.

As she began to talk, Alston told the delegates and participants that she had decided not to respond to the speeches by Fischer and Adams. Instead, she would try to "define for ourselves the issues of the ecology and the environment, to

“speak these truths that we know from our lives to those participants and observers who we have invited here to join us.” Alston engaged her audience, responding to their appeal for self-definition. “For us,” she declared, “the issues of the environment do not stand alone by themselves. They are not narrowly defined. Our vision of the environment is woven into an overall framework of social, racial, and economic justice.” As Alston spoke, many in the audience talked back to her, shouting their agreement. “The environment, for us, is where we live, where we work, and where we play. The environment affords us the platform to address the critical issues of our time: questions of militarism and defense policy; religious freedom; cultural survival; energy-sustainable development; the future of our cities; transportation; housing; land and sovereignty rights; self-determination; employment—and we can go on and on.” Turning to the environmental CEOs, Alston declared that what she and the delegates wanted was not a paternalistic relationship but a “relationship based on equity, mutual respect, mutual interest, and justice.” This required a vision of the future. In pursuing these goals, Alston concluded (restating a dominant theme of the summit), “we refuse narrow definitions.”<sup>3</sup>

The question of definition lies at the heart of understanding the past, present, and future of the environmental movement. Today, the environmental movement, broadly defined, contains a diverse set of organizations, ideas, and approaches: professional groups, whose claims to power rest on scientific and legal expertise; environmental justice advocates concerned about equity and discrimination; traditional conservationists or protectionists, whose long-established organizations have become a powerful institutional presence; local grassroots protest groups organized around a single issue; direct-action groups bearing moral witness in their defense of Nature.

Environmental organizations range from multimillion-dollar operations led by chief executive officers and staffed by experts to ad hoc neighborhood associations formed to do battle concerning a local environmental issue. Some environmental groups speak the language of science; others criticize the way science is used to direct policy. There are groups concerned with improving efficiency in existing economic arrangements and those that seek to remake society; groups



that promote market solutions and those that want to regulate market failures; conservative environmentalists hoping to strengthen the system and radical environmentalists interested in an agenda for social change.

Given the diverse nature of contemporary environmentalism, it is striking how narrowly the movement has been retrospectively described by historians. In all the standard environmental histories, the roots of environmentalism are presented as differing perspectives on how best to manage or preserve “Nature,” meaning Nature outside the cities and the experiences of people’s everyday lives. The primary figures in numerous historical texts—the romantic, unyielding, Scottish mountaineer John Muir and the German-trained, management-oriented forester Gifford Pinchot are the best-known examples—represent those perspectives to the exclusion of other figures not seen as engaged in environmental struggles because their concerns were urban and industrial. There has been no place in this history for Alice Hamilton, who helped identify the new industrial poisons and spoke of reforming the “dangerous trades”; for empowerment advocates such as Florence Kelley, who sought to reform the conditions of the urban and industrial environment in order to improve the quality of life of workers, children, women, and the poor; or for urban critics such as Lewis Mumford, who spoke of the excesses of the industrial city and envisioned environmental harmony linking city and countryside at the regional scale.

In part because of these historical omissions, scholars offer sharply divergent views about the origins, evolution, and nature of contemporary environmentalism. Most common explanations place the beginning of the current environmental movement on or around Earth Day 1970. The new movement, they emphasize, came to anchor new forms of environmental policy and management based on the cleanup and control of pollution. These histories review how this movement influenced and was shaped by legislative and regulatory initiatives focused on environmental contamination rather than on the management or protection of Nature apart from daily life. This explanation thus provides a convenient way to distinguish between an earlier conservationist epoch, when battles took place concerning national parks, forest lands, resource development,

and recreational resources, and today's environmental era, when pollution and environmental hazards dominate contemporary policy agendas.

The problem with the story historians have told us is whom it leaves out and what it fails to explain. Pollution issues are not just a recent concern; people have recognized, thought about, and struggled with these problems for more than a century in significant and varied ways. A history that separates resource development and its regulation from the urban and industrial environment disguises a crucial link that connects both pollution and the loss of wilderness. If environmentalism is seen as rooted primarily or exclusively in the struggle to reserve or manage extra-urban Nature, it becomes difficult to link the changes in material life after World War II—the rise of petrochemicals, the dawning of the nuclear age, the tendencies toward overproduction and mass consumption—with the rise of new social movements focused on quality-of-life issues. And by defining contemporary environmentalism primarily in reference to its mainstream, institutional forms, such a history cannot account for the spontaneity and diversity of an environmentalism rooted in communities and constituencies seeking to address issues of where and how people live, work, and play.

*Forcing the Spring* offers a broader, more inclusive way to interpret the environmentalism of the past as well as the nature of the contemporary movement. This interpretation situates environmentalism as a core concept of a complex of social movements that first appeared in response to the urban and industrial changes accelerating with the rapid urbanization, industrialization, and closing of the frontier that launched the Progressive Era in the 1890s. The pressures on human and natural environments can then be seen as connected and as integral to the urban and industrial order. The social and technological changes brought about by the Depression and World War II further stimulated environmental points of view. And if Earth Day 1970 is seen not simply as the beginning of a new movement, but as the culmination of an era of protest and as prefiguring the different approaches within contemporary environmentalism, it is possible to more fully explain the commonalities and differences of today's complex environmental claims.

This book offers that broader interpretation by reconsidering and reconstructing the analysis of historical and contemporary environmentalism. The

book is organized into three parts. Part I explores the historical roots of this movement from the 1890s through the first half of this century. Chapters 1 and 2 trace the rise of the social movements that sought to address how a new urban and industrial order influenced different environments, whether in the industrial cities of the East or the resource-rich and rapidly developing West. These chapters reevaluate the traditional debates concerning resources and recreation and identify the new movements addressing the hazards of urban and industrial life. At some points these movements briefly intersected, both through the particular insights and efforts of figures such as Robert Marshall and Benton MacKaye, who were concerned with the relationships between natural and human environments, and in various efforts to define a new progressive politics consisting of rational decision making, social justice, and resource management in both city and countryside. For much of the time, however, the histories of the movements for the preservation of nature and for the remaking of everyday life were distinctive and separate, based on different constituencies and differing ways of responding to the new urban and industrial order. Chapter 3, the final chapter in this section, reviews the post–World War II era up through the late 1960s, situating these differences in the context of further economic and social change. It discusses the new ideas and movements that arose to challenge what writer Paul Goodman called the “organized society” and the search of these 1960s movements for environmental alternatives in the midst of social rebellion.

Part II situates the rise and consolidation of the contemporary environmental groups in the period between Earth Day 1970 and Earth Day 1990. It distinguishes between mainstream environmentalism—those groups and individuals involved in the framing of, and conflicts concerning, contemporary environmental policy—and alternative environmentalism, which has directly challenged many of the assumptions of that policy. The contrast between groups such as the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and other national environmental organizations, and grassroots or direct-action groups such as the Citizen’s Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes and Greenpeace highlights the very different conceptions of politics, process, and participation that distinguish these two manifestations of the environmental movement. Chapter 4 explores

the professionalization and institutionalization of the mainstream groups, including their reliance on lobbying, litigation, and the use of expertise as defining organizational features. Chapter 5 analyzes the community-based and direct-action groups, several of them populist in orientation, including the ways they have formed a countermovement of transformation. These alternative groups advocate environmental justice and environmental democracy as opposed to environmental management through greater system efficiency.

Part III takes up the importance of gender, ethnicity, and class, which have significance both in how movements have historically formed and defined themselves and in how current movements identify their issues and constituencies. Gender, ethnicity, and class questions are thus pivotal to both an analysis of the contemporary environmental movement and anticipation of its future directions.

Gender is central to how environmental issues are identified and is discussed in Chapter 6. Penny Newman, who organized her own community of Glen Avon to fight against the contamination seeping from the nearby Stringfellow Acid Pits east of metropolitan Los Angeles, is one of many women drawn into environmental groups by the discovery that her family and her community are at risk. These women claim authority based on everyday experience, on common sense as well as science, and on the moral position that those who may suffer the consequences of environmental hazards most directly in their lives, their communities, and the futures of their children must have a loud voice in the environmental decisions that affect their lives.

Ethnicity is also a clear factor in environmental problems and in the debates about their resolution, as explored in Chapter 7. People of color, in their jobs and in their communities, are subjected to the most intense environmental hazards. New toxic disposal sites are located in poor African-American rural communities in the South; farmworkers face pesticide poisoning in the fields; Native Americans, offered no other resources for economic development, provide a labor force for uranium mines, while their reservations become sites for the disposal of toxic and nuclear wastes. People of color face environmental problems in circumstances where they are also challenged by other manifestations of discrimination and disadvantage: unemployment, economic vulnerability, and

exclusion from political power. The experience of ethnicity, especially through the experience of racial discrimination, connects environmental justice to social justice immediately and intimately.

Class, the subject of Chapter 8, is also crucial to the framing of the environmental movement. Every toxic environmental hazard is encountered first by the workers who work in toxic industries and who use, transport, and dispose of hazardous chemicals. It is known that DBCP, a soil fumigant, is hazardous because it sterilized the men who were employed to formulate it. Asbestos is known to be hazardous because those who worked with it developed cancer. The connections among the workplace health and safety movement, the labor movement, and the environmental movement are made in the industrial choices and practices out of which contemporary environmental problems arise. This is true as well of the issue of employment and environmental quality, although the debate on this has focused on the effects of environmental regulation on employment, whether in the forests of the Pacific Northwest or the furniture factories of Los Angeles. But activists in the environmental and labor movements continue to discover that the environment-versus-jobs issue is a false opposition, used to divide the victims of economic decisions who have yet to find a common voice.

Chapter 9, the concluding chapter of the book, offers a perspective on the future of this broadly defined environmental movement. It analyzes additional factors crucial to the future of environmentalism: specifically, the end of the Cold War and the uneven but re nascent development of environmentalism among students and young people, and how such factors may shape the direction of the movement. It discusses the future directions that environmentalism may take, centering on the role of this complex movement in the contemporary urban and industrial order and its potential influence on social and environmental change. Finally, it identifies the possibilities of a renewed activism in the context of the current emphasis on the need for change at every level of American society.

When I began research for this book more than five years ago, I immediately confronted what was to emerge as my central research question: What was and is environmentalism? Which individuals and groups make up the environmental

movement? Is environmentalism a new kind of social movement? In seeking to answer these questions, I encountered, among other important figures, the extraordinary Alice Hamilton, the mother of American occupational and community health, who so clearly anticipated many contemporary environmental themes. This pivotal figure is not found in any of the environmental history texts. Yet Hamilton is clearly as much an environmentalist as John Muir, the much celebrated defender of Yosemite and passionate advocate of wilderness. I mentioned my interest in Hamilton to a staff member of one of the leading mainstream environmental groups who was curious about my project. “But who’s Alice Hamilton?” he asked in a puzzled manner. When I recounted the story to another friend involved in public health issues, I explained that the response by my environmentalist friend was equivalent to ignorance about John Muir. “Who’s John Muir?” my public health friend replied.

Through its effort to broaden the definition of environmentalism, this book shifts environmental analysis from an argument about protection or management of the natural environment to a discussion of social movements in response to the urban and industrial forces of the past hundred years. Defining environmentalism in this broad way draws attention to the commonalities and connections among segments of complex and varied movements for change. It includes groups focused not just on wilderness or resource management but on issues affecting daily life. And while the agendas, organizational forms, and political biases of environmental groups can differ significantly, they still share a common search for a response to the dominant urban and industrial order. Whether this search leads to a new direction and a new vision for environmentalism relates back to the question Dana Alston posed about definitions at the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. *Forcing the Spring* seeks to answer that question by providing a more comprehensive view of where environmentalism comes from within American experience and whether environmentalism is capable of transcending its narrow definitions to change the very fabric of social life.

*Resources and Recreation:  
The Limits of the Traditional Debate*

A “GREEN UTOPIA”?

To understand a complex movement with diverse roots, it might be best to begin with a paradoxical figure within environmentalism. Passionate about his hiking and climbing, a champion of the poor and powerless, deeply committed to wilderness, and equally forceful about the need to make nature a direct part of people’s lives, Robert Marshall is an enigmatic figure for those who have sought to define environmentalism in narrow and limiting terms. Yet this intense, engaging, always smiling, always curious radical forester proposed a common thread for a movement split between those focused on the management and/or protection of Nature and those who defined environment as the experience of daily life in its urban and industrial setting. The liberation of society, Marshall proclaimed, was a condition for the liberation of Nature, and the liberation of the natural environment from its would-be exploiters was an essential condition for social liberation. The absence of such a common thread serves as the environmental movement’s actual point of departure.

The son of a well-known lawyer who was a senior partner in the prestigious Washington, D.C., firm of Guggenheimer, Untermeyer, and Marshall, Robert Marshall grew up steeped in liberal values, including defense of civil liberties, respect for minority rights, and the fight against discrimination. Encouraged by his father, whose strong interest in forest conservation led him to make a large endowment to the Forestry School at Syracuse University, Marshall decided to attend the program at Syracuse to launch a forestry-related career. After graduation, he worked in various capacities for the U.S. Forest Service, where he began to develop strong feelings about forests as a necessary retreat “from the encompassing clutch of a mechanistic civilization,” a place where people would be able to “enjoy the most worthwhile and perhaps the only worthwhile part of life.” Marshall quickly became a strong critic of development pressures on forest lands and the activities of private logging companies, which had led to a decline in productivity, increase in soil erosion, and “ruination of the forest beauty.”<sup>1</sup>

Marshall most loved to hike and explore. He was constantly on the move, a pack on his back, entering and discovering new lands, new environments, new wilderness. In *Arctic Village*, a 1930 bestseller describing his activities in the Arctic wilderness area, Marshall spoke of a “vast lonely expanse where men are so rare and exceptional that the most ordinary person feels that all the other people are likewise significant.” His compassion for people and powerful desire to be in touch with wilderness eventually led Marshall to adopt two distinct, yet, for him, compatible positions about wilderness protection. On the one hand, Marshall feared a loss of the wild, undeveloped forest lands in both their spectacular western settings and in the less monumental forest areas of the East, such as the Adirondacks. In a February 1930 article for the *Scientific Monthly*, Marshall laid out this concept of wilderness as a “region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means, and is sufficiently spacious that a person crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out.” To achieve that goal, Marshall urged a new organization be formed “of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness” and be militant and uncompromising in their stance.<sup>2</sup>



At the same time, Marshall argued that wilderness belonged to all the people, not simply to an elite who wanted such areas available for their own use. Already by 1925, Marshall was writing that “people can not live generation after generation in the city without serious retrogression, physical, moral and mental, and the time will come when the most destitute of the city population will be able to get a vacation in the forest.”<sup>3</sup> Marshall was particularly critical of the policies of the National Park Service with their expensive facilities and concessions. Though he argued against more roads and increased development in either park or forest lands, Marshall nevertheless wanted wilderness accessible to “the ordinary guy.” During the New Deal era of the 1930s, this was a particularly appealing position to the Forest Service, which convinced Marshall to head a new outdoors and recreation office. Through this office, the Forest Service hoped to contrast itself as a kind of blue-collar alternative to the Park Service.<sup>4</sup>

Despite his agency role, Marshall remained a critic of both the Forest Service and the Park Service, blunt in his attack on the prodevelopment posture of the Forest Service as well as the Park Service’s recreation-oriented policies, which ended up destroying wilderness. His criticism of the Forest Service, laid out in his best-known work, *The People’s Forests*, was tied to Marshall’s overall critique of private forestry and its role both in destroying wilderness and in injuring the work force, the community, and the land itself.

In *The People’s Forests*, Marshall distinguished between private ownership of forest land (where the vast bulk of private lands had already been overcut), private ownership with public regulation, and full public ownership, which Marshall strongly endorsed. With public ownership, Marshall argued, “social welfare is substituted for private gain as the major objective for management.” To Marshall, that meant a new labor and rural economic development strategy and careful land use planning, more research and science, and safeguarding recreational values from “commercial exploitation.” His concept of linking protectionist objectives within a social policy framework was, according to one reviewer from *The Nation*, the best assurance for future generations that the forests could provide “a green retreat from whatever happens to be the insoluble problems of their age.”<sup>5</sup>

This search for a green retreat, or a “green utopia,” became a continuing passion for Marshall, both in his governmental activities and advocacy work. After his return to the Forest Service in 1937 following a stint with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Marshall laid out this combined social and environmentalist vision. It included subsidizing transportation to public forests for low-income people, operating camps where groups of underprivileged people could enjoy the outdoors for a nominal cost, changing Forest Service practices that discriminated against blacks, Jews, and other minorities, and acquiring more recreational forest land near urban centers. At the same time, he sought to designate wilderness as places “in which there shall be no roads or other provision for motorized transportation, no commercial timber cutting, and no occupancy under special use permit for hotels, stores, resorts, summer homes, organization camps, hunting and fishing lodges or similar uses . . .”<sup>6</sup>

Marshall also sought to integrate some of these ideas into the approach of The Wilderness Society, an organization he helped found and finance in its first years of operation. In 1937, Marshall enlisted his close friend Catherine Bauer, a leader in the regional planning movement, to explore the issues of wilderness, public access, and social policy. In a long letter to Marshall, Bauer noted that wilderness appreciation was seen as “snobbish,” but that a great many people, even the majority, could enjoy the wilderness, given a chance to experience it. Bauer suggested that “factory workers, who experience our machine civilization in its rawest and most extreme form” were the ones who could most benefit from wilderness and that by doing so they could broaden wilderness’ political base.<sup>7</sup>

Though Bauer’s suggestions reflected Marshall’s own approach, they caused some concern and consternation among other key figures in The Wilderness Society, especially its executive director, Robert Sterling Yard. Yard, whose salary was largely paid out of Marshall’s funds, worried that the New Deal forester might interest too many “radicals” like Bauer to attempt to influence wilderness policy. Yard and others were also sensitive to the redbaiting that Marshall himself became subject to during the late 1930s, with its possible taint for The Wilderness Society as well. Most of these attacks, led by members of Congress associated with the House Un-American Activities Committee, sought to tar

Marshall through his non-wilderness activities and financial contributions. Wilderness Society leaders such as Yard feared that Marshall's activities might reflect on the organization and worried that his advocacy of a "democratic wilderness" policy could undermine their preservationist concept of "protection." In response to the democratic wilderness concept, key Wilderness Society figure Olaus Murie would later write in an essay that "wilderness is for those who appreciate" and that if "the multitudes" were brought into the backcountry without really understanding its "subtle values," "there would be an insistent and effective demand for more and more facilities, and we would find ourselves losing our wilderness and having these areas reduced to the commonplace."<sup>8</sup>

Murie's pivotal essay was written a few months after Robert Marshall unexpectedly and tragically died in his sleep during an overnight train ride from Washington to New York. His death (Marshall was only thirty-nine when he died on November 11, 1939; some attributed his mysterious death from unknown causes to his hard-driving, passionate wilderness hiking) brought an end to the idea of combining a social and protectionist vision. In his will, Marshall divided his \$1.5 million estate into three trusts: one for social advocacy, including support for trade unions and for promoting "an economic system in the United States based upon the theory of production for use and not for profit"; a second to promote civil liberties; and a third for "preservation of wilderness conditions in outdoor America, including, but not limited to, the preservation of areas embracing primitive conditions of transportation, vegetation, and fauna." It was this last trust that came to be controlled by key officials of The Wilderness Society, including Yard, whose approach was more narrowly conceived (in terms of membership and constituency) and politically limiting (in terms of resource policy) than Marshall's own inclinations. Ignoring his social vision, Wilderness Society leaders focused instead on Marshall's protectionist ideas, successfully lobbying to have a wilderness area in Montana named after him. Over time, Robert Marshall's life and ideas began to undergo reinterpretation, with the suggestion that his love for wilderness had really been an exclusive and separate concern. With his death, Robert Marshall, the "people's forester" whose life's mission had sought to link social justice and wilderness protection, would become an

ambiguous historical figure representing environmentalism's divide between movements, constituencies, and ideas.<sup>9</sup>

**FROM RESOURCE EXPLOITATION  
TO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The standard histories of environmentalism in the United States almost invariably begin in the West. In the vast, spectacular landscapes, in the breathtaking vistas, powerful mountain ranges, and sharp-cutting rivers, in the West's abundance and scarcity of resources, in its aridity and fertility, the forces of urbanization and industrialization created some of the most dramatic changes in environment. It was in the West that the best-known mainstream environmental group, the Sierra Club, was formed, and where some of the most bitter urban and industrial conflicts took place involving hard-rock miners or resource and development disputes over access to water sources. It is also in the West that much of the traditional interpretation of environmentalism is grounded.

It was in the West that the idea of a land ethic was first put into practice by the Mormons, followers of a quasi-utopian, theocratic movement who settled throughout the Colorado River Basin. Influenced by the land use approaches of the Utes and other southwestern Indian tribes, the Mormons sought to organize on a cooperative basis to benefit the group and the community as opposed to individuals acting separately from one another. From these principles a concept of "stewardship," applied to land ownership and resource use, was derived. One of the earliest questions the Mormons confronted along these lines was control of water resources in an arid and unpredictable environment. Mormon leaders rejected the prevailing riparian doctrine, which defined water rights as property rights based on ownership of the land adjacent to the water, as inappropriate to the irrigation requirements of the Colorado River Basin. Instead, a community value to the water was established, based on community ownership of dams and ditches designed to direct the flow of water.

The stewardship approach to water was applied to other resources as well. Timber harvesting required access roads to the canyons where the forests were

located and were constructed under the direction of the Mormon Church, with provisions for use placed under the jurisdiction of county courts controlled by church officials. The act establishing these courts explicitly identified the stewardship requirement to “best preserve the timber” and to “subserve the interests of the settlements” in timber cutting and in the distribution of water for irrigation and other purposes.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1880s, the Mormon stewardship approach had come to be considered both controversial and exceptional. In his journals and later writings, John Wesley Powell, who first explored the Colorado River, headed the U.S. Geological Survey, and became the West’s first great resource analyst, spoke admiringly of the Mormon experiment in cooperation and stewardship. Powell feared that settlement in the West would be inappropriately organized through private control of land and related water rights with a tendency toward monopolies or large-scale government intervention. Mormon stewardship, including cooperative management of land and water and irrigation on a more limited scale to serve the needs of planned communities, appealed to Powell’s instinctive environmentalism. Yet it was quickly becoming apparent to the railroad companies, cattle owners, wheat farmers, mining and timber companies, and their financial backers that the West and its resources provided an extraordinary source of new wealth, ripe for exploitation, not cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

Already by the 1870s and 1880s, resource exploitation of the West dominated development patterns. Massive overgrazing, timber cutting, land monopolization, boom-and-bust mining practices as well as the industrialization of mines, speculation in land and water rights, and monocrop plantings overwhelmed limited efforts at cooperation and more orderly resource development. Gifford Pinchot, a young, wealthy forester recently returned from Germany, where he had begun to learn the principles of forest management, and soon to become a pivotal figure in the emergence of a conservationist movement, would write of this period that “the Nation was obsessed, when I got home, by a flurry of development. The American Colossus was fiercely intent on appropriating and exploiting the riches of the richest of all continents—grasping with both hands, reaping where he had not sown, wasting what he thought would last forever. New

railroads were opening new territory. The exploiters were pushing farther and farther into the wilderness.”<sup>12</sup>

The problems of resource exploitation seemed most pronounced with respect to land, water, and forests: an exploitation of the natural environment that paralleled the exploitation of labor in early industrialization, as historian William Cronon has argued. The 1890 U.S. Census Report called attention to dwindling supplies of timber and arable land, which in turn was seen as a function of increased concentration of ownership and intensified development. The concentration of land ownership had escalated rapidly during the 1870s and 1880s, creating major landholdings in California and other parts of the West. This was typified by the creation of the huge Miller and Lux holdings, two competing interests involved in a major water rights ruling in 1886, who between them controlled more than a million acres in the San Joaquin Valley of California. Government entities such as the General Land Office housed in the Department of Interior and local land offices responsible for the management and allocation of public lands were easily subject to political manipulation and abuse, often fronting for powerful private interests adept at using existing legislation to obtain additional landholdings.

These tendencies toward land monopolization also established political tensions in the region. Semipopulist countercurrents began to advocate government-backed irrigation projects, hoping that the availability of public capital would offset the accumulated power of the land monopolists. By the 1890s, groups such as the National Irrigation Congress had formed to push for federal legislation as a way to establish a kind of irrigation revolution in the West. The Irrigation Congress included not only populists who wished to impose restrictions on land ownership, but railroad interests who saw irrigation as a further opening of the West, politicians concerned that an immigration outlet for the East remain open, and larger western landowners who welcomed the availability of public capital for the construction of water development projects.

Passage of the Reclamation Act in 1902 failed to resolve the political tensions inherent in the irrigation coalitions. While the legislation provided land ownership restrictions for receiving federally reclaimed water, the Reclamation Service,

which was mandated to carry out the provisions of the law, itself became subject to pressures that undermined the social vision associated with public support for irrigation. These included multiple requests for exemptions from acreage limitations, differing interpretations of what constituted land ownership, repayment provisions that clouded the question of socially designed subsidies, and proposed projects that stretched the original definition of beneficiaries.

The emergence of the Reclamation Service (which subsequently became the Bureau of Reclamation) as a key institution in western resource development was perhaps most significant as part of the push for organized, “scientifically based” resource management as opposed to the chaotic resource exploitation associated with land monopolization and private resource development. Under the leadership of Arthur Powell Davis (John Wesley Powell’s nephew), the Reclamation Service became a leading advocate of applying the principles of science and engineering to the orderly management of resources. Resource development projects, through the application of science, would be designed to maximize the efficient use of a resource while preventing its overexploitation. Combining irrigation, storage, and possibly flood control and power generation suggested the potential for regional economic development and provided the Reclamation Service its social engineering identity.

This engineering-based utility principle was also associated with the rapid emergence of the Forest Service and its ambitious plans for restructuring timber production along scientific principles. Even more than the private land and water speculation that characterized the West prior to the Reclamation Act, unregulated timber cutting had become a major scandal in the West and elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> The rapid depletion of forests within just a few decades created fears that a “timber famine” was imminent and that only through some dramatic government intervention could the timber lands be saved. These fears led to passage of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which temporarily protected certain forests against further development. The intent of the legislation was to halt destructive and unregulated timber cutting rather than to “lock up” forest reserves as a form of wilderness protection. During the next decade, pressures to reopen forest lands shifted the debate from the effort to stop overuse to the development of

appropriate logging or forest management approaches as defined by Gifford Pinchot and others. Even John Muir, foremost champion of wilderness values, would write as late as 1901 that American logging should draw on the Prussian approach to forest management, whereby “the state woodlands are not allowed to lie idle” but are made to “produce as much timber as is possible without spoiling them.”<sup>14</sup>

By the turn of the century a broad consensus had emerged, extending from Muir’s own California-based Sierra Club, founded in 1892 as an outdoor recreation and advocacy group, to the Boone and Crockett Club, an elite hunting and wildlife protection association whose members included Theodore Roosevelt and Pinchot. These groups put forth a complementary vision of what Muir called “preservation” and “right use” of resources and wilderness, arguing against the waste and spoliation associated with unregulated private development while suggesting that “right use,” or the application of science and technique, would enhance the values of preservation, or “the necessity” of wilderness.

The assassination of William McKinley in 1901 and elevation of Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency pushed forward these new resource strategies. Less than two months after his inauguration, Roosevelt delivered his first message to Congress directly on the question of resource development, a speech that would become a benchmark in the rise of conservationist politics. “The fundamental idea of forestry,” Roosevelt proclaimed on December 2, 1901, “is the perpetuation of forests by use. Forest protection is not an end in itself; it is a means to increase and sustain the resources of our country and the industries which depend upon them. The preservation of our forests is an imperative business necessity.”<sup>15</sup>

Central to this concept of economic utility lay the role of the government in capturing the tools of science and establishing the principles of regulation and management beyond the single-purpose focus of the existing bureaucracies. Pinchot would later say that the “heart and soul” of Roosevelt’s first message to Congress was the establishment of the new U.S. Forest Service, pieced together from several different existing agencies and provided with a mandate to coordinate private development through government regulation and management.



Similarly, Roosevelt strongly promoted the creation of the Reclamation Service to accomplish “the reclamation and settlement of the arid lands.”

These two bureaucracies became the cornerstone of conservationist politics over the next half-century. Pinchot, for one, was continually seeking to consolidate existing organizations or establish new ones, such as the American Conservation League and the National Conservation Association, to promote this utilitarian and expertise-driven vision. Most of these efforts at movement-building were unsuccessful, as were the attempts to maintain the irrigation-related coalitions once the Reclamation Service was organized. Instead, specific regional or industry-related interest groups emerged to serve as lobbying organizations and agency support groups, further situating conservationism less as a social movement than as a development strategy linked to government action based on the principles of efficiency, scientific management, centralized control, and organized economic development.

During the seven years of the Roosevelt administration, when conservationism emerged as the country’s dominant resource strategy and when the conservationist agencies became central to the formation of these resource strategies, the first sharp divisions between those primarily focused on “preservation” and those linked to “right use” also emerged. These debates over preservation versus development also exposed a lack of consensus within organizations such as the American Civic Association and the Sierra Club and the absence of a clear vision concerning how to contend with the forces of urbanization and industrialization. At the same time, the leadership within the government agencies set out to establish their own mandates, which became the heart of the conservationist world view. That process culminated in the May 1908 Governors’ Conference on Conservation, aimed at consolidating the gains of conservationism and establishing it as a permanent fixture within the policy process regarding resources. While the focus of the conference was the marriage of science and development, conference organizers specifically sought to downplay the principle of preservation. Pinchot, in fact, specifically excluded John Muir from this gathering. By then, the author and preservationist champion had become the most visible and effective advocate of the notion that wilderness maintained a separate value as a “fountain of life,” independent of its utility as a resource.<sup>16</sup>

This division between Muir and Pinchot, much celebrated in the history of environmentalism, has tended to obscure the crucial role of the government agencies and their resource strategies in the framing of conservationist politics. It has also served to obscure the contending pressures among the conservationist-oriented agencies themselves. Pinchot's departure from the Forest Service in 1910, for example, can be seen as less significant in terms of the specific circumstances of his departure—a leasing dispute over Alaskan resources within the Department of the Interior—than in terms of the uncertainties surrounding overall resource policy and the role of the agencies.

By 1912, with the founding of the Progressive Party and the attempt to restate conservationist politics, conservationism as an ideology also seemed harder to define. This group of former and present government officials, industry critics, resource development advocates, and professionals sought to incorporate not only the principles of efficiency and science, but the remaking of civil society as well. The passing of resources under monopolistic control, former Pinchot aide W. J. McGee wrote in 1910, was creating a generation of “industrial dependents.”<sup>17</sup> To break that linkage required not just better management, some conservationists argued, but social transformation.

This conservationist coalition, which had become an amalgam of very different movements, ultimately failed to last much beyond the 1912 election. The process of creating a unifying vision for remaking society—from strategies with respect to resource management to issues of urban and industrial reorganization—splintered before the new Progressive Party had any chance of cohering. The long-standing historical argument over whether conservationism represented a more exclusive effort that relied on science and efficiency in the management of resources or of industry itself or whether, in fact, it provided a forum for those concerned more with “economic justice and democracy in the handling of resources than with mere prevention of waste,” as one historian put it, was never fully resolved. By World War I, those distinctions had faded, as the country entered a new age in which growth and expansion again became linked to resource availability rather than resource management.<sup>18</sup>

This emphasis on new development also tended to divide the government agencies at the center of the conservationist approach. The Forest Service split between advocates of “cooperation,” who supported allowing market forces to fuel the drive for forest management, and the defenders of public regulation. By 1920, the postwar shortage of lumber, the upward spiral of lumber prices, and the extension of logging into new areas had led Pinchot and many of his followers to fear that without renewed regulation and government intervention, another cycle of overexploitation could undermine conservationist gains.<sup>19</sup> The new leadership of the Forest Service, including one-time Pinchot ally William Greeley (chief forester during the Harding and Coolidge administrations), argued forcefully against intervention, declaring that the Forest Service’s “real objective” was, as Greeley put it, “the actual production of timber.” This shifting agency leadership role was best symbolized when Greeley himself, on resigning from his position as chief forester, became the timber industry’s chief political advocate and spokesman as secretary and manager of the West Coast Lumberman’s Association.<sup>20</sup>

The prominent role of the timber industry in the affairs of the Forest Service paralleled changes at other agencies. This included the Bureau of Reclamation, which continued to drift from its original social vision toward a supportive role in the development of a western water industry. By the 1920s, BuRec activities were being framed less in relation to a conservationist “science” and more as a tool for development on behalf of particular private interests, whether landowners or urban development interests.<sup>21</sup>

Through the 1920s and into the 1930s, the language of conservationism was increasingly appropriated by the resource-based industries and other industrial interests attracted to the concepts of efficiency, management, and the application of science in industrial organization. Groups organized to monitor and influence the agencies, such as the industry-dominated American Forestry Association and the National Water Resources Association, increased the pressure on the agencies to redefine their mission as incorporating the techniques of science and management to support private development. Industry interests were also able to adopt the principles of multiple use as justification for their own

environmentally destructive activities, such as the discharge of untreated wastes into streams or other water sources defined as “nature’s sewers.”<sup>22</sup>

With industry occupying a central role in defining and interpreting conservationism by the end of the 1920s, the historic tension between conservationism as an anti-corporate social movement and as an effort to rationalize a resource-based capitalism had disappeared. By the close of the Progressive Era in the 1920s, conservationism as expertise and rational management of resources for business uses had emerged as the movement’s dominant ideology, an ideology eagerly embraced by the very industries an earlier generation of conservationists had so forcefully challenged.

#### NATURE SET APART: THE SEARCH FOR PROTECTION

If utility became the byword of the early conservationists, the setting apart of Nature became the focus of those who emphasized that wilderness needed to be protected from urban and industrial influences. This preservationist or protectionist movement provided an even less coherent vision and organizing principle than conservationism. It included such diverse approaches as nationalism (Nature as a national treasure); commercialism (wilderness available for tourism and recreation); spiritualism (wilderness as regeneration in an urban and industrial age); ecology (Nature as biological richness and diversity); and a kind of elite aestheticism (Nature as beauty and experience, especially for those presumed to be most capable of appreciating it).

Wilderness advocacy has a long tradition in the United States, dating back to the early and middle years of the nineteenth century when urban expansion and resource activities in the East and middle border regions transformed much of the natural environment. It was the westward movement, however, that elevated wilderness as a key issue, both in terms of the scenic impact of the West’s natural wonders and the ambiguities associated with expansion and the closing of the frontier. By 1872, with the setting aside of Yellowstone as a “preservation,” there emerged the notion that western wilderness was distinctive, even as the policies designed to address wilderness remained bound by other considerations.

In the case of Yellowstone, the area set aside was considered worthless in economic terms, except insofar as it offered an opportunity for tourism with its related economic benefits. The wonders of Yellowstone, such as its geysers, were deemed important in part because they highlighted what was absent in other parts of the country: spectacular and monumental Nature. As a result, Yellowstone provided America with an opportunity to compete culturally with the Old World, with an image of Nature frozen in time, made possible by the absence of competing interests.

During the period that Yellowstone began to be celebrated as a national monument, the country also experienced a revival of interest in and sentimental attachment to the cause of the Indians, whose tribal organizations and lands, including the Yellowstone area, had largely eroded in the face of military action by the government and settlers. Yellowstone National Park, in fact, had been established from lands belonging to the Shoshone, Bannock, Blackfoot, and Crow tribes. The conception of the park as a cultural monument further reinforced the notion that preservation was specifically *not* about protecting living environments subject to the land uses and activities of organized societies, but rather about safeguarding cultural artifacts.<sup>23</sup>

The most significant issue facing early wilderness advocates was the overriding influence of resource development. The 1890 Yosemite Act, for example, referred to the newly established Yosemite National Park as “reserved forest lands.” Wilderness protection became feasible only after resource development was defined as remote from any given area or where the area needed protection as a hedge against overexploitation of resources. Pinchot and Muir worked closely together during the 1890s, in part because Muir, who valued wilderness primarily as a spiritual resource, had decided that wasteful industry practices were a major cause of the decline of wilderness and that there existed what he called the “legitimate demands on the forests” tied to their economic utility.<sup>24</sup>

However, as the outlines of a new resource-based conservationist approach took hold during the Roosevelt administration, Muir and some of his allies became increasingly dismayed by the logic of the conservationist argument. The linkage of efficiency and science with maximum use could also mean the

sacrifice of wilderness, particularly where urban or industry interests were involved. Thus, the decade-long battle over the construction of a dam in the Hetch-Hetchy Valley twenty miles to the northeast of Yosemite to meet the city of San Francisco's water needs has rightfully been identified as a critical event demonstrating the basis for a conservationist/preservationist dispute where the claims for development and protection competed in the same arena.

For the preservationists, grouped in part around Muir and his supporters in the Sierra Club, the defense of Hetch-Hetchy represented the first clear delineation between the need for protection versus the logic of resource development. After more than thirty years of often brilliant writing and advocacy about the "beauty, grandeur, and all-embracing usefulness of our wild mountain forest reservations and parks" in such publications as *Century* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, Muir became his most eloquent and inspiring in his defense of Hetch-Hetchy as wilderness. His famous "Dam Hetch-Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches" was complemented by numerous other tracts and writings less well known but nevertheless magnificently capturing his vision of wilderness as its own life force.<sup>25</sup>

When resource development was not seen as conflicting with this kind of scenic wilderness value, the preservationists stayed away from the issue. This occurred in the Owens Valley, where a proposed water resource development pitted conservationists allied with Los Angeles business and development interests against local Inyo County forces as well as urban Angelenos contesting the spiral of expansion proposed for their community. On the sidelines stood the preservationists, fixed on their definition of wilderness as scenic resource, and for whom neither rural development nor urban growth issues were seen as relevant.<sup>26</sup>

The Owens Valley area, this "land of little rain," was for those who knew it a special place, where "to understand the fashion of any life, one must know the land it is lived in and the procession of the year," as that other great essayist of the era, Mary Austin, wrote of her home.<sup>27</sup> But to the preservationists, interested primarily in the monumentalism of nature, this semi-arid valley held little interest as a natural or scenic environment. Most important, the issue of the urban environment, so critical to the events that unfolded around the securing of Los

Angeles' water supply, was even further removed from the preservationist frame of reference.

The preservationist position, in retrospect, appears particularly poignant, given how the issues of urban growth and sustainability emerged between 1908 and 1913 during the construction of the Los Angeles aqueduct. Though the problem was perceived in part as a labor issue (new residents represented a source of cheap labor), key aqueduct opponents, including the Los Angeles Socialist Party and its leader, Job Harriman, questioned whether the region could support an indefinite cycle of expansion based on the concept of an unlimited water supply. The Socialists offered an alternative vision of a democratic community organized to live and grow within its existing resource base, with real estate subdivisions organized according to plan rather than through speculation.

After narrowly losing the mayoralty election in 1911, the Socialists ultimately lost the battle over disposition of the water supply by 1913. Los Angeles would grow in a rapid and crazy-quilt fashion via access to this new, imported water supply, and an annexation policy would make surplus water available to areas willing to annex to the city as a precondition for expansion. Between 1913 and 1928, when the next imported water supply was secured, Los Angeles grew fourfold in land area, establishing a pattern of development for the southern California region and ultimately for the country as a whole. And while John Muir became best remembered for his defense of Hetch-Hetchy and scorn for San Francisco, Job Harriman became a forgotten symbol of the effort to define Los Angeles as a place of limits, equating environment with the conditions of urban life.

#### **RECREATIONAL POLITICS**

The preservationists' disinterest in the urban environment was reinforced by the anti-urban biases that prevailed among the most radical and forceful wilderness advocates, including Muir and wildlife defender William Hornaday. Although he wrote for urban, cosmopolitan publications that allowed him to establish urban support for wilderness protection, Muir was nevertheless especially hostile to urban living. As his biographer, Stephen Fox, pointed out, Muir distinguished

between the urban “lowland” and the wilderness high ground, which provided a kind of spiritual replenishment for daily life. Returning to Yosemite after a visit to San Francisco, Muir wrote how he experienced his own physical regeneration in the wilderness, “sufficient to shake out and clear away every trace of lowland confusion, degeneration and dust.”<sup>28</sup>

The anti-urban attitudes of the preservationists were also linked to their attitudes about class. The issue of hunting, for example, pointed to preservationist biases about class. By the mid- to late nineteenth century, hunting for food was being strongly criticized in the name of wilderness protection. The terms *pot hunting* and *pot shot*, or hunting for food, entered the language as depicting acts of lower-class cowardice and ill-breeding, as distinguished from the upper-class “sportsman [who] pursues his game for pleasure . . . [and] shoots invariably upon the wing and never takes mean advantage of bird or man,” as Theodore Roosevelt’s uncle, Robert Roosevelt, put it.<sup>29</sup> William Hornaday, the strong-willed director of the New York Zoological Society and impassioned defender of wildlife, made similar distinctions in his writings and specifically called for legislation that would discourage those who “sordidly shoot for the frying pan.” Much of Hornaday’s argument was structured as an appeal to his upper-class supporters, whom he urged “to take up their share of the white man’s burden and bear it to the goal.”<sup>30</sup>

Where Hornaday and other wildlife defenders differed with this elite constituency was over its preoccupation with sport hunting as upper-class recreation. Similar to Muir in the kind of absolute protectionist position he adopted, Hornaday became especially suspicious of those groups and individuals willing to ally with anti-protection groups such as the gun and ammunition businesses and elite hunting and commercial duck clubs. Hornaday, in fact, engaged in a bitter conflict that lasted more than two decades with T. Gilbert Pearson, the head of the National Association of Audubon Societies. During his lengthy tenure as leader of one of the oldest preservationist groups (until his forced resignation in October 1934), Pearson centralized the administration and sought to shift the group toward a middle ground between protection and accommodation to hunting and commercial interests.<sup>31</sup>



The hunting disputes also reinforced the strong perception that preservationist debates were primarily disputes among elites—between those who wished to leave the natural environment in a pristine state and those who viewed it as a place for recreation and pleasure. These disputes were most directly associated with the question of the national parks. When the National Park Service was established in 1916, it had all the trappings of an institution run for and by the elite. Its first head, Stephen Mather, a wealthy businessman with strong ties to the railroads, ran the Park Service as a kind of fiefdom, a playground for the wealthy, whose support for the park system he hoped to secure.

Mather's strategy to develop support for the Park Service was directly tied to the development of the parks as recreational resources. In pursuing this new approach, Mather initially relied on the railroads, which had already been instrumental in linking the concept of tourism to park management. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railroads had become the primary source of capital for new concession businesses in such parks as Yosemite, Yellowstone, Zion, Bryce, the Grand Canyon, and Mount Rainier. Since the railroad companies saw tourism primarily as an upper-class activity, they sought to establish "proper" tourist facilities, including grand hotels catering to the wealthy. Hotel management, in turn, served as an important adjunct to passenger train service to park areas, primarily designed to attract wealthy patrons.<sup>32</sup>

Mather extended this tradition of service for the wealthy, particularly through promotional activities such as the publication of glossy, expensive portfolios and picture books (some financed by Mather as well as by western railroad interests). These promotions were designed, as Mather's biographer, Robert Shankland, wrote, "to reach a hand-picked elite, capable, they hoped, of passing the habit of park travel down from above." Central to Mather's conception, already implicit in the Hetch-Hetchy conflict, was that the economic rationale for preservation lay in the growth of the tourism industry. "Our national parks are practically lying fallow," Mather wrote shortly before his appointment, "and only await proper development to bring them into their own."<sup>33</sup>

This economic argument—"making a business of scenery" as one article put it—became the dominant park policy: greater park access was needed in order

to stimulate the tourism trade. To promote the parks, Mather also understood that the long-standing nationalist appeal about cultural monuments, such as the railroads' promotional slogan of "See America First," had to be integrated into a broader appeal of experiencing nature. This "back to nature" appeal was part nostalgia and part therapy, an arcadian myth in an increasingly urbanized and industrial society. It also permeated the life and thinking of a good portion of the urban middle and upper classes during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Park Service refined those sentiments, both in attempting to protect Nature by setting areas apart and then by opening protected areas for larger and larger numbers of people to enable them to imagine life as it was "lived before the call of the city was insistent," as one 1912 writer put it.<sup>34</sup>

The revolution in access that Mather envisaged became most feasible with the rise of the automobile as the primary mode of transportation into the parks. Mather saw the automobile as a crucial stimulant to park travel and framed policies such as road construction, decisions about access, and joint promotional efforts to encourage car visitors. Long active in the American Automobile Association, Mather was a park-and-auto booster. He promoted and in large part financed, for example, the reopening of the Tioga Road in Yosemite for auto traffic. "The automotive and corollary industries counted him safely among their friends at court and reciprocated by advertising the parks almost gratuitously," Mather's biographer wrote, describing one instance in which a tire manufacturer widely distributed a three-sheet billboard poster exhibiting Yosemite Valley from Glacier Point while superimposing, with Mather's sanction, the company's tire in the center of the poster.<sup>35</sup>

Automobile access to the parks, far more than the earlier railroad traffic with its elite constituency, fundamentally transformed the nature of the park system. Tourism emerged as the dominant concept driving park policy. In Yellowstone, for example, the Park Service sought to increase the elk population as a show-piece to attract tourists and helped accomplish this by creating an open war on elk predators such as the mountain lion. Auto traffic into the parks, meanwhile, increased dramatically through the 1920s, with the number of cars entering Yosemite alone jumping more than tenfold in less than a decade.<sup>36</sup>

These figures also indicate that tourism had expanded the park constituency in terms of class as well. Mather's successors, among them Horace Albright, continued these pro-automobile, protourism policies, even as the Park Service's strongly elite character and ties remained in effect. The divisions within the preservationist movement that emerged in the late 1920s and 1930s over park policy focused less on those elite ties or even the political necessity for encouraging tourism than on the presumably unavoidable consequences of tourism on wilderness areas. Correspondence between *Saturday Evening Post* publisher George Horace Lorimer and J. Horace McFarland of the American Civic Association, two key wilderness advocates and park supporters, highlighted this dilemma for preservationists. In November 1934, Lorimer wrote that the growing role of the automobile had caused him to lose enthusiasm for the national park system. "Motor roads and other improvements are coming in them [the parks] so fast that they are gradually beginning to lose some of their attraction for the out-of-door man and the wilderness lover," Lorimer lamented. In response, McFarland acknowledged that while automobile access helped generate political support for the parks, he still felt, like other key preservationists, a condescending attitude toward those he called the park-going "dear public."<sup>37</sup>

These park tourism critics, dismissed as purists by Park Service defenders, became increasingly vocal during the 1920s and 1930s at a time when tourism was increasing and wilderness protection was becoming a contested policy arena. Former Park Service officials such as Robert Sterling Yard joined with a new generation of wilderness advocates, many of them tied to the Forest Service bureaucracy, in promoting a conception of wilderness as separate from its tourism-derived economic utility. A key figure in this evolving definition of wilderness was Aldo Leopold, a Forest Service employee who wrote in 1921 of wilderness as "a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state." Although suggesting that such areas could be open to lawful hunting and fishing, Leopold still asserted that wilderness necessarily had to be "kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man."<sup>38</sup>

This concept of wilderness as distinct from the urban and industrial environment, as having value in its own right, and as insulated from the pressures of both

resource development and the tourism trade became directly linked with the emergence of what Leopold called a “land-based ecology.” Leopold’s own evolution, in his activities and writings, charts this shift toward ecology. Early in his career, Leopold accepted the dominant conception of forestry as a science that allowed for a certain level of timber cutting and logging. He also sought to distinguish between scientific forestry and scientific game management, which required a level of protection for “the perpetuation of every indigenous species,” with the significant exception of predators and other non-game wildlife. This approach drew heavily on Leopold’s allegiance to hunting as a form of adventure and cultural replenishment to counter the “tragedy of prescribed lives” embedded in the urban and industrial culture. “The hunting instinct is a fixed character, and will continue to appear in a certain proportion of all normally developed individuals,” Leopold wrote in 1919. This core interest in hunting shaped his search for a minimal impact use concept, allowing for such activities as hunting, fishing, canoeing, and camping while providing for what Leopold called “some logical reconciliation between getting back to nature and preserving a little nature to get back to.”<sup>39</sup>

Through the 1920s and early 1930s, Leopold tried to steer a middle road. He was sympathetic to wildlife advocates such as Hornaday and the newer, more contentious conservationist organizations such as the Izaak Walton League (whose Wisconsin chapter Leopold joined in 1925), while also seeking common ground with his former colleagues in the Forest Service over the question of scientific management of forestry and wildlife. But Leopold’s studies in the science of game management increasingly led him to the conclusion that most game advocates, such as sportsmen, naturalists, and outdoor writers, had less interest in conservation as a science of living environments than as a method of keeping sufficient numbers of wildlife game alive for their economic or scenic utility. Though Leopold still sought to reconcile his continued love of hunting with his increasing concerns about the precarious state of various wildlife environments, he began to despair that growing population and economic expansion pressures were making the two positions irreconcilable. It was crucial, Leopold argued in an unpublished manuscript from the early 1930s, to find a workable synthesis between expansion and protection.<sup>40</sup>

During the New Deal years, Leopold grew increasingly pessimistic, believing population and expansion pressures had become too powerful. The essays that constitute his most famous and posthumous collection, *A Sand County Almanac*, written during the last decade of his life, reveal his growing hostility toward “mass recreation,” which he contrasted with “rudimentary grades of outdoor recreation” linked to “recreational ethical restraint.” At the same time, Leopold’s insistent call for a “revision of the national attitude toward land, its life, and its products” was being increasingly perceived as too radical, too removed from the mainstream conservationist and even preservationist ideas concerning economic and scenic utility. As early as 1935, National Wildlife Federation founder Jay “Ding” Darling wrote Leopold that “you are getting us out into the water over our depth by your new philosophy of wildlife environment” based on Leopold’s insistence that ownership and use of the land created “obligations and opportunities of trans-economic value and importance.” “The end of that road,” Darling wrote Leopold, “leads to socialization of property which I could only tolerate willingly if I could be shown that it would work.”<sup>41</sup>

Leopold, however, was far from a socialist or even a supporter of the New Deal. Leopold’s biographer, Curt Meine, characterized this advocate of a new land ethic as an “anti-ideologue.” “His experience of urban problems,” Meine wrote of Leopold, “was vicarious at best, naive at worst. He appreciated the problems of urbanized man, but he was not a social activist.” Leopold focused more on what he called the “individual responsibility” of the private landowner and was hostile to the notion of government responsibility for “land health.”<sup>42</sup>

Within this individualist credo, nevertheless, was contained a crucial, radical idea: the desire to infuse the industrial culture with what Leopold called “ecological conservation.” “To change ideas about what land is for,” Leopold wrote in 1940, “is to change ideas about what anything is for.” Within the year, he would extend that argument to proclaim that the essential value of wilderness was not recreation and its corollary economic interests but its value as a “science of land-health,” presenting a “base-datum of normality.” This “picture of how healthy land-maintenance [exists] itself as an organism” ultimately became a crucial objective in its own right. The concept of protecting wild areas, Leopold wrote

in a Wilderness Society publication, had to extend beyond the “spectacular scenic resources” of some park areas to include such places as “low altitude desert tracts heretofore regarded as without value for ‘recreation’ because they offer no pines, lakes, or other conventional scenery.” A conservationist deeply entrenched in the tradition of rugged individualism, Aldo Leopold, in his last years, could also be seen as this country’s first deep ecologist.<sup>43</sup>

#### THE TECHNOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

For conservationists and preservationists, the main order of business during the 1930s and 1940s continued to be the development of policies related to the management of resources or protection of the natural environment. The Roosevelt administration maintained an active interest in resource management and brought many key conservationists to the center of its resource policy making. These included most prominently Chicago lawyer and Progressive Party leader Harold Ickes, whose term as secretary of the interior (thirteen years) lasted longer than that of any previous or subsequent head of Interior. Though Ickes failed in his quest to create a unified Department of Conservation by combining such agencies as the Bureau of Reclamation and the Forest Service, he was successful in maintaining a political balance between protectionist approaches, such as the creation of Olympic and Kings Canyon national parks, and development-oriented policies, such as construction of the Colorado–Big Thompson and Central Valley water projects. Both approaches, however, were largely subsumed under the economic development policies established to deal with the overriding question of unemployment and the depression.

With the end of World War II and its military-induced economic recovery, balancing preservation and development objectives seemed more problematic. That became especially true after Harold Ickes’ resignation in 1946 as new resource development plans among such bureaucracies as the Bureau of Reclamation came to the fore. These initiatives had the potential to reopen the divide within the conservationist movement (the term *preservationist* had largely disappeared from use during the Ickes era). Tensions were emerging over ques-

tions of population growth and potential resource scarcity, the offsetting role of technology, and differing protest tactics and strategies regarding whether and how to protect the natural environment.

In the late 1940s two books written by prominent conservationists launched a debate about the state of the postwar order and the problem of population. These books—*The Road to Survival*, written by ornithologist and one-time editor of the Audubon Society magazine, William Vogt, and *Our Plundered Planet*, authored by the prominent head of the New York Zoological Society, Fairfield Osborn—became key conservationist tracts, helping reelevate a neo-Malthusian perspective within the movement.

The two authors were different in background and temperament. Vogt, the more impatient and radical in his approach, framed *The Road to Survival* as a continent-by-continent survey of land and population issues. He argued that the relationship between human populations and the supply of natural resources necessary for daily life had become highly unstable. This was due in part to “free competition and the application of the profit motive.” “Free enterprise—divorced from biophysical understanding and social responsibility,” Vogt wrote, “must bear a large share of the responsibility for devastated forests, vanishing wildlife, crippled ranges, a gullied continent, and roaring flood crests.” Vogt saw the problem as global in nature, stimulated by a “sanitary revolution” that had spread beyond the industrialized countries into less developed continents, such as South America, thus causing a population explosion. The resulting breakdown in the ratio between population and resources had the potential to create social disorder and possible starvation, a “meeting at the ecological judgement seat.” With the postwar population explosion, Vogt gloomily concluded, “the handwriting on the wall of five continents now tells us that the Day of Judgement is at hand.”<sup>44</sup>

Vogt’s unabashed Malthusianism and especially his anticapitalist tone contrasted with Osborn’s *Our Plundered Planet*. Osborn, the son of New York Zoological Society founder Henry Fairfield Osborn, also sought to present population and resource management concerns but argued that a free enterprise system could be mobilized to correct potential system abuses. At the same time, Osborn criticized “technologists [who] may outdo themselves in the creation

of artificial substitutes for natural subsistence” as a way to avoid the possibility of loss of resources. The only solution, Osborn warned, was to recognize “the necessity of cooperating with nature.”<sup>45</sup>

Even more than *Road to Survival*, the publication of *Our Plundered Planet* set off an intense debate in the late 1940s and early 1950s about population, resource, and technology issues. In a 1949 MIT forum, “The Social Implications of Scientific Progress—An Appraisal at Mid Century,” Osborn’s position, characterized by *Time* magazine as the “familiar Malthusian boggy of ever-shrinking resources, ever-increasing population,” was attacked by several conference participants, including Vannevar Bush, the wartime director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. In a panel session entitled “The Problem of World Production,” Bush argued that both population and scientific discoveries might be “bursting upwards” simultaneously, but that “science gets there first.” Both Bush and fellow panelist Nelson Rockefeller, then head of the International Basic Economy Corporation, spoke glowingly of the power of American technology to stretch resources and allow for a worldwide increase in the standard of living through such new technologies as insecticide sprays.<sup>46</sup>

By the early 1950s, the debates over resource, population, and technology issues had been joined. On the one hand, technology advocates, such as Thomas Nolan, director of the U.S. Geological Survey, spoke of the “inexhaustible resource of technology” and how potential resource shortages would simply “inspire the research and technical advances that will make it possible to resolve such problems well in advance of the doom we are often prone to foresee.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast, the “new conservationists,” as Osborn and his assistant, Samuel H. Ordway, Jr., called themselves, argued that the demand for resources combined with population increases would outstrip technological advances. “The future promises of technology are potential promises,” Ordway argued, and, as such, remained “‘pie in the sky’ in the laboratory and the unplumbed seas.”<sup>48</sup>

With few exceptions, both the technology-oriented optimists and the conservationist pessimists shared the belief that the private sector rather than government intervention would best correct abuses or provide answers. Both sides also sought to address growth issues, a central facet of postwar urban and indus-



trial ideology. One key document, the 1952 President's Materials Policy Commission report, which primarily focused on the problems of possible materials shortages, nevertheless also asserted a fundamental belief in "the principle of Growth." "Granting that we cannot find any absolute reason for this belief," the commission declared, "we admit that to our Western minds it seems preferable to any opposite, which to us implies stagnation and decay." The postwar growth debate thus centered on whether there existed "any unbreakable upper limits to the continuing growth of our economy," as the commission put it. Even Samuel Ordway, who fretted about the role of advertising and complained about "faster automobiles, radio and television sets blaring imprecations to buy more machine products, 90-page newspapers, pulp magazines, and Mickey Spillane by the millions," still argued that growth could be maintained as long as it was no longer based on consuming "more than the earth produces." Such a shift in approach would require, according to the conservationists, less a faith in technology than a willingness to incorporate the values of conservation—efficiency, wise (or temperate) use, better management—into how the urban and industrial order operated. Warning that a failure to adopt such changes could lead to widespread government intervention in everything from land use planning to price controls, the conservationists maintained a belief that the "free enterprise system" was capable of making such adjustments.<sup>49</sup>

How those adjustments could be made became the central mission of the two most important organizations of the new conservationists: the Conservation Foundation and Resources for the Future. Founded in 1948, the Conservation Foundation (CF) defined its goals in terms of research, education, and reports that addressed resource and population issues. Led by Osborn and Ordway, the organization's leaders during its first two decades, the CF relied heavily on a tight circle of officers, conservationist allies, financial contributors (including, most prominently, Laurance Rockefeller), and favored experts commissioned to write about key CF issues. The CF placed population and resources at the center of the conservationist discourse, while seeking to make linkages between industry, government, and universities in promoting better resource management. Unlike the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society, which became embroiled in specific

resource conflicts, the Conservation Foundation deliberately removed itself from a direct advocacy role, preferring instead to emphasize through conferences and publications how government and industry practices could be made more rational. The organization primarily focused on promoting expertise for its educational and policy roles and thought policy changes were best achieved through the proper application of expert knowledge.

The establishment of Resources for the Future (RFF) four years after the founding of the Conservation Foundation furthered this expertise-oriented view of conservationism. The original impulse behind the creation of RFF was the effort by several leading conservationists, including Osborn and former National Park Service director Horace Albright, to undertake a major “midcentury” conference on resource and conservation issues. After extensive maneuvering that caused the new group to disassociate itself from New Deal–style conservationism and its emphasis on national planning, the Mid-Century Conference was able to secure sponsorship from several conservative businessmen and resource-oriented trade associations. Lewis Douglas, chairman of the board of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, served as conference chairman, and the conference steering committee consisted of executives from cattle companies, the Farm Bureau, the American Petroleum Institute, Standard Oil, Newmont Mining, and Monongahela Power, with only Ira Gabrielson of the Wildlife Management Institute representing any of the conservationist advocacy groups.<sup>50</sup>

On December 2, 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower welcomed the 1600 Mid-Century Conference participants who had filled Washington, D.C.’s Shoreham Hotel in anticipation of this signal event in the evolution of conservationism. Eisenhower set the tone for the conference when he declared that conservation was not about “locking up and putting resources beyond the possibility of wastage or usage,” but involved “the intelligent use of all the resources we have, for the welfare and benefit of all the American people.”<sup>51</sup> Conference participants emphasized the need for population control, technological innovation, and appropriate resource development strategies to best address the key problems of population growth, an expanding economy, and a need for materials for military preparedness, which were the primary topics of the conference.

This attempt to combine the need for resource management with support for the development of new technologies characterized much of the early work of RFF. “Progress toward greater control [of the environment],” the group’s first annual report declared, “reflects basic discoveries in pure science and the ability to adapt new principles for the benefit of society through improved patterns of organization and cooperation.”<sup>52</sup> Along these lines, one of the first major grants by the organization involved exploring the “productive uses of nuclear energy. . . . Though nuclear power is not yet economic in most places,” RFF president Reuben Gustavson reported in the group’s 1955 annual report, “man has in the nucleus of the atom an almost inexhaustible source of energy, which he will be able to control and make available at prices that will decrease with advances in technology.”<sup>53</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, RFF emphasized its problem-solving approach. “The strategy of our efforts to enlarge understanding of the role of natural resources in the growth of the American economy and the welfare of the American people,” Gustavson’s successor, Joseph Fisher, commented, “is to start with a basic and critical problem, stated usually in economic, political or social terms, and then to pursue it by means of research, fundamental or applied as may be indicated.”<sup>54</sup> Much of the research focused primarily on resources, especially water resources, whose management had become central to the conservationist agenda in the 1950s. During this period, RFF researchers also worried about a breakdown in the conservation ethic caused by a powerful “Iron Triangle” of congressional leaders, government agencies, and local development interests who set the framework for policy on the basis of (sometimes marginal) economic interests rather than efficiency criteria.

By the 1960s, the focus on resource development for groups such as Resources for the Future and the Conservation Foundation had shifted from materials shortages to the externalities of resource development: inefficient projects, water pollution, waste discharges, air emissions. Led by a team of welfare economists, RFF raised the possibility that a failure of the market was occurring because “decisions concerning the use of natural resources do not always take into account the effects of that use.”<sup>55</sup> By correcting such abuses, the RFF

economists emphasized they were interested not in “abolishing adverse unfavorable effects” as such, but “reducing them in some cases where investigation shows that on balance such a reduction is worthwhile.”<sup>56</sup>

To carry out such corrections, RFF researchers became strongly wedded to two related approaches: cost-benefit analysis to see where corrections would be most cost-effective; and a reliance on cleanup or pollution control technologies when their benefits outweighed the costs involved. In cases where externalities impacted the natural environment, such as polluted streams, RFF analysts argued that the benefits side of the ledger had to incorporate the recreation value of the resource, underlining the increased importance of recreation for the conservationist argument. And while the shift in emphasis from materials shortages to inefficiency and externalities preoccupied the conservationist experts, the concern for safeguarding and setting aside pristine areas continued to be the dominant focus for conservationist advocacy groups, at a time when resource development was once again becoming identified as synonymous with an attack upon Nature.

#### THE FIGHT FOR WILDERNESS

The consolidation of the Iron Triangle during the 1950s was best exemplified by the Bureau of Reclamation’s ambitious projects to ring the Colorado River with storage dams, hydroelectric plants, and various other facilities. As early as 1946, Department of Interior officials laid plans linking water reclamation with regional economic development strategies. They hoped to stimulate agricultural and resource extraction activities as well as overall urban and industrial growth in the West, especially the Mountain States and the Southwest. By the late 1940s, an initial package of Iron Triangle–related projects serving the Upper Basin states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming was introduced as legislation. One of the sites proposed in the legislation, a dam and hydroelectric facility at Echo Park within Dinosaur National Monument at the intersection of the Green and Yampa rivers on the Colorado–Utah border, immediately became a focus of concern for certain conservationist groups. The subsequent battle over Echo

Dam, which would last nearly a decade and would be seen by some as a “turning point of historic significance” for environmentalism,<sup>57</sup> revitalized several of the advocacy groups and set one wing of the conservationist movement off on its search to find a place for wilderness in the postwar order.

The two leading organizations in the Echo Park fight, the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society, seemed at first ill-equipped to undertake a major public battle against the entrenched interests of the Iron Triangle. The Sierra Club had become strongly associated with such activities as mountain climbing, skiing, and backpacking, and its leadership tended to be drawn heavily from the business and professional worlds. Even during the New Deal period, the Sierra Club, many of whose top officers were conservative Republicans, played a relatively passive role in the development of resource policy and preservationist goals.<sup>58</sup>

If the Sierra Club did not appear to be a strong candidate for confrontation, the same could be said for The Wilderness Society, particularly during the reign of its first executive director, Robert Sterling Yard. But when Yard died at the age of eighty-four in 1945, his replacement, Howard Zahniser, a former employee of the U.S. Biological Survey, defined his mission as safeguarding and extending wilderness designations. Zahniser also saw the need for The Wilderness Society to develop working alliances with other conservationist groups, including the Sierra Club, which became more interested in direct advocacy after the new position of executive director was filled by university press editor and long-time Sierra Club member David Brower.

As Bureau of Reclamation plans to develop projects within the Colorado River Basin began to unfold, both organizations realized they had reached a point where a high-profile, public campaign to save Dinosaur National Monument was necessary. With the decision to pursue such a campaign, including lobbying and major promotional efforts designed to highlight this scenic resource, the Dinosaur fight served to distinguish between those conservationists still wedded to reclamation and other multi-use projects and those groups such as the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society that sought to recapture their preservationist or protectionist roots by emphasizing the need for protection. Yet these same protectionist groups

were also afraid of being characterized as “just aginners” and thus sought to support an alternative facility in the Upper Colorado River Basin as long as it did not “adversely affect Parks, Monuments, or Dedicated Wilderness,” as Brower and other leaders repeatedly declared. This position pushed the protectionist groups to accept a proposal to eliminate the Dinosaur facility but significantly expand a dam to generate additional hydroelectricity at Glen Canyon at the Arizona–Utah border to the east of the Grand Canyon. Unlike Dinosaur, which was quickly becoming an attractive recreation site popularized by the protectionist groups as a mobilizing tactic, the rugged and isolated but spectacular Glen Canyon was largely unknown to the groups’ leaders and members. Most important, it had never achieved park status, so the protectionist leaders, including Brower, reluctantly agreed to the compromise as the best way to save Dinosaur, even though they privately acknowledged that the Glen Canyon facility was an inefficient and questionable project.<sup>59</sup>

This compromise also had an unintended but substantial impact on the protectionist groups, especially the Sierra Club. On the one hand, the Dinosaur campaign had placed the club at the center of resource politics through its lobbying and mobilization tactics. This, in turn, had transformed the club’s public identity, attracting in the process a growing number of middle-class members, which helped to shift the organization beyond its more exclusive, upper-class frame of reference. At the same time, the loss of Glen Canyon forced the group to further reconsider its approach concerning wilderness, particularly where development plans threatened potential scenic resources.

One of these plans, the Park Service’s proposed Mission 66 project, immediately became controversial for the protectionist groups. Mission 66 plans called for improved roads and services in the national parks and a major expansion of parking facilities to ultimately accommodate more than 155,000 cars in park areas. Although parts of the plan, including those for Yosemite, the Sierra Club’s most valued scenic resource, had involved input and approval of top Sierra Club leaders in earlier years, the new, more aggressively protectionist-oriented club leaders, especially Brower, became sharp critics of Mission 66 and led the lobbying and public protest campaigns to curtail it.<sup>60</sup>

For the Sierra Club and, especially, The Wilderness Society, the best way to achieve renewed protectionist goals seemed to be the legislative route. In the wake of the Dinosaur fight, the groups felt the need to be more proactive in safeguarding wilderness by making protection responsibilities subject to legislative mandate. Toward that end, in 1955, Howard Zahniser drafted the first of eventually dozens of versions of a Wilderness Act calling for the permanent creation of 50 million acres of wilderness with no commercial activities, such as mining or hydroelectric generation, to be permitted.

During the next nine years, the protectionist groups found themselves immersed in lobbying and deal making. Facing significant opposition from resource development interests, government agencies, and certain congressional figures, and obliged to trek through eighteen hearings and sixty-six redraftings before a final compromise was reached in 1964, the groups were able to salvage only a sharply reduced National Wilderness Preservation System that consisted of 9.1 million acres and included provisions to review another 5.4 million acres over a ten-year period. Though the legislation identified the mechanisms to set apart future wilderness areas, it also allowed significant exemptions for mining, water development, livestock grazing, and recreational uses.

While passage of the Wilderness Act was hailed at the time by protectionists as a “benchmark in our civilization,” it quickly became apparent that the legislation would not, as Brower put it, “be the end of a series of problems, but the beginning.”<sup>61</sup> The review process was slow and cumbersome, tying up enormous conservationist resources. Both the Park Service and Forest Service resented the dilution of their decision-making powers to designate and administer wilderness areas and dragged their heels in getting the process under way. The first parcels to be placed in the system were not completed until 1968, and countless hours were spent by Sierra Club and especially Wilderness Society staff monitoring the process. Scientific and lobbying expertise had to be developed to comment on the unit-by-unit procedures established. “Whereas the long campaign for the Wilderness Act was a propagandistic tour de force,” the Sierra Club’s Michael McCloskey wrote in 1972, “the subsequent efforts to implement it have been dissipated by bureaucratic technicalities. Problems of administration, statutory

interpretation, field studies and reviews, record building, schedules, and congressional tactics have become the grist of the effort.”<sup>62</sup>

This immersion in bureaucratic rule making contrasted with the highly charged and publicly visible battles that swept up and ultimately polarized the Sierra Club during the mid- to late 1960s. One fight centered on a proposed dam and power-generating facility at Marble Bridge at the edge of the Grand Canyon, part of a major water-development legislative package introduced in the early 1960s. The intense conflict that ensued was an even more contentious affair than the earlier Dinosaur fight. Brower especially saw the battle as a crusade, complete with impassioned rhetoric (the proposed dam was compared to flooding the Sistine Chapel in one memorable ad, intentionally recalling John Muir’s rhetorical defense of Hetch-Hetchy), mobilization of the club’s membership, and an apparent no-compromise posture. Whereas park status had been the cutting-edge issue with Dinosaur, and the protectionists had declared themselves “neither pro-reclamation, nor anti-reclamation,” Brower and his supporters now defined their position as absolute opposition to all water development and hydro facilities in scenic resource areas. And while some Sierra Club directors fretted over the tone and direction of the Grand Canyon campaign and worried about the retaliatory actions of the Johnson administration (the club lost its tax-exempt status in a much-publicized move by the IRS, though it also immediately gained several thousand new members), the powerful symbol of the Grand Canyon allowed Brower to adopt a more aggressive approach.<sup>63</sup>

Once again, as with Dinosaur, the telling moment for the protectionists was the decision to agree to a compromise that removed the threat to the Grand Canyon but allowed the expansion of a coal-fired plant in the Four Corners region, where the states of Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona meet. On September 30, 1968, the new water development package, without a Grand Canyon facility, was signed into law, with the protectionists applauding their victory while feeling wary of the outcome.<sup>64</sup>

The Grand Canyon fight, similar to the Dinosaur battle, represented an ambiguous conclusion. A few years after the bill was signed, the Sierra Club would initiate litigation against the Four Corners power plants for their enor-



mous air pollution—emissions also affecting the Grand Canyon. The issue of what constituted a “scenic resource,” a concern raised twenty-five years earlier by Aldo Leopold, also remained unresolved. Nevertheless, the Grand Canyon campaign had become a critical battle for the Sierra Club. The organization had become a new and potent political force in the water policy arena, a public interest (as opposed to special economic interest) group able to mobilize an unrepresented public that valued the area for its own sake. Even more striking was the nature of the campaign, a protectionist version of 1960s-style, direct-action tactics. Letter writing, expressive ad campaigns, and demonstrations at congressional hearings became protectionist equivalents of civil rights and antiwar sit-ins and protests. Brower was in his element during this campaign, willing to take on all comers. But Brower’s critics within the Sierra Club saw him as a charismatic and unsettling force acting in an arbitrary and volatile manner. In the wake of the Grand Canyon fight, the Sierra Club began to move toward a decisive showdown over tactics and leadership that culminated in the fight over a siting proposal for a nuclear power plant.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the siting of nuclear power plants and their potential impact on scenic resources emerged as a major source of controversy for protectionist groups such as the Sierra Club. In this period, the proposal by the Pacific Gas & Electric utility for a Diablo Canyon power plant began to preoccupy both the club’s national leadership as well as several of its local chapters in terms of where the plant was to be located. Some of the club’s leaders worked closely with PG&E to find an acceptable site, eventually deciding to support PG&E’s choice of the Nipomo Dunes, a relatively undeveloped area along the California coast south of San Luis Obispo. Debates within the club erupted over the scenic value of Nipomo, the group’s decision-making process, and whether to seek trade-offs or otherwise participate in allowing certain projects to proceed. When Brower protested the club’s endorsement of Nipomo, a bitter organizational conflict ensued, which eventually led to the firing of Brower and a shake-out of the club’s leadership.<sup>65</sup>

For Brower and some of his supporters, the lessons of Diablo Canyon became linked to their mistrust of large government or corporate-sponsored development

projects. Brower saw the outcome of the Diablo conflict and the earlier battles around the Dinosaur and Grand Canyon facilities as reflecting two different directions for conservationist and protectionist groups: one implacable in the defense of wilderness and the other seeking to balance the demands of development and protection. But Brower's supporters never came to articulate a different vision nor organizational approach other than the deal making, lobbying, and use of expertise that characterized all of the conservationist and protectionist groups. The Diablo fight ultimately had to be seen as a personality dispute, not an ideological divide. And although the firing of David Brower was written about as a sign of the times, the influence of the 1960s in redefining environmentalism, it turned out, would emerge more directly from other sources and issues.

By the 1960s, the search for a common frame of reference, embedded in either management or protectionist language, had reached a certain impasse regarding the natural environment. With a complex relationship to the resource bureaucracies, an unresolved debate over technology and population, a growing expertise and lobbying focus, and an increasingly visible profile, conservationist and protectionist groups had managed to carve out for themselves a major role in the policy arena regarding resources and the natural environment. Yet these groups had failed to identify a common agenda even in the resources area, nor had they been able to respond to the urban and industrial realities that marked the Progressive Era and subsequently transformed the post-World War II order. Other groups—of reformers, professionals, and radicals—had emerged to confront the urban and industrial environmental realities of the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the postwar period. These were separate and distinctive groups, defining issues and constituencies from a different starting point than their conservationist and protectionist counterparts. These groups also provide a different though essential lens through which a complex social movement with diverse roots and contending perspectives can best be understood.