

WILDERNESS VALUES, THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND MISSION 66

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Mission 66 was a ten-year program that began in 1956 and concluded in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the National Park Service. The stated goal of Mission 66 was to increase public access and enjoyment of the national parks through a program of development and reconstruction. However, wilderness conservationists and environmentalists criticized the program heavily during its time. This reaction has left Mission 66 with a controversial legacy that reflects negatively on the historical developments of the program. The goal of this thesis is to delve into why Mission 66 was such a controversial program by examining the historic roots of wilderness and environmental thought in the national parks in the United States. It is hoped this study work will provide an important perspective on Mission 66 that can be utilized in the ongoing conversation about Mission 66 and its cultural legacy.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This Research and Analysis

The goal of this thesis research is to analyze why the National Park Service Mission 66 initiative was such a controversial program during the 1950s and 1960s. Mission 66 was a ten-year program that began in 1956 and concluded in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the National Park Service. Conceived in-house by Park Service staff, the stated goal of Mission 66 was to increase public access and enjoyment of the national parks through a program of development and reconstruction of park facilities. It was both a dramatic step forward and a natural outgrowth of the traditional National Park Service management system. But why was Mission 66 such a controversial program? My thesis question asks what contemporary factors contributed to the public's reaction to the developments proposed by NPS within the program. The answer lies with wilderness values and the blossoming environmental movement in the 1960s, which included wilderness preservationists, conservationists and environmentalists. While these terms are used interchangeably, each actually represents a different set of values that evolved during different times in American history. Understanding the history of these groups, and how they melded together in the 1950s and 1960s, provides valuable insight into the rationale for the dislike of the Mission 66 program.

Mission 66 was not deemed a 'failure' by critics because the program was inherently flawed. Many aspects of Mission 66 reflected the most popular policies from the heyday of the National Park System during the 1930s, promoting recreation and access to all aspects of the parks. Mission 66 also embodied the traditional understanding of wilderness and environmental management. However, because of the popularity of and political support behind 'New Conservation', by the 1960s environmental critics called for a more ecologically-based development, visitation and management scheme for the National Parks System. Traditional wilderness supporters, who were by and large also supporters of the National Park System, were thus left torn between the National Park System that they new and loved and new evidence suggesting that that same system might be inadequate to protect the resources they

valued. It was an intellectual environment in which many old and new ideas were being rejected and reformed. I propose that the National Park Service, internally focused on its own programs and goals, was not able to adequately address external concerns about wilderness and environmental integrity within the Mission 66 program. This left the most vocal opponents of the program the opportunity to promote their own arguments against the value of the program and influence public opinion from the top down. I believe this played a significant role in why Mission 66 was 'rejected' by contemporary interests as insensitive, unnecessary overdevelopment.

My thesis research begins by setting the stage for the discussion by giving a general overview of the historic circumstances that brought about the development of Mission 66 by the National Park Service. I will explain the program's policies and planning organization. Next, an in-depth discussion of the origins of wilderness values and the environmental movement is provided. A summation, analysis and criticism of specific aspects of the Mission 66 program will be examined in case studies. Three different types of Mission 66 projects from three different national parks are presented, with the purpose of further exploring the critical themes presented earlier in the thesis in the context of actual Mission 66 projects that are still extant today. In Mount McKinley National Park (now Denali National Park and Preserve) the Denali Park Road will be discussed. In Olympic National Park, the subject is the park's extensive park trail system. In Crater Lake National Park, the topic is the Steel Circle Residential Complex. The Park Service's response to the criticism, and the resulting perception of the program at its conclusion are also discussed, with an eye towards changing viewpoints in Mission 66 scholarship today in 2011.

It is hoped that the work undertaken in my research will provide an important perspective on Mission 66 that can be utilized in the ongoing conversation about the pros and cons of the program during its own time. How that debate influences the historical significance we assign the tangible architectural remains of this ten-year program is critically important. It is also important to understand that America's national parks are filled with thousands of Mission 66 projects, from visitor centers to roads and trails. Without a critical reexamination of established attitudes towards Mission 66, there is a very real danger that the cultural resources of this transformative mid-century

program will be lost before their true value to the history of the National Park Service is fully understood.

National Parks Are Cultural Landscapes

In the field of historic preservation, the primary focus of study is architectural cultural resources. While buildings are the most obvious type of resources that preservationists deal with, there is more to preservation than buildings. The landscape itself is a large cultural resource, shaped by the wants, needs and practices of people. It is a holistic unit comprised not only of natural features like hills, fields, lakes and rivers, but also manmade features like buildings, roads, trails, farms and gardens. Beyond the physical, cultural landscapes are also defined by a layer of intellectual meaning; cultural traditions and values that further shape man's understanding of particular landscapes and their characteristics. These give landscapes intangible value, and guide us in using the landscapes in the most 'appropriate' manner compatible with these ideas. Every landscape, from the most wild to the most domestic, is a cultural landscape, and cannot escape the compulsion of man to ascribe feelings, emotions and significance to the aspects of them which we feel have the most intrinsic value. Wilderness itself is a type of cultural landscape. We have come to define wilderness as pristine, remote, untouched, natural and spiritual. Yet many of these attributes have nothing to do with the physical history and current reality of the areas we call wilderness. Areas of the Olympic National Wilderness were once logged for timber, Denali National Park and Preserve has a road running through it and members of the Klamath Tribe of Oregon visited the edge of Crater Lake long before the region was ever 'discovered' by Euro-American settlers. These wildernesses are not untouched by the hands of man, but are defined by their idealistic natural character. It is our overlay of ideals and values that make wilderness both a cultural and natural landscape.

In no other context is this more sharply apparent than in the national parks, where for over a century Americans have ascribed their highest cultural values to the natural landscape. The first national parks and monuments were established through individual acts of Congress, championed by individuals and organizations that believed strongly in the cultural significance and benefits of wilderness, as well as our other important natural and historic places. Intellectuals also praised wilderness as a great

cultural resource of amazing scenic beauty, unparalleled in Europe. It was seen as a source of particular national pride and identity. Furthermore, transcendental thinkers believed nature to be a reflection of God's great work. Wilderness was a place of spiritual retreat where man could find respite from the hectic whirl of late 19th industrialization and urban development, and reconnect with a simpler, more spiritual part of himself. Thus, these people, based on the particular values they saw in nature, wanted to ensure the survival of wilderness and the wilderness experience for the benefit of their fellow man. The first national parks were born. As the cultural value of the national parks became more accepted by the American public, Congress was finally convinced to establish a federal bureau for the management and preservation of the national parks. Established by the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) was given stewardship of the nation's valued natural and cultural resources, with the mission to provide for the enjoyment of the national parks, while at the same time leaving them "unimpaired" for future generations.

Since its founding the National Park Service has strived to carry out its mission to protect resources and provide access to the extensive system of parks, monuments and sites that fall within its jurisdiction. However, the ways and means by which NPS has accomplished its mission have been subject to change over time. Today, there are over twenty different administrative designations for the units of the National Park System, each reflecting the specific values for which each area was set aside. In the large nature parks the land is managed to preserve and tell the story of the primitive natural landscape as it was before the encroachment of human development. Such parks include Denali National Park and Preserve, Olympic National Park and Crater Lake National Park, all discussed within this treatise. In NPS's heritage and cultural sites the emphasis lies with telling the stories of our collective past by highlighting the lives of important individuals and events. Such sites include Kingsley Plantation National Historic Site and Gettysburg National Military Park. Yet in all these places, whether set aside for their natural or historical resources, premium is placed not only on the preservation of the intrinsic cultural values of wilderness and nature, but on the physical preservation of the environment itself and the features therein. This is true in both the heritage and nature parks, regardless of the preservation mission of each park. But the particular value placed on the physical integrity of wilderness was not always so

strong as it is today. The reason that environmental planning takes on the level of precedence that it does today is in large part because of the controversial legacy of one particular National Park Service initiative: Mission 66, and the controversy that it created.

Why Mission 66?

Mission 66 was imbued with a sense of urgency because of the decaying state of many national parks, including buildings, roads and trails, which had suffered from low funding and neglect during World War II. The program introduced modern planning principles and modern architecture to the national parks, with new roads, campgrounds and visitor centers being constructed on a fast track schedule. At the same time, all of these new developments were still executed squarely within the framework of NPS' traditional master planning system developed in the early 20th century. The idea of



Figure 1-1. The National Park Service's official Mission 66 logo.

developing master plans for each park came from within the planning branch of NPS, headed for many years by landscape architect Thomas Vint. In collaboration with

agency landscape architects, each park had developed its own master plan that guided the development and management of the parks. These plans treated each park like a scenic landscape, and planning ideally maximized the qualities and preservation of the resources for which each park had been designated. Mission 66 continued to treat national park landscapes as such, balancing new uses and unparalleled access with the traditional understanding of wilderness management.

On paper, Mission 66 read like a dream, the right program for the right moment in history. In line with previous policy, Mission 66 was not intended to be a referendum on the value of wilderness or other resources in the National Parks System. Yet as the program began and the first projects got underway, it was clear that something fundamental had changed in the way that Americans valued wilderness. All of the people-centric wilderness values that the National Parks System was built on still remained true. People still had nationalistic pride in its existence, and still believed in spiritual power and scenic beauty of wilderness in the parks. But now there was another lens through which Americans saw wilderness. It was a natural resource that deserved protection in its own right, because it's ecological integrity had its own value, not just to humanity, but also to the planet itself. Mission 66 was characterized by its critics as being insensitive to these new wilderness values, and was attacked from many directions on nearly all its principles. Declared all but a public relations disaster by 1966, Mission 66 (and its successor program, PARKSCAPE, U.S.A.) would be the last comprehensive, system wide planning programs to be initiated by the National Park Service, from the 1970s to the present. This is mostly because of the decrease in funding provided to NPS after the conclusion of the program, as well as the large number of new parks added to the system after 1970, which stretched the budget even thinner. However, the conservative nature of park development since Mission 66 is also related to fallout over the Mission 66 program and the resulting skepticism over the value of further development with the parks.

Mission 66 has become a topic of increasing interest among National Park Service historians in the last ten years, reviving scholarship in what in some ways is considered a "black mark" on the record of the National Park Service. What drew me as a historic preservationist to Mission 66 was the seeming disconnect between how the

program's developments are characterized by contemporary observers and later historians, and the crucial role those same developments have in the national parks today. Mission 66 was and continues to be characterized as having overwhelmingly negative impacts on the national parks, promoting overdevelopment and tourist excess. Yet the infrastructure developed during Mission 66 is the backbone of the National Park System today. In retrospect, Mission 66 has positively contributed in a number of ways to the management of the national parks, and increasingly historians, like Ethan Carr, Sarah Allaback and Linda McClelland, are beginning to give the program credit where credit is due. However, historically negative attitude towards Mission 66 have cast a cloud over the legacy of the program. This attitude has placed the physical features that the program added to the cultural landscape of the parks- the buildings, roads, trails and campgrounds- at increased danger of being demolished before their historic significance can be fully evaluated.

The National Register of Historic Places

One medium through which Mission 66 has begun to be evaluated is the National Register of Historic Places. The cultural resources of the program have begun to reach the 50-year threshold for eligibility. As of 2011, the first five years of Mission 66 architecture and landscape planning, from 1956 to 1961, now qualify for listing in the National Register based on age. The National Register was established in 1966 with the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and is intended as a comprehensive list of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that are significant to history for their design, history and other significant associations. Since that time, it has been the responsibility of the National Park Service to administer the National Register and uphold its standards. This law, as amended, also requires NPS to evaluate all resources it manages for eligibility and listing in the National Register.

As the National Register is currently organized, a historic resource, including cultural landscapes, can be nominated for listing under one or more of four different criteria.¹ Potential eligibility or listing to the National Register does not provide any

¹ Rebecca H. Shrimpton, ed, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," National Park Service, National Register Bulletin No. 15, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990, rev. 2002, Chapter 2.

explicit protection to historic resources. However, it does, among other things, require that federal agencies (including the National Park Service) to consider their impacts to buildings and features within their administrative purview through the review process known as Section 106. Section 110 of the NHPA further requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their actions on historical properties, and afford the Advisory Council in historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on these actions.² Hence, the National Park Service's responsibilities under the NHPA represent another significant motivating factor for Mission 66 research. Thus, Section 106 is in a way forcing the National Park Service to confront the reality of Mission 66, NPS must think critically about what Mission 66 meant for the National Parks System before it is allowed to alter or demolish those parts of the cultural landscape that it helped shape.

While the National Register is not, and should not be considered the end all or be all of what is important in American history. The intent of the NHPA of 1966 is to bring cultural resource values into the planning and decision making process for federal agencies and federally funded or permitted projects. That said, the National Register nomination has become a way in which historians and preservationists structure their thinking about historic places. Indeed, nominations represent one type of literature through which Mission 66 has begun to be explored both broadly and deeply, as historians attempt to categorize the program and its physical resources within the framework of the National Register. Historic context statements and Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) forms are two formats that the National Register provides which offer a condensed format for summarizing important background information that all researchers can access and cite. Overall, Mission 66 is historically significant because of the great impact it had on the infrastructure of the National Park System and how the National Park Service manages its resources today.

However, there is an important distinction to be made between what is 'significant' and what we 'like.' Mission 66 has not been positively portrayed or

² Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, "Section 106 Regulations Summary." Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, <http://www.achp.gov/106summary.html> (accessed August 2011).

accepted by historians in the past, and this attitude has had to be addressed in new literature concerning Mission 66 resources for the National Register. This attitude also encompasses the modern architectural style used for many of the buildings constructed during the program. Some don't like the buildings because of their association with urban renewal and park 'overdevelopment.' Others don't like them because they are not Rustic buildings. And still others just think that modernist architecture is ugly and unappealing. Modernism, as a movement is more than an architectural style and planning philosophy. The Modern Movement also encompassed a broad spectrum of cultural movements, centered on the rejection of conservation social, cultural and artistic values, only a small facet of which involved architecture. Many of these values were reflected in the Mission 66 program for the national parks, embodied in the landscape planning undertaken and the buildings constructed. In the field of historic preservation in the United States, "modern" has yet to fully turn the 'corner' of popularity, and preservation professionals, policymakers and the general public has yet to be convinced of the worthiness for protection and preservation.³

In her book Allback provides a historic context for the Mission 66 visitor center, which addresses all of the requirements for nomination, from form and function to style and associations.⁴ However, while some visitor centers have been listed on the National Register as contributing to a national historic district or monument (such as the Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument and the Beaver Meadows Headquarters at Rocky Mountain National Park), few visitor centers has as of yet been listed individually.⁵ This seems to be because there is still debate within the NPS historical

³ Bronson, Susan D. and Thomas C. Jester. "Conserving the Built Heritage of the Modern Era: Recent Developments and Ongoing Challenges." *APT Bulletin* 28, No. 4 (1997): 4.

⁴ Sarah Allback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2000. Appendix III: Registering Mission 66 Visitor Centers in the National Register of Historic Places.

⁵ A notable exception is the Wright Brother's Memorial Visitor Center, designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001.



Figure 1-2. The Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center, Mount Rainier National Park, Washington. Demolished 2009. In 1986 Jonathan Monroe described the building as “One of the worst... buildings in the national park system.”⁶ However, this is a “view” expressed without the understanding that the building was purpose designed for day-use skiing activities during the winter months at the park. This use never developed and the purpose of the building changed, leaving it to be used for a purpose it was not designed to fulfill. Photograph by Nathan Vander Wilt, 2007.

community as to how stringent the standards, should be for listing Mission 66 resources, and how historically important they really are. In response, another ongoing effort towards interpreting Mission 66 for the National Register is the draft MPD form begun by Ethan Carr, Elaine Jackson-Retonda and Len Warner in collaboration with the NPS Pacific West Regional Office for Mission 66 resources in the region.⁷ Within its pages the authors have begun to parse the complex development of parks during the

⁶ Jonathan Searle Monroe, “Architecture in the National Parks: Cecil Doty and Mission 66.” Master’s Thesis, University of Washington, 1986, 68.

⁷ Ethan Carr, Elaine Jackson-Retondo, and Len Warner. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “The Mission 66 Era of National Park Development, 1945-1972”. Draft, January 2006.

era by resource type and address issues of historic context, relating Mission 66 with automotive and recreating culture during the mid-century period and the program's complex relationship with the environmental movement. However, like other contemporary scholarship about the Mission 66 program, this MPD still only discusses the negative perception of Mission 66 in a general way, and only begin to scratch the surface when it comes to understanding the deeper feelings that have fostered such a lasting dislike of Mission 66.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIC CONTEXT OF MISSION 66

The Parks in Crisis

The years leading up to Mission 66 were lean ones for the National Park Service (NPS). During World War II federal funding for many agencies had been cut in order to channel more dollars to the war effort, and the National Park Service was no exception. Between 1940 and 1945 the annual budget for the national parks dropped from \$21,098,000 to \$4,740,000.⁸ The war brought the end of the CCC and other New Deal programs that had benefited the parks as legislators streamlined the budget by paring down or completely cutting off major public works programs. Non-essential agencies were also moved out of Washington, D.C. offices to make way for wartime functions; NPS headquarters was moved to the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, and did not return home until 1947.⁹ Newton Drury, director of the National Park Service from 1940 until his retirement in 1951, had the difficult task of keeping the Service afloat during the tight wartime years. Drury was known to be a preservation-minded administrator, and he was challenged from 'day one' to balance protection and maintenance in the parks.¹⁰ Some requests on the parks were moderate in impact, such as use by the military of the parks as rest and rehabilitation areas.¹¹ However, he also had the task of fighting off private developers who wished to exploit the excuse of wartime need to gain access to the natural resources of the parks. Heated debates raged over timber extraction in Olympic National Park. While the battle at Olympic was eventually settled in favor of the NPS, allowances were eventually made elsewhere, in places like Death Valley and Yosemite, where mining for salt and tungsten was personally approved by

⁸ Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, 261

⁹ Janet McDonnell, Barry Mackintosh and Harper's Ferry Center, *The National Parks: Shaping the System*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005, 47.

¹⁰ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007, 30.

¹¹ Carr, *Mission 66*, 32.

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes.¹² While such resource battles raged at the management level park employees were kept busy creating master plans for thoughtful park development at a future date. However, as Ethan Carr states, despite the shortcomings Drury seemed content with the small wartime budget, as it ensured the agency could “do no harm” to the parks through unnecessary development.¹³

Despite Drury’s careful management, the result of this protracted period of underfunding was that by the end of the war many park units could barely keep up with maintenance as old facilities aged. Staff was stretched so thin that many parks were without adequate protection to prevent misuse by poachers, miners and looters, as well as overuse by unmonitored visitors. Park concessions were also not in good shape, many operations having scaled down or shut down entirely during the wartime years. All of these problems were further compounded by exponentially increasing visitor numbers. The American public, flourishing in the post-War economy, had begun to vacation again, and the chosen mode of transportation for most vacationing families was the automobile. Since its introduction the car has become a fixture of American culture and during 1920s. The car had reinvented the way Americans spent their leisure time, enabling middle-class Americans to become tourists of the nation’s natural and historic destinations, including the national parks.¹⁴ After WWII automobile tourism was revived as a popular summer pastime, as American families had more money and more free time. Bolstered by enthusiastic advertising sponsored by the National Park Service itself, the national parks quickly became a popular travel and leisure destination. This was in part thanks to the development of the parks during the interwar/CCC years of the 1920s and 1930s. During this Progressive Era, the government had willingly sponsored many road building and recreational projects on public lands. As a result, many parks and forests were easily accessible by car, offering a scenic vacation destination for urbanites and suburbanites across the country.

¹² Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, 151.

¹³ Carr, *Mission 66*, 31.

¹⁴ Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005, 24.



Figure 2-1. A traffic jam at the park entrance. Overcrowding in the parks was one of the primary reasons given for needing the Mission 66 program.¹⁵ National Park Service.

Between 1945 and 1950 alone, the national parks saw a nearly 280% increase in visitation, from 11.7 million visitors to 33.2 million.¹⁶ However, the parks were ill-equipped to deal with record visitation, and soon the National Park Service was drawing criticism from the public because of overcrowded campgrounds, deteriorating trails and trampled vistas. The general dissatisfaction of the public was summarized in an editorial piece penned by Bernard DeVoto that was published in Harper's Magazine in 1953. DeVoto, a western historian, novelist and conservationist, was one of the most influential journalists of his day, with a very popular monthly editorial column in Harper's. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s DeVoto used his talents and influence as a writer to defend the national parks and forests, and was a vocal opponent of what he saw as inappropriate exploitation of preserved public lands, such as proposed Echo Park dam project at Dinosaur National Monument. In the late 1940s¹⁷ His 1953 article entitled "Let's Close the National Parks" dramatically pointed out the perceived deficiencies of the national parks, from the slum-like campgrounds, dangerously

¹⁵ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, *Our Heritage: A Plan for Its Protection and Use: Mission 66*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1956, 4.

¹⁶ Wirth, *Parks*, 261.

¹⁷ Carr, *Mission 66*, 55.

unkempt trails, and “antique” park staff housing.¹⁸ Unless proper funds could be spent on repairs and upgrades, he suggested that the parks were better off closed to protect their natural resources from being loved to death by the public.¹⁹ DeVoto was not the first to openly and pointedly criticize the condition of the national parks and the deterioration of their natural resources, but his position as a historian and popular journalist assured that his appeal was heard not only by the academic world and the politicians in Washington, D.C., but also by the American public. This awareness fostered by DeVoto and other national parks advocates put increasing pressure on Congress to provide more funding for the parks.

The Origins of Mission 66

When Conrad Wirth (longtime NPS employee and former assistant director in charge of the Branch of Land Planning for the state parks during the CCC era) was appointed the director of the National Park Service in 1951, the annual park appropriations from Congress were actually below 1940s levels (\$33,577,000 in 1940 versus \$30,111,000 in 1950)²⁰, and did not reflect the growing need of the national parks to update their programs and facilities to meet increased and new visitor needs. At the time, the parks were still attempting to deal with repairs on a park-by-park basis, making individual requests for funds as had been done in the past. As during the wartime years, this made it easy for Congress to selectively approve appropriations requests, and while this kept the discretionary spending low, it also meant that often critical projects went half completed, or were never even started. The subsequent failure of the “piece by piece” system to keep up with demands led to a new style of administrative planning which involved seeking funding on a larger scale. To that end, the NPS was able to secure federal aid highway money specifically for park roads as

¹⁸ Carr, *Mission 66*, 55.

¹⁹ Bernard DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks.” *Harper’s Magazine* 207, no. 1241 (October 1953): 52.

²⁰ Conrad Wirth, *Parks*, 238. Adjusted for inflation, the 1940 budget was approximately \$57,640,000 in 1950s dollars, making the budget gap even wider than the unadjusted numbers initially suggest.

part of the Federal Highway Act (FHA) of 1954.²¹ This was one of the first large infusions of funding NPS had seen in over a decade.



Figure 2-2. Conrad Wirth, sixth Director of the National Park Service. Wirth was the vocal figurehead of the Mission 66 program. He was in constant dialogue with the press throughout his tenure, and not afraid to directly address critics. National Park Service Digital Image Archive.

Inspired by the success of such multi-year funding proposals as the FHA in Congress, in 1955 Wirth convened a multi-disciplinary planning committee to put together a 10-year funding plan to revive the national parks. The members of the working committee included Howard Stagner (naturalist), Bob Coates (economist), Jack Dodd (forester), Bill Carnes (landscape architect), Harold Smith (fiscal specialist), Roy Appleman (historian), and Ray Freeman (landscape architect).²² The make-up of the committee showed that Wirth was concerned with addressing all aspects of the Park Service's immediate concerns. Not only budget and recreation, but both natural and cultural resources were also under NPS management since being transferred over to

²¹ Carr, *Mission 66*, 88.

²² Allaback, 3.

the Service management in the 1930s.²³ Wirth also sought to keep NPS ahead of increasing visitation pressure in the future. The program was named “MISSION 66” by Wirth, and the goal of the program was “To Provide Adequate Protection and Development of the National Park System for Human Use” by 1966, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the National Park Service.²⁴ He also hoped it would give the proposal a sense of urgency he felt was appropriate to the seriousness of the Service’s management situation.²⁵ Wirth presented the Mission 66 proposal during President Eisenhower’s cabinet meeting in January 1956, with the president’s personal endorsement.²⁶ That same spring Congress approved the proposal with its initial expected budget of over \$700 million. By 1966 the National Park Service had spent nearly \$1 billion on internal improvements to create the capacity to accommodate the over 120 million visitors the national parks received that year.²⁷

Policies and Planning

The most succinct summary of the goals of the Mission 66 program is found not within the original proposal itself, but within the myriad of pamphlets and booklets printed by the National Park Service for distribution to the public. Iconic amongst these publications is *Our Heritage*, distributed in 1956 shortly after the Mission 66 program was announced by the Park Service. The booklet was essentially a condensed version of the original Congressional proposal. It echoed the eight-point plan that Wirth had laid out for Mission 66 developments, supplemented with whimsical color graphics. These booklets mostly focused on the capital improvements proposed for the parks, such as road rehabilitation, increased staff, administrative facilities, etc. After all, one of the major reasons for the proposal of Mission 66 in the first place was the need to address the compounding problems of crumbling infrastructure and the demands of rapidly

²³ John C. Miles, *Wilderness in National Parks: Playground or Preserve*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009, 58.

²⁴ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Mission 66 for the National Park System*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956. Title page.

²⁵ Wirth, *Parks*, 240.

²⁶ Ethan Carr et al., Section E, 4.

²⁷ The original estimated visitation in 1966 was only 80 million.

increasing visitation. Progress is easy to track in dollar amounts, as it is a tangible scale that most people can appreciate, so focusing on spending figures was an easy way to present the immediate impacts Mission 66 would have on the National Park System.



Figures 2-3 and 2-4. (Left) Cover of *Our Heritage*, depicting the ‘average’ American family expected to visit the national parks during Mission 66. (Right) Mission 66 project sign at Cleetwood Cove Trail, Crater Lake National Park. Many Mission 66 projects were identified with signs to promote the accomplishments of the program. Crater Lake National Park Museum and Archives Collections.

In order to be considered for a portion of the Mission 66 funding, each park unit was required to submit a prospectus, outlining a basic idea of what improvements it would need to construct over the next ten years and estimates for construction costs and program expenses. This process was made easy because of the National Park Service’s longstanding policy of creating master plans for the management of each park unit, a task that had occupied the parks almost exclusively during the lean wartime years. A standard template was distributed to each park, containing at minimal the following required sections:

- A general explanation of the goals of Mission 66
- Description of the park, including its location, boundaries
- Explanation as to why the park is important and why it has been designated (scenic beauty, scientific research, historic significance)
- List of specific problems facing the park (overuse, understaffed, insufficient infrastructure)
- Proposed development program, including specific projects addressing administrative and visitor services
- Request amount for appropriations for the duration of the 10-year program

Prospectuses were generally no more than twelve pages long; they were condensed summaries of immediate park development plans that were supplemented by each park's master plan. Indeed, the primary focus of most prospectuses was on physical improvements in the parks, such as road building, maintenance facilities, campgrounds, and employee housing. While environmental protection and "conservation unimpaired" were stressed significantly in the Mission 66 program literature, there often seemed to be a disconnect between what the parks were requesting and how those requests had a direct bearing on nature conservation would impact the environment. However, by its nature the Mission 66 prospectus did not lend itself toward an in depth discussion of such issues (it was a funding proposal after all) and so while the prospectuses are an excellent source concerning the tangible needs of each park in the 1950s, they are not the best source of information on NPS environmental policy and intent.

What about the natural resources of the parks, which Director Drury and other NPS officials fought so hard to protect during the war? To fulfill the other half of the Service's obligation to the public, all of the requirements for repair, replacement and new construction were presented as subservient to a final, less tangible objective:

"8. Provide for the protection and preservation of the wilderness areas within the National Park System and encourage their appreciation and enjoyment in ways that will leave them unimpaired."²⁸

²⁸ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, *Our Heritage: A Plan for Its Protection and Use: Mission 66*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1956, 7.

NPS proposed that this would be accomplished through careful placement of new facilities and the extension of visitor services in a controlled manner. To this end, it worked in the Park Service's favor that just a few years before Wirth had reorganized and consolidated all the design and construction staff into three offices to serve the entire National Park System. These offices were the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) in San Francisco and the Eastern Office of Design and Construction (EODC) in Philadelphia, and the National Capitol Region Office in Washington, D.C.²⁹ Thomas Vint, the landscape architect who had been very influential during the CCC years in the NPS, was kept on as chief of design and construction, based in Washington, D.C. These offices included all of the architects, landscape architects, engineers, and other design professionals who worked within the park units. During Mission 66 it was the policy of the National Park Service to do as much design and planning in house as possible, in order to keep costs down and to ensure that development was compatible with the management goals of each park service unit. However, it was not uncommon for the design offices to hire contract architects to draw up plans for minor buildings as a labor-saving device. In addition, concession facilities being built and paid for by park concessioners were also oftentimes contracted out to private firms, sometimes even well-known architects.³⁰ Nevertheless, NPS staff at the ODCs retained final approval rights over all buildings constructed in the parks, and they influenced what was and was not built in the parks, and where it was located.

Under the influence of Vint and Wirth³¹ the ODCs operated under a design policy that sought to limit the impact that Mission 66 developments would have on the parks, in line with the goal of wilderness conservation. Known as the "Vint Plan" or "Plan B", the idea was to make the main areas of the parks a camping and day use destination, and keep major construction like visitor centers and park administration away from

²⁹ Carr, *Mission 66*, 58.

³⁰ Monroe, 67.

³¹ Wirth was a longtime colleague and former subordinate of Vint, having worked with him on state park landscape design during the CCC era.

sensitive natural areas, on the edge or even outside the parks when possible.³² Concessioners were also to keep their new buildings away from major park features. Instead, roads would be rehabilitated or built to modern automotive standards to serve as conduits that would distribute visitors throughout the parks, making sure no one visitation area received too much traffic.³³ When new buildings were required within the parks, precedence in siting was given to already-developed areas, unless compelling reasons required location at a new site. Park architects also chose to break with the picturesque rustic style “Parkitecture” of the 1930s and design new park buildings rooted in the contemporary architectural styles that had risen in popularity since the end of the 1930s. While the exterior forms were vastly different than the park architecture that had come before, the Park Service believed that it was remaining consistent with the spirit of Rustic style; Mission 66 buildings were to blend into the landscape, through their low, flat profiles and plain façades, rather than by identification with natural features or materials.³⁴

Finally, the implementation of extensive park level interpretation programs was intended to educate the public about the value of the national parks and their scenic wonders. It was the hope of the Park Service that if the public understood why the parks were important, they would endeavor to use them wisely and preserve them for future generations:

“Through new visitor centers, information stations, publications, exhibits, camp fire talks, conducted trips, roadside displays, and audiovisual presentations, Mission 66... expanded from the communication of a park’s natural history to become an important tool for park preservation.”³⁵

³² Thomas C. Vint, "The Future Development and Functions of Our National Parks", October 1944.

³³ Carr, *Mission 66*, 246. In this case, Yosemite Valley was the inspirational cautionary tale.

³⁴ Allaback, 11.

³⁵ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, 465-466.

All of these new features, especially the visitor center, performed a more introductory role, giving visitors a starting point to explore a park, versus the previous system of park rangers providing a set narrative.³⁶ Park interpretative facilities, from visitor center to museums, were now major destinations within the parks, though of course visitors could pick and choose which programs they wished to see. Moreover, such structured activities also helped to control visitor interaction with the park, keeping large numbers out of the most sensitive areas, yet not keeping those inclined to go “off road” from getting the more traditional park experience.

The End of an Era

Overall, the development and education policies of Mission 66 closely mirror the modern planning trends in the 1950s; that is, the idea that thoughtful development and proper design could solve any dilemma. The same logic was used by Federal planners when formulating other large public works programs, such as urban renewal in large cities and the new interstate highway system. The program was intended to be a “fix it all in one go” type of proposition, ambitious in its scope and complete in its planning. However, much of the development proposed during Mission 66 never fully came to fruition. While Mission 66 began with enthusiastic public support, by the 1960s growing concern over environmental issues began to make people question if the program was not overdeveloping the parks. Controversies over such projects as the reconstruction of the Tioga Road in Yosemite stoked the flames under the ever-evolving debate over whether portions of the national parklands should be set aside as wilderness, and what should be the definition of wilderness.³⁷ Lack of new scientific research within the parks also called into question among scientists NPS’ commitment to fully understanding the complex natural systems within the parks.³⁸ Tensions within the Department of the Interior also put pressure on the program, as the new Secretary of the Interior Stewart

³⁶ Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the interior, National Park Service, 1986. http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/mackintosh2/index.htm (accessed July 2011), Chapter 3, “New Directions”.

³⁷ Carr et al., Section E, 69.

³⁸ Sellars, 224.

L. Udall was appointed in 1961. Udall was himself sympathetic to the environmental cause, and had conflicting ideas with Wirth as to how the national parks fit into the new wilderness legislation before Congress.³⁹

Wirth retired from the directorship of the National Park Service at the end of 1963, unable to complete the program he had worked so hard to begin. Many factors played into the successes and failures of Mission 66, but wilderness and environmental advocacy have had the most lasting effect on how we remember the program, and why such a proposal has never been implemented since. At the conclusion of Mission 66, Wirth's successor, George B. Hartzog, instituted a new multi-year program called "PARKSCAPE, U.S.A" to maintain the funding momentum of Mission 66. Instead of focusing on infrastructure, as Wirth had, Hartzog's goal was the "completion" of the National Park System by 1972 through the addition of new parks and recreation areas to better serve the American public.⁴⁰ However, the PARKSCAPE program faced the same type and level of criticism as Mission 66, and in 1972 Hartzog was dismissed from office. The kind of planning that Mission 66 and later PARKSCAPE, U.S.A. proposed was apparently no longer palatable to the American public. As Jonathan Monroe puts it:

"By the 1970's a vision of the parks as delicate, functioning ecosystems had replaced the historic attitude that culminated with Mission 66. As this attitude took hold, the focus of park management began to shift away from providing for human use..."⁴¹

Given the significant impact that the wilderness and environmental movements played in shaping the course of and our current valuation of the Mission 66 program, it is important to look deeply into the origins of both movements as they relate to the national parks. While conservation and environmentalism are often discussed in monolithic terms, both movements were and continue to be incredibly diverse, with different priorities and passions that unite and divide them. The following chapters will

³⁹ The Wilderness Act became law in 1964. See Chapter 3 of this thesis for a complete discussion on the background, debate, and final implementation of the Act.

⁴⁰ Sellars, 206-207.

⁴¹ Monroe, 130.

examine these questions: What common ground brought these two movements together in opposition to Mission 66? What aspects of the program conflicted with both the values of wilderness and nature so thoroughly that they could excite two disparate movements to unite? How did the National Park Service respond? And how has the outcome of these historic events shaped the way the movement itself and its tangible remains, its historical resources, are treated today?

CHAPTER III

WILDERNESS VALUES, THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND MISSION 66

Wilderness and Conservation in the United States

To understand United States of America's love affair with the wilderness, one has to travel back at least to the earliest days of European settlement in North America. Indeed, initial impressions of the bountiful nature of the New World were far from positive. The first European settlers to the continent imported the traditional distrust and fear of the wild with them to the frontier. For centuries wilderness had been defined as an uncultivated, untamed and dangerous place, filled with wild animals and life-threatening obstacles. Defined largely in Biblical terms, the 'wilderness' was a sinister, amoral place that one only visited against one's will.⁴² Rather than a place of wonder, it was a wasteland that must be conquered in the name of God and civilization.⁴³ Even worse, while most of the western European countries had only small pockets of the evil 'wild' - a thicket here and a glen there - the New World had it in abundance. As Nash puts it, the first European settlers, such as the Puritans, were depressed to find the second Eden they had hoped to find was nothing but forests as far as the eyes could see.⁴⁴

"The howling wilderness into which the New England saints were called was a wilderness of fact, of type, of the world, and of the mind. It was a dense and dangerous forest; it was a parallel type of the wilderness through which God's Israel of old had to pass before entering Canaan; it was the world itself in which the faith of God's people constantly had to be tried; and, by no means least, it was the wilderness of human consciousness, the howling chaos in the depths of the mind into which every sinner was called to be crucified before there could be any hope of salvation."⁴⁵

⁴² William Cronon, ed, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996, 71.

⁴³ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967. 3rd ed 1982, 2, 23.

⁴⁴ Nash, 25.

⁴⁵ David R. Williams, *Wilderness Lost: The Religious Origins of the American Mind*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1987, 23.

Defined in such frighteningly religious terms, popular opinion was slow to change. By the 1800s, most Americans still had an overwhelmingly negative opinion of wilderness. However, as the eastern coast of the country became more urbanized and tame, appreciation for the untamed natural places in America began to grow. Part of what drove Americans' new positive regard for the wilderness was the search for cultural identity. The narrative of the struggle of determined, independent and inventive settlers against the wilderness frontier came to define the 'American' way of life. Conquering the forests, plains and mountains on a steady march of domination towards the West made Americans uniquely hardy and self-reliant, as Europeans, Asians and other long established populations had not for centuries had to fight to subdue and conquer the natural landscape. Additionally, the fledgling nation, which lacked the long history and cultural artifacts of the Old World, needed an extraordinary feature that could compete with the images of the motherland. The continent's natural wonders became the symbol of American value and worthiness.⁴⁶

America's great natural wonders, which had been largely shunned as sinister and worthless in the previous century, was increasingly appreciated in the 19th century for their romantic, picturesque qualities. Romanticism, an intellectual movement that had begun to sweep Europe and then the New World, gave high value to the strange, remote, irregular and mysterious.⁴⁷ The American wilderness, which was imbued with these qualities, was seen as a refreshing contrast to the staid orderliness of civilized, urban society. Thus, the beauty 'discovered' in the natural wonders of the United States became the subject of European and American landscape tourists, as well as artists and philosophers who sought to capture the magic of the wilderness on paint and paper. For example, the Hudson River Valley saw a huge increase in visitors intent on seeing the scenery and admiring its beauty, remoteness and romance.

The United States' nationalistic fervor for wilderness was also supported and enriched by a revolution in the spiritual conception and intellectual appreciation of nature. The American Transcendental movement of the 1830s and 1840s is embodied

⁴⁶ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1979, 11-12.

⁴⁷ Nash, 47.

in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and others. They postulated that there existed a plane higher than the physical world, and that there existed a parallelism between our material world and the spiritual one above. Nature, specifically wilderness, was then a reflection of the divine; it was not the antithesis of righteousness or morality, as it had been considered in the past, but rather was a reflection of universal spiritual truth.⁴⁸ Thus it was to the spiritual, religious benefit of man to have a personal, intimate relationship with nature. It would bring a person closer to God (or whatever higher spiritual power one believed in) and also closer to humanity's simpler, purer, primitive state. In this sense, wilderness was viewed as the ultimate provider of respite, healing and rejuvenation- it had humanistic values that went beyond its utilitarian use for raw materials and land. By contrast, the negative attributes that were once given to the wilderness were transferred to the urban environment. Doubts about the direction and benefits of industrialization also shaped transcendental aspersions of cities and factory towns.⁴⁹ For an urban population (especially those who were middle and upper class) that had little interaction with the realities of living on the 'frontier,' romantic and spiritualistic visions of nature were a tempting escape from the ordered structure of city life. As a result, outdoor leisure activities, such a hiking and mountaineering, became more popular. Unlike landscape tourism, which also remained popular, these activities brought people into even more intimate contact with nature. Local, regional and national clubs such as the Sierra Club (1892) were organized so that like-minded individuals could share their love of wilderness and explore its joys together.

Thus, by the 1890s Americans had embraced its wilderness in what Nash defines as a "wilderness cult," and it was a potent combination of nationalism, romanticism, and humanism that compelled Americans to consider preserving the wilderness in perpetuity.⁵⁰ As early as 1832 the Arkansas Hot Springs Reservation had been set aside by the state as a public park, as had Yosemite by the state of California

⁴⁸ Nash, 85.

⁴⁹ John Opie, *Nature's Nation: An Environmental History of the United States*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998, 194.

⁵⁰ Nash, 142-143.

in 1852. However, wilderness preservation advocates, such as John Muir, believed that true protection of America's 'sacred wilderness' could only be achieved at the highest level of government, the federal government. At first, the declaration of an individual reserve required a specific act of Congress. The first of what became known as the national parks were formed this way: Yellowstone (1872), Yosemite (1890), Sequoia (1890), Mount Rainier (1899), Crater Lake (1902), and others. Many of these parks had individual champions that led the way for their founding, such as John Muir for Yosemite, Nathaniel Langford for Yellowstone and William Gladstone Steele for Crater Lake. This was in part because the capital and political lobbying needed to bring the attention of Congress to a national park bill was sometimes great; as Sellars notes, after the formation of Yellowstone National Park, Congress was in no rush to declare additional national parks.⁵¹ As a consequence, at the same time as the individual parks were being created more general enabling legislation was enacted to set aside further public lands in several formats, cutting down on the bureaucratic red tape. Some of the most significant legislation included: The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 authorized to protect public lands as "forest reserves," managed first by the Department of the Interior and later by the new United States Forest Service (USFS) in the Department of Agriculture (DOA). The Antiquities Act of 1906 allowed the President to set aside public lands with special natural and cultural values as national monuments, managed by the Department of the Interior after 1933. The Organic Act of 1916 established the National Park Service within DOI, which was given the management of the national parks and national monuments.

Just as there were many different categories of protected public lands, so there were many different philosophies as to how they should be managed to ensure an ideal state of preservation. In the national parks in particular it was unclear exactly what purpose they should serve, as there was very little guidance. While wilderness advocates had extolled the benefits of the wilderness, the idea of a national park was a new concept, not just in the United States but the world. One place the federal government could turn to for guidance was the writings of Frederick Law Olmsted. His

⁵¹ Sellars, 11.

crowning jewel was his design for New York City's Central park, the elegance and harmony of which remains the subject of avid study and admiration to this day.

Olmsted was a prominent landscape architect in the late 19th century, and is considered by many the father of landscape architecture. He was intimately involved in the growing parks and parkway systems across the county, especially on the east coast. Olmsted believed strongly that natural public space, both designed and wild, were important to the health and happiness of people, and that parks were democratic social spaces which fostered "communicativeness" between all social and economic classes.⁵² In urban areas, such as in the case of Central Park, they also had practical benefits, such as improving transportation, increasing property values and providing a pleasant space for leisure and recreation.⁵³ In the rural parks, as well, there was also the opportunity to blend these high-minded ideals with more utilitarian concerns such as fostering business development.

In his report entitled "Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove," Olmsted explained to the California commission in charge of the Yosemite Valley why government should set upon itself the task of scenic preservation of the wilderness.⁵⁴ On the practical side, Olmsted begins with the monetary advantages of holding the land in trust, as it is a popular tourist destination that could enrich the entire community and foster independent enterprise.⁵⁵ However, he did not consider capitalistic pursuits the most important reason for preservation:

"A more important class of considerations, however, remains to be stated. These are the considerations of a political duty of grave importance which rest on the same eternal base, of equity and benevolence with all other duties of a republican government. It is the main duty of government, if it is not the sale

⁵² Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, xiv.

⁵³ Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, 24.

⁵⁴ Joseph L. Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980, 19.

⁵⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted, "Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove: A Preliminary Report (1865)," with an introductory note by Laura Wood Roper, *Landscape Architecture* 43 (October 1952).

duty of government, to provide means of protection for all citizens in the pursuit of happiness against the obstacles, otherwise insurmountable, which the selfishness of individuals or combinations of individuals is liable to interpose to that pursuit.”⁵⁶

Happiness, in Olmsted’s argument, was intimately attached to the ability of man to enjoy nature, and reap its intellectual and emotional benefits. This concept came directly from transcendentalism, which by the 1860s was well understood and gaining in popularity. The real revolution in Olmsted’s thinking was linking the pursuit of the wilderness experience with the responsibilities of government. Wilderness was not just a privilege, it was a god-given right, and access to it fell under the responsibilities of government (specifically the federal government) to guarantee the American citizen’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Furthermore, reasonable steps should be taken to ensure equal access to these natural resources. In the case of Yosemite, Olmsted recommended a good access road, sufficient accommodations and camping supplies provided by a private businessman for visitors, and a superintendent to oversee the management of the park. No form of enjoyment of the park was privileged; Olmsted’s goal was to get the visitor into nature, by carriage or on foot, and leave them to experience it as they would.⁵⁷ All of these necessary developments were to be made with the least impact to the landscape possible through the use of conscientious landscape planning.

Olmsted’s Yosemite report remained unpublished during his time, and it was not until 1952 that a complete copy of the report was uncovered and published by historian Laura Wood Roper. However, his ideas were incorporated into the founding of the National Park Service in the 20th century through his son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., was a leading member of the committee to draw up the Organic Act of 1916. Olmsted did not see a contradiction between development and wilderness values. In fact, moderated, planned development could preserve, reveal and enhance the scenic qualities of a landscape, likewise enhancing the visit experience.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Olmsted.

⁵⁷ Sax, 24.

⁵⁸ Carr, *Wilderness*, 5.

However, all conservationists did not share this philosophy. Preservationists in the vein of John Muir, on the other hand, believed that the wilderness should be left as untouched by human interference as possible. Muir, who was famous for his interstate hikes and long periods of seclusion in the forest, felt that only in true wilderness, isolated completely from the influence of society and development, could a person really experience the spiritual impact of nature.⁵⁹ While Muir also believed that the best way to protect the wilderness was to have it in government hands, he did not support the idea of roads, cabins, and other sorts of tourist intrusions in the national parks.

However, even Muir realized at the time that tolerance for tourism was needed, as the national parks, being so new, needed all the support they could get.⁶⁰ Muir himself was extra sensitive to the potential risks to the national parks in particular. He had already had his heart broken in the 1890s during his struggles with Gifford Pinchot over the fate of the forest reserves created by the Forest Reserve Act. Pinchot, trained in the emerging science of forestry, ridiculed the idea of complete preservation of wilderness for scenic purposes; rather, he believed that improved logging techniques could ensure preservation of the visual qualities of the forests, conserving them while at the same time allow for uses such as logging and grazing.⁶¹ Pinchot's utilitarian conservationism stance also harmonized with the idea of recreation, and that the environment is meaningful only when it serves multiple functions, such as recreation or natural resource extraction.⁶² Muir strongly disagreed, and while he gave up the fight for the national forests by 1897, he had high hopes for the future of the national parks.⁶³ The construction of the dam at Hetch Hetchy, in Yosemite, a project that Muir and Pinchot also quarreled over, may very well have been the death of Muir, but the bitter

⁵⁹ Nash, 125.

⁶⁰ Runte, 172.

⁶¹ Carr, *Wilderness*, 3-4.

⁶² Opie, 402.

⁶³ Nash, 139.

battle ended up swaying many in power closer towards Muir's vision of preservation unimpaired in the national parks.⁶⁴

As the new National Park System developed, the dynamic tension remained among recreationalists, who desired access for all manner of tourists and their activities, pure preservationists, who tolerated them for the sake of the parks themselves, and utilitarian conservationists who believed that human exploitation of resources without permanent damage to wilderness was possible. The two interests that really shaped the early use of the national parks were recreation and utility. Concern for pure preservation, which over time came to be defined by ecological and environmental integrity, would not come until the mid-century period.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, all of these conflicts were by no means settled, but the intellectual atmosphere was stable enough to allow the continued expansion and development of the national parks into the early 20th century. It was not until increasing visitation and new scientific information began to emerge that any new arguments entered into the debate, not just by the established wilderness preservation movement, but also by a new movement that came to be known as environmentalism.

The Effect of the Environmental Movement

The above discussion focuses on the romantic and humanistic reasons that Americans in the 19th and early 20th centuries had for wanting to preserve the wild lands of the United States. Indeed, the intellectual and aesthetic qualities of the wilderness were the primary talking points in defense of wilderness conservation and the establishment of the nation's first protected public lands. However, while the conversation may have been dominated with the need for wilderness for the sake of wilderness, the biological values of the natural environment were not disregarded. In 1864, only a year before the compilation of the Olmsted Report, George Perkins Marsh published his treatise entitled *Man and Nature; or Physical Geography as Modified by*

⁶⁴ Joseph Edward de Steiguer, *The Origins of Modern Environmental Thought*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006, 12.

⁶⁵ Sellars, 15-16.

Human Action.⁶⁶ Within it, Marsh postulated that the overexploitation of nature by man could have a disruptive effect on natural systems, which result in negative consequences for humanity. As a primary example he cites the clear cutting of primitive forests in watershed areas, which resulted in droughts, floods, erosion and negative climatic changes. There were also consequences for wildlife, whose populations would also be affected. While highlighting the effects caused by the loss of environmental balance, Marsh also made the connection to their affect on the utilitarian use of nature by man. Drought, floods and game animals had a direct effect on human survival, and for the wealthy, recreation and enjoyment of the wilderness.

Marsh, whose book later became influential in the development of the field of ecology, was not the only preservation figure to be concerned with the biological integrity of wilderness. Biology literally came into vogue in the 19th century, and botany, entomology, and geology were all popular hobbies of the middle and upper classes. John Muir himself was very interested in the science of nature. He, like Marsh, was critical of the permanent impacts that human uses, such as grazing, might have on the environment, going so far as to call sheep “hoofed locusts.”⁶⁷ He was also interested in natural history, and contributed a great deal of original research to the discussion of how the Yosemite Valley was formed, how glaciers moved, and many other topics. So, while the intellectual arguments for preservation characterized the debate, there was definitely a growing awareness of the environment that went hand in hand with the intellectual and spiritual appreciation of wilderness.

It was not until the mid-20th century that the environment in itself became the reason for its conservation and protection on public lands. Not because the environment had not been a consideration before, but because society’s scientific understanding of nature had exponentially grown since the beginning of the century. The 1950s through the 1970s in particular saw a blossoming of environmental science,

⁶⁶ George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature; or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*. New York; C. Scribner, 1864.
http://books.google.com/books/about/Man_and_nature.html?id=q-7wEQi0Gj0C (accessed September 2011).

⁶⁷ Sax, 7.

especially ecology. This fostered a national environmental movement in the United States, forever changing the way that we as humans view our role in nature. It was during this period that a clash between two competing approaches to ecological theory, the holistic and individualistic approaches, resulted in a dramatic paradigm shift in environmental theory. The former view, championed by ecologist Frederic Clements, reflected the long-accepted idea that over time vegetation tends to become organized into uniform units with discrete boundaries, dictated by climatic factors. By identifying the presence of one species of plant, you could be assured of the presence of other associated species for that zone type. Furthermore, any disruption of the order of a unit would predictably affect all other elements of the system, the certainty of which meant the history of the landscape could easily be reconstructed.⁶⁸

Henry Allen Gleason's individualistic approach, on the other hand, was infinitely more complex. Rather than discrete units, Gleason postulated that the landscape was a continuum, and that innumerable factors such as seeds dispersion patterns, weather patterns, presence of animal species and more really shaped the ecology of any given place. Holistic communities, then, were only the constructs of human thought.⁶⁹ Soon Gleason's theory became dominant, overturning all previous understanding of how wilderness functioned. Eugene Odum and several other ecologists proposed a unified approach. Their theory acknowledged the ordered succession of plant communities as well as the hierarchy of producers and consumers who contribute to an efficient 'yield' in an ecosystem. Odum also pinpointed human beings as their main disruptor of balanced ecosystems.⁷⁰ Going farther, he also stated that not only could humans damage ecosystems, it could alter them beyond all recovery.⁷¹ However, Odum believed that if human's took ownership over their effect on their environment, that

⁶⁸ Cronon, 235-36.

⁶⁹ Cronon, 234.

⁷⁰ Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 189.

⁷¹ Opie, 412.

through ecological principles and environmental ethics that the “damaged web of nature” could be repaired.⁷²

The rise of ecology as a mature academic field provided a new scientific understanding of the environment that has had a lasting impact on land management practices, as well as changed society as a whole with responsible stewardship of the environment. “Prior to the 1950s nature was simplistic and deterministic; after the 1950s nature became complex, fuzzy edged, and probabilistic.”⁷³ In other words, it was not enough to manage discrete blocks of public land, like the national parks, for their scenic beauty and recreational opportunities anymore. Ecologists argued that Americans needed to stop thinking about nature and wilderness as “individual scenic “wonders” but [instead] as a complete ecosystem.”⁷⁴

One individual whose work strongly reflects how ecology impacted the arena of land management policy was A. Starker Leopold. His farther, Aldo Leopold was an influential ecologist and wildlife management advocate at the turn of the 20th century. The elder Leopold had worked for the United Stated Forest Service, and as an ecologist (and avid hunter and fisherman) had seen firsthand the decline in wildlife populations and the effect that human use was having on the environment as a whole. In many ways, Leopold was an environmental prophet in his own time. He believed that that true wilderness was essential to the American experience, and that if the last untouched wilderness were to disappear, so would the best of American culture.⁷⁵ Furthermore, because of humanity’s unrivaled ability to modify the environment, we were not just responsible for preserving it for ourselves; we also had a moral obligation to be good stewards of the land for the rest of life as well.⁷⁶ All of these values were passed down to A. Starker Leopold, who followed his footsteps into environmental science. However,

⁷² Merchant, 189.

⁷³ Cronon, 233.

⁷⁴ Opie, 391.

⁷⁵ Nash, 189.

⁷⁶ Nash, 196-197.

because of the advances in ecology since the time of his father, A. Leopold was able to go farther in his recommendations, as he now had a more solid scientific backing. The younger Leopold's single most important contribution to environmental policy is known today as the Leopold Report, commissioned by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. He asked the National Academy of Sciences to review DOI's natural resources policy and identify gaps where new research and policies were needed for continued management of national parklands. The report, presented in March 1963, was adeptly summarized at the conclusion of the report:

The goal of managing the national parks and monuments should be to preserve, or where necessary to recreate, the ecologic scene as viewed by the first European visitors... Protection alone, which has been the core of Park Service wildlife policy, is not adequate to achieve this goal.

...A greatly expanded research program, oriented to management needs, must be developed within the National Park Service itself. Both research and the application of management methods should be in the hands of skilled park personnel.⁷⁷

The report was especially concerned with the management of wildlife, but its findings were applicable to conservation policy at the broadest scale. No longer would a superficial understanding of the ecosystems within and surrounding the parks be sufficient for conscientious environmental management. In addition to more research, the Leopold Report recommended that all roadless sections of the parks be "permanently zoned" to prevent nonconforming uses that might damage the quality of the wilderness in those areas, including recreation, which was an important part not just of National Park Service programs, but the other major land-holding agencies as well.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Leopold, A. Starker, S. A. Cain, C. M. Cottam, I. N. Gabrielson and T. L. Kimball. "Wildlife Management in the National Parks." Report submitted by Advisory Board on Wildlife Management, appointed by Secretary of the Interior Udall, March 4, 1963. http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/leopold/leopold.htm (accessed July 2011), Summary.

⁷⁸ The Leopold Report also has unintended negative consequences on the management of natural and cultural landscapes within recreational areas. It put pressure on NPS, USFS and the Bureau of Land Management to management these areas for wilderness qualities. However, further discussion in this direction is beyond the scope of this report.

Concerns over quality-of-life issues, skepticism of 'Big Science' and the growing dissatisfaction with the social status quo by the end of the 1950s, also created an ideal environment for the questioning of established policies. Nearly every aspect of society was in upheaval; between the civil rights movement, protests against the Vietnam War, and growing influence of youth and consumer culture, Americans were ready to be critical of all inalienable truths, and environmentalism became one of the causes they rallied around, especially young, idealistic students.⁷⁹ Indeed, what came to be known as "environmentalism" and the "environmental movement" during the 1960s and 1970s was defined just as much by its social interest and implications as it did its concern for the science of the nature. Publications for mass consumption, such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) explained in plainspoken language some of the inherent issues with prevailing public policy concerning the environment. Carson in particular also urged the public to be skeptical of new, untested advancements in scientific and technological research, not because science was inherently bad, but because only thorough testing and time can tell whether a new advancement will on balance harm or hurt humanity and the environment.⁸⁰ Endorsement of these works by major government and research organizations gave further legitimacy to the idea that there were in fact looming environmental crises that needed to be addressed.⁸¹ This mobilized the public concern over environmental issues during the era, elevating environmentalism to a major national issue.

John Opie (1998) cites the impact that non-governmental organizations (or NGOs) also had in spreading the word about environmental issues. Some of these organizations were products of the mid-century environmental discussion, such as The Nature Conservancy (1951) and the Natural Resources Defense Fund (1970.) Other organizations, however, were familiar names from the earlier wilderness preservation

⁷⁹ de Steiguer, 25.

⁸⁰ Michael A. Bryson, *Visions of the Land: Science, Literature, and the American Environment from the Era of Exploration to the Age of Ecology*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002, 159-160.

⁸¹ de Steiguer, 39.

movement and were considered 'partner organizations' of the National Park Service, like the Sierra Club (1892), Audubon Society (1905) and the Wilderness Society (1935.) Though the new environmental rhetoric was not strictly part of their original mission statements, they adopted 'new environmentalism' issues including population growth, pollution control, global warming, energy efficiency and nuclear power.⁸² This was not just a selfish move to tap into popular issues to draw attention to their own. Rather, there was, as is today, a legitimate synergy between the more concrete concerns of modern environmentalists over environmental degradation and the wilderness movement's belief in the preservation of the wilderness for the benefit of mankind. Conversely, environmentalism found its moral foundation in the spiritual ideas of transcendentalism that had been the central feature of 19th and early 20th century wilderness preservation.

The environmental and wilderness movements did not emerge at the same time, have the same origins, or even have the same stated goals. However, they grew together over common concerns over nature, its appreciation and future. As a result of the wide appeal and popularity of the new hybrid environmental message, greater knowledge and promotion of environmental issues by this combined effort during in the mid-century period lead to more public interest in the management of public nature lands, including the national parks, in the 1950s to 1970s. This later spurred the federal government to adopt new environmental policies and create new environmental regulations.⁸³

The Dual Mandate of the National Park Service

While wilderness conservation, and later environmentalism, were both concerned with the management of all types of public lands, the debate took on a particular character when it came to the National Park Service. The Service, established by the Organic Act of 1916, has a mission that is unique compared to other land-holding agencies such as the United States Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management. Rather than being defined by a need to manage their natural and cultural

⁸² Opie, 419.

⁸³ Merchant, 194-195.

resources for their practical value, the mission statement of NPS, also known as the 'dual mandate,' included provisions concerning human enjoyment of the parks that can be traced back to the debate between purism and recreation in the early wilderness movement. The rise in environmental awareness by the public during the 1950s and 1960s added a new dimension by which the 'dual mandate' could be interpreted, and the scale of the Mission 66 program focused renewed attention on understanding the 'true' mission of the National Park Service. This disputed clause, the so-called 'dual mandate', is that portion of the Organic Act of 1916 outlining the NPS's mission in managing the federal parklands:

The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the... national parks... by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks... which purpose to *conserve* the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and *to provide for the enjoyment* of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.⁸⁴ (emphasis added)

This seemingly contradictory mission statement left an ample amount of ambiguity over what the appropriate balance between human use and conservation within the national parks should be. Despite this, according to Sax, in the early years of the parks, both purposes existed side by side peaceably. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, the purist nature preservationists tolerated pleasure-seeking tourists, as their small numbers did not dramatically threaten the natural landscapes they were trying to protect in the 1920s and 1930s.⁸⁵ In fact, conservation groups were even supportive of the Park Service promoting additional use and visitation by the public, as public awareness and use could lead to more lands being set aside, and more funding to manage and protect the other parks already in existence. Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, the first two directors of the National Park Service, were strong supporters of recreational use of the parks. Following an Olmstedian model, early NPS planning policy relied heavily on the principles of landscape architecture. Each park was encouraged to develop its own master plan in conjunction with the designers at the central design office, and development decisions were based just as much on what

⁸⁴ Congressional Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535) as amended, Ch. 408, Paragraph 1.

⁸⁵ Sax, 11.

there was to see, but how it was to be seen. Roads were aligned to take the maximum advantage of scenic views and buildings were placed to create picturesque compositions. The architectural style used in the parks, especially during the 1920s and 1930s CCC and WPA era, was modeled after the architectural revival styles popular during the same period, and was meant to “harmonize” with the landscape in a romantic way.⁸⁶ Also, as all the land agencies were in a sense ‘competing’ for visitor traffic, NPS officials were vigorous in promoting the national parks as ‘the’ wilderness destination. As an example of their dedication, in the 1920s Mather had once proposed a “touring” division be set up for the parks. He set work with travel agencies to increase visitation.⁸⁷

Despite this aggressive promotion of the parks, conservation advocates were not overly worried at the conclusion of World War II. If past visitation trends continued even at the pre-WWII level, they would not pose a significant threat to nature. Furthermore, the balance between preservation and use still appeared to veer in favor of preservation in the National Parks Service under the leadership of Director Newton B. Drury. Partially, this was because Drury was willing to maintain the status quo, and defended the parks from overexploitation by resource developers during wartime. He had to keep the system afloat. Another good reason for the status quo was the fact that the parks had no money to spend on infrastructure. As Drury put it himself, “We have no money... we can do no harm.”⁸⁸

When new, more intrusive uses were proposed for the parks, this understanding quickly waned. Controversies such as the Echo Park dam proposal for Dinosaur National Monument in 1941 greatly damaged relations between environmental advocates and the Park Service. These intrusive, damaging developments within the national parklands flew in the face of what was then the understanding of the purpose of the public land reserves; human use and protection, but not resources exploitation.

⁸⁶ Carr, *Wilderness*, 285.

⁸⁷ Miles, 42.

⁸⁸ Carr, *Mission 66*, 6.

In fact, resource extraction, such as mining and logging had been allowed within the national monuments since their creation under the Antiquities Act of 1906. These had different governing policies than the national parks. However, since the monuments had come under the care of the National Park Service in 1933, many advocates did not see why there should be a great distinction in management. The construction of the Echo Park dam, like the Hetch Hetchy Dam decades before, represented development on a much larger, destructive scale. While Director Drury (and later Wirth) did not actively support the development of the Echo Park area for power and recreation, his lack of comment allowed the proposal to gain so much political support that it might very well have been built, had it not been for the staunch opposition from public and private wilderness advocacy groups such as the National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club, and Wilderness Society.⁸⁹ This criticism fell especially hard on Director Drury, who had always been considered a staunch anti-development advocate. Such a seeming breach of trust was not easily forgiven, and despite the positive public support at the beginning of the Mission 66 program, all interested parties kept a close eye on the parks, ready to confront NPS on any proposal they thought inappropriate.

The dramatic rise in visitation numbers, and the ensuing recreational development, was also of concern to preservationists. Conrad Wirth, who became director of the National Park Service in 1951, strongly believed in the recreational responsibilities of the National Park Service. Wirth entered the service during the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) years of development during the 1930s, and had a close relationship with Director Albright, working under him as assistant director in charge of the Branch of Land Planning for the state parks during the CCC era.⁹⁰ Recreation planning, in the form of campgrounds, comfort stations, and road building had been an important part of CCC development in the national and state parks during the period, and Wirth's attitude toward recreational use in the parks carried forward into his plans for Mission 66. Yet Wirth's focus on recreation was not just based on his personal planning predilections, it was timely as well.

⁸⁹ Carr, *Mission 66*, 37-38.

⁹⁰ Wirth, *Parks*, 15.

Some popular forms of recreation, especially involving the automobile, were not adequately supported in the parks as they were currently developed. Recreation had also been an important part of the mission of the national parks since their creation. Why shouldn't the National Park Service reinvigorate and renew its recreation traditions? In the forward to the 1956 Mission 66 program proposal, Wirth reinforced his commitment to the dual mandate by invoking the passage from the Organic Act quoted above, highlighting the fact that the statement of purpose for the NPS refers to a singular objective:

“It is significant that the basic Act uses the singular form of the word purpose – it defined one purpose, a single objective, not several. True, that single purpose combines use with “conservation unimpaired.” These are merely the components of one purpose, a concept that at once embraces and indistinguishably combines both use and preservation. Neither, standing alone, out of context, can be accepted as the true and adequate expression of the reason-for-being of the National Park System.”⁹¹

So, with his single-minded determination, Wirth firmly set the Mission 66 program on the path of development in the parks. In his mentor Albright's opinion, Mission 66 was one of the “noblest conceptions in the whole national park history.”⁹² But was Wirth leaning too far towards the ‘use’ side of the dual mandate spectrum rather than the ‘preservation’ side? NPS's ambitious development goals did not sit well with wilderness and conservation advocates, including longtime NPS partner organizations, and consternation over the Mission 66 program would bring the debate over wilderness in the national parks to a head.

Environmental Criticism of Mission 66

Thus far in this chapter the deep history of wilderness, environmentalism, and the mission of the National Park Service have been presented to provide a comprehensive picture of the complex intellectual and scientific theories that form the foundation of what would be a strong, critical opinion of Mission 66. Yet, as the history suggests, this was not a completely unified opinion. Preservationists, conservationists

⁹¹ *Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development*, ii.

⁹² Horace Albright, as quoted by Sellars, 205.

and environmentalists all had their own specific agendas when it came to wilderness in the national parks, and it was more the place (the parks) and the program (Mission 66) that united them to a common cause than their actual ideas. Each group is the product of different intellectual movements and arose at different times, though they did begin to grow together and blend during the mid-century period. It is the complexity in thought that makes it difficult for scholars not to use terms such as ‘conservationist’, ‘environmentalist’ and ‘preservationist’ interchangeably, for these terms do not historically mean the same thing.

Thus, as these wilderness and environmental movements apply to Mission 66, criticism of the environmental impacts of the program came on many fronts, concerned with nearly all aspects of the program, especially those that involved physical development within park boundaries. The major themes in the criticism of Mission 66 can be summarized as follows:

LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION First and foremost, wilderness conservationists and environmentalists were critical of the lack of legislative protection for wilderness. This bullet point was of longstanding concern to established wilderness groups and new environmentalists groups, the former concerned with the access to and character of the wilderness, while the latter ‘new’ environmental group was much more concerned with the ecological integrity of the land itself. Mission 66 was seen as taking specific advantage of the lack of environmental oversight to implement an ambitious development plan that they saw as having significant adverse impacts on wilderness.

As previously discussed, NPS planners had always considered wilderness protection planning as falling within the purview of the established master planning system.⁹³ Master planning was sufficient for protecting wilderness since “preservation unimpaired” was a key aspect of the agency’s ‘dual mandate,’ and that “wilderness not developed was wilderness protected.”⁹⁴ Environmentalists did not see this ‘zoning’

⁹³ McClelland, 475.

⁹⁴ Miles, 80-81.

system as protection enough, as it was subject to administrative change at any time and did not constitute permanent protection in perpetuity.⁹⁵

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH Natural scientists, such as biologists, ecologists and geologists were critical of the lack of Mission 66 funding devoted to new scientific research in the parks. The promise of renewed funding for research had been one of the primary selling points of Mission 66 when it was announced to public, specifically outlined in the program prospectus and subsequent publications for distribution.⁹⁶ Requests for research funding featured in many parks' individual prospectuses as well. However, the funding never really emerged, at least not at the level hoped by scientists. Overall, the Mission 66 program averaged only \$100 million a year of its ten-year budget for biological research.⁹⁷ Not only was this seen as a promise broken by Director Wirth and NPS, but was seen as damning evidence against the Service's supposed dedication to wilderness protection. After all, without up-to-date data about the ecosystems in the parks, how could NPS expect to make the best decisions possible concerning their preservation?

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT An outgrowth over the concern over a lack of legislative protection and research was the skepticism over the scale and style of Mission 66 development. The published Mission 66 plan called for \$1 billion in road redevelopment and construction, new campgrounds, hotels, motels, park villages and new museum and visitor centers. While there was clearly a need to renew facilities in the parks (the motivation behind Mission 66 in the first place) were so many new facilities needed, and was the plan encroaching too far into previously undeveloped wilderness areas? Roads were of particular concern; the definition of wilderness adopted by wilderness advocates implied that wildernesses must be roadless, and they did not buy the National Park Service's idea of 'roadside wilderness.'⁹⁸ The issue of

⁹⁵ Sellars, 192-193.

⁹⁶ *Mission 66* (1956), 46; *Our Heritage* (1956), 21-22; *The National Park Wilderness* (1957), 27.

⁹⁷ Sellars, 168.

⁹⁸ Sellars, 191.

carrying capacity was also presented, as there was concern over whether “planning for the future” of the national parks would really just translate into overuse and damage to the parks in the present, even in the already developed frontcountry.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the National Park Service’s reliance on the principles of landscape architecture for master planning was called into question. It was not the idea of a master planning process that drew the ire of critics. More, it was their perception that the principles of landscape aesthetics rather than ecological science were being used as the basis for important planning decisions, such as the placement of new buildings and roads.¹⁰⁰

RECREATION Critics also took issue with the types of recreation encouraged by the Mission 66 program. This issue is intimately tied to the debate over roads, as most of the ‘new’ recreation types had to do with motorized vehicles- car and RV camping, motels, scenic drives and in-and-out of the park traffic visitation patterns. Director Wirth was excited about bringing increased capacity for these activities into the national parks, since they were increasingly popular among the public. While auto tourism of the parks had really gotten its start during the 1920s and 1930s, the magnitude of post-WWII tourism was exponentially greater.¹⁰¹

However, beyond the negative impact of automobiles on the environment (emissions, requirement for paved roads) some wilderness advocates worried that NPS was promoting the wrong kind of wilderness experience. By wrong, they meant that the public was not being encouraged to pursue a personal, one-on-one experience with wilderness that would allow them to fully benefit from the intellectually healing powers of nature by ‘getting out there,’ instead of experiencing the parks from a car. Rather, walking a trail, enjoying a solitary moment by a waterfall, or for the more adventurous, hiking in the backcountry were encouraged activities.¹⁰² These ideas traced back to the earliest transcendental ideas about wilderness taken up by the likes of Olmsted and

⁹⁹ McClelland, 477.

¹⁰⁰ Carr, *Mission 66*, 222-223.

¹⁰¹ Sutter, 256.

¹⁰² Sax, 30-31.

Muir, who believed in the freedom to roam and create one's own "wilderness experience." Mission 66, they stated, was not bringing the public an 'authentic' wilderness experience, but was instead promoting superficial leisure activities that were not consistent with the purpose of the national parks. These activities were considered better suited to other types of nature 'playgrounds,' such as ski resorts, or national recreation areas.¹⁰³

AESTHETICS Lastly, but not of least importance, was the criticism of the modern aesthetics of new Mission 66 building projects themselves. While the look of the architecture would not at first glance seem to have much to do with environmentalism or wilderness, the perception of what modern design stood for- abstract, artificial, sterile¹⁰⁴- struck critics as a very inappropriate choice for the national parks. These ideas figured heavily in criticism of specific building projects. Despite the relative popularity of the "Park Service Modern" design aesthetic in architectural circles, the style was not as well received by conservationists and long-time National Park Service followers. To them, the modernist buildings did not possess the same ability to 'harmonize' with their natural surroundings the way old, rustic style park buildings did, and were out-of-tune with nature compared to the "picturesque and home-like" architecture of previous decades.¹⁰⁵ They were too visible, too cold, and not the carefully crafted wood and stone buildings that people had come to expect in the national parks. Devereux Butcher, former executive director of the National Parks Association, went so far as to accuse the National Park Service of violating its mission statement by erecting park structures that were too conspicuous.¹⁰⁶ Visitor centers, hotels and other high-profile public use buildings were the most often cited offenders, but the use of modern design and building techniques in park housing and operations facilities was also looked on with an unfavorable eye.

¹⁰³ Sax, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Paul M. Falsetto, "International Modernism and the Perception of Historic Significance" Master's Thesis, University of Oregon, 1998), 90.

¹⁰⁵ Carr, *Mission 66*, 132-133.

¹⁰⁶ As quoted by Carr, *Mission 66*, 158.

Within these five themes there are several overlapping ideas. Legislative Protection and Scientific Research are interconnected with the idea of holistic wilderness management. Planning and Development is intimately tied to Recreation because one is a powerful tool to guide the other. And Aesthetics touches on all of the above. The aesthetics of modern design, tied to construction, was highlighted above because it struck the general public as the most obvious statement physical statement of a 'new start' for the national parks. However, another sort of aesthetics- the aesthetics of wilderness- overarched the entire discussion. Was wilderness roadless, or could it be roadside; could wildlife be managed, and to what extent; and what amount of human activity in wilderness could the landscape bear before overuse caused significant impacts on the natural ecological order? All of these were questions that wilderness conservation advocates and the National Park Service attempted to negotiate during Mission 66, in all these thematic areas.

All of these themes were framed within the understanding that there was a legitimate need for change within the National Parks System. After all, prominent journalists like Bernard DeVoto had not written editorials about the decay of the infrastructure of the national parks simply to stir up an unfounded public controversy. But the way in which the "reboot" of the National Park System was undertaken were not compatible with emerging new ideas about the purpose and protection of the national parks. Not that it would have been easy for NPS to adjust their agenda had they known in advance, anyway; the nuances of the new conservation and wilderness and environmental movement were still uncharted and their philosophy had yet to settle on a definitive form. The unified, interconnected list of grievances above is both accurate and deceptive, because the list is a summary of criticisms that by the end of the 1960s had all been aired publicly. But these concerns were not all by viewed the same organizations in a uniform manner, and reflect scientific and qualitative concerns about wilderness shared by the collective of individuals and groups interested in the progress of the Mission 66 program. Some of the issues, such as the dislike of modern architecture, are very subjective and emotional, and the values it embodies might not matter to a person purely concerned with the ecological integrity of the backcountry, while it might appeal more to the student of the National Parks System who is familiar with the history of architecture in the parks, like the National Parks Association.

Conversely, the scientifically-minded environmental group, such as the National Resources Defense Fund, might be very interested in the subject of prescribed burning in the backcountry, while other groups more interested in the preservation of scenic landscapes might be less excited. Still, there were subjects like the idea of park roads that had a wider appeal to critics, though they again were interested in the subject for different reasons, wilderness integrity versus 'authentic' wilderness experiences.

That is not to say that the balancing of a multitude of special interest groups, even interconnected ones, is unique to Mission 66. Every government program or action has the capacity to generate a wide variety of opinions, and has since there have been governments to make decisions. But in the case of Mission 66, the National Park Service was at the particular disadvantage of undertaking a multi-year program during one of the most actively evolving social, cultural and economic moments in American history. As the decades progressed, the line between those "narrow" interest groups that have always had an interest in the national parks, the new environmental awareness and popular opinion progressed and blurred at such a quick pace that keeping up completely with new trends, while still staying within the existing framework of policy and management of NPS, would have been impossible. Wirth's eventual resignation from the directorship of the agency two years before the completion of Mission 66 is an indicator of how the National Park Service was struggling to adapt its strategy to meet new demands and expectations in an increasingly environmentally conscious America.

In Defense of Mission 66

The National Park Service, which expected the early support of Mission 66 to continue, was initially taken aback by the high vocal criticism coming from both the public special interest groups and partner organizations. After all, Mission 66 had been conceived as both a program of protection and use, and all the promotional literature distributed about the program heavily emphasized the preservation goals of the initiative from the beginning. However, as Sellars puts it, "in a *pre-Silent Spring* confrontation, development itself was the central issue, not ecological impacts per se,

such as destruction of habitat.”¹⁰⁷ The potential impacts of Mission 66 on wilderness had apparently not been properly clarified in the original Mission 66 program, and had stirred up doubts of the environmental soundness of the program. NPS was quick to respond to the growing controversy by publishing new booklets, further clarifying the Service’s position of wilderness issues and park management.

One such tract was *The National Park Wilderness*, published in 1957. Written by NPS naturalist Howard R. Stagner, a member of the original Mission 66 steering committee, the 37-page booklet (with a forward by Director Wirth) delineated the management of the national parks into discrete sections, explaining the mission of the national parks (the dual mandate), defining appropriate and inappropriate uses (recreation versus cattle grazing), and providing a definition for wilderness and how the National Park Service (specifically using Mission 66) intended to protect and preserve these areas. Wilderness was defined as:

“...an area whose predominant character is the result of the interplay of natural processes, large enough and so situated as to be unaffected, except in minor ways, by what takes place in the non-wilderness around it.”¹⁰⁸

This definition is much like that provided by Aldo Leopold, and adopted by the U.S. Forest Service years before,¹⁰⁹ though it shied away from the idea of roadlessness. He also echoed Leopold’s idea that “pure wilderness”, in the sense that some wilderness advocates described, did not exist in the United States, as even the most remote areas of the country had at some point or another been influenced by human activity. Furthermore, Stagner emphasizes that wilderness is not only a physical condition, but also a state of mind, an important distinction that should guide both preservation AND use of wilderness areas, since they have both physical and mental value to society.¹¹⁰ This sentiment is very much in touch with the humanist ideas presented by Olmsted in

¹⁰⁷ Sellars, 185.

¹⁰⁸ Howard R. Stagner, *The National Park Wilderness*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1957, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Nash, 186.

¹¹⁰ Stagner, 11.

his 1865 report on the Yosemite Valley, which also encourage visitation and use as a way to revive the tired minds of the American people. *The National Park Wilderness*, while written as a piece of Mission 66 propaganda on behalf of the Park Service, displays a continuity of thought on behalf of Wirth and other park planners as to what constituted proper use of the parks, and reveals that NPS saw the Mission 66 program as an extension of previous planning policy and wilderness theory. The document also became another ripe target for criticism for more ‘purist’ wilderness advocates, who saw within its pages a confirmation of their “worst fears” about development within the national parks, especially the “blurring” of the line between “the real wilderness” and that tainted by human interaction.¹¹¹

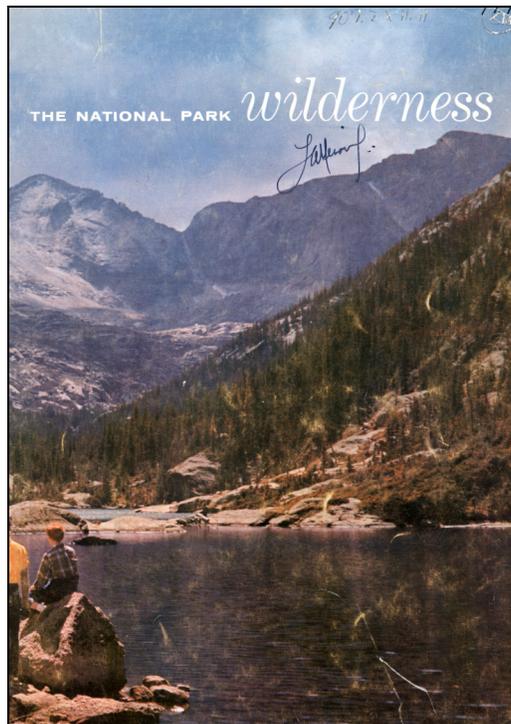


Figure 3-1. Cover of *The National Park Wilderness*.

Conrad Wirth spent a great deal of his own time promoting and defending Mission 66, both in Washington, D.C. and in newspapers and magazines. Wirth, who had always been politically astute, knew that controlling the public message on Mission 66 was essential to making sure the program continued to be supported by Congress

¹¹¹ Carr et al., Section E, 72.

and the American people. When it came to environmental issues that meant making sure that it was the Park Service's definition of wilderness that became accepted in discussion, not the one proposed by advocate organizations. It also meant reinforcing the idea that Mission 66 was an interdisciplinary program, of which construction was a critical component, but not the whole story. To this end, in 1958, *National Parks Magazine* published an article by Wirth that directly addressed many of the criticism leveled at Mission 66 over wilderness and environmental issues, many of which were published within the magazine itself.¹¹²

“Now I make no apology for the construction included in Mission 66. You can't merely rule, *ipso facto*, that a road is wrong, a building is a mistake, and a water system is an intrusion. It is the people's right to visit their parks, and they do so in large numbers. Recognizing this fact, you must also accept its corollary—certain physical developments are required. There is no surer way to destroy a landscape than to permit undisciplined use by man; and roads, trails, campgrounds, and other developments are one means, perhaps the most important one, of localizing, limiting, and channeling park use....

Nor do we need to be disturbed by headlines. Headlines merely echo the pulse-beat reflecting the health of the whole body. Mission 66 is the body, and development, planning, management, protection, and interpretation its separate functions. All, separately and together, contribute to the one objective of the national park system: provide or beneficial enjoyment in ways that will leave these wilderness, natural, scientific, and historical areas unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹¹³

Interestingly, that same issue of the magazine also published an article by David Brower, editor of the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, who was one of the most outspoken critics of Mission 66. In it, Brower tears apart *The National Park Wilderness*, disagrees with Wirth on the necessity of 'convenience development' and accuses the National Park Service of misinterpreting the intentions of the Organic Act.

“Scrutinize it [the Organic Act] and see if the condensation [of the 'dual mandate'] distorts it in any way. If you concede that in 1916 the word “promote” meant something different from the Madison Avenue technique of implanting

¹¹² Wirth, Conrad. “Mission 66 in the Headlines.” *National Parks Magazine* 32, No. 132 (January 1958): 8-9, 36-28.

¹¹³ Wirth, “Mission 66”, 8, 38.

ideas with careful design and four-color illustration, the perhaps you will accept the further condensation, *regulate use so as to assure preservation*. This very clearly limits the kind of use and emphasizes preservation.”¹¹⁴

The timing and placement of the article, in the same issue and featured before Wirth’s own editorial, irked Director Wirth incredibly. It also showed that even longstanding allies of the Park Service believed that NPS had shifted too far away from the purpose of preservation with the Mission 66 program. The fact that longtime partners of the National Park Service were choosing to criticize Mission 66 instead of support it is in itself interesting, and there are a few potential reasons as to why they would choose to do so. Most obviously, as Brower’s article demonstrates, there were legitimate differences in the way that these partner organizations defined wilderness and preservation and the stance that Wirth and NPS had chosen to do so. However, there have historically always been differences in opinion on the mission of the national parks. What seems to have muddied the waters over Mission 66 was a combination of new scientific information, mixed with a lack of communication on the part of the National Park Service. Mission 66 was developed by a diverse team of professionals, from historians to landscape architects to economists. But all the individuals involved in the planning of the program, from first conception to its presentation to Congress, were from within the agency. There was little to no input from outside organizations. This early lack of communication on the part of the National Park Service may have not only left partner organizations feeling ignored, but later lead to political isolation in defense of the program. They were not part of the creation of Mission 66, it did not feel it accurately reflect their values, so why should they not criticize it and make their voices heard?

Wirth did not see any contradiction between recreation and protection, and with or without the support of national parks conservation groups, continued to fight the individual fires of controversy as they reached his doorstep. While this fervor was characteristic of Wirth’s political style, his lack of broad-sweeping policy changes (or defenses) of Mission 66 and NPS are strange at first glance. However, it was not from Wirth’s lack of faith in Mission 66, but rather because of lack of support at the highest

¹¹⁴ David R. Brower, “Mission 65” is Proposed by Reviewer of Park Service’s New Brochure on Wilderness.” National Parks Magazine 32, No. 132 (January 1958): 45.

level of the Department of the Interior that kept him from rocking the boat harder than he needed to. In 1961 Secretary Fred Andrew Seaton had stepped down from his position at DOI and been replaced with President John F. Kennedy's appointee Stewart Udall. Seaton, and his predecessor Douglas McKay, had been very supportive of Wirth and the Mission 66 program. Secretary Udall, on the other hand, was much more skeptical of the effectiveness and necessity of Mission 66. Udall was an admirer of the work of early transcendental and wilderness figures, and a strong believer in the cause of modern environmentalism, so much so that in 1963 he published his own book entitled *The Quiet Crisis*, inspired by the work of Rachel Carson. In it, he explores the history of nature in the United States, focusing at the end on the disappearance of natural resources and the loss of scenic beauty in America's public lands.¹¹⁵

“As inheritors of a spacious, virgin continent we had had strong roots in the soil and a tradition that should give us special understanding of the mystique of people and land... Unless we are to betray our heritage consciously, we must make an all-out effort now to acquire the public lands which present and future generations need.”¹¹⁶

It was not then surprising that Secretary Udall and Director Wirth would come to have an uneasy working relationship. As Wirth describes it in his memoirs, his working relationship with Udall was troubled, and misunderstandings were not uncommon.¹¹⁷ However true Director Wirth's account may be, his book clearly indicates that Wirth felt that with the appointment of the new Secretary, he now felt that he would not only had to address tough questions about his wilderness policies from outside his agency, but from his own boss. In March 1961 Wirth wrote a memorandum to the Secretary regarding the lash of magazine articles and editorials criticizing the Park Service,

¹¹⁵ de Steiguer, 53.

¹¹⁶ Stewart L. Udall, Stewart L. *The Quiet Crisis*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, 180.

¹¹⁷ Wirth, *Parks*, 297-299.

defending his position on Mission 66 planning much as he had in print elsewhere.¹¹⁸ In response, Udall appears to give his support, but at the same times warned Wirth that

“Personally, I am a strong believer in wilderness preservation and you can depend on me to scrutinize all plans and activities of the National Park Service with this viewpoint clearly in mind.”¹¹⁹

After Udall’s appointment, Wirth made an effort to adapt Mission 66 to the “New Conservation” ideas that Udall brought to the agency, and supported initiatives like the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, which in many ways threatened the recreational program that Wirth had worked into fostering in the National Park Service with Mission 66.¹²⁰

Despite the convictions of Secretary Udall and his goals for the agency, Director Wirth did not fall in lockstep with all of the new Secretary’s environmental agenda. The National Park Service’s opposition to the proposed bill that later became the Wilderness Act of 1964 would become Wirth’s last great stand against the establishment of the management infrastructure of the Service and of Mission 66. The genesis of the wilderness bill dated back to the defeat of the Echo Park dam project. The wilderness bill drew heavily on the work of Aldo Leopold in defining wilderness as:

“...in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”¹²¹

Furthermore, the bill called for the drawing of discrete boundaries around wilderness areas, the boundaries of which and the management of which was subject to review

¹¹⁸ Director Conrad Wirth to Secretary Steward Udall, Office of the Director of the National park Service, March 10, 1961. “Recent Magazine Articles on National Parks.” This exchange would later be forwarded to all of the NPS regional directors.

¹¹⁹ Secretary Steward Udall to Director Conrad Wirth, Office of the Secretary of the Interior, March 20, 1961 “Preservation and Use of Areas Administered by the National Park Service.”

¹²⁰ Carr, *Mission 66*, 299.

¹²¹ Congressional Act of September 3, 1964 (78 Stat 890) as amended, Section 2(c).

and approval by an act of Congress; enforcement would not be at the park/forest, agency or even department level, but entirely from without. While advocates of the bill initially focused their attention on the management practices of the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, as a high profile land-holding federal agency, was also directly connected with the legislation. Sellars points out that out of all the public land agencies, the mandate of the National Park Service was most closely allied to the goals of the Wilderness Act, and should have been a logical supporter of the legislation.¹²² However, the issue was not so much over intent as it was authority. Wirth and other Park Service planners, including Thomas Vint, believed that the master planning system in place, bolstered by the mandate for “conservation unimpaired” within the Organic Act, provided ample protection for the wilderness areas within the parks, and that further environmental legislation from outside the department would only mire down management of the parks in unnecessary bureaucracy. How exactly wilderness was defined and was managed was an internal matter, and should not be subject to outside regulation by any other agency.¹²³ Wirth was also convinced that the concessions towards special interests, such as miners, grazers, loggers that would be needed for the bill to appease these parties operating in the national forests would weaken the protection of resources in the National Park System.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the legislation as written would essentially designate wilderness areas for their own sake, not for use by the public, something that Wirth as a strong believer in public use and recreation did not want to see in the parks.¹²⁵ Miles cites circumstances in which Wirth may have used his political clout to convince potential supporters of the bill, such as Fred Smith director of the Council of Conservationists, to sit on the sidelines.¹²⁶ Others, such as former director Horace Albright, needed no encouragement, as he still believed that the parks were as well protected as when he had been in the Service.

¹²² Sellars, 193.

¹²³ McClelland, 474.

¹²⁴ Miles, 140.

¹²⁵ Carr, *Mission* 66, 307.

¹²⁶ Miles, p. 141. The Council of Conservationists had been an important player in the final defeat of the Echo Park Dam proposal in 1954.

Mission 66 figured prominently in the debate over the Wilderness Bill, because the program, with its broad scope and ambitious planning, embodied the point (or pointlessness, as it were) of the bill so well for both sides. On the one hand, the National Park Service saw Mission 66 as a successful implementation of its traditional master planning process, which was ensuring that development happened within the parks in a sensitive and efficient way. On the other hand, wilderness and environmental advocates saw Mission 66 as the culmination of all their worst fears concerning park overdevelopment and insensitivity to the natural balance of pristine ecosystems. Each side saw itself as fundamentally right, and the other fundamentally misguided when it came to what constituted good stewardship of the national parks. To environmentalists, Wirth and the National Park Service's opposition to the passage of the Wilderness Act was seen as a traitorous betrayal of not only its mission, but the trust of the American people.

While Mission 66 was seen through to completion (without Director Wirth) the National Park Service in the end capitulated and withdrew opposition to the Wilderness Act. The new law, combined with the recommendations in the Leopold Report from 1963, began to shift Park Service policy strongly towards a new ecologically-based planning system that for all intents and purposes ended the recreation era of Mission 66 planning. While Wirth and his supporters put up a strong defense for the traditional way of managing the national parks, the way the public valued these natural landscapes had fundamentally changed, and programs like Mission 66 were no longer in line with public and academic opinion. By the beginning of the 1970s, NPS master plans began to heavily reflect ecological concerns within the parks, and by the end of the decade the system has been abandoned in favor of a system of multiple planning documents that targeted specific environmental and developmental issues.¹²⁷ In effect, the National Park Service had gone from managing scenic landscapes to preserving ecosystems.

¹²⁷ McClelland, 481-482.

The Perception of Mission 66, Yesterday and Today

At the conclusion of Mission 66, the prevailing opinion of the program was that while it had been a well-intentioned response to the growing needs of the national parks, in the end of National Park Service had missed the mark. Between 1967 and 1968, journalist Robert Cahn wrote a series of sixteen articles for the *Christian Science Monitor* that were then compiled in a volume entitled *Will Success Spoil the National Parks?* in 1968. In the series, Cahn visited several national parks across the country, using his personal experiences as a backdrop to discuss the National Park Service and Mission 66. Each article featured a different topic such as history, wilderness, crime, wildlife, recreation and more. Like Bernard DeVoto's landmark editorial on the state of the national parks after World War II, Cahn's articles essentially did the same for the post-Mission 66 era, taking the temperature of public opinion and outlining hopes for the future.

The author himself seems to be skeptically accepting of the criticisms made about the Mission 66 program, accepting the positive benefits of easier access to the national parks, at least in the beginning of the series. Cahn both praises the parks for improving visitor facilities and adopting new policies to improve the visitor experience and control their impacts on natural resources. He also acknowledges that the National Park Service's recent attempts to increase visitor facilities (i.e. Mission 66) have not entirely satisfied users or critics, as visitors ask for more access and conservationists demand less- for certain types of visitation at least.¹²⁸ But it quickly becomes clear as the series progresses that Cahn is writing with a sympathetic ear to conservation and wilderness advocacy. Either because of his personal bias or his belief that he was portraying the majority opinion, Cahn gives over a great deal of print space for quotes from backpackers, hikers and wilderness enthusiasts who extol the virtues of 'roughing it' in the great outdoors. Even in his articles in which his discussion of wilderness vs. use is fairly balanced, carefully chosen quotes and stories at the end of each article draw the reader back to the side of the conservationist and the glorification of the 'traditional' national parks experience. For instance, In Article #11, "Recreation Areas: A

¹²⁸ Robert Cahn, *Will Success Spoil the National Parks?* Boston, Christian Science Publication Society, 1968, 6.

New Dimension,” Cahn ends his discussion on the pros and cons of water sports in Lake Powell Recreation Area with a story of a couple who chose to ‘rough’ it on a 24-mile overland trip to Rainbow Bridge National Monument instead of taking the afternoon tour boat across the lake.

“I’ve wanted to come here for 20 years-it’s been a dream of mine,” Mrs. Beebe told me. “This year when we had planned it, I knew it was possible to come by boat. But we decided to make it the difficult way. They say these things mean more when you work for them. It was really worth it to see it this way.”¹²⁹

The two articles in the series that are most revealing, however, are the final two, #15 and #16, in which Cahn asked readers of the Christian Science Monitor to answer a questionnaire about the future direction for the national parks entitled “How Would You Run the National Parks?” Though the author is candid about the results not being in any way a statistical or necessarily unbiased, the results reveal a more heterogeneous opinion on recent changes that have taken place in the national parks, and what future policies should be. For example, while respondents did not like the idea of highways in the national parks, they were okay with the idea of new roads, as long as they were “primitive” and “scenic.”¹³⁰ Respondents also supported the ideas embodied in the wilderness act, such as setting aside wilderness areas to excluding development; at the same time, they were concerned about making sure sufficient amounts of land was left outside the wilderness boundary for “primitive” accommodations and so that those with limited access, like the elderly, could experience the parks.¹³¹ Overall, while the responses of Christian Science Monitor readers were definitely colored by an understanding and acceptance of contemporary wilderness and environmental values, they also give consideration to many practical needs in the park, and embrace facilitation of visitation of all kinds, from the backcountry enthusiast to the ‘average’ American family. If the results of Cahn’s poll are considered representative of the popular opinion of Mission 66 in the late 1960s, While the National Park Service and its policies after Mission 66 were not wholly praised by the respondents, nor were they

¹²⁹ Cahn, 37.

¹³⁰ Cahn, “3. Roads,” 50.

¹³¹ Cahn, “6. Wilderness,” 52.

censured either. People still appeared to accept in practice the need to respect the balance of the 'dual mandate' of NPS, and did not seek to make the agency a wholly preservation organization.

This middle of the road opinion is not what one would expect if they were immersed in the more bombastic rhetoric of environmentalism and wilderness advocacy. The tone of Cahn's series, while supportive of wilderness-minded policies in the national parks, is a far cry from the sharper language of David Brower in National Parks Magazine. Then again, the Christian Science Monitor is not a periodical or an organization with intimate ties to the National Park Service. While the entire series was written with the involved and support of NPS, especially Director George B. Hartzog, Jr., the Monitor is not only interested in the business of the national parks- in a sense, Cahn was able to step back from the sound and the fury of the controversy and write his articles about the legacy of Mission 66 and the future of the Park Service with a sense of intellectual distance. This allowed him the freedom to represent multiple opinions, from the public, advocates, and even government officials, which one could argue was lacking in the dialogue of writer's more involved with the inner workings of the parks.

Taking a further step back, it is even easier to ask, in the grand scheme of things, how much of the doomsday-like rhetoric about wilderness and Mission 66 in the 1950s and 1960s was coming from the bottom, the grassroots general public, and how much was really being driven from the middle or the top via select national parks and wilderness interest groups. The answer seems to be a bit of both, but arguably more from the top. Certainly, the American public has a longstanding relationship and national pride in the national parks. They were receptive to the idea that wilderness was potentially in danger because of Mission 66 policies because of their growing environmental awareness. This much is apparent in the reader poll in the Christian Science Monitor. But the driving force behind the criticism appears to be the wilderness preservationist. Not the 'old' preservationist, however, but the new preservationists motivated by spiritual values and scientific evidence. That is not to say that preservationists were forcing their ideas on the public, or that they were trying to be an exclusive elitist about nature in general. As Sax puts it, the preservationist, from the

earliest days to the present, seeks more to convert others to their way of thinking about wilderness.¹³² But wilderness in the national parks was different. In the case of Mission 66, traditional preservationists and new environmentalists convinced the public that the expansion and development promised in the program was not without environmental consequences, and that action needed to be taken to restrict their use of wilderness for the protection of the resource for present and future generations.¹³³

So what can be said about the perception of Mission 66 during the mid-century period? Firstly, it must be interpreted in the context of a rich history of wilderness thought grounded in the ideas of transcendentalism, romanticism and preservation that matured during the late 19th century. These ideas, along with the discipline of landscape architecture, influenced the founding principles of the National Park Service in 1916, and guided early development of the national parks. Advances in the ecological sciences and growing public awareness through popular books on environmental topics in the 1950s and 1960s combined with the tradition of wilderness values to create a strongly influential hybrid environmental movement. Conrad Wirth introduced Mission 66 to the public in 1956 in response to calls by public advocates to remedy concerns over unacceptable conditions for visitors in the national parks. However, it was also at a time of great cultural change in the United States, when traditional values were being questioned and readjusted. In many ways, Mission 66 embodied the traditional understanding of wilderness conservation and park development, which after the advent of environmentalism were no longer considered valid. Thus, while it was understood that changes were needed within the parks to bring them back to life after a period of neglect during World War II, the program was perceived as not environmentally sensitive by interest groups and partner organizations.

Mission 66 was criticized on many fronts, here summarized by the five themes of Legislative Protection, Scientific Research, Planning and Development, Recreation and Aesthetics. The general public was in turn persuaded by arguments of these groups on these five themes that the National Park Service, and by extension other

¹³² Sax, 14.

¹³³ Nash, 222.

land-holding agencies, were not doing enough to protect the wilderness and the traditional values it represented within the scope of Mission 66. Fundamental policy changes within NPS, and outside legislative action, in the form of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and other policies, was needed to protect the wilderness in perpetuity. In the end Mission 66 was considered both necessary, but unsatisfactory, and the National Park Service was forced to reevaluate itself and move forward in a new direction that better fit the new socio-cultural, political and economic climate of the 1970s and beyond.

Today, National Park Service scholars are still attempting to understand the long-term impact of Mission 66, just as their contemporaries did nearly fifty years ago. Renewed scholarly interest in the program has led to new studies and new, more positive interpretations of the legacy of Mission 66 on the preservation of wilderness. Ethan Carr, landscape architect and historian for the National Park Service, has been a leading figure in the resurgence of interest in Mission 66, and his book, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, is definitive written history of the program to date.¹³⁴ Carr has argued that the developments that occurred in the parks during Mission 66 have been positive in the long run. Thanks to Mission 66, the Park Service is still able to do its job of providing public access to the parks thanks to the roads, campgrounds, administrative buildings, employee residences, bathrooms and more built during the program.¹³⁵

“In the era of new environmental regulation and the “general management plan,” the Park Service and the American public have continued to rely on the extensive, and now aging, infrastructure built largely under Mission 66.”¹³⁶

What Carr is saying, then, is that Mission 66 modernized park facilities, bringing them up to contemporary comfort, safety and access standards. Without the sweeping updates made to the system during the program the national parks would arguably be in much worse shape today than they are. And because of increasing visitation and

¹³⁴ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

¹³⁵ Carr, *Mission 66*, 335-336.

¹³⁶ Carr, *Mission 66*, 336.

deteriorating facilities, serious development/updates would still have been needed before the present day, which may have been hampered by new wilderness legislation. Additional benefits of Mission 66 was the expanded the network of national park units, increasing from 181 units to 258 units between 1956 and 1966, nearly doubling the amount of parks, recreation areas, and monuments managed (and protected) by the National Park Service.¹³⁷ The momentum created by Mission 66 for Hartzog's PARKSCAPE U.S.A. program helped bring an additional 39 park units into the system by 1972. Furthermore, Mission 66 revolutionized interpretation within the parks through the hiring of increased interpretative rangers and the construction of visitor centers, a new building type invented during Mission 66.¹³⁸ These new services allowed NPS to better educate the public about nature and history in the parks, including wilderness.

That is not to say, however, that Mission 66 did not have shortcomings or missteps, or that the criticisms voiced by environmental and wilderness interest groups were not born out of genuine concern at the time. However, our understanding of the historic significance of the program cannot remain static, and new scholarship on the program has brought new and differing perspectives based on a different set of values than those underpinning the wilderness and environmental movements. These views are also valid, and provide the foundation for a positive understanding of Mission 66 that counterbalances a legacy of negative press about the program.

¹³⁷ Wirth, *Parks*, 261.

¹³⁸ For more information on Mission 66 visitor centers, see Sarah Allaback's book *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type*.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYZING THE CRITICISM: CASE STUDIES IN THREE WESTERN NATIONAL PARKS

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were five major themes related to both wilderness values and the concerns about environmental appropriateness within which opponents of Mission 66 criticized the program. While these issues can be discussed in general terms, the best way to delve deeper into these arguments is to see how the values they represented apply in specific situations. In this chapter, three projects from three western national parks have been chosen to provide case studies for exploring these critical themes. The three case study parks and their projects are:

1. Mount McKinley National Park: Denali Park Road
2. Olympic National Park: Trail System
3. Crater Lake National Park: Steel Circle Residential Complex

For each case study, a brief history of the park is given, followed by a more detailed history of the individual project. Then, one or more of the five critical themes (legislative protection, science and research, planning and development, recreation and aesthetics) will be applied to each case, to evaluate how applicable each is to the project. This analysis is my analysis of this work, and goal is not to predict or recreate the actual controversy caused by each project. Instead, each project is used as an example of a Mission 66 development for which these critical themes can be applied and discussed. The Denali Park Road, for example, provides a straightforward topic of consideration, since critics of Mission 66 were very vocal in the opposition to road projects in wilderness. However, critics' thoughts on trails, such as those in Olympic National Park, are harder to capture, making it a more elusive example upon which to speculate. Commentary on the project by contemporary observers, when available, will also be discussed in this section as a counterpoint to my analysis. Finally, the outcome of the project will be summarized, as well as the current status of the resource today, including how it is currently being managed. This analysis is not meant to be the final, objective understanding of the relationship between these three projects, Mission 66 and wilderness values. Rather, these case studies are intended only to illustrate the complex, subjective, intellectual atmosphere surrounding the implementation of Mission 66.

Each park in this case study was chosen with consideration for the following research criteria:

1. Park highlights a particular kind of development representative of broader development categories implemented during Mission 66 that would have been subject to discussion amongst program critics
2. Regional or national level discussion of one or more specific Mission 66 programs within the park
3. Ease of access to and abundance of information concerning Mission 66 development within the park
4. Previous knowledge of park history and development by the author

Information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources, including construction plans, administrative histories, superintendent's reports and newspaper articles. National Park Service resources are heavily represented, as the agency has always been thorough in documenting the history of the park service units. NPS has also been systematically digitizing its archives, making access to primary source documents relatively easy. However, when available outside resources were specifically sought out to provide a balanced perspective on the issues being discussed.

The three national parks that have been chosen for this study are Mount McKinley National Park, now Denali National Park and Preserve (Alaska), Olympic National Park (Washington) and Crater Lake National Park (Oregon). Each park was established before Mission 66, between 1899 and 1938, and was designated specifically to protect scenic and natural resources. The early founding dates, that both pre and postdate the Organic Act of 1916, mean that all four parks have background in the early management practices and history of the Park Service, and were subject to 'Rustic' style planning and architecture. Furthermore, as nature is the primary object for conservation and stewardship, the intensity of scrutiny and discussion of developments made within the park was greater than it would have been at a 'non-wilderness' park. By keeping all of the studies within the west, specifically the Pacific Northwest, region of the United States provides thematic continuity to this analysis. Many of the same logistical issues posed by climate and location were shared among all four parks. As previously stated, access and familiarity were factors in the choice of study sites; the

author has worked on or volunteered for projects at Crater Lake, Denali and Olympic National Parks.

There are other projects that took place during Mission 66 in other parks that are of greater environmental ‘infamy’ and dispute. The Tioga Road in Yosemite National Park, the visitor complex at Everglades National Park and the Clingman’s Dome Observation Tower at Great Smokey Mountains National Park are three high profile Mission 66 projects that were hotly debated and criticized after completion. All of these projects are potentially relevant examples for the discussion proposed. Some of these, such as the Tioga Road, have already been discussed in detail by Ethan Carr, both in *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* and in the draft version of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for Mission 66 resources.¹³⁹ However, since these projects have already been thoroughly analyzed by other historians that they were not included here. The analysis section of my thesis research provides new case studies focused on Mission 66 projects that have yet to be substantially discussed within the context of wilderness and environmental advocacy. These provide a framework within which major Mission 66 themes are examined.

Mount McKinley National Park: The Denali Park Road

Park History

What is known today as Denali National Park and Preserve was originally named Mount McKinley National Park.¹⁴⁰ The park was the brainchild of wilderness advocate Charles Sheldon, who was interested in setting aside Mount McKinley and portions of the land surrounding the Alaska Range for its scenic beauty and as a wildlife preserve. Sheldon was first introduced to the wilderness surrounding Mount McKinley in the early 1900s, when he traveled the area with backpacker and guide Harry Karstens. Soon after he returned to New York in 1909, he began to raise awareness about the natural wonders within the wilderness of the Alaskan frontier. Sheldon was particularly concerned about the toll that prospecting miners and the encroaching railroad developments would have of the wildlife of the area if they were left to indiscriminately

¹³⁹ Full citation for sources available in References Cited section.

¹⁴⁰ ANILCA officially changed the name of the park to Denali in 1980. Mount McKinley, however, retained its historic period name.

hunt without supervision.¹⁴¹ He quickly gained support for Mount McKinley National Park, not only from wilderness groups but also from politicians in Washington, D.C., including Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, who later become the first two directors of the National Park Service.¹⁴² Finally, after lengthy debate in Congress, the park bill establishing Mount McKinley National Park was signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt on February 26, 1917. The original park boundaries enclosed approximately 1,591,897 acres of Alaskan wilderness around the Alaska Range of mountains, which included the park's namesake, Mount McKinley. Furthermore, within the bill Congress stated that the primary intent in establishing the park was:

“the freest use of the said park for recreation purposes by the public and for the preservation of animals, birds, and fish and for the preservation of the natural curiosities and scenic beauties thereof.”¹⁴³

The early years of the park were relatively quiet. There were few visitors to the area other than gold prospectors in the Kantishna hills west of the park boundary and intrepid climbers seeking to conquer Mount McKinley. Initially, Congress refused to allot any funding to promote or manage the park, leaving it a relatively unknown and inaccessible resource in the backcountry of Alaska. The park did not have its first staff until 1921, when Harry Karstens, Sheldon's intrepid backcountry guide, was appointed as the park's first superintendent. Karstens labored for the next four years trying to establish a headquarters within the park and serving the park's very few visitors. In 1922, there were only 7 recorded visitors, and in 1924, only 62.¹⁴⁴ Visitation only began to increase steadily after the completion of the McKinley Park railroad depot east of the park, and as the Alaska Railroad Commission began to construct the park's first, and only, access road. Referred to simply as the Park Road (and later as the Denali park Road,) the construction took over a decade to complete. In 1924 only two miles of road were graded, but by 1938 the road stretched all the way from east to

¹⁴¹ Frank Norris, *Crown Jewel of the North: An Administrative History of Denali National Park and Preserve, Volume 1*. Anchorage: National Park Service, 2006, 18.

¹⁴² Norris, 17.

¹⁴³ As quoted by Norris, 21.

¹⁴⁴ Norris, Appendix B.

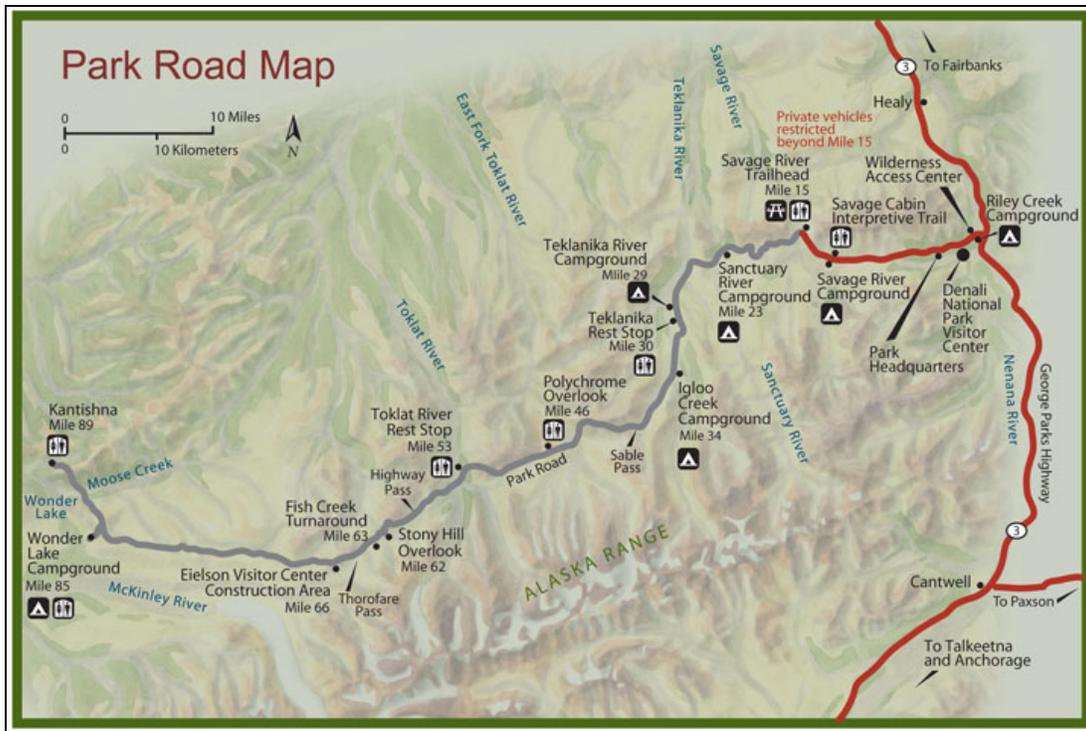


Figure 4-1. Current Park Road Map. Denali National Park and Preserve website, accessed October 2011.

west across the length of Mount McKinley, 92 miles in all, from McKinley Park Station to the Kantishna mining district.¹⁴⁵ As the Park Road moved toward completion, the rest of the park's infrastructure was improved as well. Karsten's small park headquarters became permanently established and the McKinley Park Hotel, built with NPS construction funding, opened in 1939, with a capacity for 200 overnight guests.¹⁴⁶ However, very few private vehicles traveled the Park Road, because there was no cheap and convenient way to get them to the park. There was no connecting highway from either Fairbanks or Anchorage, and visitors who did want to bring their own vehicles had to ship them in by railroad. Instead, most visitors traveled the Park Road by touring cars and buses provided by the park concessioner and other private camp owners outside the park. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, the road was continually

¹⁴⁵ Norris, Appendix F.

¹⁴⁶ Norris, 88.

maintained to formal but modest road standards, remaining unpaved, and the historic 18'-wide roadway was kept to.¹⁴⁷



Figure 4-2. Park Road near Stony Creek Bridge, mid-1930s. Hoyt Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.

During the wartime years Mount McKinley National Park, in addition to maintaining its own facilities, served as a site to test winter military equipment and between 1943 and 1945 the McKinley Park Hotel operated as a U.S. Army recreation camp during the winter months.¹⁴⁸ As a result, the park's budget was not as severely cut as some other parks throughout the system. Mount McKinley was also the beneficiary of military manpower, which was volunteered by the army to help offset the strain that thousands of visiting soldiers were putting on the park's staff. However, the park did not receive any funds for projects that did not benefit military activities. As a

¹⁴⁷ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service. Denali Park Road Determination of Eligibility. Anchorage: National Park Service, Denali National Park and Preserve, Draft 2009, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation. *Cultural Landscape Report for Park Headquarters, Denali National Park and Preserve*. Boston: National Park Service, 2008, 87.

result, the NPS budget allotment was only getting smaller. In addition, the War Department had barred travel into Alaska for security reasons, and until 1945 recreational tourism was prohibited, except for civilians already residing within the territory.¹⁴⁹ As a result, civilian visitation was almost non-existent during the wartime years. Thus, at the end of the war Mount McKinley National Park was no more prepared to deal with the rising tide of tourism than any other park in the National Park System, and perhaps less so, because of historically isolated location and low visitation numbers.

Project Details

However, the status quo of low visitation radically changed for Mount McKinley National Park. By 1955 the Mission 66 program began at a fortuitous time for the park. Park administration knew that the Denali Highway, connecting the park to the evolving continental road system, would open in 1957, and bring with it a whole new level of tourist traffic to the park.¹⁵⁰ Visitors from Fairbanks and Anchorage now had easy access to the park by car, but so would visitors from the Lower 48, were able to travel up the Alcan Highway through Canada into Alaska. Up until that time, travel to and within the national park had been moderated by the limited means of access. As previously noted, visitors generally came in by train, fewer by plane, and while one could pay to have his/her car hauled on the train to the park, most visitors toured the park in concessioner buses, making them easy to manage. The new highway opened the park to unrestrained automotive travel, and the park lacked the manpower and facilities to support it. McKinley's looming overcrowding situation was exactly the kind of problem that Mission 66 was initiated to address. To cope with what they expected to be an exponential growth in visitation¹⁵¹ the park wrote a strong Mission 66 prospectus, requesting (and receiving) \$9.7 million in funding over the course of the program; \$7.2 million for road improvement and reconstruction and \$2.5 million for new

¹⁴⁹ Norris, 111.

¹⁵⁰ Norris, 157.

¹⁵¹ Between 1956 and 1958, the number of visitors to Mount McKinley grew from 5,200 to 25,900.

campgrounds, trails, visitor centers, as well as other visitor and administration-related construction projects.¹⁵²

The Mission 66 prospectus did not call for the construction of new branch roads or additions to the Park Road, except for those needed for administrative purposes. Assumedly, these would be in the frontcountry area where the park's administrative areas were already established, and where the proposed visitor centers (one in the frontcountry, one 60-miles into the backcountry along the Park Road) were to be located.¹⁵³ However, road paving and realignment was Mount McKinley Park's primary concern. The park's goal was to bring, what the park characterized as a "substandard gravel road", up to contemporary highway paving standards. When completed the road was to be of standard 20-foot width, hard surfaced, with 3-foot shoulders and the occasional turnouts and parking areas. It was expected that improving the road to support increased private visitor traffic would minimize visitor impact on the otherwise undeveloped wilderness backcountry of the park, leaving the environment as untouched as possible. Mount McKinley National Park was entering a new era of visitor use.

Most of the proposed road improvements were driven by concerns over visitor safety and expectations of a dramatic increase in visitor use. When the plan was first announced to the public there was general acceptance of the necessity and value of the proposed improvements. However, in short order Mount McKinley's plans for the Park Road were heavily criticized by wilderness and wildlife conservation advocates. Olaus and Adolph Murie, two wildlife biologists who had conducted many years of research within the park, were leading people in the opposition to Mount McKinley's proposed Mission 66 improvements to the road. Echoing the debate over other park roads (such as the Tioga Road in Yosemite Valley) Adolph Murie in particular called for the road to remain in its existing condition. The proposed widening and modernization

¹⁵² United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. "Mission 66 for Mount McKinley National Park." May 1957, p. 9. The same total amount would cost about \$74.3 million when adjusted for inflation in today's economy.

¹⁵³ "Mission 66 for Mount McKinley National Park," 2-3.

of the road was an unwelcome and considered an unnecessary development that would only damage the “wilderness integrity” of the relatively untouched wilderness backcountry. They also believed that the road widening would disrupt the wildlife population in harmful and potentially irreversible ways.¹⁵⁴ The new Eielson Visitor Center, which Adolph disgustingly called “the Dairy Queen” was also opposed.¹⁵⁵ The Muries and other wilderness conservationists believed that the Alaska Range wilderness within Mount McKinley National Park needed absolute protection, lest it be despoiled the way that other wilderness areas had been in the Lower 48.

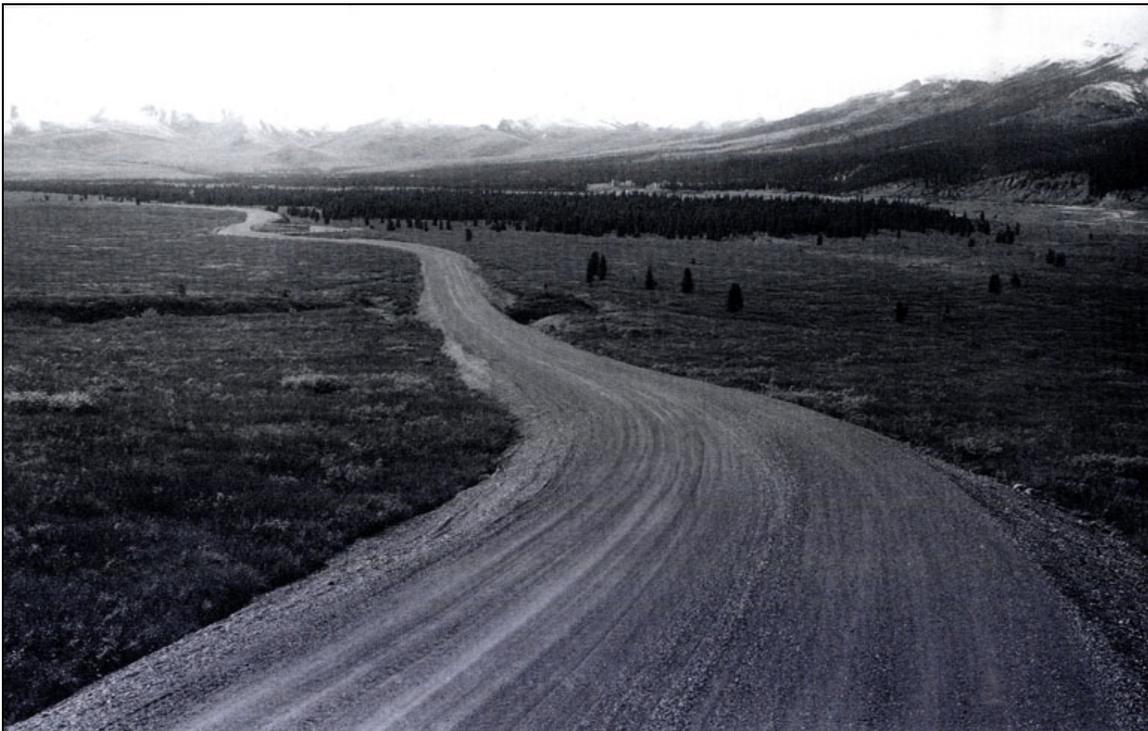


Figure 4-3. Park Road on Teklanika Flats after widening and grading, 1962. DENA-34-23, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.

Despite vocal protest, work on the Park Road proceeded, albeit slower than originally scheduled in the Mission 66 prospectus. However, conservation advocates were not silenced. Public controversy over the project, spurred on by a handful of vocal conservationists, became strong enough so that in 1963 the NPS Director of Design

¹⁵⁴ Carr et al., Section E, 81.

¹⁵⁵ Norris, 169.

and Construction, A. Clark Stratton (successor to Thomas Vint,) proposed a new plan for the road. In the new plan, the road would be completed according to “telescoping standards.”¹⁵⁶ The first 30 miles of the road, completed by 1963, would be a paved road 20-feet wide with 3-foot shoulders, as called for in the original Mission 66 prospectus. The next 40 miles, from Mile 26 to Camp Eielson, would have a 20-foot unpaved, gravel driving surface, and minimal to no shoulders. The final 18 miles of the road would remain relatively untouched, except for the addition of passing and parking pullouts where necessary. With minor alterations, the new telescoping standards were completed as amended. This was a compromise between the more ambitious Mission 66 plan and the less developed road desired by conservation advocates.

Discussion

Conservationist opposition to the modernization of the Park Road is a straightforward critique of Mission 66 Planning and Development policies relating to a subject that all parties in the 1950s and 1960s wilderness and environmental movements generally agreed about: *roads*. As was discussed in Chapter III, one of the most significant disagreements between wilderness advocates and the National Park Service during Mission 66 was over the definition of wilderness, and whether roads were compatible or incompatible with wilderness protection and management. In the opinion of wilderness advocates roads did not belong in wilderness. This concern for the continued preservation of Mount McKinley’s wilderness backcountry was heightened by the fact that it is was still relatively untouched with a high degree of natural integrity. But in the case of Mount McKinley National Park the historic Park Road was acknowledged as a necessary evil. Without it, there was no way to effectively gain access to the millions of acres of park backcountry, either for visitors or for scientists. While the park had a history of using sled dog teams to patrol the most remote areas of the park in winter, travel by sled dog was incredibly limiting because of long travel times and cargo weight restrictions. They would be of no use in the summer. Travel by other traditional means, such as horse or pack mule, would also not be ideal, for the same reason as using dog teams. It was also the main access road for miners who were still operating in the Kantishna mining district west of the park. If the park

¹⁵⁶ Norris, 170.

closed the road, residents in the area would have been left without a way in or out of the settlement. A new road, or even a railroad, would further disrupt the Alaska Range wilderness. The current alignment of the Park Road was at least a limited, established disturbance to the landscape.

Just because the road was necessary it did not mean it needed to accommodate an unlimited volume of automotive traffic at high speed (interstate highway) standards. Indeed, opposition to the reconstruction of the Park Road was also a referendum on the types of recreation being promoted by Mission 66, specifically automotive recreation. As in many other national parks throughout the system during Mission 66, critics were unhappy with the relatively unfettered amount of access that visitor automotive traffic was being given to the Park Road. While recreational use was explicitly condoned in the founding legislation for Mount McKinley National Park, the park's new pro-automobile policy was viewed as a misstep in light of the previous limited access to the road by visitors, even though the previous lack of traffic had more to do with access issues than with a conscious policy decision on the part of park staff. Implicit in the resistance to increased automotive tourism was the disapproval of what critics saw as the impersonal type of wilderness experience that visitors would have viewing the landscape from a car instead of from walking a trail or hiking. Five lengthy hiking trails were proposed in the original Mission 66 prospectus along the road corridor to disperse visitor use and to provide a more personal nature experience.¹⁵⁷ However, if critics took any note of this proposed amenity, it was not mentioned in the critical discussion of the road development itself. The high road standards, akin to those being used for the evolving public highway system, were also viewed as promoting an in-and-out visitation pattern incompatible with the preservation mission of Mount McKinley. In a sense their concern was justified, for at the time Mission 66 was proposed, the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) was responsible for managing the Park Road. Even after NPS took over maintenance operations for the road in 1960, it still worked closely with BPR in planning and designing its Mission 66 park road improvement projects.¹⁵⁸ Critics felt that much lower standards were adequate, and in

¹⁵⁷ "Mission 66 for Mount McKinley National Park," 6.

¹⁵⁸ Norris, 168-169.

fact necessary, to ensure that the Park Road did not just become another high-speed highway.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

As is evidenced above, the critical reaction to the proposed improvements to the Park Road are consistent with the overarching criticisms of Mission 66 in the areas of Planning and Development as well as Recreation. No road development was viewed as good road development, and in the case of Mount McKinley National Park, retention of existing conditions was considered ideal. Controversy over the development of the road led to a compromise telescoping standards scheme during the 1960s, which effectively put an end to the dream of a fully modern road corridor. In this sense, the 2011 condition of the Park Road is a physical expression of the strength, conviction and acceptance of the viewpoints of the new wilderness/environmental movement during the mid-century period.



Figure 4-4. The expanded Eielson Visitor Center (the “Dairy Queen”), 1981. Note the large number of tour buses and small number of personal vehicles. R&RP Files, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.

¹⁵⁹ Norris, 170.

The controversy over the Mission 66 plan continued to be overwhelmingly influential in later management of the Denali Park Road, and protection of the wilderness and the historic conditions of the road have remained the top priority. In 1972 the park official closed the park road past Savage River to unrestricted automotive traffic, restricting access and instituting a shuttle bus service to carry passengers beyond Mile 15.¹⁶⁰ Alaskan residents were mixed in their opinion of the road closure, but in the end it was accepted as necessary to protect the wildlife in the wilderness as well as to keep the road safe for all travelers. Today, this system is still in place, with the park (renamed Denali National Park and Preserve in 1980) maintaining a strict limit on the number of vehicles allowed on the road past Savage River each summer. Since 1986 there has been a strict limit of 10,512 motor vehicle trips allowed on the Denali Park Road between late-May and mid-September, as per the park's General Management Plan.¹⁶¹ This number was determined by park managers at the time to strike the best balance between public access on the Denali Park Road and protection of the wilderness ecosystem, wildlife viewing opportunities and wilderness character of the road itself. This capacity cap is applicable to National Park Service staff, concessioner tour buses and private traffic as well, with a limited number of private vehicle passes offered through a lottery system to Alaska residents each year. As of 2011, Denali Park has begun an environmental impact study to reevaluate the current road management system to allow it to be more responsive to increased and new types of visitation to the park in the years to come.

Olympic National Park: Trail System

Park History

Olympic National Park was established in 1938 through joining together the existing Mt. Olympus National Monument (1909) and much of the surrounding United States Forest Service (USFS) land on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington. The initial

¹⁶⁰ Norris, 219.

¹⁶¹ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, General Management Plan, Denali National Park and Preserve. National Park Service, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, 1986, 17.

boundaries of the park encompassed over 990 square miles (634,000 acres) of land along the north side of the peninsula. This made it one of the largest wilderness parks in the National Park System in the continental United States.¹⁶² The creation of Olympic National Park represented a shift in the valuation and management of the rainforests on the Olympic Peninsula. Instead of being conservatively managed for future use by the USFS (in partnership with local logging operations,) the lands within the park were now to be preserved in perpetuity for their natural values; not only the forests, but the glaciers, beaches, lakes and wildlife as well. However, the National Park Service inherited many management hurdles, from disgruntled logging interests to numerous private inholdings within the park's boundaries. Illegal logging within the park was a persistent issue, and there was even pressure from within NPS to allow logging to continue in certain locations.¹⁶³ During World War II, protecting the timber resources within Olympic also became a national issue, and NPS Director Drury fought many battles against logging and boundary reductions, proposed in the name of the war effort, from affecting the park.¹⁶⁴

While Olympic National Park had to establish its preservation management system, it also had to decide how the public was going to be provided access to the new park. Now that the lands had been set aside, how would NPS fulfill the second half of the dual mandate? Wilderness preservation advocates, who fought very hard to see that the rainforests were taken away from the 'greedy' hands of the Forest Service, wanted to see Olympic National Park become a model of wilderness park management in the National Parks System. In this goal they were supported by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. Since his appointment Ickes had made it clear he wanted the national parks to be managed as wilderness reserves, and he used his influence to pressure the management at Olympic to adopt his priorities.¹⁶⁵ In response, the park's

¹⁶² Guy Fringer, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History*. Seattle: National Park Service, 1990, 76-77.

¹⁶³ Carsten Lien, *Olympic Battleground: The Power Politics of Timber Preservation*. Seattle: The Mountaineers Books, 2000. Second edition, 215.

¹⁶⁴ Sellars, 152-153.

¹⁶⁵ Miles, 95, 97.

first superintendent, Preston P. Macy, set an early precedent for minimal physical development in the parks, keeping road improvements to a minimum while focusing on the development of an extensive, but low impact trail system as the primary means of experiencing the park.¹⁶⁶ By 1957 Olympic National Park boasted over 600 miles of trails crossing the backcountry, while roads were kept to the periphery of the park.¹⁶⁷ These trails varied in length and difficulty from leisurely and short loops trails to backcountry hikes and bridle trails that took days to complete. There were also large areas of trail-less land for more experienced mountaineers. Despite the continued timber crises, many preservation advocates considered Olympic National Park and its wilderness trail system a great victory, and hoped that the park would set a positive precedent for future park planning initiatives.

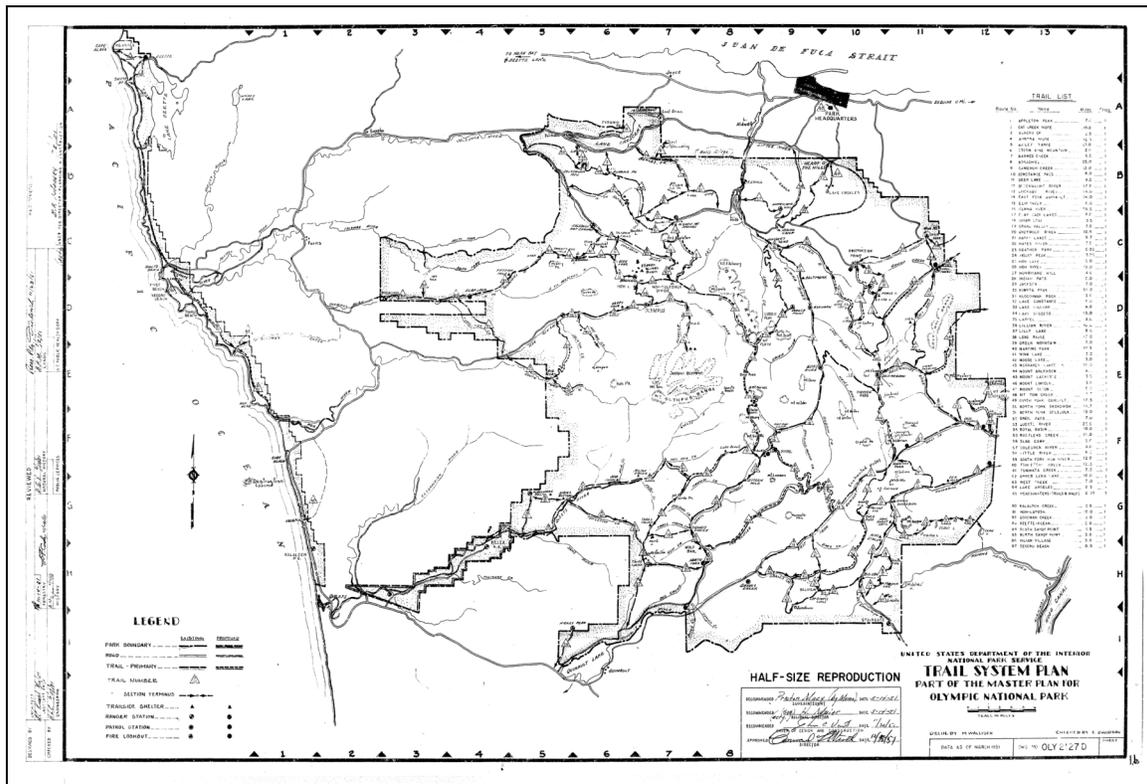


Figure 4-5. Trail System Plan for Olympic National Park, 1957. ETIC Document No. 149-2127D, accessed October 2011.

¹⁶⁶ Fringer, 93.

¹⁶⁷ Frederick Leissler, *Roads and Trails of Olympic National Park*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1957, v.

However, by the beginning of Mission 66, visitation to Olympic had mounted rapidly, increasing from 40,650 in 1939 to 864,599 in 1956, and park administration expected over 1,000,000 visitors to the park in 1960.¹⁶⁸ Because of the great increase in visitation, the park felt that further controlled development was needed to adequately accommodate future visitors, not only to keep them from trampling currently accessible areas, but also to incorporate new kinds and levels of use. New and improved campgrounds, cabins, hydro-electric plans, administrative buildings and even reconditioned and extended roads were all part of the park's Mission 66 prospectus. The coastal strip road proposal, strongly advocated for by Superintendent Fred Overly, was particularly controversial and in the end defeated through the permanent revocation of funding for the project by Director Wirth.¹⁶⁹ In the end, the majority of the park would remain roadless as before, and new administration buildings were built outside the park's boundaries in the city of Port Angeles, where park headquarters had been established years before.

Project Details

Heading into Mission 66, Olympic National Park's established trail system was already unique in scale and complexity in the National Park System. Since the system is so vast, it is considered as a single unit. As previously stated, in 1957 the park had over 600 miles of trails, some of which were inherited from the Forest Service era and others that had been added and expanded after the NPS took over management. In Olympic's Mission 66 prospectus, the trail system is called out as an important recreational asset to visitors, who come to the park specifically for a primitive wilderness experience in the backcountry.¹⁷⁰ However, it also states that park administration felt that the system as it was not adequate to meet the diversity of trail experiences visitors wanted within the park.¹⁷¹ In a report entitled "Report Outline for the Study of the Specific Areas Trail

¹⁶⁸ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, "Mission 66 for Olympic National Park," 1957, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Carr, *Mission 66*, 288.

¹⁷⁰ "Mission 66 for Olympic National Park," 3.

¹⁷¹ "Mission 66 for Olympic National Park," 5.

System, Olympic Nat'l Park," park planners proposed that a further 215 miles of trails be constructed.¹⁷² While planners conceded that they have inherited a very well constructed trail system from USFS, they felt that there was still room for improvement, and that there were still many scenic (i.e. wilderness) areas of the park that were still inaccessible by trail. Some priority was also placed on connecting old and new trails within the parks to trails within the surrounding Olympic National Forest when possible. Furthermore, 178 miles of trails were proposed for reconstruction to bring them up to modern safety standards and to increase their durability. The estimated costs for the proposed trail system development over ten years was \$1.5 million.

However, while trail maintenance undoubtedly continued during the Mission 66 program, there is no evidence that any major new trail construction or reconstruction projects were ever initiated during the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, there is no evidence that the trail system developments as proposed in the "Outline" ever came to fruition. Because there is a lack of a definitive report on trail building during Mission 66, this conclusion is made based on circumstantial evidence in other contemporary and later reports. In "A Wilderness Plan for Olympic National Park," put together in 1968 after the passage of the Wilderness Act, new trails are only recommended for two areas of the park, the Queets Corridor and the Quinault Valley, significantly less development than proposed during Mission 66. Furthermore, the *Final Environmental Statement for the Proposed Master Plan* published in 1976 only reports 550 miles of extant trails in the backcountry of the park (only 50 less than the 1957 park total,) and recommends only new, modest loops trails in the most developed areas of the front country, and only of such design as no trees need be removed.¹⁷³ Finally, the NPS Facilities Management Software System (FMSS) reports that there are currently 612 miles of trails within

¹⁷² United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, "Report Outline for Study of the Specific Areas Trail System, Olympic Nat'l Park." Date unknown, c.1957. Electronic Technical Information Center (ETIC) Document No. 149_D332. Date based on the map referenced, which dates to 1957.

¹⁷³ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Master Plan, Olympic National Park, Washington*. National Park Service, 1976, 46, 76.

Olympic National Park today,¹⁷⁴ only 12 miles more than the reported 600 miles of trails in 1957. Thus, whatever the intention of Olympic planners at the outset of Mission 66, very little new trail development actually took place within the park, making the trail system more a project denied than a project undertaken.

Discussion

The lack of development of the trail system in Olympic National Park during Mission 66 is representative of the ambiguous acceptability of trails within the new wilderness conservation philosophy. While the expansive trail system was heralded as a positive step towards promoting the 'proper' wilderness experience in the 1930s, by the 1960s any kind of human intrusion into wilderness areas, including primitive trails, was not promoted anymore. Overall, getting to the heart of the trail issue is not easy because they are almost uniformly overlooked in the 1950s and 1960s discussion about wilderness. However, a circumstantial understanding can be had on the topic within the themes of Legislation and Protection, Planning and Development, and Recreation.

To begin with the cornerstone of wilderness legislation, trails are not addressed in any way within the Wilderness Act of 1964. While there is general language about human development, and rather more specific dictums concerning road building, trails go unmentioned in the Wilderness Act. At first glance this is not controversial or surprising. Hiking and backpacking in wilderness has been a cornerstone of the wilderness experience since the time of John Muir and Frederick Law Olmsted. Both men had believed that direct contact with wilderness was the best way to experience the intellectual, emotional and spiritual benefits of nature. The presence of trails within designated wilderness, then, does not conflict with the protection of wilderness by traditional preservation motivations. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Olympic National Park's 600 mile trail system, mostly built during the 1930s, was well accepted by the wilderness community coming in to Mission 66.

However, the presence of such a large, well-developed manmade system within the park's wilderness is at the same time at odds with the environmental treatment of

¹⁷⁴ Facilities Management Software System (FMSS), accessed October 2011. This number includes all listings for trails categorized as operating, excess and inactive.

wilderness, which holds that wilderness be defined by a total lack of human intervention or influence that could disrupt natural systems. Trails, though a traditional, non-motorized transportation system, are still a human development with the potential to bring large numbers of people into direct contact with protected wilderness. Despite widespread criticism of Mission 66 for ‘taking advantage’ of the lack of legislative oversight concerning wilderness development, trails were not called out in Olympic National Park as being an adverse impact on the landscape. Considering the controversial history of rainforest/wilderness management on the Olympic Peninsula, it would follow that if there was going to be an environmental showdown over trails, Olympic National Park, with its large trail system, would have been the place it would have happened.

These seemingly incompatible philosophic points also continue into the topic of Planning, Development and Recreation, which all go hand-in-hand when discussing Olympic National Park’s trail system. In the park’s Backcountry Plan of 1960, the study’s conclusion clearly states that:

“we accept the idea of man using wilderness for recreation, and we accept a trail, a simple campsite, or even a short fence or fire lookout, so long as the predominant character of wilderness remains.”¹⁷⁵

However, as the author of Olympic’s administrative history puts it, in later wilderness philosophies (such as the environmental movement) wilderness and recreation were not synonymous as they were in earlier times.¹⁷⁶ Any human intrusion into the landscape was becoming more unacceptable in the mid-century period, and trails, though not as dramatic as roads, were certainly a form of human incursion into the landscape that is decidedly cultural and not natural. The reluctance of critics to be harsh on trail development can be explained by the presence of traditional wilderness advocates within the greater New Conservation movement, as discussed above. Moreover, there was also an element of romantic nostalgia for the ‘golden days’ of the National Park

¹⁷⁵ Fringer, 104.

¹⁷⁶ Fringer, 104.

Service during the 1930s that critics of Mission 66, especially those interested in the tradition of NPS, were having a hard time giving up. *Man & Nature in the National Parks: Reflections on Policy* was at the time of its publication in 1967 a rather bald referendum on the management of the national parks during Mission 66, with many rather bald criticisms of its faults and missteps.¹⁷⁷ However, even Darling and Eichhorn, for all their criticisms, again and again throughout the book state their admiration for the National Park System as it was during the 1930s, despite the fact that the development policies of Director Wirth and Mission 66 were a direct outgrowth of that same management tradition. They also don't condemn trails within wilderness, even those that are so well worn (such as the Appalachian Trail) that they endorse the paving of portions of the trail to prevent further degradation.¹⁷⁸ The presence of trails in wilderness is also contrary to Forster's definition of wilderness areas in *Planning for Man and Nature in National Parks*, published in 1973, which actually cites Darling and Eichhorn's publication as the inspiration for the study.¹⁷⁹

So, while the retention of trails in wilderness, and the use of trails and backcountry recreation in wilderness, went expressly against the environmental protection of wilderness, parks like Olympic National Park retained their trails because they continued to be supported by traditional wilderness advocates, who still believed that trails helped provide for a meaningful wilderness experience, in the tradition of the early days of the Park Service.

Conclusion

Trails are a subject over which the different interests groups that comprised the composite preservation and environmental movement should have theoretically clashed during Mission 66. Comparing the most basic principles of wilderness advocacy and environmental preservation, there is an inherent contradiction embodied in the

¹⁷⁷ F. Fraser Darling, Noel D. Eichorn and Conservation Foundation. *Man & Nature in the National Parks: Reflections on Policy*. Washington, Conservation Foundation, 1969.

¹⁷⁸ Darling and Eichorn, 63.

¹⁷⁹ Richard R. Forster, *Planning for Man and Nature in National Parks: Reconciling Perpetuation and Use*. Morges, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1973, 6, 37.

acceptance of maintained, extensive trail systems in wilderness. Traditional wilderness advocates were pulling NPS back in time, to what perceived as the golden age of NPS planning and management, while contemporary environmental advocates were pulling NPS forward, towards a new definition of wilderness and environmental protection. However, this difference in underlining goals and principles never came to a head. Trails, though they represented a tangle development in the backcountry by definition incompatible with the idea of pure wilderness, were not accorded the same status or high level of criticism as roads. The failure of Olympic National Park to implement its ambitious expansion to its existing trail system, while at the same time maintaining the system at its original scale, is a physical representation of the compromise unconsciously reached between traditional wilderness advocates and new, more hard-line environmental conservationists over appropriate levels of human intrusion into wilderness.



Figures 4-6 and 4-7. Trails in Olympic National Park. (Left) Sand Point Trail (Right) Hall of Mosses Trail. National Park Service, Olympic National Park website, accessed October 2011.

The presence of formal trails in designated wilderness may be characterized as a throwback to pre-environmentalist wilderness theory, but their present day use and management is not. Today, the National Park Service does continue to permit trails within wilderness areas, but they are maintained only to the minimal approved standards for wilderness management required by wilderness planning documents.¹⁸⁰ In addition, maintenance activities must be undertaken without the use of any kind of motorized equipment, including chainsaws, ATVs, and even wheelbarrows.¹⁸¹ Within Olympic National Park, park administration also restricts use of backcountry trails by issuing wilderness camping permits, which are required for individuals who intend to be in the backcountry for multiple days. All of these measures have been undertaken to prevent overcrowding and damage of the wilderness environment. These scientific principles of wilderness management, balanced with humanistic principles of wilderness recreation, represent a compromise between both the 'old' and 'new' wilderness conservation movements that comprised the opposition to Mission 66, and have shaped the way that visitors experience the wilderness of Olympic National Park and all other parks in the National Park System.

Crater Lake National Park: Steel Circle Residential Complex

Park History

Crater Lake National Park, located in southern Oregon, was established in 1902, making it the sixth oldest national park in the United States. The park was the decades-long dream of William Gladstone Steel, whom had first visited Crater Lake in the 1870s after he had read about it in the Ohio newspaper.¹⁸² With an average diameter of five miles and an average depth of 1,148 feet, the size and clarity of Crater Lake marked it as a natural wonder unparalleled in North America. Unlike many of the other western

¹⁸⁰ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, Management Policies 2006: The Guide to Managing the National Park System. National Park Service, 2006. Online, <http://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/policies.html> (accessed October 2011), Section 6.3.10.2 "Trails in Wilderness"

¹⁸¹ Management Policies 2006, Section 6.4.3.3 "Use of Motorized Equipment"

¹⁸² Harlan D. Unrau, *Administrative History, Crater Lake National Park, Volume 1*. Seattle: National Park Service, 1988. http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/crla/adhi/contents.htm (accessed October 2011), Chapter 2.

wilderness parks, Crater Lake National Park was created not to protect an entire landscape, but a singular feature- the lake itself. In the establishing act for the park, the boundaries were drawn tightly around the lake, encompassing only as much land as was deemed necessary to keep Crater Lake from harm. In total, the original park boundaries enclosed a square tract of only 249 square miles (approximately 160,000 acres,) small in comparison to other western nature parks.¹⁸³

Because Crater Lake is the defining feature of the park, visitation patterns have always focused on experiencing it, and this was from the start accomplished using wheeled vehicles. The first visitors to the park had to traverse rough trails and wagon roads to reach the caldera. Once inside the park there was very little in the way of amenities, and primitive camping was the rule if visitors wanted to stay overnight. The park had no formalized campgrounds, and the National Park Service operated from a small administrative site called Government Camp on the south edge of the park.¹⁸⁴ However, as Crater Lake became increasingly popular, development quickly followed. In 1915 the Crater Lake Lodge was opened on the rim of the lake, and 1918 saw the first cars traversing the developing Rim Road, the first formalized road system around Crater Lake. It was not long before automobiles began to make their way along the rough, unpaved road.¹⁸⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s this pattern of automotive visitation was expanded upon with a large number of CCC and WPA funded projects. The Rim Road (now named the Rim Drive) was paved and expanded, development of the Rim Village visitation center began around Crater Lake Lodge, and a permanent park headquarters, with many rustic-era buildings, was established in Munson Valley, south of the lake. The new facilities accommodated increased visitation within the park, which had grown from less than 2,000 visitors a year in 1904 to over 250,000 a year in 1940.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Unrau, Chapter 4. The park has only been moderately expanded since its establishment, encompassing a little over 286 square miles (183,225 acres) today.

¹⁸⁴ Unrau, Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁵ Steve R. Mark and Jerry Watson, *Rim Drive Cultural Landscape Report, Crater Lake National Park, Oregon*. Seattle: National Park Service, 2009, 14-15. Indeed, there had been intrepid autos visiting the park before the construction of the Rim Road, which had braved the old, rutted wagon roads to make it into the park.

¹⁸⁶ Unrau, Chapter 15, Appendix C.

Mission 66 brought further refinement of the visitation plan instituted during the 1930s with Rim Drive, completed to meet the needs of increased day use visitation and modern automotive traffic. Before and after Mission 66, there was never any serious discussion of removal or limitation of use of the Rim Drive. Unlike the Denali Park Road in Alaska, Rim Drive had always been accessible to private automobiles, and viewing Crater Lake from the road was the definitive way to experience its beauty, so improvements within the park continued to focus on accommodating the automotive tourist and enhancing the automotive experience. Some new facilities were built, but the bulk of project money went to the improvement of already existing facilities, such as roads and utilities. The mostly costly development that occurred within the park was the realignment and repaving of the park's road system, including the final completion of the Rim Drive Loop.¹⁸⁷ Further improvements included the addition of wayside interpretive exhibits, the construction of Mazama Campground and Cleetwood Trail. Some of the funding requests that the park made in its own Mission 66 prospectus, such as a new visitor center and funding for intensive lake research, went unfulfilled.¹⁸⁸ However, when it came to new construction, one of the park's greatest needs was quality year-round employee housing.

Project Details

According to Crater Lake's *Mission 66 Prospectus*, new employee housing was considered an "urgent" need by park administration in the early 1950s.¹⁸⁹ Proposed new residential housing would serve two goals. Firstly, it would supplement and replace substandard seasonal housing with new permanent employee housing. Up until that point, the only permanently standing employee residences were the six 'Stone Houses' built by the CCC during the 1930s as part of the construction of Park Headquarters. These buildings, with their steeply pitched roofs and rusticated exteriors, matched the

¹⁸⁷ Mark, 90.

¹⁸⁸ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, "Mission 66 for Crater Lake National Park," December 1956.

¹⁸⁹ "Mission 66 for Crater Lake National Park," 17.

aesthetics of the rest of headquarters and responded to the ever-present snow-load in the winter, but lacked the capacity to accommodate all the park's permanent and seasonal staff. As a result, employees built ramshackle cabins and pitched tents throughout the park, many of which were just south of headquarters in an area that would come to be known as Sleepy Hollow. However, these haphazard accommodations lacked running water, electricity, and other comforts, leading to unsanitary, unacceptable living conditions.

Park staff were living in similarly poor conditions in many other units of the National Park System, and employee housing was singled out in the Mission 66 program proposal as being of such a high priority that NPS proposed to construct over 1,000 family units and 400 seasonal units in five years instead of the ten allotted for the rest of the program.¹⁹⁰ The extent of the housing problem was captured in the 1953 Baggley Report. Herma A. Baggley, former Yellowstone National Park ranger and wife of the superintendent of Lake Mead National Recreation Area, organized a survey of the wives of park service employees concerning the current condition of NPS housing, as well as their preferences and expectations for new housing in the future.¹⁹¹ Baggley knew firsthand the substandard condition of NPS staff housing, which made it difficult to maintain morale and retain qualified staff.¹⁹² According to Baggley's findings a mere 40 percent of park staff (many of which had growing families) were lucky enough to be living in a two- or three-bedroom house or apartment, and 60 percent of this group reported that their accommodations were substandard in comparison to surrounding communities, with overcrowding being a common complaint. At the far end of the spectrum, 16.5% of all employees were living in tents, trailers and other makeshift accommodations as they were at Crater Lake. At Crater Lake, there weren't even any substantially developed nearby communities to compare to or for employees to move to instead, exacerbating the situation.

¹⁹⁰ *Mission 66: To Provide Adequate Protection and Development*, 108-110.

¹⁹¹ Herma A. Baggley, "Report of the National Park Service Housing Survey", unpublished report, 1953. National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center Archive.

¹⁹² Carr, *Mission 66*, 89.

The second reason Crater Lake wanted to build a new employee residential area was because it would allow for the headquarters complex in Munson Valley to become the year-round operations center for the park.¹⁹³ Consolidating operations would help reduce the park’s operating expenses, while allowing staff to offer expanded visitor services year-round within the park. Crater Lake had only ever been staffed full-time in the summer months because the winter weather within the park, combined with a lack of four seasons housing, made it impossible for staff to live in Munson Valley during the winter. Even the Stone Houses, though seemingly designed with stone walls and steeply pitched roofs for cold, snowy winters, were not equipped with the proper heating for winter habitation. Instead, winter headquarters was set up in the town of Medford, about 70 miles southeast of the park, splitting operations (and budget) between two locations. New housing was thus a pre-requisite to bringing operations back into the park on a full-time basis.

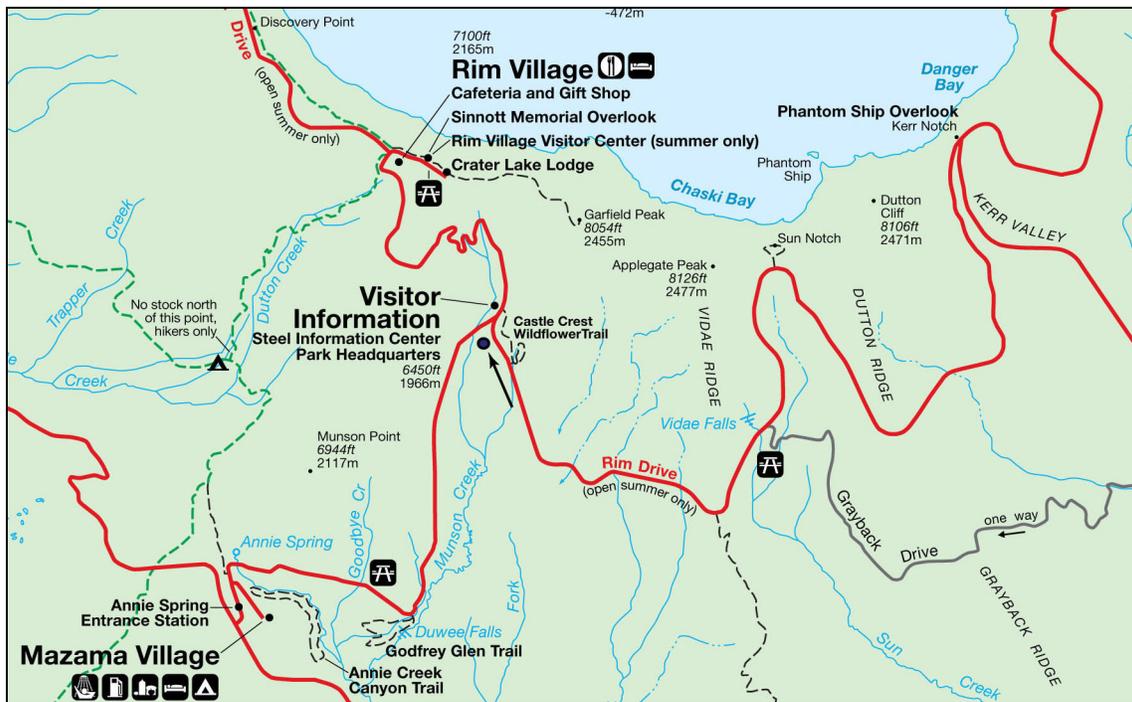


Figure 4-8. Map of the south half of Crater Lake National Park. The arrow just south of Park Headquarters indicates the location of Steel Circle Residential Complex. Crater Lake National Park website, accessed October 2011.

¹⁹³ “Mission 66 for Crater Lake National Park,” 6.

The site chosen for the Steel Circle Residential Complex is located just south of park headquarters along Munson Valley Road. The residential complex is bordered to the north and west by Munson Valley Road, and to the east by the East Rim Road. This is within an area that had been previously disturbed by road building activities. The residential area consists of ten Mission 66 era buildings. Based on the findings of the Baggley report and the needs of current park staff, a family-friendly design scheme was chosen that included seven duplex and one multi-unit apartment buildings surrounding a central school building on a paved loop road. All of the residential buildings included private entrances and garages and two three bedroom floor plans. The construction timeline is as follows:

Table 4-1: Steel Circle Residential Complex, Crater Lake National Park, Oregon

Building #	Date of Construction	Historic Function	Current Function
17	1956-1958	Residential Fourplex	Residential Fourplex
227	1958	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex
504	1958	Chevron Dorm	Fitness Center
15	1963	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex
18	1963	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex
26	1963	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex
222	1964	Community School Building	Community Center
219	1964	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex
221	1964	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex
226	1964	Residential Duplex	Residential Duplex

The buildings within Steel Circle were constructed in two phases, approximately four years apart. The first phase, between 1956 and 1958, was cut short by the financial difficulties of the contractor, Deller Construction Company of Eugene, OR. The contractor significantly underbid for the construction projects in Steel Circle, as well as the contract for the encasement for Annie Spring. Soon after ground was broken on Building #17, the contractor went bankrupt, and completion of Buildings #17 and 227 was overseen by a third party bonding company. Building #504 was constructed at the

behest of the concessioner in 1958, to provide accommodations for their employees working at the new gas station at the intersection of Munson Valley Road and East Rim Drive.¹⁹⁴ The six duplexes built during the second phase of construction, between 1963 and 1964, were very similar in plan to the original duplex (Building #227), but in terms of exterior details were finished in a slightly different way. Among other things, the newer duplexes were built with completely flat roofs instead of slightly pitched ones, and with two garages instead of three.

Discussion

The two critical themes that most directly apply to the Steel Circle Residential Complex are Planning and Development as well as Aesthetics. In terms of planning, Steel Circle fits within the guidelines set forth by Mission 66 planners and wilderness advocates for conscientious park development. One of the primary criticisms put forth concerning Mission 66 planning was that too many developments were being unnecessarily sited within park boundaries, and in sensitive natural areas. The residential complex was built within the boundaries of the park, adjacent to the well-developed Park Headquarters complex in Munson Valley, along an existing road, and 3 miles south of Crater Lake. This meant that the new housing was away from the primary natural feature of the park, the lake, and did not directly impact any previously undisturbed wilderness areas. This was in keeping with the “Vint Plan” to keep new NPS developments away from sensitive natural areas, which wilderness preservationists approved of, and felt that NPS had not kept to in other parks. At the Flamingo development in Everglades National Park, for instance, the visitor center was built in the center of the site.¹⁹⁵

Along with the questionable condition of employee housing in the park during the 1950s, as well as the lack of available housing immediately outside the park, this gave park planners a compelling argument for building Steel Circle where they did. No evidence was uncovered in the process of researching Steel Circle that suggests that there was any dissent concerning the location of the development.

¹⁹⁴ Building #503, constructed in 1958, demolished in 1991.

¹⁹⁵ Carr, *Mission 66*, 98.

However, while the location of Steel Circle might pass the ‘sniff test’ for any criticism of its location or necessity, it is in the area of aesthetics where the residential complex really provides an opportunity for a discussion of modernism, Mission 66 and the national parks. The buildings within Steel Circle all had a simple rectangular floorplan, constructed primarily out of concrete and concrete blocks, with low pitched or flat roofs, narrow banks of steel framed windows, and very minimal exterior decoration. The wood siding and structural elements provided the buildings with some visual interest, but there was no applied ornament. The layout of the complex, with a loop road, and style of the buildings was consistent with the suburban housing developments being built for Americans across the county.



Figure 4-9. Building #227 Duplex Residence, c.1958. Note the nearly flat roof and minimal exterior decoration. Crater Lake National Park Museum and Archives Collections. Collection 8889 Building and Construction Files.

By the mid-1950s modernism had become mainstream, and was the ubiquitous style choice of housing developers, governments, and corporations.¹⁹⁶ Historians Sarah

¹⁹⁶ Carr et al., Section E, 23.

Allaback and Ethan Carr have named this simple modern style, represented in a modest interpretation at Steel Circle Residential Complex, 'Park Service Modern.' When visualizing 'Park Service Modern,' most minds recall the most elaborate examples of the style, such as the Cyclorama Building at Gettysburg National Military Park, or the Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center at Mount Rainier National Park. However, these buildings, designed by renowned modern architects, are not representative of the overwhelming majority of structures built in national parks during Mission 66. In fact, park architects at the Western and Eastern Offices of Design and Construction¹⁹⁷ designed most of the new structures needed by the program "in house," from visitor centers to maintenance facilities. These structures display a much more restrained interpretation of the style, with less 'wow' factor and more practical functionality, so that buildings did not compete with the surrounding environment. While most structures were built of modern or prefabricated materials, many buildings also incorporated natural elements, such as wood or stone, into the design, mixing the natural and manmade and creating further continuity between the buildings and the environment.

Park Service designers, including Director Wirth and Thomas Vint, saw in modern design an opportunity to mitigate the infrastructural issues, including staff housing, which had plagued NPS in the previous decade. As Allaback puts it, Mission 66 buildings were not designed of atmosphere, whimsy or aesthetics, but for functionality.¹⁹⁸ In the case of housing, it also meant bringing housing up to contemporary standards of comfort and safety, and also fulfilling the new staff residential requirements identified in the Baggeley report. Buildings that had a more contemporary modern design were not only familiar to the families that would be living in them, but they were also inexpensive to construct. NPS architects were familiar with contemporary homebuilding techniques, and designed buildings that any contractor could build without any specialized knowledge, keeping costs to a minimum. Cost was of key importance to NPS planners, as they needed to stretch the \$1 billion Mission 66 budget as far as possible, and there were so many infrastructure projects to undertake.

¹⁹⁷ Among which included landscape architect Thomas Vint, one of the creators of the Park Service Rustic style, and Cecil Doty, a prolific architect of the period.

¹⁹⁸ Allaback, 12.

The ideal was that each home/duplex type unit would cost less than \$20,000 each to construct.¹⁹⁹ At Steel Circle in Crater Lake, the average cost of duplexes #15, 18 and 26 was over \$56,000, while the Community School (#222) cost over \$200,000.²⁰⁰

The simple and plain ‘Park Service Modern’ residences comprising Steel Circle are an excellent example of the kind of modern architecture that critics of the aesthetics of new Mission 66 buildings abhorred. Besides their inherent design qualities, the residences of Steel Circle had the further disadvantage of being constructed within walking distance of one of the most impressive collection of Rustic style buildings in the entire National Park Service. The buildings comprising the park headquarters complex in Munson Valley were built during the heyday of “Parkitecture” within the national parks, and many of them were featured as representative examples of the building style in Albert Good’s book *Park Structures and Facilities*.²⁰¹ The Rustic style relied heavily on natural materials, skilled craftsmanship, and careful placement of buildings within the landscape to create picturesque compositions that would be perceived as harmonious with the natural environment and attractions in the park. The form of the buildings, with steep pitched gable roofs, decorative trim and multi-paned windows, was very much influenced by the landscape design philosophies of A. J. Downing in the 19th century, and the Gothic Revival and other pseudo-vernacular architectural styles in vogue during the 1920s and 1930s. Philosophically, the Rustic style was heavily influence by transcendentalism and romanticism, linking it intimately with wilderness values.²⁰² Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) recruits, put to work by Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation, built many of the Rustic style buildings of the time. The confluence of inexpensive labor, as well as inexpensive, high quality

¹⁹⁹ United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service, “Standard Plan for Employee Housing.” Unpublished report. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1957.

²⁰⁰ Crater Lake National Park Museum and Archives Collections. 8889 Building and Construction Files.

²⁰¹ Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938.

²⁰² There is irony in this sentiment, as many Rustic buildings actually used the latest technology and materials (stud framing, poured concrete) in their structure, despite their external appearance.

materials (such as old growth lumber) made the proliferation of the Rustic style possible.

At Crater Lake National Park, the comparison between the modern aesthetics of Steel Circle and the Rustic aesthetics of park headquarters was inescapable. In general, Mission 66 critics treated the two styles as philosophical opposites; the Rustic style was emblematic of the naturalistic harmony with nature (especially in the West), and the Modern style was portrayed as a jarring, ‘ugly’ juxtaposition to the traditional style. Modern architecture was not considered compatible with the national parks, but was instead associated with overdevelopment and inappropriate use, the physical representation of everything that was wrong with Mission 66.²⁰³ While the debate largely centered on more visible and architecturally sophisticated public use buildings in the parks, such as visitor centers, the negative sentiment also extended to the design of private use buildings as well.

Beyond the physical appearance of the buildings, the regional and environmental appropriateness of new ‘modern’ buildings within the parks was often brought up as a supporting argument against the use of modern building design within the park, though there was very little in the way of explanation as to how rustic design was in any way more environmentally friendly. During the 1930s, Rustic style buildings had been constructed in parks, such as Grand Canyon, where there was no vernacular tradition of log or wood construction, and Rustic buildings had also been constructed using many of the same methods and materials as new buildings were, only without the rusticated exteriors. Often environmental excuses were used as an open-ended argument against anything modern in any of the parks. In the case of Crater Lake, however, criticism of the design of the Steel Circle residences, particularly the duplexes, was not unfounded. The nearly flat roofs of the buildings were not the optional design choice for a location in which it was common for over 500 inches of snow to fall each winter. Snow would pile incredibly high of the roofs, and would need to be shoveled off by maintenance staff to keep the residences from sustaining any structural damage. At Crater Lake, at least, the NPS system of pairing standard designs

²⁰³ Carr et al., Section E, 27.

with local contractors did not in the end result in most regionally appropriate construction.



Figure 4-10. Building #227 Duplex Residence during a Crater Lake winter, date unknown. Note the thick snow buildup on the roof. Crater Lake National Park Museum and Archives Collections. Collection 8889 Building and Construction Files.

Conclusion

The Steel Circle Residential Complex is one of many employee residential complexes that were built in the national parks during Mission 66. While new employee housing was understood to be one of the most urgent developmental needs in the parks during Mission 66, there was still opposition to the location and style of development that took place. Steel Circle was located within the boundaries of Crater Lake, but the specific site chosen, combined with the lack of feasible housing alternatives outside the park, made its location acceptable by standards outlined in the Planning and Development theme. Cost and necessity of housing at Crater Lake, as well as other parks, was not criticized or questioned. However, Steel Circle's suburban layout and a modern style stood in stark contrast to the established Rustic style of buildings that had previously been built in Crater Lake. This style was much more appealing to wilderness advocates. This makes Steel Circle representative of the criticisms embodied in the "aesthetics" theme, which is largely based on appearance

and opinion rather than any actual threat to wilderness values or environmental integrity. Aside from the objection to the style of the buildings, the residences have justifiably received criticism concerning their low-pitched and flat roofs, which did lead to snow loading issues. In this case, Mission 66's one size fits all approach to design did not always pan out the way it should have.

The Steel Circle Residential Complex continues to be used as the primary housing area for permanent park employees within Crater Lake National Park, while seasonal employees generally reside at Sleepy Hollow²⁰⁴ or in the Stone Houses. However, in the 2011 planning climate, it is unlikely that a large, suburban style development such as Steel Circle could be constructed within the boundaries of Crater Lake National Park. The demand for in-park housing does not exist the way it did during the 1950s and 1960s. Many long-term park employees have chosen to live outside the park in surrounding communities such as Fort Klamath. This has become a more tenable option with the improvements in the condition and plowing of the park access roads. This has reduced the need for housing within the park, and it is not uncommon for more than one unit to be empty within Steel Circle at any time. Given this fact, and the National Park Service's now longstanding goal to locate as little development within national park boundaries as possible, it is more likely that park staff would chose to locate housing outside the park today instead of within.

In 1991, several remodeling and rehabilitation projects took place at Crater Lake National Park, one of which resulted in dramatic alterations to the seven duplex buildings in Steel Circle. A new, steeply pitched gable roof was built around and over the existing buildings' flat roofs, supported by large concrete columns and new garages at either ends of the buildings. These roofs were added specifically to 'correct' the snow loading issues the original flat roofs had, and to eliminate the task of shoveling the roofs each winter. Horizontal aluminum siding was also added to the sides and rear of the buildings, and the balance of the façade painted white. The new exterior details homogenized the look of the buildings, and make it difficult to discern the original style, which was a modest expression of Park Service Modern. The Fourplex apartment

²⁰⁴ All of the original housing at Sleepy Hollow was completely removed in the 1990s, and new, modern two-story duplexes built to accommodate all park seasonal employees.

building and the Community School have retained their exteriors with only minor cosmetic alterations. Because of the extensive remodeling done in 1991, Steel Circle would not qualify as a district for the *National Register of Historic Places* as an example of Mission 66 employee housing. However, it can be argued that these changes represent an inevitable response to the well intentioned, but poorly thought out design of the original buildings.



Figure 4-11. Building #227 Duplex Residence, Summer 2010. Only upon close inspection can elements of the building's original design be discerned underneath the new roof and façade treatment.

Technically, there is still no designated wilderness within Crater Lake National Park. Congress has not official acted upon any of the park's wilderness proposals. As per Crater Lake's 1986 *Statement of Management*, the current wilderness proposal states that non-wilderness extends 200 feet beyond the edge of all developments, including roads, and that all areas beyond that are recommended for wilderness designation, including the surface of the lake, excluding the boat launch sites at

Cleetwood Cove and Wizard Island.²⁰⁵ The park continues to use best practices for wilderness management in these areas, and all proposed undertakings are treated as if the park has official wilderness designation.

Conclusion

These case studies highlight some of the many projects undertaken by NPS during Mission 66, and touch on some of the more prominent criticisms of Mission 66 development. For each study emphasis was put on discussing each project within the context of the five critical themes of Mission 66 as developed within my research. Some of these criticisms were fair, while others were shallow. Furthermore, within this analysis there are other insights to be gained about the broader successes and failures of Mission 66.

In the case of the Denali Park Road, the issue focused on the issue of road reconstruction in backcountry wilderness. The resulting criticism from conservation researchers like Olaus and Alfred Murie, centered on the appropriateness and necessity of the road, was not unexpected. The final outcome of the project was a compromise between critics and the Office of Design and Construction that allowed for telescoping improvements to the road. This compromise illustrates that the National Park Service was not deaf to criticism of the Park Road project. In fact, NPS was making an effort during Mission 66 to respond to outside opinions, while at the same time proceeding with the development it felt was necessary for Mount McKinley National Park. While critics were correct to voice their concerns about increasing automotive traffic on the Park Road, it would be incorrect to say that NPS did not share those concerns, or did nothing to diminish the potential impact. Moreover, based on the large number of visitors who chose to travel the Park Road during the years it was open to private traffic, the improvements to the road were necessary and popular. The fact that Denali National Park and Preserve is undertaking a study to adjust the 1986 trip limit is further evidence that travel on the park road continues to be in demand.

²⁰⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Statement for Management, Crater Lake National Park, August 1986, 16-17.

As discussed earlier, I ascribed the lack of criticism of Olympic National Park's extensive trail system to an unspoken compromise between wilderness ideals and contemporary wilderness theory concerning the appropriateness of trails in backcountry wilderness. In a way, criticism was avoided because there was no consensus over whether there was anything to criticize. The trail system not expanded as planned for in the park's Mission 66 prospectus, further heading off any potential concerns. However, the decision of the park not to extend the trail system is symptomatic of another common issue that plagued Mission 66 projects: the expected demand did not materialize. Day use of the park did increase, facilitated by road improvements and new campgrounds, and the trail system was being used and maintained. But there was not enough new demand to warrant expanded the trail system, and so the project was removed from the Mission 66 development plan. Insufficient or changing use also caused other Mission 66 projects to not be constructed or to 'fail' after they were.²⁰⁶ However, the lack of trail construction at Olympic is in a sense a success for NPS planners, who were willing to set aside previous plans when it was clear that they were wrong about what the actual demand in the park was for new trails.

The criticism of the Steel Circle Residential Complex at Crater Lake National Park itself embodied the success and failure of NPS architects to design comfortable, cost-effective housing for park employees. At Crater Lake NPS succeeded in building much-needed housing in a location that did not impact any new natural areas in the park. The new housing units meet all of the standards called for in the Baggley report, bringing modern amenities to park employees. Criticism on appearance aside, modern architecture and construction techniques can be credited with making this new housing affordable and easy to construct. However, the designers of the buildings failed to take into account the heavy snowfall within Munson Valley, and as a result the flat-roofed buildings suffered greatly from excessive snow loading. This not only put the buildings structurally at risk, but also made extra work for the park's maintenance staff, who now had to clear the roofs every winter. In this sense, the centralized design and planning

²⁰⁶ The Henry Jackson Visitor Center at Mount Rainier is one such project, which was mentioned in Chapter 1.

scheme that was the heart of Mission 66 failed to take into account the important climatic details of the project, the results of which had to be fixed decades later.

If nothing else, the goal of these case studies was to show that the criticisms of the Mission 66 program are not infallible, and there are instances where the anxious concerns of intent critics overshadowed the National Park Service's willingness to work with critics to create a successful program. While Mission 66 may have been implemented from the top down by NPS staff, but the program was not unyielding or unresponsive, and it would be incorrect to portray it as being so. Both the Mount McKinley and Olympic National Park case studies are examples of this flexibility. At the same time, the program was not flawless. While progress was made, mistakes were also made, as shown in the Crater Lake National Park study. However, no program or initiative is perfect, and it is unfair to hold any organization to unreasonably high standards of perfection. I hope that further research, including case studies, concerning the program will continue to break down the myth of complete failure that surrounds the National Park Service and Mission 66.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS

The primary goal of my thesis question was to explore the interconnected web of social, cultural and historical factors that contributed to the public's reception of Mission 66 in the 1950s and 1960s. The resulting impressions have since had lasting consequences on our understanding of what the program was about and its impact on the current management of wilderness and the environment in the National Park Service. On the whole, the legacy of Mission 66 is one of a program that was both the right program for the right time, and the wrong program at the wrong time. It was right because it sought to address the need for new and upgraded infrastructure in the national parks to meet growing and evolving demands for use by the American public. Without a long-term program like Mission 66, it is unlikely that the national parks could have weathered the post-World War II period as well as they did. Facilities had crumbled, and parks were being overrun and trampled. It was a situation that satisfied no one.

However, Mission 66 was also the wrong program at the wrong time because it failed to address the public's concerns about preservation and protection of America's wilderness. Between 1956 and 1966 the interconnected web of transcendental wilderness thought, ecological theory, public awareness of the value and dangers posed to the environment and growing social unrest converged in a perfect storm of scientifically based wilderness advocacy with which the National Park Service was not prepared to deal with. Director Conrad Wirth, architect of Mission 66, misjudged the great changes taking place within the American conservation movement. NPS was not able to respond sufficiently to the resulting public relations debacle. By the time the Wilderness Act of 1964 was enacted, the vocal wilderness advocates who did not like the type and tone of Mission 66 development had 'won the day' and the program was heavily criticized for its perceived failings.

Five overarching themes were identified within the broader scope of Mission 66 criticism: legislative protection, scientific research, planning and development, recreation and aesthetics. These themes were then explored more thoroughly through

three case studies of Mission 66 projects that exemplify the types of projects undertaken during the program. In the case of the Denali Park Road in Mount McKinley (now Denali) National Park the themes of Planning and Development and Recreation were discussed. In many ways this case study was the most straightforward critique of Mission 66, concerning road construction or reconstruction in the wilderness, which was expressly opposed to the critics' definition of wilderness as a roadless area undisturbed by human development. As for the trail system in Olympic National Park, the themes of Legislative Protection, Planning and Development and Recreation were applied. The decision of the park not to go ahead with a proposed system expansion highlights the ambiguity of the acceptable limits of human non-interference in wilderness, and the inherent contradictions possible within a critical environmental movement that is not unified with a single message or set of goals. In the case of the Steel Circle Residential Complex in Crater Lake National Park, Planning and Development and Aesthetics were discussed in the context of the form and style of new buildings within the national parks, which perhaps represents one of the most prevalent criticism of the program discussed by scholars today.

The strong advocacy of mid-century environmental and wilderness supporters combined with the legislative precedent of the Wilderness Act of 1964 has greatly contributed to wilderness management in the National Park System today. Wilderness management is a key component of the administration of every national park unit, large and small, and the current system of environmental compliance helps ensure that the great natural landscapes of the United States of America will remain safe and unimpaired for the education and enjoyment of future generations. However, all of this would not be possible without the strategic infrastructural developments undertaken during the Mission 66 program. This work remains the backbone of the National Park System today. The visitor centers, trails, roads, museums and more all contribute to the public's understanding and enjoyment of the parks. Without Mission 66, it is difficult to know what the national parks' experience would be today, especially since there was a great irony in the victory of the new wilderness movement. As Roderick Nash puts it, greater appreciation of wilderness has led to more people wanting to visit it, and that

increased visitation has become the greatest threat to the continuity of wilderness, more than any other kind of development ever has been.²⁰⁷

The legacy of controversy and criticism that has been cultivated by historians has the potential to have a lasting impact on the preservation of the historic cultural resources of Mission 66. That is why studies, such as the work embodied in my thesis, are so urgently needed. While some resources, such as visitor centers, have begun to gain recognition through programs such as the National Register of Historic Places, other, less well-documented resources remain vulnerable. After all, the cultural landscape is made up of more than just individual buildings. While change is inevitable, this does not mean that change should be undertaken without a full appreciation for what has been built before.

No program or movement in the history of man can be said to have gone by without at least one negative comment. It is the nature of man to question the status quo. Opinions are not set in stone, and change is an ever-present reality of life. In the end, the final verdict on Mission 66 may be that the National Park Service didn't get it all quite right. However, perspective, gained by taking a few steps back, is always crucial. This is especially true in the national parks, venerable institutions that embody the best of man's intentions for a better life through nature. As Darling and Eichhorn put it is plainly themselves:

“The large problem of development in the national parks is inevitable; whatever is done and whoever does it is going to be criticized, probably unfairly.”²⁰⁸

Americans care deeply for the national parks, and the solutions to the management problems that plague the parks and their wildernesses are not simple or straightforward. It is hoped that through this work and the work of others that we can fully understand the history of the concept of wilderness- where it came from and what it became- so that the positive aspects of Mission 66 might be better appreciated. With

²⁰⁷ Nash, 316.

²⁰⁸ Darling and Eichorn, 55.

this perspective, the important history and lessons from this period might be carried on into the future.

The important impact that Mission 66 developments had on the national parks makes them historically significant and worth fully understanding. This is true whether one 'likes' Mission 66 or not. It puts preservationists in the awkward position of advocating for resources that historically have strong negative associations. These associations are not only with the environmental movement of the mid-century but also with modern architecture and planning, which also experienced a strong popular backlash later in the 20th century. It is up to preservationists to address these challenging prejudices to get to the heart of what makes Mission 66 historically significant. Only then can the program and its remaining resources be properly understood in the historic context of the National Park System. Once the cultural value of Mission 66 is better understood, then we can decide what is worth and not worth preserving for future generations.

Future Research

This research has only scratched the surface concerning the complicated history of wilderness, the environment and Mission 66. In general, research on Mission 66 is still in its infancy, and hopefully this work will act as a stepping-stone for researchers on the subject in the coming decades. Due to the narrow focus of my thesis question, there were some topics outside the scope of my research that could not be fully discussed in this treatise.

For instance, this research did not touch on the politics of recreation planning between the National Park Service and other federal agencies, including the United States Forest Service and the short-lived Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The struggle to define the place and purpose of recreation on public lands between these agencies had a direct impact on the dialogue concerning Mission 66 planning, which was recreation-based. Furthermore, many of the same questions concerning wilderness and 'authentic' wilderness experiences also had to be addressed by these other agencies. Examining the impact that the wilderness and environmental movements had on these federal

agencies could shed further light on the relationship between the government and environmental values.

Within the sphere of wilderness and conservation advocacy, the relationship between the National Park Service and its partner organizations during Mission 66 deserves further attention. These organizations, such as the Sierra Club and National Parks Conservation Association, were historically promoters and supporters of Park Service policy in the early days of the National Park System. However, during the 1950s and 1960s a tipping point was reached, and many of groups went from being simply advocates to skeptical watchdogs. Considering the influence that these groups continue to have of on National Park Service policy today, it is worth further understanding what events caused the shift in the relationship between NPS and these organizations. Within the federal government, the influence of Secretary Stewart Udall on conservation planning within the Department of the Interior during his time in office has been little studied, and is also worth further examination.

More broadly, this research barely touched on the relationship between historic preservation, modern architecture and cultural landscapes. There has been movement to recognize major modern (and post-modern) works as having significant historic and cultural value. As of 2011, there are over 500 resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places associated with the 'Modern Movement.' However, we have yet to fully explore how we feel about modern architecture and its impact on the physical and mental landscape of the United States. We have yet to ask ourselves what is it that we want to commemorate from this period of time, which was both tumultuous and transformative, and why. Mission 66 represents a small microcosm within the greater modern movement. These questions must also be asked within the context of the National Park System as concerns the preservation of Mission 66 resources.

APPENDIX

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