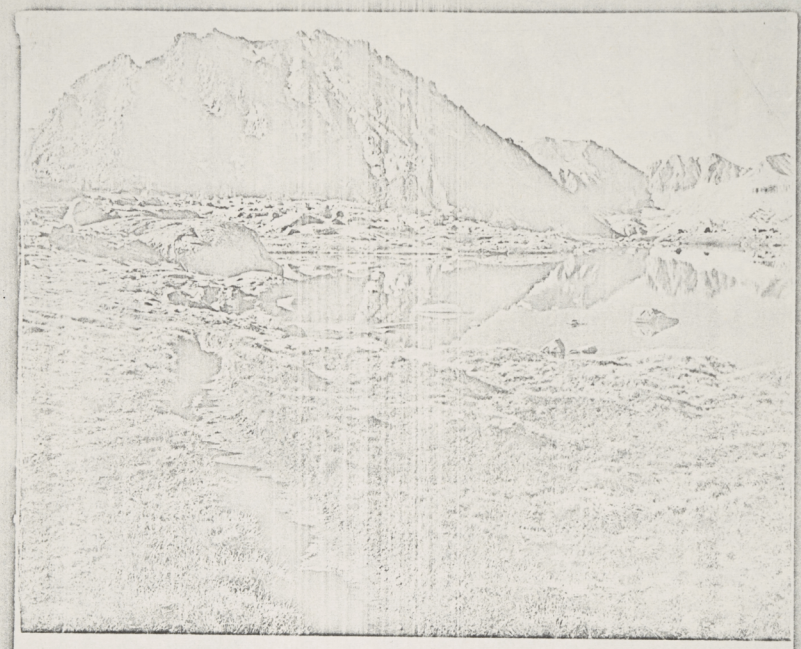


WILDLANDS IN OUR CIVILIZATION

SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN • JUNE 1957

Dave Leopold

Sierra Club Bulletin

VOLUME 42 June 1957 NUMBER 6

Wilderness—Conflict and Conscience

By DAVID R. BROWER

YOU LIKE wilderness, let's suppose, and you want to see some of it saved. Not just a thin strip of roadside with a sign saying "Don't pick the flowers." Not just a wild garden behind the hotel or a pleasant woods within shouting distance of the highway. But *real* wilderness, big wilderness—country big enough to have a beyond to it and an inside. With space enough to separate you from the buzz, bang, screech, ring, yammer, and roar of the 24-hour commercial you wish hard your life wouldn't be. Wilderness that is a beautiful piece of world. Where as you start up a trail and your nine-year-old Bob asks, "Is there civilization behind that ridge?" you can say no and share his "That's good!" feeling.

Yes, a place where you can rescue your *self* from what Ortega calls the *other*—all the extraneities that pile on you too deep. So deep, to quote my wife Anne's *bon mot*, that "the life you lead is not your own."

So you want a place where you can be serene, that will let you contemplate and connect two consecutive thoughts, or that if need be can stir you up as you were made to be stirred up, until you blend with the wind and water and earth you almost forgot you came from.

You like wilderness, then, and need it. And suddenly you encounter a practical man who never learned that he needs it too, or doesn't remember. It doesn't take you long to encounter him, because there are a lot of him, many of him in places of influence, all adding up to a political force that can jeopardize wilderness if it chooses to, and choose it seems to.

will this work? well said

Glen is such a place; rear start of book. ?!

What Criteria for Decision?

Let us go back briefly to that matter of correctly interpreting facts, for it is from this interpretation that we shall have to derive our criteria for decision.

We must make one decision before we shall know how to sort out our facts. Shall we on the one hand resurrect the rejected philosophy of *aprés moil le déluge*, or on the other hand shall we seek the exact opposite for those who follow us — for them a world as beautiful as ours? I don't think this will be a hard decision to make but we shall need to keep reminding ourselves that we made it.

Since wilderness is our primary concern here, let us list the points we need to consider in weighing wilderness preservation against a potential conflicting use. This weighing will set a pattern for the scenic resources which are less fragile than wilderness. And wilderness conflicts are hardest to solve and most critical.

1. The wilderness we have now is all that we, and all men, will ever have.

2. Much of our wild land which is presently used for its wilderness will be lost to wilderness use. It has not been dedicated, and remains only by accident or oversight, or because of the slight value of its raw materials. When it goes, its human load must be added to that placed upon dedicated wilderness, wherever it is left.

3. We don't know what the carrying capacity in terms of people is or may be, either for accidental or dedicated wilderness — carrying capacity that should be expressed in two ways: (a) What human use will a place withstand and still recover naturally, and (b) how many people will it withstand at a given time without their eliminating its esthetic value at the time?

With respect to recoverability: We must not be fooled by vastness of a total area. The key terrain, or the heartland, or the living space, or the camping base — whatever you may call it — is that rare, scarce oasis that has real scenic appeal, that has water and shade, wood and forage, that is gentle enough in slope to camp on, and that possesses a wild setting (without which one might as well camp in Central Park). There is precious little key terrain, even in the vastest reserves. And what key terrain there *is* is likely also to be a good reservoir site.

With respect to esthetic capacity: Wilderness cannot be false-front wilderness and fulfill what man needs in it — no green-belt fringe obscuring a periodic sea of stumps. There must be assurance that a man's wild slice of sky won't have too many elbows in it, or administrative conveniences either. There must be room enough for time — where the sun can

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"Business As Usual" signs

In any event, some kind

calibrate the day, not the wristwatch, for days or weeks of unordered time, time enough to forget the feel of the pavement and to get the feel of the earth, and of what is natural, and right.

4. Whatever the carrying capacity turns out to be, we can predict that it will be limited — so limited that wilderness can probably never again be abundant enough for everyman to walk in it. But after all, only the small child must handle a thing to know it; adults need only look. Those in between need a little of both. So some people will be able to walk in wilderness and most of them will be the better for it. Some may wish to but never make it. Some may not think they care to at all, nor expect their sons to care. But wilderness must be there, or the world's a cage.

5. It follows that our expanding population will need more wilderness than exists, and far more than has yet been set aside for preservation.

6. Therefore, we can conclude that any step to discard our vestige of dedicated American wilderness, or to prejudice its protection, is premature at this time. And knowing this, we are obligated to insure its protection the best way we know how—by law, regulation, and understanding.

To those who for materialistic convenience want to extinguish just part of that dedicated wilderness we can cite Solomon's precedent. We all remember his most famous decision, when one mother wanted the child divided, and the other wanted the child spared, even if she herself were not to have it. Let the judgment favor those who want the wilderness to remain whole. A decision adverse to that whole can never be rescinded.

Suggestions for Immediate Action

It will take time to seek out facts and reach decisions in the long-range public interest — three years at the very least. In the interim an immediate holding action is needed, and I have a brief suggestion. Let federal and state executives appoint task forces who can set about promptly to put up three kinds of signs in places where it is the consensus of conservationists that they belong:

"*Sample, Don't Sell*" should be posted for each of our crown jewels — our parks, dedicated wilderness, or their equivalent in scenic caliber.

"*Closed During Inventory*" ought to be posted on certain areas in controversy in which the scenic, recreational, and scientific values are probably high, lest we find that the forthcoming inventory of our scenic resources consists of checking off our choicest treasures as they are carried out the door.

"*Business As Usual*" signs can be posted everywhere else.

In any event, some kind of moratorium is essential. A three-year wait

used scarcely at all for recreation by the citizens. Nor are the educational and scientific values of wilderness, of which we often speak, weighed heavily into the equation.

The only possible force that could be motivating the effort to preserve natural areas is the moral conviction that it is right—that we owe it to ourselves and to the good earth that supports us to curb our avarice to the extent of leaving a few spots untouched and unexploited.

When one considers the spread of this idea over the earth in sixty-odd years it is cause indeed for wonder. Here is an addition to the accepted mores of people in all continents, imposed suddenly on codes of ethics that have been evolving for many centuries.

And so when we find cause for alarm and discontent with the progress of the wilderness movement it may help perhaps to take the long view—to see how astonishingly far the idea has progressed in the few decades of its existence.

I think that when future philosophers scan back through the records of human history and human thought they may put their finger on this century as a time of outstanding advance in man's feeling of responsibility to the earth. Whether man can succeed in preserving an attractive and livable world is the problem that lies ahead.