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The Need for Wilderness Areas

SPEECH
OF

HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Wednesday, February 29, 1956

Mr. HUMPHREY. Mr. President, it was my privilege to receive unanimous consent to insert in the Appendix of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for June 1, 1955, a significant address on The Need for Wilderness Areas, by Mr. Howard Zahniser, executive secretary of The Wilderness Society, and editor of The Living Wilderness. Mr. Zahniser had delivered his address at the National Citizen's Planning Conference on Parks and Open Spaces for the American People, in Washington, D. C., on May 24, 1955.

In asking for this consent, I said:

Mr. Zahniser not only pointed out the practical needs for areas of wilderness for recreational and other purposes; he also discussed the underlying philosophy, and proposed the establishment of a national wilderness preservation system.

Such a system, it was suggested, would be made up of areas already within our Federal estate that are appropriate for the purpose. No changes in jurisdiction would be involved. No new land-administering agency would be created. Areas within the system—areas already under some kind of Federal administration and still wilderness in character—would be designated, with congressional approval, by the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior, or by Executive order, with the provision that re-

moval of an area from the system would be effected by Congress. The agency administering an area designated as a unit in the national wilderness preservation system would simply be charged with the responsibility of preserving its wilderness character.

NO CHANGE IN JURISDICTION

The wildernesses in the national forests, for example, would continue under the protection of the Forest Service but with the guaranty of perpetuity that Congress can give. National park and monument areas would continue under the National Park Service. National wildlife refuges to be included would continue to be administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service as wildlife refuges, but without the developments and installations that destroy wildernesses. So it would be with any other kinds of land in our proposed wilderness system. Each area would continue to serve its peculiar purpose in the program of its particular administering agency, but every agency would be charged with the responsibility of preserving the wilderness character of any such area in its custody.

A Wilderness Preservation Commission modeled in part after our Migratory Bird Conservation Commission would assist in the establishment and administration of the system and in the gathering and dissemination of information for the public, coordinating the common interests and activities of the various agencies. With a minimum of administrative time and expense and with only slight modification of our

present land-management policies we would thus see affirmed our national policy to preserve for all time some areas of our pristine American wilderness.

The interest and response to this proposal from every part of the country have been remarkable. Few seem to doubt the underlying philosophy, or to dispute the practical need. Letters have been received from people in all walks of life—lay people and professional people, educators, physicians, scientists, conservationists—people with a deep concern to preserve their heritage of the magnificent, almost untouched, natural areas in our national parks and monuments, our national forests and wildlife refuges.

Mr. President, excerpts from letters responding to this wilderness proposal have been collected by the Council of Conservationists. Conscious of the special interest which I know this subject has for many Members of the Congress, I ask unanimous consent that these collected excerpts be inserted at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the excerpts were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WILDERNESS AS A RELIEF FROM TENSIONS

Elizabeth B. White, M. D., of Spokane, Wash., writes:

"As a physician I see the need for people to get out * * * commune with nature. A great many of my patients are improved in mind and spirit after spending * * * a vacation in one of our vacation spots here in (the State of) Washington. They seem to gain a perspective that is not obtainable in the rush and humdrum of a business world. * * * We need wilderness areas. Let's establish a system whereby they will always be preserved and properly controlled."

Conservation of the human being is one of the prime objectives to be obtained in the conservation of wilderness—a conviction expressed by a research worker, Burgess W. Heacox, of Essex, Calif. Mr. Heacox writes:

"I have come to realize the significance of conservation practices and their importance

for our continued welfare. Through my present work I am beginning to realize the importance of another aspect of conservation—conservation of the human being. This may sound a bit nebulous, but of what importance is the conservation of natural resources without a comprehensive program aimed at providing man with outdoor recreational opportunities. The opportunity to lose himself in a relaxing and peaceful environment, to reestablish his relationship with all the world of nature, perhaps even to instill a little humility as he realizes his comparative insignificance. Nowhere have I seen this expressed more adequately than in the paper by Howard Zahniser, executive secretary of The Wilderness Society, titled 'The Need for Wilderness Areas' as inserted by Hon. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, of Minnesota, in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, 84th Congress, 1st session, on June 1, 1955.

"Speaking for myself and friends," Mr. Heacox continues, "we wholeheartedly endorse Mr. Zahniser's positive program (p. 7, The Need for Wilderness Areas) to secure the preservation of wilderness as a national policy—within the framework and jurisdiction of existing agencies."

RECREATIONAL AND ESTHETIC

These wilderness areas are essential to the American way of life, in the opinion of another research leader, John J. Craighead, of the cooperative wildlife research unit at the University of Montana. Mr. Craighead writes as follows:

"More and more we are beginning to recognize the need for preserving large areas of wild lands for recreational and esthetic purposes. As you well know, we have in the Northwest some of the finest and largest of these so-called wild areas (wilderness and primitive areas). As the population density in the Northwest continues to grow, decisions eventually will have to be made as to the best use of these lands in the general economy of the region. Many of us believe that these wild lands are essential to the American way of life, and in fact are becoming increasingly necessary as population density and its accompanying tensions build up.

"I am very much in favor of a bill to establish a national wilderness preservation system that would affirm a national

policy to preserve such lands," Mr. Craighead continues. "Should such a system be established in cooperation with the Federal land administering agencies and conservation organizations, a provision that the removal of an area from the system can be effected only by Congress would be a tremendous step forward."

The desire for the consummation of national wilderness protection, with a recognition for the healing qualities of large wild areas, transcends political subdivisions. K. W. Hodgdon, assistant chief of the State game division, Augusta, Maine, writes:

"While we in Maine have several large tracts of relative wilderness areas and are fortunate in having been given the Baxter State Park area, I can well understand the concern of other States for the preservation of certain areas as wilderness areas to be set aside for the enjoyment of the future generation. I believe that we should not be blinded by our good fortune, and therefore should help in any way possible to establish a policy which would provide for such areas throughout the Nation which could be preserved against future exploitation. In the rush of today's business matters, such areas provide a mental relief as well as much enjoyment to those who have access to them. They could very well play an important role in the physical well-being of our people."

Another citizen, Paul J. Linsley, of Whittier, Calif., speaks for the serene influences of wild nature "as a most vital essential in this era of restlessness approaching hysteria."

"Such a bill if passed," writes John C. Asbury, Doniphan, Mo., "would be of great benefit to the general public as a whole, providing relaxation and recreational values for the present and future generations of our people."

WILDERNESS FOR SPIRITUAL VALUES

The ministry of wild nature in its far reaches, to the soul, is touched upon by the eminent Suffragan Bishop of Connecticut, Robert McConnell Hatch, who writes:

"We have made an excellent start toward preserving a portion of our natural heritage for the recreational and spiritual benefit of our future citizenry. More needs to be done, in order to safeguard permanently certain of our remaining wild and primitive areas

in a world that is becoming increasingly mechanized."

Again Bishop Hatch writes: "I hope that this program can be enacted before it is too late. * * * It is both practical and positive, and it contains the best hope that I know of for preserving our remaining wilderness."

"I pray," Bishop Hatch writes, "that Congress will act on your proposals."

The spiritual need is recognized also by Mrs. Helen M. Hiller, Mattapoisett, Mass.:

"These unspoiled places are of historical, scientific, and educational value but most of all spiritual. There is peace and relaxation. As Lois Crisler says in the Christian Century, no one can walk in the forest without a feeling of awe and pleasure. This is what saved Leo Tolstoy in his generation and ours.

"We have lost much of our virgin forests," Mrs. Hiller continues. "In 1907 there were 469 million acres. The annual burn has been 20 to 30 million acres, much of it the result of logging operations. Now there are 44,600,000 acres. The logging interests are determined to get more. They are working especially hard just now on the Olympic National Park. They want 225,000 acres. They have lengthy articles with many pictures in big magazines trying to win the public. We want the wilderness areas preserved for future generations by the maximum possible degree of security but is there any guaranteed security? The Indians thought they were safe when the Indian Reorganization Act was passed in 1934. Now it has been violated by an emancipation law and they may lose everything. Any law can be repealed or bypassed."

The intangible need is expressed also in a letter from Dave Gaskill, of Albuquerque, N. Mex.:

"I felt a deep kinship with your presentation; a difficult subject at best, dealing in large part with intangibles—intrinsic qualities that are generally out of the realm of majority experience—and often, I think, not well understood or even perceived in the sense desired. Wilderness values are something we must experience for ourselves. It is indeed sad that such universal values are so frequently unrecognized or overshadowed by practical, transitory demands.

"In particular, I am reminded of Europeans (mountaineers and such) whom I

have met in our western high country and canyon lands, who, above all else, are deeply stirred by this quality of wildness, something fresh and delightfully new to their senses."

On this aspect I shall quote from another letter. It was written to Mr. Zahniser by Laurie Whitlock, of Arlington Heights, Mass., who said:

"Your address entitled 'The Need for Wilderness Areas' which was reprinted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, touched me deeply as I know it must have touched thousands of others.

"You spoke so directly and challengingly to the very finest of innate human understanding. * * *

"Would that it had been reprinted in every newspaper in the country."

SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN WILDERNESS

Next a scientist comments:

"As a professional mycologist and plant pathologist, I recognize especially the scientific values that will accrue if Congress brings into existence such a system," writes Francis W. Holmes, of Amherst, Mass. Of the recreational values, he writes:

"These values far transcend the commercialized view of nature that is often all that remains in developed natural areas. Far from threatening our national park system with invasions and bloodlettings, we should be belustering and enlarging it for our larger population and also creating a parallel national wilderness system."

John F. Wanamaker, assistant professor of biology, at the College of Liberal Arts, in Elmhurst, Ill., writes:

"I took steps as soon as I read the report to write my Congressman."

The need for permanent wilderness preservation as a national policy, persists throughout all of these letters that were received from correspondents who were moved to write by Mr. Zahniser's address.

A scientist, philosopher, artist, writer, and biologist of note, the distinguished president and director of The Wilderness Society, Dr. Olaus J. Murie, writes as a private citizen from Moose, Wyo.:

"Mr. Zahniser does not advocate a new department, but suggests that administration

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of these various areas remain in the care of the agencies in which they now reside. * * * We here in Wyoming are proud of the beauty of these recreational areas, and they mean a lot to us as people, but also, I would add, economically. Anything that you can do in Congress to further these ends I am sure will be acclaimed by the people of this State as well as by conservationists throughout the United States."

The president of Philadelphia Conservationists, Inc., Allston Jenkins, of Philadelphia, writes on behalf of his organization:

"I heartily endorse the idea of a national policy of wilderness preservation. Coordination and cooperation are vitally essential in saving our wild natural areas from misuse. At present there are often conflicting policies between various Federal agencies and departments. Federal legislation to correct this deplorable situation is badly needed.

"We have a priceless asset in our wilderness lands. They have cost us nothing. The value of what they give us cannot be reckoned. We should immediately take steps to recognize their worth by a strong national policy of preservation."

"With the rapidly increasing population in the United States and the greatly increasing appreciation and need of natural areas," writes Mrs. A. R. Laskey, from Nashville, Tenn., "we need protection for our national parks, national monuments, and wildlife refuges from infringement on their boundaries and natural grandeur."

Miss Ada Fuller Crowley, Englewood, N. J., writes:

"Some definite national policy must be set up."

"As lifelong users of the wilderness areas," writes Miss Evelyn B. Bull, Pasadena, Calif., "we strongly recommend the preservation of wilderness as a national policy, using existing agencies."

T. N. Anderson, of Eustis, Fla., editor of *Fun, Facts, 'n' Fishing*, writes:

"Every year we who are interested in conservation fight a losing battle against commercial interests who wish to capitalize on all or parts of our now existing State and national forest lands. A Wilderness Preservation Commission would possibly help us to assure the future of land being left in a wild state."

PROTECT WILDERNESS CHARACTER

Wilderness areas must be carefully protected from the changes that would damage the characteristics which make wilderness the prized resource it is—a prized possession of all the people. This is a thought that many of these correspondents stress. Don Bleitz, of Los Angeles, Calif., writes, for example, that he has "for many years been an advocate of and an ardent supporter for the inclusion of additional wilderness areas in various sections of the United States," and he emphasizes the need for "wilderness areas, to be left exactly as they are now, without additional roads nor any improvements whatever except maintenance of trails, etc." Mr. Bleitz adds: "If, during the next session of Congress, legislation is introduced to form additional areas I should like to urge your support of such legislation."

When the destruction of a wilderness begins, irrevocable change also begins. Its value historically as a living museum, as a source of continuity from our past, through the present, to the future, is extinguished by man-made alterations.

H. M. B. Weicksel, Renovo, Pa., writes:

"Because I live in a small town in the middle of one of the largest areas of wild land east of the Mississippi, I can see some of the desirable features of providing for the future some unspoiled tracts.

"Man has put his stamp on the vast majority of our outdoors, and all too often it has resulted in anything but beauty.

"It is quite likely that many of our citizens will be unable to appreciate unspoiled nature. Many will see only lumber in a tree or potential electric power in a stream and will picture to themselves the wealth in mineral resources lying beneath the surface.

"We apparently were not satisfied until we had destroyed the heath hen, the grayling, the eastern buffalo, and elk. We have just about done the same for the plains buffalo, the whooping crane, and the trumpeter swan. Must we add to the sordid record the last of the unspoiled wilderness?"

"Not far from my home considerable areas have been ripped up by strip miners in pursuit of comparatively cheap coal and clay while thousands of deep miners are out of work. What were once productive farms or timberlands are now desolate wastes. Farms

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that might have produced for centuries are ruined for a few thousand quick dollars.

"The same thing can conceivably happen to our last remaining wilderness areas. If for no other reason than sentiment let's use every effort to preserve them as nature made them."

Douglas E. Wade, editor and educational director with the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Columbia, S. C., comments:

"It was a genuine pleasure to receive from you a copy of Howard Zahniser's wonderful essay, *The Need for Wilderness Areas*, which was printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

"Believe me when I say that it gives one a good feeling to realize that some of you folks in Congress see clearly in this matter of wilderness preservation. Personally I consider an understanding of the wilderness problem basic to an understanding of the entire conservation picture. In your own State the Quetico-Superior country is much to the point. I have been in that part of our State. My home State is Wisconsin."

The "proposal to secure congressional recognition for such areas is very significant and should have the backing of various conservation organizations throughout the country," writes Paul W. Thompson, chairman of the Michigan Natural Areas Council, Birmingham, Mich.

A private citizen, Miss Irene Koslan, Bronx, N. Y., writes:

"It was with great pleasure that I read this paper. * * * It * * * presents the problem from every vital point of view * * * its philosophy (is) of such basic importance to the people of our land."

How universal is this sense, this need for wilderness preservation. Mrs. Robert R. Usher, of Tully, N. Y., relates this to experience nearer home.

"At present there has been much discussion in various parts of the country—including our own New York State—over preservation of national wilderness areas, parks, etc. I have just read from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, *The Need for Wilderness Areas*, remarks of Hon. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY quoting an address by Howard Zahniser, the executive secretary of The Wilderness Society.

"We hope that a bill may soon be drawn up to establish a national wilderness preser-

vation system, with the joint cooperation of the Federal land-administering agencies and conservation organizations.

"We would like to see the bill include certain important provisions, such as: It should affirm the national policy to preserve such a wilderness system.

"It should define the proper uses of areas within the system and provide protection from misuse.

"The bill should list areas included and provide for additions by executive order or as recommended by Secretary of Agriculture or Secretary of the Interior and also provide that no area could be removed without approval by Congress."

On the editorial page of the Christian Science Monitor, issue of November 3, 1955, in a letter to the editor, Rose K. Gidley, of Palo Alto, Calif., discusses the importance of preserving the wilderness, and stresses what the wilderness does for mankind individually and, so, collectively. She writes as follows:

"To quote Robert Marshall, one of the world's foremost conservationists, 'It is difficult to overestimate the importance adventure assumes in the longings of innumerable vigorous people. Lack of opportunity to satisfy such longings undoubtedly is responsible for much unhappiness, for a considerable portion of the crime which is so often committed as a means of self-expression, and * * * even for war.' He (Robert Marshall) also continues to point out that the demand of the wilderness brings out a person's resourcefulness, is ideal relaxation, and stimulates esthetically all the senses which a man has. Further he points out that the wilderness brings 'to many human beings the most perfect experience of all the earth.'

"Are these not more important than all the political maneuverings and axe-grindings that seem to accompany the so-called development of the wilderness?"

IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED

William Mussig, of Lapeer, Mich., writes:

"I enjoyed reading Mr. Howard Zahniser's paper, particularly the chapter The Wilderness and Human Realities. The whole text illustrated explicitly the finest resort one can turn to in his most despondent and hopeless hour, for solitude and comfort, and to regain composure.

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"It was my fate to experience the agitated harshness of a big city when inflicted early in youth with an eye injury and later on severe eyestrain because of occupation, with frightful consequences of becoming a total nervous wreck and making life an enduring misery. It was when I bought some wilderness land (it was wilderness to me—a mere scrub farm where I was prepared to grub for a living as a last resort) that I discovered the healing powers of nature—ever so slow but sure. That was 16 years ago and now at 49 I possess perfect health except for limited ocular capacity.

"During those years it grew upon me to devote all my energy and time to preserve and develop this beautiful wooded lake farm for those who seek sanctuary. It is not wilderness by exact description, but enough for those with a sense of appreciation and imagination.

"It is gratifying to know this cause is toward a national policy. With an already over-industrialized Nation and all forms of business merging into colossal pyramids, cold and calculating, characteristically dwarfing more and more insignificant man, is it not possible for man to counteract these smothering forces to ground himself by the many natural resource organizations and start climbing these colossal granite structures like a clinging vine to give it life and beauty? Imaginative as it is, there is room for individualism to make the most of this opportunity in promoting natural resource conservation by constructive objectives."

Mrs. Eddie W. Wilson, of Los Angeles, Calif., writes:

"As a citizen deeply concerned regarding the preservation of our wilderness areas—national parks and forests, State parks and forests, and our other heritages of the out-of-doors—and realizing the recreational, educational, historical, scientific, and inspirational values of these areas, I wish to tell you how greatly pleased I am with the paper presented by Howard Zahniser, May 24, 1955. I rejoice that this paper is now a part of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

"I feel that Mr. Zahniser's statements on the need for wilderness areas and his assertion that wilderness needs are interrelated are true, indeed. And, finally, I feel that his

detailed proposal for a national preservation system housed in a bill which thus provides for the joint cooperation of the Federal land-administering agencies and conservation organizations is very necessary and worthy of passage at the earliest possible time.

"Here I am reminded of the late President Theodore Roosevelt's plea at the Grand Canyon, Ariz., on May 6, 1903: 'Leave it (the canyon),' he urged, 'as it is. You cannot improve on it. What you can do is to keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you.'

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"May necessary and immediate action be taken to keep our wonderful wilderness areas exactly as they are."

Mr. HUMPHREY. Mr. President, let me say, in concluding my remarks on the subject today, that in the very near future I hope to introduce a bill which will establish a wilderness-preservation system, thus embodying in legislative form this imaginative proposal which has already attracted such widespread support.



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