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Chapter 3

THE U.S. NATIONAL PARKS IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: THE YELLOWSTONE MODEL OR CONSERVATION SYNCRETISM?

John Schelhas*
Southern Research Station USDA Forest Service
112 Campbell Hall Tuskegee University Tuskegee, AL 26088

SUMMARY

In recent years, international conservation scholars and practitioners have largely dismissed the U.S. national park experience, often termed the "Yellowstone model," as being too protectionist and exclusionary, and therefore irrelevant and even detrimental to park management and policy in lesser developed countries. A review of the U.S. national park experience finds, however, that U.S. parks are perhaps most notable for the way that they have adapted to broader economic, social, cultural, and political demands to become an enduring feature of U.S. culture, while at the same time becoming keystones of biological diversity conservation in a process that I call conservation syncretism. The U.S. experience suggests that there is no easy, perfectly harmonious balance between protecting park ecosystems and meeting the needs of people, but that both can be pursued concurrently. U.S. parks are an imperfect response to diverse human demands, but the process of responding to these demands has produced many different types of national parks and management strategies. The 125 years of U.S. experience in balancing people's needs and desires with nature protection in national parks holds useful lessons for international conservation. Specifically: (1) regardless of the nature of their management, it is important that national parks become valued by people from a broad spectrum of society; (2) a combination of advocacy groups, broad public input, and professional and scientific park management all can work together, even in the absence of formal collaborative processes, to shape a strong and enduring conservation system, (3) socially valued conservation takes time to evolve, and must simultaneously reflect and lead societal values; and (4) there is no easy answer to fundamental conflicts between biodiversity maintenance and human needs; these must be worked out in the combined crucibles of negotiation and adaptive management.

*Coresponding author:Email jschelhas@fs.fed.us

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, a highly polarized debate has emerged in the conservation literature about whether national parks in lesser developed countries should follow the "Yellowstone model" of strict protection or whether a new type of national park should be developed that is more suited to the circumstances of lesser developed countries by making provisions for local economic uses. The roots of this debate are deep, dating back nearly 40 year (Adams 1962, Curry-Lindahl 1974, McNeely and Miller 1984, and Olindo 1974). More recently, a number of recent critiques by social scientists of national park practice and policy in lesser developed countries have argued that one of the chief problems facing national parks in particular, and biodiversity conservation in general, has been the widespread use of the "protectionist" U.S. national park model in countries where it is not appropriate. The U.S. model has been blamed for a range of ills, both ethical and pragmatic, including harm to local people, providing benefits for developed country interests at the expense of local people, high costs of park protection, and ineffective park protection. For example, Stevens (1997a:28) suggests that the "Yellowstone model" of national parks, a model "in which strict nature protection is the primary goal," has become the world's standard while provoking disregard for human rights and cultural insensitivity and being ineffective or even counterproductive for conservation. West et al. (1991:10) suggest that emulation of the United States park system by developing countries has led to the over-use of the exclusionary national park category of protected areas, as compared with other categories that permit some human extractive uses, to the detriment of local people. Pimbert and Pretty (1995) state that strictly protected areas of the "Yellowstone model" that exclude local people have had many social costs, including disenfranchisement of indigenous people from their lands, a neglect of indigenous knowledge and management systems, the suppression of local institutions and social organization, neglect of valuable wild resources, and lost opportunities to promote local development. Bailey (1996:327) suggests that "fully protected core areas," which create wilderness areas where "only a handful of field biologists may tread," are a Western concept that has little credence in many lesser developed countries. A number of authors have pointed out that strictly protected reserves often must be maintained through militaristic defense strategies, coercive conservation measures, and social repression (Ghimire 1995, Machlis and Tichnell 1985, Peluso 1993).

In addition to having high social costs, it has been suggested that strict protection may also threaten the biological conservation potential of parks. Strictly protected reserves may have a high management cost to governments (Pimbert and Pretty 1995) and, by antagonizing local people and heightening conflict, may undermine public support for parks (Ghimire 1994, Machlis and Tichnell 1995). Wells and Brandon (1992) note that parks at times become threatened by the local people who have been excluded from them, and Pinedo and Padoch (1993) offer evidence that exclusionary parks may in fact be less successful at conserving biological diversity than community-based reserves that permit some local extraction. Wood (1995) suggests that strictly protected reserves undermine conservation by eliminating indigenous and traditional use of species and disturbance of ecosystems that have historically shaped ecosystems and therefore are important to their future conservation.

These critiques have led to a number of conservation alternatives to strictly protected reserves:

- Integrated conservation and development projects that "attempt to ensure the conservation of biological diversity by reconciling the management of protected areas with the social and economic needs of local people" (Wells and Brandon 1992:ix), and include agroforestry, forestry, tourism, water projects, and wildlife utilization.
- "Use it or lose it" approaches based on the notion "that, compared to protected areas, more wildlands and biodiversity will be conserved by making use of the living resources in those wildlands that are not strictly protected [for forestry, hunting, collection of non-timber forest products]" (Freese 1997).
- Extractive reserves (Browder 1992), where resident populations are granted long term use rights to resources that they have historically used and collectively manage.
- Multiple categories of protected areas with different levels of protection and use, such as the six categories developed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), which use multiple types of protected areas to provide different benefits to society (McNeely 1994).
- Collaborative management (Borrini-Feyerabend 1996:12), an inclusive approach in which the "some or all of the relevant stakeholders in a protected area are involved in a substantial way in management activities."
- Community-based conservation is an alternative to "top-down, center-driven conservation" that instead focuses on biodiversity protection "by, for, and with the local community" (Western and Wright 1994:7).
- Indigenous and traditional conservation recognizes long-standing relationships between people and ecosystems that have often been ignored in the science of ecology, and sees conservation of agroecosystems and other human-used ecosystems as equally important to biodiversity conservation in ostensibly "natural" ecosystems (Guyer and Richards 1996).

The common element in all of these conservation alternatives is an emphasis on finding ways that people can continue to live in and use ecosystems, rather than conservation by isolating nature from humans--particularly from their livelihoods.

Although these new strategies have received wide attention in the conservation literature and international agencies have made substantial investments in them, they have not to date produced results that clearly show them to be superior to strictly protected reserves. In fact, there is an emerging "neoprotectionsism" trend in the conservation literature that criticizes these new approaches while advocating the importance of strictly protected reserves of the nature of the "Yellowstone model". Redford and Sanderson (1992) argue that efforts to "form coalitions among erstwhile enemies" of conservation and development is the result of wishful thinking, and that these efforts have produced few successes. Robinson (1993) argues that real contradictions underlie notions of sustainable use, and that the ecological impacts of "sustainable" resource extraction has rarely been rigorously measured. Kramer et al. (1997) suggest that while the trend away from species protection and toward sustainable use has been effective in increasing the broad appeal of conservation efforts, it has also lead to a reduction on support for the strictly protected areas that many biologists view as necessary for biodiversity maintenance. They argue that large, strictly protected reserves must remain the keystone of biodiversity conservation. Brandon (1998) suggests that we should place the

emphasis in parks on conservation first, and avoid expecting parks to address social and economic problems.

While the policy debate between conservation through strictly protected area versus integrated conservation and development and particpatory approaches is important, much of it has revolved around an idealized "Yellowstone model" of protected areas that may bear little resemblance to actual national park practice in the U.S. In the remainder of this paper, I will review the history of the U.S. national parks to see to what extent it conforms to the view of the "Yellowstone model." Subsequently, I will present an argument that the U.S. national park experience would be better characterized as "conservation syncretism," and suggest that the syncretism model of the U.S. parks holds important lessons for protected area establishment and management throughout the world.

NATIONAL PARKS IN THE UNITED STATES

The modern concept and entity of a national park is generally attributed to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, in the U.S. Runte (1977:65) has argued that, "while it would be comforting to believe that the national parks idea emerged in the United States out of a deep and uncompromising love of the land for its own sake," in fact the parks emerged out of Americans' search for a distinct identity separate from the manmade wonders of Europe and were allowed to expand because most parks were worthless in terms of extractive natural resources. Early parks were primarily concerned with preserving spectacular scenery; interest in ecosystem conservation came much later (Runte 1997). Throughout their history, the U.S. parks have been shaped by economic pressures, political possibilities and opportunities, and cultural forces into an enduring, although at times flawed, institution.

"Worthless Lands"

Early national parks, including Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Sequoia, were established to preserve spectacular scenery and natural wonders from the threat of confiscation by private interests during the rapid frontier expansion of the late 1800s (Runte 1997). Early parks generally included only the minimum land needed to protect spectacular scenery. The inclusion of a large land area in Yellowstone National Park happened only because it was believed that more natural wonders would be discovered in the region (Runte 1997, Sellars 1997). From the beginning, park designation was frequently justified on the basis that the lands in question were relatively worthless for extractive resource uses, and the parks themselves generally included only high, rugged, spectacular scenery while excluding areas valuable for lumbering, mining, grazing, and agriculture (Runte 1997:49). When valuable resources were included in park proposals or even designated parks, they were at times later excluded from the parks by adjusting their boundaries--for example the original boundaries of Yosemite National Park were later adjusted to exclude valuable timber and mineral resources (Hampton 1981, Runte 1990). It has been historically difficult to establish national parks in unique biological areas with important economic uses, demonstrating the unwillingness of the

U.S. Congress to allow parks to hinder resource extraction. For example, the California redwoods were a candidate for national park status as early as the late 1800s, but it was not until 1968 that Congress established a relatively small park with serious conservation limitations due to the failure to include complete watersheds (Albright 1985, Runte 1997). In another example, a tall grass prairie national park was first proposed in the 1930s, but it was only in 1996, after numerous failed efforts, that a 11,000 acre park was established (with only 180 acres being owned by the National Park Service in deference to local resistance to federal land ownership) (Hartzog 1988; Baker 1997). It is notable that or private conservation efforts preceded those of the federal government in both of these cases. The State of California first began protect redwoods in 1901, in response to both local and national interest in nature (Schrepfer 1983). The Nature Conservancy, a private conservation organization, established tall grass prairie preserves in Kansas in 1972 (2,188 acres) and Oklahoma in 1989 (30,000 acres).

Developing a Constituency

National parks in the United States have captured the public's imagination to a sufficient extent that by 1997 they could be used in advertisements to sell everything from cars to cookies (examples include Ford Motor Company and Pepperidge Farm) Far from being an elitist, repressive institution, U.S. national parks often symbolize the good that government can accomplish. For example, polls show that the National Park Service is among the most respected of all federal agencies (Rettie 1995:125), and the national parks had sufficient public support to turn back attempts by Congress to reduce NPS budgetary allocations, even during a period of general public sentiment that government spending should be reduced (Adams 1995). This level of support for national parks was garnered through over 100 years of efforts to promote use of the parks "in the manner that best satisfies the individual taste" (Lane 1918, in Albright 1985:70) and to develop and project a strong image of the parks (Foresta 1984:27).

Early public support for the parks was generated through alliances with the railroads to facilitate public visitation, courting powerful allies by escorting key leaders around the parks, building facilities to welcome the influential, books and pamphlets, and strategically placed articles in mass circulation magazines such as *The National Geographic* and *The Saturday Evening Post* (Foresta 1984, Runte 1997, Shaffer 1998). While early political support for the national parks was closely associated with concessions that gave the railroads and other corporations monopolies on park tourist facilities, guaranteeing handsome profits, the national park idea also had democratic roots (Sellars 1997). Closely linked with the progressivism's view of a broad-based, democratic public interest, the national parks were from the beginning intended to benefit the "public"--albeit a "public" that generally excluded indigenous people, other American minorities, and the urban poor (Popper 1984, Kaufman 1966, NPS 1993)--and protect important scenic and natural resources from exploitation by an elite minority (Andrews 1999, Foresta 1984). Although early park use was primarily by the upper class, the emergence of mass leisure in conjunction with modern industrial society and increasing American affluence, as well as the widespread availability of automobiles, brought about the possibility to create a constituency for the parks among vacationers from many social strata (Foresta 1984). The National Park Service (NPS) encouraged use of the parks by promoting

the construction of roads within and between the national parks, and developing accommodations within the parks ranging from luxury hotels to camping facilities (Albright 1985). The continued expansion of outdoor recreation after World War II culminated in Mission 66, a ten-year program (1956-1966) to expand accommodations and infrastructure in the parks. Mission 66 was "especially aimed at increasing the visitor use of parks threatened by resource exploitation schemes and thereby strengthening the Service's hold on them" (Foresta 1984:53), and the types of accommodations constructed were those identified as desirable to the general public in public opinion polls conducted both independently and by the NPS (Wirth 1980:244). Construction of new facilities tapered off as park crowding became an issue in the 1970s, but the NPS has continued to manage the parks with public use as a primary goal, often to the consternation of preservationists (Runte 1997, Sellars 1997). Complementing the development of tourism, parks have been promoted by the NPS and individual constituencies as symbols of nature's grandeur, closely allied with the Romantic movement in the early years, and later with the preservationist movement, creating a dual constituency for the parks comprised of direct users and people who valued the existence of parks (Foresta 1984, Runte 1997). While some authors (e.g. Clarke and McCool 1996) have seen many of these actions as the National Park Services way of competing in the budget process with its rival agency, the Forest Service, and this is undoubtedly a partial explanation, the effort to develop a constituency reflects a broader and more public cultural phenomenon.

Subtle Utilitarianism

Although the wilderness and preservationist movements in the U.S. have influenced national park policy (Fox 1981; Nash 1982), the history of these movements is distinct from that of the national parks. Park establishment and management have often addressed utilitarian values, particularly environmental services and economic development through tourism. In the 19th century, widespread protection of forests from logging, fire, and overgrazing was carried out to protected economically important water transport routes, sources of irrigation water, and metropolitan water supplies (Andrews 1999, Cox 1985, Runte 1997, Sellars 1997). Concerns for watershed protection played an important role in generating support for and influencing the lands that were included in some national parks, including Sequoia National Park and Yosemite National Park (Cox 1985, Runte 1990). Furthermore, as several historians have pointed out (Cox 1983, Sellars 1983, Winks 1983), Runte's argument that the national parks were comprised of worthless lands is accurate only with respect to direct extraction of natural resources. National parks have always been far from worthless for tourism. Tourism value offered a utilitarian counter-argument to extractive uses of public lands as promoted by the U.S. Forest Service (Runte 1997), and the NPS has actively promoted tourism in the parks from the beginning, through facility development, pointing out the ways that business benefitted from parks, and seeking strategic alliances with park-related tourism industries and outdoor groups (Albright 1985, Foresta 1984). The NPS has often been accused of endorsing resort style tourist development in the parks, and giving preference to tourism over nature preservation (Sellars 1997). Yet one of the early arguments for park establishment was protecting them from abuses of private tourism operators that were evident at places such as Niagra Falls (Runte 1997), and the NPS has always placed limits on tourism development to preserve scenic and, to a lesser extent, environmental resources.

Diversity of Management Strategies

Although Yellowstone may be the archetypical U.S. national park, the national park system is in fact made up of many different kinds of units representing a diversity of management strategies. There are of 369 units of 20 different types in the national park system, comprising a total of 84,752,981 acres (see Table 1). The U.S. park system includes a number of historical sites, memorials, and urban parks, but is also includes a diversity of management regimes for natural sites. The fifty-four national parks comprise the largest total acreage by type, but it is significant that fifteen national preserves contain about half the land area of the national parks, making them second in the park system in total acreage (by type of unit). National preserves have all the properties of national parks, but permit long-established patterns of hunting and other extractive uses (Rettie 1995, Runte 1997). Many of the national preserves are in Alaska, but they also include Big Thicket (Texas), Big Cypress (Florida), Mojave (California) and others elsewhere in the U.S. and its territories.

There are also a number of examples of special relationships with local people. Canyon de Chelly and Navajo National Monument are jointly managed by the NPS and the Navajo Nation (Mitchell 1987). National Seashores and Lakeshores are comprised of mosaics of public and private lands (Foresta 1984). Pinelands National Reserve includes no federal land; leaves existing patterns of ownership intact; is managed by an intergovernmental commission with local, state, and federal participants; and includes novel techniques such as tradable development credits (Lillieholm and Romm 1992).

Table 1. Classification of National Park System Units (NPS 1995).

Classification	Number	Acreage
National Park	54	51,711,507
National Preserve	15	25,139,220
National Recreation Area	18	3,700,629
National Monument	73	2,064,445
National Seashore	10	592,628
National River	6	416,018
National Lakeshore	4	228,848
National Wild and Scenic	9	219,378
River and Riverway		
National Scenic Trail	3	184,235
National Parkway	4	170,707
National Historic Park	37	161,976
National Military Park	9	38,016
National Reserve	2	33,407
National Historic Site	72	23,111
National Battlefield	11	13,098
National Battlefield Park	3	8,727
National Memorial	26	8,049
International Historic Site	1	35
National Battlefield Site	1	1
Without Designation	11	38, 945
Totals	369	84,752,981

U.S. parks have a long history of specific concessions to local interests. Stephen Mather made concessions to grazing interests to ensure passage of the National Park Service Act in 1916 (Sellars 1997). Six national parks and monuments (including Death Valley National Monument, Glacier Bay National Monument, Mount McKinley National Park, Crater Lake National Park, and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument) were established under compromises that permitted mining claims to continue to be filed within their boundaries (Runte 1997). Many parks permit use of spiritual sites and regulated traditional harvesting by Native Americans (Friesema 1989), and Canyon de Chelly National Park includes Navajo agricultural fields. Recently established parks, in particular, are noteworthy for concessions to extractive users. Great Basin National Park, established in 1987, allowed cattle grazing to continue in the park (Lowry 1994). Mojave National Preserve, established in 1994, permits off-road vehicle use, hunting, grazing, and mining, and allows people to continue to occupy private lands inside the park unit (Manning 1997). Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, established in 1996, permits grazing, hunting, and fishing to continue, and designates the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as the administrator, instead of the NPS, because of the BLM's long-standing relationships with local communities (Larmer 1996). These recently established U.S. national parks and preserves permit regulated, specific extractive uses of natural resources as concessions to local people or national interest groups.

Relationships with Local People

Although national park management and policy have emphasized parks as national resources, there are a number of ways in which local interests have been served or given voice. Historically, local residents have been granted preference in hiring for some positions. Also, the agreement and support of the Representative or Senator in whose district a park lies is important in establishing new parks and in obtaining budgetary allotments for individual parks. Congress responds to constituent complaints and can decrease appropriations to demonstrate displeasure with park management, an important local check on top-down management activities (Foresta 1984, Hartzog 1988). In addition, local people can advocate their interests through public involvement processes that are required when parks make certain kinds of management decisions. Residents can even use direct means when necessary. For example, in the 1960s, during an inspection trip related to the establishment of a tall grass prairie park in Kansas, a shotgun-toting rancher chased the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the NPS off the property, undoubtedly sending a clear message about local opinion of the proposed park (Hartzog 1988:121, Wirth 1980:299-300).

In spite of these ways in which local people can influence park policies, local representation in national park management and planning has been imperfect. When congressional support has been lacking for park establishment, Presidents have used their power to declare national monuments by decree under the Antiquities Act to set aside park lands. National monument designation has often been used as a "way station" to protect areas while awaiting more favorable congressional conditions for national park status. A number of national parks, including notables such as the Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Carlsbad Caverns, and most Alaskan parks, originally entered the system in this way (Rettie 1995, Rothman 1986, 1989). It is worth noting, however, that while the establishment of national monuments by Presidential decree may circumvent local opposition, in many cases parks

established in this way, even under local opposition, have eventually gained local support (Larmer 1997). Furthermore, in some places local support for parks is being accelerated due to shifts from natural resource-based to knowledge-based economies directly outside national parks (Rasker and Glick 1994) and changes in regional rural-urban population balances (Gottlieb 1998).

In general, national park creation in the U.S. has often engendered local opposition because it often shifts control of resources from the local or regional level to the national level. For example, Sequoia and General Grant national parks had been largely created in response to regional demand for resource protection, but the creation of the National Park Service made the management of the reserves less responsive to local needs as it came under the jurisdiction of a professional bureaucracy (Dilsaver and Tweed 1990). In New York, a proposal to convert a state park to the Adirondack Mountains National Park met with near universal opposition (Liroff and Davis 1981). Proponents of wilderness protection felt that the state's "forever wild clause afforded more stringent protection than national park status; hunters feared that the hunting that was permitted on all state lands would be prohibited in a national park; and small and large landowners, timber companies, and local governments all feared the loss of local control (Liroff and Davis 1981).

Relationships with Native Americans

There are several recent historical reviews that clearly show the negative impact that the national parks have had on Native Americans (Burnham 2000, Keller and Turek 1998, Spence 1999). At best, perhaps, it could be argued that this relationship has reflected the broader treatment of Native American in the United States. Many, if not all, national parks in the U.S. are comprised of lands that had been used or occupied by Native Americans, and early national park establishment was concurrent with the conquest of the West and efforts to force Native Americans onto reservations in the late 1800s (Morehouse 1996). Native Americans were actively excluded from Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Canyon National Parks after park establishment (Spence 1996a). They were granted the "moral right" to remain in Yosemite by the superintendent in 1892, although their rights to hunt were eliminated and their occupancy rights were gradually eroded through local NPS administrative actions (Spence 1996b). Clearly, the U.S. national parks have historically played a role in the disenfranchisement of Native Americans from their traditional lands.

Yet the national parks have had a long and complex relationship with native peoples, particularly in the Southwestern United States and in Alaska, that defies simplistic conclusions. Native Americans have always been seen as appropriate elements in the national park experience, and they have generally been permitted or encouraged to display their traditions and artifacts in the parks. Although park policy has tended to treat native cultures as historical ornaments and not as vital and distinct communities (Spence 1996b), it is also true that the parks have, formally and informally, played a role in the maintenance of some tribal cultures, particularly prior to the revaluing of indigenous culture that has taken place in recent decades (Rothman 1991), and encouraged and provided outlets for traditionally-based handicrafts (Spence 1996b).

The role of Native Americans in shaping park ecosystems and landscapes has taken longer to be recognized, receiving little acknowledgment until the 1960s (Runte 1997). Since

that time, research has documented the role of Native Americans in shaping the patterns of forest cover in many parks through fire (Runte 1997). More recently, documentation of Native American plant harvesting and propagation practices has found that a number of previously abundant species used by Native Americans are now endangered, suggesting that continued harvesting and use of these species has an important role in biodiversity conservation (Anderson 1993, Anderson and Nabhan 1991, Nabhan 2000). There is some evidence and hope, though, that recent research documenting the long historical role of Native Americans in what has often been termed "wilderness" (Gomez Pompa and Kaus 1992), combined with increased public sensitivity to Native American rights, may ultimately change Americans' view of their national parks from "uninhabited wilderness" to a perspective that acknowledges longstanding and complex relationships between people and landscape (Spence 1996a).

Although the NPS is now making significant efforts to address Native American concerns in the national parks (Crespi 1987), the extent to which Native American interests will be permitted to influence management decisions is much less clear. Because the national parks serve multiple constituencies, it has always been difficult to negotiate tensions between other interest groups and native peoples' uses. In Alaska, inclusion of subsistence use rights in the national monuments that were established in the 1970s generated debate about the use of new technologies to exploit what were previously subsistence resources, a debate that has been in part fostered by sport hunters who saw indigenous groups as competing with them for the same limited resources (Poole 1989, Runte 1997). Recent NPS efforts to restrict general public use of Native American sacred sites in parks in the western U.S. have met with opposition from other recreational users, who see these restrictions as denying public access to serve a narrow religious constituency (Smith and Manning 1997).

Conservation Status

The discussion above has shown how the processes that have shaped the U.S. national parks have produced an institution that occupies a secure place in the public imagination, has constituencies of direct and indirect users, and whose units serve as keystones for many regional economies. But it is important to ask, too, what has been the conservation legacy of this process?

The tendency to exclude from parks certain lands that were important for extractive natural resource industries has led to parks that do not include the complete habitats of the species that are found in them. A notable example was the exclusion of key winter wildlife ranges in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park (Runte 1997). Although partly remedied by later park additions, the initial decision not to draw the boundaries these parks in accordance with ecological processes, largely due to political factors, continues to have repercussions (Runte 1997). In another example, the differences between watershed and park boundaries in Redwood National Park, combined with logging that extended to park boundaries, resulted in floods and mudslides that threatened protected trees (Runte 1997). Many parks are too small (Newmark 1995), or do not include all seasonal habitats, for resident species (Runte 1997), although a number of parks have *de facto* buffer zones consisting of federal and other protected areas. The NPS historically has been reluctant to take the political risk of getting involved in land use planning efforts outside the parks even

when park resources are directly threatened (Foresta 1984, Shafer 1999). Confronting transboundary issues requires sharing authority and becoming entangled in complicated, multi-jurisdictional planning and management structures, which can dilute NPS power or create public hostility. However, recently the NPS has begun to confront major external threats around a number of parks, including the Everglades, Yellowstone, Saguaro, and Grand Canyon under the rubric of ecosystem management (Halvorson and Davis 1996, Lowry 1994).

Many argue that the national parks have been considerably less successful at conserving a representative sample of the country's ecological regions than they have at conserving outstanding scenery. Everglades National Park, approved by Congress in 1934, was the first park established primarily to conserve biological resources, although its establishment was opposed by prominent conservationists and parks supporters who felt that it lacked the scenic grandeur required of a national park (Runte 1997). Additions to the National Park System representing several key biogeographic regions not widely considered "scenic" were notably late in coming, for example the Great Basin National Park (established in 1986), the Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve (1996), and Mojave National Preserve (1994).

The national parks have also have faced a number of problems resulting from the NPS tradition of courting multiple constituencies. One of the most enduring of these has been the difficulty of managing the environmental impact of tourism. The national parks have a dual mandate to provide for both use and preservation, and the development of visitor facilities within the park, including the massive Mission 66 program, have often been accused of degrading park resources (Sellars 1997). The early promotion of automobile use in the parks has led to traffic jams and overcrowding in major parks, such as Yosemite and Grand Canyon, that are only beginning to be addressed today (Frome 1992; Runte 1997). Managing conflict between use and preservation, and between different types of uses, has been a perennial theme in park management over the past forty years, resurfacing time and again around new issues, such as the location of visitor facilities, airplane and helicopter sightseeing tours, motorized water travel, and wilderness designation.

The importance of parks for watershed protection, which helped generate support for the establishment of several early parks, also has a mixed legacy. For example, although Yosemite National Park was intentionally reconfigured to protect the Tuolomne River watershed, San Francisco later successfully lobbied Congress dam the Tuolomne within the park as a water source for the city. The resulting Hetch Hetchy reservoir is arguably the greatest intrusion that has occurred into a U.S. national park (Runte 1997).

In spite of these many compromises and shortcomings, the U.S. national parks have played a leading role in nature protection in the U.S. Sellars (1997:27) notes that, in spite of ecological manipulations and intrusions during the early years of the national parks, the park idea "embraced the concept of nurturing and protecting nature--a remarkable reversal from the treatment of natural resources typical of the times." Scientific research and ecological perspective have become important factors in national park management in the late-twentieth-century (Sellars 1997). Furthermore, the NPS has long sought to convey to the public an appreciation of nature (Sellars 1997), and has for several decades explicitly tried to protect representative examples of the nation's biomes and physiographic regions (Foresta 1984).

Changing Management Approaches

National parks and their management in the U.S. have changed markedly over time. While parks have continued to focus on preservation of spectacular scenery, preserving and maintaining representative ecosystems has become an important objective in park designation and management (Runte 1997, Wagner et al. 1995). Park management has been changing from actively exterminating predators such as mountain lions and wolves in the early part of this century (Runte 1997:111) to an increasingly ecological approach to resource management that has included reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone (Davis and Halvorson 1996) and designation of new parks in biogeographic zones previously unrepresented in the park system. The U.S. Army's turn of the century practice of ejecting trespassing sheepherders from Yosemite (with their herds being ejected from the opposite side of the park)(Runte 1990), is in marked contrast to the recent grandfathering in of grazing rights during the establishment of new parks such as Great Basin National Park (Lowry 1994). Yet it is important to note that many of the Yosemite sheepherders were Basque or Native American (Snyder et al. 1988, 1989), which may account for their receiving less favorable treatment than white sheepherders or the more politically connected Western stockmen. After a history of excluding Native Americans from park sites (Spence 1996a), the NPS now seeks active involvement of Native Americans in park planning and policies (Crespi 1987). Tourism opportunities have changed from an early focus on elite tourism (Runte 1997) to a more egalitarian approach that provides a wide range of recreational opportunities. Changes in park management policies have their origins in, among other things, changes in social values, changes in the political climate (including the participation of interest groups ranging from environmental groups lobbying for more ecological management to recreational groups supporting greater access), and changes in scientific knowledge. The NPS itself has played a complex role, at times reflecting public and scientific opinion and at times leading it, in a process that has been marked by public disputes and disagreements (Foresta 1984).

CONSERVATION SYNCRETISM

Although the debate between strictly protected areas and sustainable use is important in defining conservation philosophy, it has limited grounding in actual conservation practice. The above analysis suggests that the national parks in the U.S. have often been inaccurately portrayed in the recent literature on international protected areas, and that the "Yellowstone model" is basically a straw argument with little grounding in conservation practice. Rather than being rigid and exclusionary, U.S. national parks are most notable for the extent to and ways in which they have adapted to their social, political, economic, and cultural context. It may be true that an idealized representation of the U.S. national parks, consistent with what the above authors have called the "Yellowstone model," has often been promoted in the U.S. and elsewhere with little attention to the actual history U.S. national parks. It may also be true that this idealized U.S. model has at times harmed local people in lesser developed countries while at the same time resulting in weak and ineffective national parks. However, I argue that the U.S. national park experience is broad in scope, and mischaracterizing it as the protectionist "Yellowstone model" fosters a tendency to dismiss the U.S. experience as

irrelevant to international conservation when, in fact, there are many lessons that could be learned from it. The U.S. national park experience provides a long term, real world example of an evolving and often turbulent process of creating parks that aspire to be both socially relevant and ecologically sound, a process that lies in the middle ground between strict protected areas and sustainable use. Most important for the purposes of this paper, the U.S. national parks have evolved into unique social and conservation entities based on the struggle between evolving conservation interests, political realities, and local people in a processes characteristic of syncretism.

Syncretism is the fusing of two or more different forms of belief or practice. It is often applied to specific domains such as ritual, religion, language, or medicine, but is sometimes thought of as applying to culture in general (Ortiz 1989, Shaw and Stewart 1994). A classic example of this is the many ways that Catholicism became synthesized with indigenous American religious practices, particularly in Central America and the Andes, to create locally unique practices and ideology (Gossen and León-Portilla 1993, Schmelz and Crumine 1996). Although syncretism has been an enduring concept in cultural and religious studies, its meaning and usefulness has been debated (Shaw and Stewart 1995). Syncretism has at times been criticized for implying that the prior cultural patterns that are synthesized are somehow pure or authentic (Gossen and León-Portilla 1993), rather than always evolving, although others have maintained the relevance of the concept of syncretism need not assume prior cultural purity (Shaw and Stewart 1995). Another criticism is that the concept of syncretism implies a smooth process of mixing between two cultures. But syncretism, viewed close-up over short time periods, can include the more tumultuous processes of counter-appropriation, delimitation, and contestation (see Pfeffer et al. 1999) and still represent a broader process of cultural synthesis. Others have criticized syncretism as process of cultural hegemony in which local cultures are forced to adapt to stronger external forces, but it can also be thought of as the coming together of top-down and bottom-up agency between external and local poles of power (Shaw and Stewart 1995). Most importantly, the definition and debates about syncretism all fit closely to the parks and conservation literature. National parks and conservation often develop in a process of interaction between local people and external conservation interests. In this process, external groups adapt their ideology and practices to be understandable and palatable to different social groups, and these social groups, local people among them, reconcile their previous ideologies and practices with a new dominant paradigm, producing new and unique patterns of ideology and practice. *Conservation syncretism is then the process by which international and national conservation ideology and practice (reflecting both environmental and economic interests) is synthesized with local conservation and livelihood ideology and practice to produce unique types of parks, reserves, and other conservation strategies in different places.*

SYNCRETISM IN AND LESSONS FROM U.S. NATIONAL PARK HISTORY

U.S. national park history is one of change and synthesis on several levels. On the national level, there has been an evolving national park ideology that blends a landscape preservation approach, including both romantic and scientific conservation interests, with the role of parks as keystones in rural tourism economies, for watershed protection, and for other

utilitarian purposes. At the same time, national conservation interests have interacted with local interests, traditional and otherwise, to create numerous exceptions to the "Yellowstone" model of national parks. The implications of this process are many. From a park management perspective, it has produced is a national park system with many different types of units, a great deal of "local" diversity of national park management and policy, and a park management agency that seeks to find accommodation between diverse national and local interest groups. At the level of conservation ideology, it has produced several diverse and evolving strains of national park values that include biodiversity conservation, recreational use, and tourism.

Considering the many was that park ideology and practice has been synthesized with other national and local ideologies and practices, the protectionist "Yellowstone model" seems to be a rather poor choice to represent of the legacy of the U.S. national parks to the world. In the remainder of this paper I will identify some alternative "lessons" that can be learned from the U.S. national park experience. One of the principal lesson to be learned is of the importance of national parks becoming valued by people, both locally and nationally. In the U.S., this has been a long term, pragmatic venture characterized by conflict and negotiation among interest groups. The U.S. national parks show little evidence of protectionism imposed from the top down by the government or by a narrow constituency group favoring biodiversity conservation. Rather, they represent a combination of high ideals and pragmatism that has used the multiple values that park establishment can produce, including tourism and watershed protection, and made concessions to local and political interests, to achieve incremental conservation gains while at the same time laying the groundwork for an incipient national appreciation of nature.

It is notable that much of the pressure for nature conservation in the U.S. parks has come from constituency groups representing wilderness and ecosystem preservation, rather than from within the NPS itself, and that the NPS has historically had weak ties with these groups (Sellars 1997). Yet while environmental groups have clearly influenced park policy over time, the political and administrative processes within which park establishment, management, and policy formulation have taken place have at the same time facilitated the protection of at least some of the interests of park neighbors and traditional extractive users of park lands. Thus a second lesson to be learned from the U.S. parks is that a combination of advocacy groups, broad public input, and professional and scientific park management all can work "together," even when not linked by formal structures of collaborative management, to shape a strong conservation system that may very well produce greater long term conservation gains than efforts only by a single one of these groups.

In the U.S., this process has not been without its shortcomings. The U.S. national parks, as a social institution, have reflected social and ecological biases in wider American society, including mistreatment of Native Americans, a bias towards serving white middle class American visitors, lack of attention to ecological management, misguided efforts to control predators, and uneven attention to local interests. But as society has changed, so too has park management. Native American rights and claims are treated with increasing respect in park management, recently established parks have made many provisions for local interests, and the ecological sciences are increasingly influential in park management. Furthermore, many of the conservation shortcomings in the park system or individual parks are made up for by lands managed by other federal agencies (e.g. the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management), state and local governments, and in private

nature reserves (e.g., those operated by The Nature Conservancy and other land trusts). Thus a third lesson is that socially valued conservation takes time, can change along with our conservation objectives, and may be best achieved at the national level by a number of different public agencies and private organizations.

The U.S. national park experience suggests that conservation cannot be achieved only by using protectionist measures, such as establishing and policing large reserves. Parks and park systems cannot survive in the long run, at least in democratic societies, without public support. Many exceptions to the idealized national park have been allowed to accommodate people's interests--at times for moral or ecological reasons, and at times because it was politically necessary. But the U.S. experience also shows that pressures for development and use of park resources by local people, tourism operators, and extractive users is often relentless. There is no easy, perfectly harmonious balance to be achieved between protecting park ecosystems and meeting the needs of people, but both can be pursued concurrently. Similarly, the U.S. experience shows that there are often many stakeholder groups with interests in a park, groups as diverse as suburban environmentalists, summer vacationers, indigenous people, the local chamber of commerce, local ranchers, the rural poor, downstream cities, and extractive industries such as mining. It has rarely been possible to satisfy all interest groups, and political expediency has at times supplanted fairness, justice, or ecological values. Yet, in spite of the fact that wider social and cultural biases often carry over to park management, the U.S. parks are not simply a reflection of wider societal trends. Public values change over time, and the national parks have played a crucial role in shaping Americans' views of nature and they will likely shape it in new ways and directions in the future.

The U.S. park experience suggests that, although compromises are inevitable in efforts to balance people's needs and ecosystem conservation and to build support for national parks, win-win solutions can also be found. In some cases, continuing traditional extractive uses may be crucial to protecting biological diversity. Parks managed as islands free of people, based on romantic notions of wilderness that ignore historical human-environment relationships, may develop ecological problems of a different type or suffer backlash from excluded people. Yet policy and management guidelines cannot be based on any general rules or easy formulas; they must be set on a case-by-case basis with both scientific and public input. Thus a fourth lesson is that there is no easy answer to fundamental conflicts between conservation and human needs, that these must be worked out in the combined crucibles of (1) negotiation and conflict and (2) adaptive management (Lee 1993).

The U.S. parks should not be a model for the rest of the world; they reflect a unique national history and culture and a level of affluence vastly different than that of lesser developed countries. The concept of conservation syncretism helps to illustrate the way in which a changing national conservation agenda interacts with changing the livelihoods and values of local people to produce many unique manifestations of the general national park or protected area concept. In spite of the historical and current social and ecological shortcomings of U.S. national parks, they do provide a wealth of real world experience and different approaches in the *process* of balancing people's needs and desires with nature protection. The debate between strict protection and sustainable use ignores the fact that, in practice, parks and protected areas must be managed in such a way that generates social support *and* conserve ecosystems, and that this is a complex and interactive process made up of short term partial success, mis-steps, and corrections in the effort to satisfy multiple

constituencies, achieve real results, and still move towards the more idealistic goals of both national and local constituencies. Although the balance between protection and use in conservation efforts in lesser developed countries may differ from that of the U.S. parks, integrated conservation and development projects, sustainable use, community conservation, and indigenous and traditional conservation will face many of the same balancing acts that have been faced by the U.S. national parks. A more explicit recognition of the syncretic processes by which conservation ideology and practice develop may ultimately be more helpful in forging future conservation efforts than the more static notions of indigenous conservation and protectionsism that have been prominent in the recent international conservation literature.

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