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The Continental Divide Trail and the Changing Face of Recreation on America's Public
Lands

by

Alan Roe

B.A. Davidson College, 2000

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

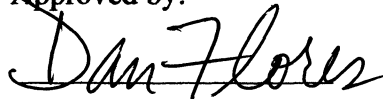
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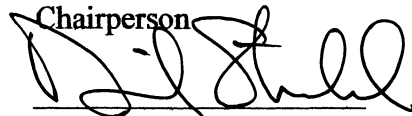
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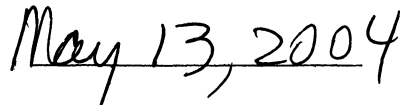
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The Continental Divide Trail and the Changing Face of Recreation on America's Public Lands

Director: Dan Flores

07

The Continental Divide Trail (CDT) stretches 3,100 miles across 25 national forests, 3 national parks, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, and a few hundred miles of privately owned acreage. Influenced by disparate grassroots attempts to promote a continuous trail through the Rocky Mountains, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) first proposed the CDT in 1966 as one of four National Scenic Trails, which would comprise part of a national trails system. Until recently, the CDT has remained virtually unchanged from its nascent years. America's other two long distance mountain trails, the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails, never faced such difficulty in going from conceptualizations to physical realities.

I became interested in the CDT during my through-hike of the Appalachian Trail in 2001. Upon moving to Missoula, I began researching the CDT and quickly realized that hardly anyone knew anything about its history. Thus, I decided to combine writing the first history of it with a hike along the Montana/Idaho portion of it.

This thesis is the product of intensive primary and secondary research on the trail as well as my five week hike during the summer of 2003. In attempting to put this trail in as broad a perspective as possible, I have reached back to the turn of the twentieth century, when outdoor recreation boomed, and traced the CDT its present development. My conclusions are as follows. Recreation trails and hiking filled part of the void left by the perceived close of the frontier and became, hence, imbued with frontier values that most Americans considered antithetical to mainstream consumerism and a strong federal government. Ironically, the federal government concerned itself with outdoor recreation as an opportunity to retain places where Americans could escape civilization and briefly experience the environment that Frederick Jackson Turner argued formed the "American character." The National Trails System Act and with it the proposed Continental Divide Trail came out of an era when faith in large federal programs, including recreation programs, reached its apex. Diminished faith in the federal largesse, especially in the 1980s, compromised trails in general and the CDT specifically. In turn, corporate funding has reinvigorated the push to develop the CDT, making once unlikely bedfellows of a wilderness trail and corporate influence/consumer culture that turn of the century advocates of the "wilderness tramp" and trail building would never have envisioned or hoped for.

Acknowledgements

The rich relationships and interactions that I have had with others in conducting my research and finding inspiration for this work belie the stereotype of the cloistered academic working exclusively in the world of ideas. I must first thank a high school teacher, Jim Womack, who told me at sixteen that I should hike the entire Appalachian Trail (AT) when I was young if I wanted really wanted to do it. On this hike, I met many people who reminded me that a world of individualized aspirations, dreams, and goals exists outside of the 9-5 world, where success is largely defined by professional distinction, public accolades, and the bottom line. Each and every one of them has contributed to my unyielding desire to continue experiencing wild places, and hence my interest in the Continental Divide Trail (CDT).

Bruce and Paula Ward, the directors of the Continental Divide Trail Alliance, have expressed enthusiasm for my project ever since I first contacted them. They invited me to Pine, Colorado and without hesitation provided me with an overwhelming amount of information—past news clippings, meeting minutes, correspondence, and much more. They have an obvious passion for what the CDT and I am grateful to them for showing it to me.

Jim Wolf, the trail's staunchest proponent for many years, reassured me that this project was, in fact, worthwhile—a consummate dilemma for a historian venturing into previously untrammled terrain. He invited me to Baltimore, provided me with important documents, and offered his perspective about the trail's past and future. This project would not have been possible without his support.

Merrill Hastings, the former chairman of the CDTA Board of Directors, talked to me at length about his experience with the organization and provided general insights about outdoor recreation and trails. Bob Turner and Andy Weissner also discussed with me at length their experiences serving on the CDTA Board of Directors. All three of their views proved important to gaining a broader perspective on the trail's recent history.

Most of all, I would like to thank the members of my committee—Judy Blunt, Jeff Wiltse, Dan Flores—and my proofreader, Katherine Hyzy. Judy has done more than any other teacher of mine in helping me develop a narrative style that attempts to augment the historical analysis with my personal reflections. As a junior member of the history department, Jeff has provided me with much insight regarding the process of researching, writing, and polishing a work into a defensible form. This work simply would not have been possible without the guidance of Dan Flores. During my two years at the University of Montana, Dan has piqued my interest in areas that are reflected in this work. At every step of the way, he has pushed me to enrich, expand, and hone my research, arguments, and presentation of this subject. Finally, Katherine carefully proofread all of my work well before it reached the hands of my committee members. Her efforts saved me an immeasurable amount of time, not to mention face.

I also cannot imagine what this work would look like if I did not have such a wonderful set of peers in the history graduate program at the University of Montana. Throughout my time here, they have helped me work through ideas, not only with respect to this work but in everything that I have studied. They provided the intellectual

challenge that I required for my ideas to remain grounded and relevant and the social support that I often needed as the past two years have been fraught with challenge and loss in my personal life.

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-Introduction: Between Two Trails, Between Two Worlds-

Primeval America is well within memory of men now living, and in spots it still hangs on. --Benton

MacKaye, *The New Exploration*

On June 22, 2003, I began a five-week hike on the Continental Divide Trail in Montana, just south of the Scapegoat Wilderness in Helena National Forest. As I made my way up a series of switchbacks, the tensions of the previous five months receded into distant memory. On the trail, no one would awkwardly ask how I was doing, knowing full well that no one's doing "just fine" or "great" after their mother has recently passed away. The enveloping silence on the trail would force me to face my fears, memories, and challenges without the prevarication sometimes necessary for fluid social discourse. I knew that hiking for five weeks, observing, as William Blake once stated, "portions of eternity too great for the eye of man," would remind me that the mystery and immensity of creation made this a world worth living in.

By seeking solace in the wilds through hiking, I am hardly alone. The steady growth in hiking's popularity over the past century has made it one of America's most popular recreation pursuits today. Over the past thirty years, more and more Americans have embraced backpacking as a means of brief or extended escape from the mundane routines, equivocation, stringent social hierarchies, and sterile urban environments associated with "civilized life." More than any other single trail, the Appalachian Trail evokes images of bedraggled sojourners seeking extended adventure, challenge, and escape. Other trails also attract backpackers for similar reasons, chief among them the Pacific Crest (PCT) and the Continental Divide (CDT) Trails.

My fascination with such trails stems from fantasies about escaping societal constraints that I can trace from my earliest reflections. I cannot, however, know the

origins of this impulse with any certainty. It could come from being the youngest of three children. With four sets of eyes watching my every step, I often felt the weight of experience, expectation, and authority, leaving me uncertain of how I could forge a distinctive path. It could stem from feelings of inadequacy for much of my grade school years. Checkmarks in the “satisfactory” column for most of my academic work and “needs improvement” marks for my behavior on report cards convinced me that most authority figures were intolerable tyrants. But perhaps remnants of some evolutionary impulse also urged me to find something more primordial. Perhaps such an impulse pushed me to look for something that bore some semblance to humanity’s ancestral environments, something unlike a thirty-by-thirty room with desks lined up in rows, the students sitting like passive receptacles before an arbitrarily-imposed, omnipotent authority.

For the first sixteen years of my life, I could not articulate this desire into a specific plan or vision for my future. But the drive was unmistakable. Between the age of eight and twelve, my brother and I built ramshackle forts in the backyard, comprised of scrap plywood, wrought iron, and insulation from nearby construction sites. We lined the walls these forts with squirrel skins compliments of kills with our B.B. guns, and gazed at them with boyish pride. At age eleven, I clung to every word in *My Side of the Mountain*, a popular children’s book about an adolescent boy who decides to live off the land in the Ozarks for a summer without any support from family or friends. Yet I lamented the fact that our backyard, pioneer venture paled in comparison and that the four-acre neighborhood woods provided a measly frontier for such an experiment. At age fourteen, I read Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and mourned the fact that modern

technology and navigational instrumentation made a similar shipwreck scenario much less likely.

Finally, at age fifteen, I found a brief but genuine escape from the oppressive and constraining societal demands on a teen-age boy in a two-day backpacking trip along the Cumberland Plateau of Middle Tennessee. The leader of this trip piqued my imagination by mentioning the Appalachian Trail and the people who hike it in one expedition—through hikers. Although I had only been backpacking for one day, the moment he told me about it, I knew that I would hike the entire Appalachian Trail upon my first opportunity.

School became progressively less oppressive as I moved through the ranks, high school and then college. Weekend backpacking expeditions and kayaking trips became a regular respite from the mundane. Yet throughout these years, I always questioned what end I sought to achieve. College seemed no more than a means to a higher status in society. But I questioned the relevance of and justice in the ranking system. Why should I make my goals according to its dictates? If it was completely indifferent to me, why should I care for it? Did my parents, elders, and educational institutions desire I take the fast track to bourgeois respectability or that I follow the dictates of my heart? I wanted a unique experience that could not be quantified by a salary, measured by a degree, or judged by standards I did not hold as my own. This inescapable desire led me back to that recurring dream of hiking the Appalachian Trail. On March 4, 2001, I set off from Springer Mountain (the southern terminus of the AT) in Georgia, hoping to reach Maine in five or six months.

The cynic could deride such thoughts as immature reflections and this decision as an escapist journey to delay the inevitable: going into the “real world.” Yet there is something unmistakably human in such a desire and it can be understood within an evolutionary and historical context. Whether it was Alexander the Great, Marco Polo, Ferdinand Magellan, or Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, humans seem to have an unquenchable urge to venture out into the unknown for less mediated, more elemental experiences than civilization could possibly allow. Few educated people could contend that our biological makeup evolves as quickly as the cultures that we live in. The historical era marks but a mere fraction of human existence and an infinitesimal portion of the time that our primate ancestors spent on this earth. For most of human history, organic matter, rather than the amalgamations of processed material and synthetics found in cityscapes, abounded in plain view. Why wouldn’t the instincts of many intrepid adventures tell them to explore more primeval environs, all the while pushing the limits of past boundaries as humans are apt to do in many ways? It is not accidental that the first large-scale movement that celebrated nature and getting back to it—the Romantic Movement—occurred as European society underwent the dramatic transformations of urbanization and industrialization.

Historians prefer to analyze the emergence of this late eighteenth and early nineteenth century movement in a social, political, and cultural context rather than in an evolutionary one. But I would argue that, at an elemental level, the Romantics, who bemoaned the impositions and injustices perpetuated by industrialism and urbanization, elevated nature because of the rapidly growing disconnect between industrial civilization

during this era and the climates humans had evolved in for millions of years. This disconnect continues at a seemingly increased speed today. Not surprisingly, all types of recreation, including hiking and backpacking, have achieved unprecedented popularity.

If the Romantics elevated nature to new heights in the Western consciousness, America's pioneer tradition provided the celebratory archetype for those men who live in nature. Historians have remarked on this tradition at length and conventional wisdom now holds that this tradition provided the early impetus for the American fascination with "wilderness" and hence the wilderness movement. Few historians have argued that the onus for such a celebratory tradition lay in a complete disconnect between industrial civilization and human nature. Moreover, few historians have studied recreational trails in either a historical or evolutionary context. My early experiences of building forts in the backyard and the feeling of pride it engendered among the neighborhood boys make me think that there is something deeply ingrained in the human psyche that causes us to want to be self-reliant, close to the elements, and celebrate those who do so successfully.

When I started the journey on the AT, I carried three field guides, confident that I would become an amateur naturalist. I quickly discovered, however, that my sensibility was of a Thoreauvian bent rather than a scientific one. The deciduous forests, eroded hills, and abundant wildlife inspired self-reflection, where I could contemplate the discontents of industrial civilization and how I would resist its most insidious influences through refusing to lose sight of my individualized goals. Accordingly, those hiking the trail—their interests, goals, history, and motivations—interested me more than learning the taxonomy of plants throughout the Appalachian chain. Though I remember what

made every person I met distinctive from others, most every hiker, including myself, sought similar things—reflection, challenge, escape, clarity—and I knew that given time and research I could understand the historical roots of these impulses.

My yearning for adventure remained strong as I approached the Trail's northern terminus—Mount Katahdin, Maine. I remained confident that the AT would be the first of many such extended journeys. Above all others, I wanted to hike the Continental Divide Trail: a 3,100 mile trek that follows the Divide from Canada border in Glacier National Park to the Mexican Border at Antelope Wells, New Mexico. Yet without unlimited finances, it would have to wait.

Less than a month after getting off the trail, my morning routine of waking up as the sun emerged over Maine's craggy peaks gave way to waking up when the alarm clock successfully jarred me out of bed. After showering and putting on a freshly-pressed shirt, I would then leave to substitute teach in the type of schoolrooms I once desperately wanted to escape. Sometimes I may have even acted like the intolerable tyrants of my childhood. Future career plans quickly took precedent over planning extended sojourns from the system in which I now lived. Less than a week into my new routine, hijacked airlines crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, making the trail seem a lifetime away.

But the trail never left me. Not a day passed in the next nine months when I did not think of it or some future excursion, like hiking the Continental Divide Trail, as a respite from an unpredictable and anxiety-ridden society. Knowing that such places existed, places that could provide humans a needed glimpse of something less fleeting than civilization's tenuous foundations, offered reassurance that, despite all their

immediacy and intensity, our problems are but a small drop in a rich pageant of geological and evolutionary history. My desire to be near such places played a large role in my choosing to attend the University of Montana to earn an M.A. in history beginning in the fall of 2002.

Upon settling in Missoula, I used every available opportunity to take both day hikes and weekend excursions in the nearby Bitterroot Mountains. These trips hardly quenched my thirst for the wildness desperately missing from my life in the previous ten months. Rather, they reminded me of the liberation I felt on the Appalachian Trail and how I wanted that feeling again. The Continental Divide Trail returned to my thoughts. Among the AT hikers I met, it held a revered but enigmatic status. It became the subject for many late-night conversations around the campfire. With white blazes marking the trail every one-hundred yards, the AT seemed almost a prefab experience compared to a largely unmarked trail with few surrounding communities, grizzly bears, fourteen thousand foot peaks, and one-thousand more miles of trail. Our imaginations wandered about both the intense feelings liberation and loneliness that would come with not seeing people for days on end. Aside from these vagaries, we simply knew that almost no one outside of the hiking community knew about the CDT, including people who lived in neighboring communities.

I scoured the university's library for books on the Trail. Not surprisingly, few had been written. Karen Berger and Dan Smith's *Where the Waters Divide* proved the most informative and well-written memoir on the Trail. This book fully conveys the personal deprivation one must accept to finish this 3,100 mile journey. Moreover, as a historian, Smith writes eloquently about the histories of early settlements along the Divide and

incorporates them neatly into Berger’s sensitive narrative. Yet this book tells the reader almost nothing of the Continental Divide Trail’s creation or history.

With further research, I quickly learned why neither Smith nor Berger included any history on the trail’s development: not even a cursory history of the CDT existed. The story of the Appalachian Trail is well-known in hiking circles and to a lesser degree among environmental historians.¹ Benton MacKaye envisioned the trail as a “barbarian utopia” and a “retreat from profit,” where humans could cultivate the “art of living” by using nature as a template for richer, more egalitarian relationships. I found similar motivation in deciding to hike the Appalachian Trail; I was tired of seeing asphalt and a world that often seemed reduced to the meaning that sloganeers of consumer products provided to it. While no extensive history of the Pacific Crest Trail exists, its origins remain undisputed. Its originator, Clinton C. Clarke, envisioned this trail as a place where men could go to exercise the hardihood that he believed made the United States a great nation. And while the trail organizations working on the CDT today—the Continental Divide Trail Society and the Continental Divide Trail Alliance—knew that it was proposed in a 1966 Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Report entitled *Trails for America* and that MacKaye mentioned the trail in some correspondence with Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, to this point, no one has traced its historical progression and contextualized it within hiking’s growing popularity throughout the twentieth century.

¹ Recently, two books have been published that give extensive attention to the Appalachian Trail. Paul Sutter’s *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Started the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002) focuses on the thoughts of four of the founding members of the Wilderness Society. Benton MacKaye, one of the founders, conceptualized and promoted the development of the Appalachian Trail. Larry Anderson has recently written a biography on MacKaye, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) which focuses largely on the history of the Appalachian Trail.

Discovering a dearth of information on the CDT's history made me as eager to learn more about it as I was anxious to hike it. Thus, two goals converged; I would write the first history of the CDT and augment the historical analysis with a first-hand perspective. I learned that the Appalachian Trail came out of the progressive era when hiking a trail development was steeped in a frontier nostalgia that was suspect of mainstream consumerism. This trail provided the inspiration for the Continental Divide Trail. From its inception, however, the CDT, unlike the AT, depended on the federal largesse, specifically the Forest Service which had a long history of not delivering on the hopes of agency leaders that it would become a top flight recreation provider. Jim Wolf, a Baltimore attorney, essentially forged the trail's identity through his intensive efforts to mark a potential route as the Forest Service provided languid leadership for the trail's development. The service's failure, which is explainable by changes in American politics and agency failures, resulted in the formation of the Continental Divide Trail Alliance, a non-profit organization that depends on corporate funding, much of which comes from the outdoor recreation industry, to oversee the Trail's development. While Benton MacKaye envisioned the AT as "a retreat from profit," the push to make the CDT a physical reality raises the question of whether private industry will colonize outdoor recreation on the public domain. Although James Morton Turner has touched on outdoor recreation's evolution from a perceived antipode to mainstream consumerism to a materialist enterprise of its own in his well-written essay "From Woodcraft to Leave no Trace," much historical work remains to be done on the implications of this trend.² To

² James Morton Turner. "From Woodcraft to 'Leave no Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth Century America." *Environmental History*, Summer 2002.

date, the impact of outdoor recreation's peculiar evolution on public lands remains largely untrammelled historical terrain.

Hiking five hundred miles in just over four weeks along the Montana portion of the Trail in the summer of 2003 made me realize why Jim Wolf, the trail's foremost supporter over the past thirty years, dubbed it the "Silent Trail." Through some of the most beautiful country in the lower 48, I saw only seven other hikers. Thoroughly revitalized, I felt ready to immerse myself in some of the routines that I desperately wanted to escape a few weeks before. As I packed up my gear one final time on July 31 before hiking out to Highway 93 where I would hitch a ride to Missoula, I could not wait to hear the sound of human voices. But the journey had provided a crucial reminder why as an American, a human being, and an individual I relish such experiences: primeval environs fascinate me for explainable cultural reasons and biological ones that remain somewhat elusive but unmistakably real. Moreover, perhaps because of some of my personal history, I, like so many others, simply need an escape on trails like the AT and CDT when the life's routine becomes stifling.

---Chapter 1---

----A Revivified Heritage: The Evolution of the American Trail----

The end of the trail is the beginning of history in the West. --Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision 1846*

Frederick Chapin was born in 1853 and spent the first ten years of his life in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, a frontier community that rode the crest of the abiding faith of the era—Manifest Destiny. Built in 1827 as a depot for future military expeditions, Fort Leavenworth formed the eastern terminus for what would become the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. Many military expeditions deployed from the Fort, including Phil Kearny’s “Army of the West,” which assisted with the annexation of California during the Mexican-American War, Brigadier General William S. Harney’s campaign against the Sioux in present-day Nebraska and South Dakota, and Colonel Edwin Vose Sumner’s campaign against hostile bands of Cheyenne raiders on the Platte and Arkansas Rivers.¹

Referred to as “the gateway to the West,” Leavenworth also served as the last depot for many wide-eyed dreamers and maladjusted ruffians migrating to this “land of opportunity.” Gold prospectors heading for California and families heading for Oregon expressed aspirations of re-creating their lives at the end of the trail, always for the better. Guides, trappers, and mule skinnners would tell them what lay ahead, suffusing the residents with intrigue for the adventures that lay toward the setting sun.

From 1855 to 1867, Leavenworth’s population grew from 270 residents to 31,120.² In turn, more expeditions departed from the Fort. By the age of 10, young

¹ Dr. John W. Partin. *A Brief History of Fort Leavenworth: 1827-1983*. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1983. p. 18.

² Frederick H. Chapin. *Mountaineering in Colorado: The Peaks about Estes Park*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987. xi. Originally published in Boston by the Appalachian Mountain Club in 1889.

Frederick, having just learned to ride a horse, would follow wagon trains for miles onto the tallgrass prairie where he would watch them gradually fade into the interminable, tanned tallgrass prairie. The excitement of the unknown beyond the horizon instilled Frederick with a spirit of adventure that he retained for the rest of his life.³

Following his mother's death in 1864, Frederick's father sent him to live with his aunt in Hartford, Connecticut. The contrast between the bawdy social life of Fort Leavenworth and Hartford's culture of affluence was stark. Despite a fondness for his Hartford upbringing, Chapin never forgot the romantic promise of those early days near the Fort. Like many New Englanders of the late nineteenth century, Chapin hiked during his leisure time to satisfy his yearning for adventure.⁴

Throughout his life, Chapin frequented the Adirondacks of New York and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. He also hiked extensively in the Swiss Alps. During the summers of 1886-1889, Chapin hiked in the Estes Park area in Colorado, which is now part of Rocky Mountain National Park. The Appalachian Mountain Club published his account of these travels, *Mountaineering in Colorado: The Peaks About Estes Park*, in 1889. Accustomed to well-cut and trodden trails in the northeast, he envisioned a marked trail along the spine of the continent:

Members of foreign alpine clubs have thoroughly explored and photographed the ice districts of Switzerland, and partially so in the Caucasus; but the noble work of the survey parties in the sierras of Colorado has not yet been supplemented to any great chain reaching from New Mexico to Alaska, that has been done by European alpine clubs in Switzerland, and is being marked out by the AMC in New England. Paths are to be made, trails to be cut, detail maps to be laid out before the grandest scenes among the mountains to the tourist.⁵

³ Chapin, 17.

⁴ Chapin, 17.

⁵ Chapin, 26.

The Forest Service built trails along the Continental Divide for administrative and fire fighting purposes throughout the early twentieth century. Glacier and Rocky Mountain National Parks would develop extensive trail systems within their boundaries along the Divide throughout the 1920s and 1930s. But the first official proposal for a continuous trail spanning the Continental Divide from the Canadian to the Mexican border came in a 1966 Department of the Interior study, *Trails for America*, eighty-years after Chapin made his proclamation. As one of four National Scenic Trails, the CDT would help expand recreation opportunities within the Forest Service, which, at that time, was poorly equipped to respond to the heightened user demand of the post-WWII era. Passed in 1968, the National Trails Act provided for a feasibility study of a trail along the Continental Divide. Ten years later, an amendment to the NTA passed the Continental Divide Trail into law, making it the third National Scenic Trail.

To be sure, few, if any, of the senators who deliberated on and passed either piece of legislation knew of Frederick Chapin, and early proponents of the trail might not have heard of him, either. Nonetheless, Chapin's statement marked the first written proposal for a trail network that would cover the Rocky Mountains. This proclamation anticipated a growing interest in the outdoors, hiking, and recreation trails around the turn of the twentieth century. The dramatic growth in hiking and backpacking's popularity throughout the twentieth century provided the impetus for the National Trails Act and in turn the Continental Divide Trail. Thus, the history of the Continental Divide Trail is in many ways the history of this trend, its development, and the underlying social factors that accounted for it. No place provides a better starting point for understanding the

increased popularity of hiking than the dramatic social and cultural changes that took place near the end of the nineteenth-century.

Responses to Societal Change: Anti-modernism, Spiritualism, and Cult of the Strenuous Life.

The Jeffersonian agrarian tradition informed America's conception of national identity throughout the nineteenth century. With abundant land, few people foresaw the development of an urban society that could compromise the individualistic American character. Yet by the 1840s, large and permanent settlements emerged beyond the Rockies and homesteaders gradually claimed marginal plots of land in the Great Plains. Railroads whose tracks spread like tentacles around once undeveloped landscapes, created a vital and unmistakable commercial link between rural and urban areas. The "Iron Horse" also pushed wagons, which once symbolized the hardships ahead on pioneer trails, into obsolescence.⁶ While the yeomen tradition celebrated local economy and self-sufficiency, a common and unmistakable continental commercial economy undermined this ideal. All of these developments combined to shatter the myth that America possessed an endless bounty of land and that culture could remain more regional than national. In turn, many intellectuals expressed alarm at what the "close of the frontier" meant for national stability.⁷ While the sentiments proved widespread

⁶ The best book on how the railroad destroyed the perception that urban and rural areas were fundamentally different and separate is William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990).

⁷ David M. Wrobel. *The Myth of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993. During the 1880s, many intellectuals lamented the fact that vacant land could no longer be a refuge for unfortunates. (7) In *Progress and Poverty*, Charles Nordhoff stated that the frontier's recession was a "serious calamity" for the United States. (10) Throughout the 1880s *The Nation* and *North American Review* argued that annexing Canada could provide the solution to the "closing frontier."

throughout the 1870s and 1880s, Frederick Jackson Turner, responding to 1890 census data, proclaimed that the frontier was officially closed at the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" provided the clearest articulation of this fear.

Many historians have made careers by attacking the merits of Turner's theory. He argued that unmediated encounters with the wilderness—"untamed" nature—forced Americans to cast off the yoke of tradition and re-create themselves as uniquely hardy, industrious, democratic, and pragmatic people. Regardless of the merits and flaws (and it definitely has many of both) of his theory, it became the prevailing conception of national development for decades. If an abundance of untamed land provided the foundation for national culture and character, the question followed, what did a dearth of it mean for America's future? As municipal infrastructure failed to keep pace with the demands of the skyrocketing populations of the cities, suspicion toward them, which had its roots in this agrarian tradition, grew.⁸

These social, demographic, and intellectual changes combined to fuel a cultural anxiety that pervaded the era. Among many individuals, this anxiety resulted in what William James, one of the era's most renowned philosophers, referred to as "bottled lightning" temperaments.⁹ According to James, the common jerkiness, breathlessness, intensity, and agony of expression among Americans demonstrated a nationwide social pathology. Many historians have thoroughly and successfully displayed that this anxiety

⁸ A number of books regarding the deplorable conditions in urban areas came out around the turn of the century. See Jacob Riis. *How the Other Half Live* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890).

⁹ William James. "The Gospel of Relaxation." From *Writings, 1878-1899* (New York: Library of America, 1992).

elicited a variety of specific intellectual and cultural responses. The anti-modern impulse proved one the most pervasive of these reactions.

During this era, craftwork became popular, intellectual circles celebrated martial ideal and past civilizations that heeded to it, and many religious doubters attempted to revive mystical traditions.¹⁰ Henry Adams, who embraced medieval mysticism, became the archetypal disaffected American of the age. Adams firmly believed that America should lift individuals to new moral and spiritual heights but could not conceptualize how this would happen in an urbanized, industrialized, consumerist, and conformist society.¹¹

Many middle-class men nostalgically embraced romantic notions of America's frontier heritage as a source of pride during this anxiety-ridden era. Members of this class, most notably Theodore Roosevelt, exhorted American citizens to find, engage in, and promote strenuous endeavors to ensure that the traits that Turner ascribed to Americans would persist into the new century. In his famous "strenuous life" speech before the Hamilton Club of Chicago on April 10, 1899, Roosevelt stated, "I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife."¹² Organized sports, which Roosevelt actively supported, served, in part, to provide the intense experiences of moral and physical hardship that were seemingly lost in a consumerist and urbanized society.¹³ Like many other middle-upper class men of the era, Roosevelt was also an avid supporter of outdoor recreation as a means of preserving the nation's masculine frontier virtues.

¹⁰ T.J. Jackson Lears. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture: 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 36.

¹¹ Morton and Lucia White. *The Intellectual versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 59-72. Lears, 133-136.

¹² Theodore Roosevelt. *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Century Co., 1911), 1.

¹³ Dulles, 198-199.

An emphasis on therapeutic approaches to life provided another response.¹⁴

During the 1880s, early proponents of the “therapeutic world-view” emphasized remedies for nervousness. As this outlook spread and evolved, it emphasized mental and spiritual hygiene through rest-cures. The movement fragmented into many like schools, most of which emphasized individual re-creation (they spelled it as such) by liberating oneself from many traditional social constraints and attuning life to one’s personal desires.¹⁵ Through these means, practitioners purported to achieve psychic harmony, uniting with “everlasting currents,” and “letting go.”¹⁶ In short, the philosophy touted achieving individual spiritual fulfillment through sacrificing self-absorption to a vaguely-defined universal or cosmic unity, similar to what the transcendentalists emphasized during the mid-nineteenth century.

James Morton Turner recently contended in his eloquent and well-argued article “From Woodcraft to ‘Leave No Trace’: Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America” that pioneer nostalgia, which the Woodcraft Movement best exemplified, held nearly exclusive sway over the early outdoor recreation movement.¹⁷ Because the Woodcraft Movement became so prevalent and is well documented, this conclusion is both alluring and understandable. Yet it is only part of the story. Early twentieth century champions of outdoor recreation, including hiking and backpacking, sought solitude, sensory refinement, an emphasis on strenuous endeavor, or some combination of the three in ascribing values to the outdoors

¹⁴ Lears, 72-76.

¹⁵ Many writers wrote recreation with the dash around the twentieth century, implying that it provided the opportunity for an individual to re-create him or herself on a spiritual level. The origin of the word: to create again. Our corollaries to this would be words such as rejuvenate and revitalize. Today, recreate is thought of as more activity centered than an emotive response to a given activity.

¹⁶ Lears, 52-57.

¹⁷ James Morton Turner. “From Woodcraft to Leave no Trace.” *Environmental History*. Summer, 2002.

and human interactions with it. The first two responses reflected part the broader emphasis on a therapeutic outlook, which, according to environmental historian Paul Sutter, “sanctioned consumption and self-realization.”¹⁸ These responses also conveyed romantic sentiments similar to the European progenitors of the movement in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Coleridge, and American transcendentalists, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Though a quintessentially American impulse, the nostalgia for pioneering venture was, in part, a transmogrification of the romantic ideal of the “Noble Savage.”¹⁹

Despite sharing a common historical origin, these two impulses ascribed decidedly different values to the natural world. The therapeutic view of nature implied that nature affected the individual on a spiritual level. The pioneering impulse emphasized a more outward focus where the individual would reshape the environs he traveled by constructing shelters, building fires, or other modifications necessary to make them suitable for overnight travel.²⁰ The Woodcraft Movement and the “cult of the strenuous life” marked the masculine obsession with maintaining virility in the face of modern cultural influences that many believed could make men effete.

Because both of these traditions shared a disdain for cities and the consumer economy, a combination of their distinctive outlooks became natural. Champions of recreation most likely never intentionally delineated these distinctive views of the natural world. Moreover, some outdoor writers who focused on hiking specifically employed

¹⁸ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 21.

¹⁹ Lewis Mumford. *The Golden Day* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.: New York, 1926).

²⁰ James Morton Turner. “From Woodcraft to ‘Leave no Trace.’”

varying degrees of rhetoric from both mindsets, while some seemed to borrow equally from both.

A biological impulse underscores both of these distinctive cultural hues and this eventual fusion. Benton MacKaye, the father of the Appalachian Trail, would have agreed. Resembling the thoughts of recent champions of the Biophilia Hypothesis²¹, MacKaye asserted:

The primeval environment is one bequeathed to us by God. All others are bequeathed by God with man's assistance. Hence enters, with man, the element of fallacy. But some environments approach more closely the primal needs than do some others: they reflect the wants of man as man (as genus Homo) rather than man as any particular race.²²

Yet this line of inquiry cannot rest on the documentation so central to traditional historical endeavors. The fact remains, however, that humans, having evolved for millions of years apart from agricultural, much less industrial, civilization, often feel a disconnect from the natural world when relegated to urban environments. It is not accidental that the Romantic Movement in Europe and the "Back to Nature" Movement in America both came during times of dramatic urbanization, industrialization, and the centralization of economy along with the emergence of a common consumer culture. Inevitably, those seeking refuge in more primitive environs and a hiatus from stringent and complex social structures reached into a cultural grab-bag to express and bolster their personal motivations of rediscovering places that more closely resembled those where most of their ancestors evolved and had called home.

John Muir, a firm believer that humans held no special place in creation, became the individual most closely associated with the American wilderness at the turn of the

²¹ Steven Kellert and E.O Wilson Ed. *The Biophilia Hypotheses* (Washington D.C: The Island Press), 1993.

²² MacKaye, Benton. *The New Exploration: A Philosophy in Regional Planning* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990, originally published in 1928), 58.

century. His writings reflected an emphasis on nature's therapeutic qualities and values.

Few statements convey his sentiments better than his oft quoted introduction to *Our*

National Park, in which he wrote:

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease.²³

For Muir, Nature was the great unifier, the “everlasting current” celebrated by the therapeutic world-view. By contrast, Muir did not embrace the tenets of the “cult of the strenuous life” and even scoffed at the idea of viewing Nature as a proving ground for one's virility.²⁴

Few events in the early twentieth century displayed Americans' fascination with unmediated encounters with nature, what Roderick Nash referred to the “wilderness cult,” more than the Joseph Knowles's supposed test of living like “primitive man.”²⁵

On August 4, 1911, Knowles, a part-time illustrator who had grown disenchanted with “too much artificial life in the cities,” entered the woods of Maine naked, claiming that he would live off the land for two months.²⁶ Upon Knowles's return to civilization on October 4, northeastern newspapers heralded his purported feat and the new hero became a darling of the northeastern lecture circuit. For over two months, Knowles captivated audiences with his fantastical accounts of killing a bear with a club, strangling a deer, and

²³ John Muir. *Our National Parks* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 1. Originally published by Houghton Mifflin Company in 1901.

²⁴ Albert W. Palmer. *The Mountain Trail and Its Message* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1911), 26. Muir once expressed contempt at people who attempted to cover as many miles as possible on backpacking trips. He referred to these people as “hikers,” which, at the time, he used as a derogatory expression.

²⁵ Roderick Nash. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 241-260.

²⁶ Joseph Knowles. *Alone in the Wilderness* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company Publishers, 1913), 4.

many more unlikely heroics. After the public learned that Knowles lived in a well-provisioned cabin for those two months, his brief stint with celebrity came to an abrupt end.

The initial uncritical general acceptance of Knowles's story exemplified not simply an interest but a burgeoning obsession with primitive living and the belief that it provided the authenticity modern humans desperately lacked. People wanted to believe that Knowles tapped this "everlasting current" at its core while living with the virility of past generations. This impulse explains why more Americans than ever before returned to nature for recreation during the early twentieth century. Canoeing, fishing, and hunting all became popular. So did camping, hiking, and backpacking.

Before the twentieth century, walking for pleasure was nearly exclusive to the Northeast. By the turn of the century, enthusiasm for "tramping" (as hiking was called)—both daily excursions and extended sojourns—continued in New England and spread nationwide. While northeastern mountain clubs remained the most active proponents of the "tramp" and increased their emphasis on its more strenuous aspects, hiking clubs formed all over the country. A burgeoning literature about backcountry excursions, which focused mainly on the West with its new national forests and expanding number of national parks, also emerged during this era. Concomitant with both these developments, Americans zealously planned, built and promoted trail development during the early twentieth century.

Few individuals have been more recognized for walking feats than Bob Marshall. Throughout the late 1910s and early 1920s, Marshall engaged in a variety of friendly hiking/"tramping" competitions with his brother George and an older friend, Herbert

Clark.²⁷ Oftentimes, they would see who could climb the most 4,000 foot peaks in the Adirondacks in a single day. This sport, known as “peakbagging,” spread among hikers of the Adirondacks and the White Mountains during the 1920s. The Marshall brothers and Clark eventually became the first men to climb all of the forty-six 4,000 foot peaks in the Adirondacks. This accomplishment also started a pervasive trend, demonstrated most thoroughly by the establishment of a club, the 46ers of Troy, dedicated to climbing all of these peaks.²⁸ Similar groups dedicated to climbing the peaks of the White Mountains formed. And throughout New England hiking circles, many individuals celebrated the “big day” of lots of miles, another trend credited to Bob Marshall. From 1925-1928, Marshall continued his long walks in the Northern Rockies.²⁹ As of 1937, he had recorded 200 days where he hiked over 30 miles, 51 days of over 40 and also claimed to have hiked 70 miles in a single day!³⁰

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Marshall used words like “virility” to describe wilderness recreation. Moreover, in his article “The Problem with Wilderness,” he referred to William James’s essay, “The Moral Equivalent to War,” to argue that wilderness could provide an outlet for man’s natural spirit of adventure.³¹ This valuation of physical rigor undoubtedly motivated Marshall’s zest for hiking. But he also loved how primitive travel heightened the aesthetic experience of nature. In a 1928 article, “Wilderness as a Minority Right,” he stated:

²⁷ Linda and Guy Waterman. *Forest and Crag*: 513.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 515-516.

²⁹ James M. Glover. *A Wilderness Original: The Life of Bob Marshall* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1985), 86-89.

³⁰ *Ibid*,

³¹ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 216; also see Bob Marshall. “The Problem with Wilderness.”

A small share of the American people have an overpowering longing to retire periodically from the encompassing clutch of a mechanistic civilization. To them the enjoyment of solitude, complete independence, and the beauty of undefiled panoramas is absolutely essential to happiness. In the wilderness they enjoy the most worthwhile or perhaps the only worthwhile part of life.³²

Throughout his life's work in promoting recreation with the Forest Service, Marshall continually returned to these common themes. While few people hiked as long or as enthusiastically as Marshall, the emergence of hiking clubs throughout the country revealed the growing interest in hiking in fin de siècle America.

Until the late nineteenth century, hiking clubs existed almost exclusively in New England. Established in 1875, the Rocky Mountain Club became the first such club in the American West. Members included Frederick Vandiveer Hayden, Albert Bierstadt, Cyrus Field and James Byard Taylor. Its stated mission emphasized recreating in the mountains as an antidote to a society obsessed with money.³³ Although the group dissolved, the Colorado Mountain Club succeeded it in 1912.

By the turn of the century, collegiate outing clubs abounded throughout the country. In 1892, John Muir established the Sierra Club, which would begin taking yearly outings in 1901. In recounting these outings—an idea that the club borrowed from the Mazamas hiking club of Portland, Oregon—most club members emphasized both hardihood, camaraderie, and aesthetic experience.³⁴ In *The Mountain Trail and its Message*, A.B. Palmer, a regular on these expeditions, stated of pedestrian trails that individuals developed a “particular intimacy and companionship with it.”³⁵ He defined

³² Glover, 96.

³³ William Lowell Putnam. *A Century of American Alpinism* (Boulder, CO: American Alpine Club), 2002.

³⁴ Michael Cohen. *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970*. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 66.

³⁵ Palmer, 7.

these trips in opposition to what he viewed as the profane aspects of civilization and people refused to leave them on vacations. He stated:

There are men who live their lives on wagon roads, in the Pullman car, on the cushions of the automobile. They shun all hardship; their object in life is to avoid all pain, just to have a good time. And their reward—miles of dusty road, acres of sunburned grass.³⁶

Earlier in his book, Palmer suggested that on the trail the individual could find the greater meaning that so many Americans sought—many futilely—during this era: “I find in the mountain trail many parables, but first of all the parable of higher life.”³⁷ By higher life, he essentially meant something less materialistic than civilization.

Established in July of 1894 after 155 men and 38 women climbed Mount Hood, the Mazamas became the first hiking club in the Cascades. Throughout its early history, the club concentrated on summiting the volcanic peaks of the range. The American Alpine Club was founded in 1902. Five years later, a Seattle group, the Mountaineers, formed with the help of the Mazamas, its parent club. More groups followed: 1911 Mount Baker Club, 1912 the Colorado Mountain Club, 1914 Trail and Mountain Club of Hawaii, 1915 Trails Club of Oregon, and in that same year the Spokane Mountaineers.³⁸ Expressing a collective disillusionment with automobile tourism, the Montana Mountaineers, a Missoula-based organization, formed to garner group interest in more primitive recreation, mainly hiking.³⁹ As road building accelerated and automobile tourism grew in popularity over the next two decades, highway walking declined and trail trips became almost the singular focus of hiking clubs. By 1937, more than 150,000

³⁶ Palmer, 17.

³⁷ Palmer, 15.

³⁸ Putnam, 89.

³⁹ Glenn Boyer. “Club of Montana Mountaineers Gives Members Enjoyable Trips.” *The Missoulian*. September 17, 1922.

people were members of 209 hiking clubs nationwide.⁴⁰ Writer Ernest Dench even called hiking “a national pastime.”⁴¹

The early twentieth century also witnessed a literature that celebrated hiking. Backpackers today would find the techniques recommended in these books completely archaic. These authors made overtly self-conscious attempts to draw a moral high-ground between themselves and the complacent masses that did not undertake such excursions. Elitism among today’s outdoor writers is expressed more subtly.

Clyde Fordyce exemplified both of these characteristics, an emphasis on strenuousness and a therapeutic outlook in his books, *Touring Afoot* (1918) and *Trail Craft* (1920). Fordyce celebrated the fact that the trail called forth man’s “gregarious nature” while providing an invaluable place for people to tap into the “healing powers” of personal reflection.⁴² He wrote, “Surely Nature is a better tonic and rejuvenator than any medicine or healing ‘ism’ which man has ever contrived.”⁴³ Throughout both of these books, Fordyce employed the characteristic word of the era’s outdoor enthusiasts: recreation.

Today, most backpackers seek to make their hikes less strenuous by lightening their load and they can do so with, literally, hundreds of space-saving and weight reducing brand name products. Exemplifying the pioneering ethos that many hikers brought to the

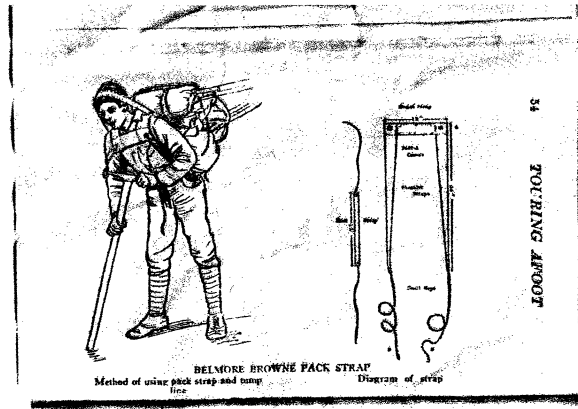
⁴⁰ Ernest Dench. “Dusty Shoes: Hiking in America Booms” from the *Literary Digest*. May 15, 1937.

⁴¹ Ernest Dench. *Nature Magazine* 23 (6) June 1934, p. 288. From Wolar.

⁴² Clyde Fordyce. *Touring Afoot*. (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1916), 16.

⁴³ Clyde Fordyce. *Trail Craft: An Aid in Getting the Greatest Good out of Vacation Trips* (Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd Publishers, 1922), 27.

backcountry, Fordyce recommended that the hiker carry an axe, a folding lantern, a gun, two dozen lumberman's screw calks and a small wrench for shoe repairs, and many other accessories. To be sure, much of the extra weight would come from the primitive



equipment available to the backpacker, but some of his gear recommendations, like an axe and gun, have no corollaries today. In both books, Fordyce describes the common pack of the era, which had not only shoulder straps but one for the

forehead that looks excruciatingly painful.

Stewart Edward White, a popular and prolific turn of the century nature writer, enthusiastically celebrated American pioneers and the frontier heritage.⁴⁴ Many of his books, like *The Blazed Trail* (1902) and *Blazed Trail Stories* (1906), included the word “trail” in them. Almost all of his books made frequent use of the trail as a motif to evoke frontier values. He wrote:

When you say the trail to a Westerner, his eyes light up. This is because it means something to him. To another it may mean something different. And so after the experience has led you by the campfires of a thousand delights, and each of those campfires is on the Trail, which only pauses courteously for your stay and then leads on untiring into new mysteries forever and ever, you come to love it as the donor of great joys. You too become a Westerner, and when somebody says ‘trail’ your eye too lights up.⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, White juxtaposed the ability of the outdoors to reinvigorate the individual through the separation from the conformist culture within cities.

⁴⁴ Stewart Edward White. *The Blazed Trail* (New York: McClure, Phillips and Company, 1902), 3.

⁴⁵ Stewart Edward White. *The Mountains* (New York: McClure, Phillips and Company, 1904), 99.

Stewart Edward Kirkham extolled both the calming effect of walking and the strenuous aspects of the trail. In describing a trip he made in the Rockies, he wrote:

While tramping over trails hardens the muscles, it toughens also the sinews of the mind.The single drop of aboriginal blood tingles in the veins, while the tendency is strong to revert to the more rude and savage life.⁴⁶

Probably no writer made a more explicit effort to reconcile the seeming contradictory elements of the therapeutic world-view with the emphasis on strenuous endeavor than Bliss Carman. He argued that a balanced personality resulted from the combination of the two. In the *Kinship of Nature* (1903), he wrote:

Meanwhile, it may be, we shall find solace in a wise philosophic blending of the two ideals. It is somehow possible, I think, to be strenuous and efficient as nature herself in action, and yet to have in mind always, as a standard of normal being, the inflexible serenity of the wheeling sun.⁴⁷

He extended this idea to walking in *The Making of Personality* (1906) by stating, “A delightful enhancement of personality will come to us through securing the utmost perfection and service of the simple and practicable art of good walking.”⁴⁸

Some other books on walking that appeared in the early 20th century included, Robert Cortes Holliday’s *Walking Stick Papers*, Nicholas Vachl Lindsay’s *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (1912), Pauline Goldmark and Mary Hopkin’s *The Gypsy Trail* (1922), and Albert Palmer’s *The Mountain Trail and its Message* (1911).⁴⁹ In 1922, George Goodchild edited an anthology on walking essays called *The Lore of the*

⁴⁶ Stewart Edward Kirkham. *In the Open: Intimate Studies and Appreciations of Nature* (New York and San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1908), 177-178. For more of Kirkham’s thought see *Outdoor Philosophy: The Meditations of a Naturalist* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912).

⁴⁷ Bliss Carman. *The Kinship of Nature*. (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1903), 21.

⁴⁸ Bliss Carman. *The Making of Personality* (Boston: L.C Page and Company, 1906), 203.

⁴⁹ Vachel Lindsay. *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916). . Pauline Goldmark and Mary Hopkins. *The Gypsy Trail* (New York: McKenney, 1922).

Wanderer.⁵⁰ This anthology included short essays that exulted in walking by many of the era's foremost intellectuals, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, Lewis Mumford, and J. Brooks Atkinson.⁵¹

Not surprisingly, with this heightened interest in hiking, Americans built more trails. In his doctoral dissertation about the development of hiking trails in the American West from 1890-1940, Glynn Gary Wolar has written, "Trails were constructed with almost an intuitive sense of urgency after Turner declared the end of the frontier."⁵² He also argues that "the trail provided the twentieth century American an avenue for pilgrimage away from the complexities of civilization that increasingly lacked meaning."⁵³ To be sure, many Americans found adequate meaning in urban areas and few trail designers or builders looked directly to Turner's essay for their rationale to build trails. Nonetheless, Wolar is correct in arguing that proponents of trails and walking for pleasure often did so because of a general disillusionment with industrial civilization. In turn, like writers who celebrated the trail, proponents of trail building employed frontier rhetoric while emphasizing the healing power of the trail. By starkly juxtaposing wilderness against civilization, they vested trails, walking, and undeveloped areas with sanctimonious qualities that mirrored views that were taking shape regarding the American wilderness.

Trail Development

⁵⁰ George Goodchild. *The Lore of the Wanderer: An Open Air Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922).

⁵¹ Aaron Sussman and Ruthe Goode. *The Magic of Walking* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967). This anthology includes all three of these essays: Atkinson's "A Note on Walking," Mumford's "In Defense of the Footwalker," and Holmes's "The Pleasure of Walking."

⁵² Wolar, 6.

⁵³ Wolar, 6.

During the first four decades of the twentieth-century, the National Park Service championed itself as the nation's foremost recreation provider. Although roads became the Park Service's foremost priority, some parks, like Glacier and Rocky Mountain National Park, undertook substantial trail building efforts to respond to the minority demand for primitive recreation. The proliferation of the automobile in the 1920s brought tourists to the park en masse, thereby making this minority more desirous of primitive recreation. Consequently, in parks like Glacier and Rocky Mountain National Park, trails came to be seen as a necessary antipode.⁵⁴

The trails built in Rocky Mountain and Glacier National Parks eventually became part of the CDT. Budgetary disputes regarding trails plagued Glacier National Park from its establishment on May 11, 1910. Yet park officials usually recognized the importance, at least nominally, of providing trails for visitors who desired a more primitive experience. In 1915, the park published a fifty six page *Walking Tours Book* and *The Mountaineers of Glacier National Park*, both of which appealed to the inspiration, freedom, and exhilaration that one found on the Park's trails. Two years later, Mathilde Holtz and Katherine Bemis, members of the American Rockies Alpine Club, wrote *Glacier National Park: Its Trails and Treasures*.⁵⁵ Although the book is primarily descriptive, it reflects the proclivity of local trail proponents to imbue trails with sacral qualities that are juxtaposed to the profane—civilization. They wrote:

The spell of a mountain trail in Glacier Park holds one, and the longing to traverse those wild and picturesque regions intensifies the longer he lives in the centres of civilization amid the artificial environment of modern life.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Paul Sutter's *Driven Wild* argues that the wilderness movement emerged from the fight to maintain roadless areas for recreation purposes.

⁵⁵ Mathilde Holtz and Katherine Bemis. *Glacier National Park: Its Trails and Treasures* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917).

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

Despite such sentiments, the trail building movement within the park proceeded at a languid pace. In a 1923 letter to the Director of the National Parks, Steven Mather, Horace Albright, a field assistant in Yellowstone, emphasized his dissatisfaction with the lack of funds dedicated to trails in Glacier by stating, “Trails are of equal importance to the roads or even more important than they are.”⁵⁷ Later that same year, mountaineer Norman Clyde visited the park and climbed thirty six peaks in as many days, describing this accomplishment as “a pioneer venture.”⁵⁸ Evoking this heritage might have bolstered the case for the park’s trails. In any event, trail development proceeded more smoothly for the rest of the decade.

From its conception in 1912, the Colorado Mountain Club pushed for the protection of the Estes Park area. By the late 1910s, Enos Mills emerged as the single most important advocate for this movement. Popularly referred to as the “John Muir of the Rockies,” Mills, much like Benton MacKaye, emphasized the idea of play in nature as a means to rescue the mind from the depths of despair and depravity that he associated with civilization.⁵⁹ He also stated that America needed to “save our best scenes is saving our manhood.”⁶⁰ He stated:

The national parks will perpetuate that adventurous highway, the trail. The trail is a romantic and poetic way through the wilderness. It goes through the realm of exploration and adventure. Father Time will lean on his scythe and wait while you are in touch with the trail...Here is Nature’s bugle song; the silence of the centuries; and the spell and the imagination of ages.

From these ideas, Mills developed the more abstract notion that outdoor recreation could inspire democratic feelings and, in turn, provide America a safeguard against the rise of

⁵⁷ Wolar, 70.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 73.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 218.

⁶⁰ Enos Mills. *The Rocky Mountain Wonderland* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), 330-331.

despots.⁶¹ With these ideas in mind, he referred to Rocky Mountain National Park as “a trail park.” Under the leadership of Superintendent Roger Toll, the Park built a network of trails during the 1920s and began advertising itself as “a wilderness trail park.”⁶² Thus the Estes Park area began to resemble what Chapin had envisioned nearly forty years earlier.

Long Distance Trails: A Distinctively American Development

This era also witnessed the conception and emergence of the long distance trail. In 1911, a schoolmaster from Vermont proposed a trail that would extend from the Vermont-Massachusetts border to the Vermont-Canadian border.⁶³ Known as the Long Trail, this 265 mile footpath through the Green Mountains of Vermont was completed within a decade. The Sierra Club spearheaded the development of the John Muir Trail in 1915, a high point in what one author has called California’s “great hiking era.”⁶⁴ But the Appalachian Trail proved by far the most visionary and eventually well-known long distance trail of the early twentieth century.

Conceived by Benton MacKaye, a forester and founding member of the Wilderness Society, the Appalachian Trail extends from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. Today, no trail is better-known in the country and perhaps the world than the AT. Every spring, wide-eyed dreamers, desiring a physical, emotional, and spiritual separation from civilization—an opportunity for re-creation, or in the

⁶¹ Wolar, 220.

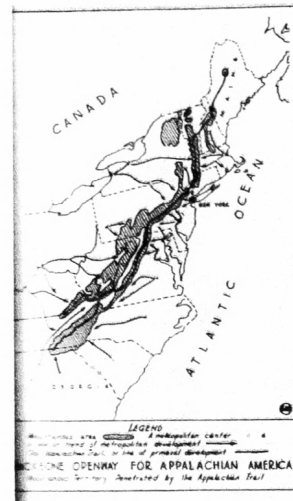
⁶² Ibid, 229-232.

⁶³ Forthcoming

⁶⁴ Abraham Hoffman. “Mountain Resorts and Trail Camps in Southern California’s Great Hiking Era, 1884-1938.” *Historical Society of Southern California* Vol. LVIII No. 3, (Fall, 1976).

modern lexicon, revitalization—leave Springer Mountain intending to hike this 2,168 mile footpath.

Although MacKaye never intended for people to make end-to-end hikes, he ascribed the same values to the trail as the individuals who hike it today. Informed by the nation's agrarian roots, more than any of the era's other wilderness advocates, MacKaye believed that urbanization, industrialization, and commercialism were degenerative to the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health of the



individual. In his article “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning,” he described the Trail and the culture it would foster in the idealistic terms so many who hike it still embrace wholeheartedly:

The camp community is a sanctuary and a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life. It is in essence a retreat from profit...cooperation replaces antagonism, trust replaces suspicion, emulation replaces competition.⁶⁵

In addition to providing a place for anyone to recreate, MacKaye wanted the trail to provide the foundation for interlinking communities with socialistic and localized economies to emerge throughout the range that would provide a physical and psychological barrier to the interminable spread of urban areas. He wanted these communities to control both the extraction of raw materials and the manufacturing of goods. This more holistic approach to industry would create unique “indigenous” cultures of working-class Americans who bucked the homogenizing consumerist trends

⁶⁵ Anderson, 146.

of 1920s America. By resisting the “metropolitan invasion,” the trail would promote a “Utopia of creative thought and action.”⁶⁶

MacKaye fully realized that the trail would draw the middle and upper classes, desperately in need of a respite from civilization. In the Turnerian tradition, he touted the trail’s potential to provide city-dwellers the opportunity to re-create in primeval environments that proved formative to the American character.⁶⁷ His emphasis on emotional and spiritual well-being demonstrated that, like many other celebrants of “wild” nature, he saw nature as a source of revitalization, of re-creation. And he probably used this term—re-creation, spelled as such—more than any other fin de siècle proponent of outdoor recreation. But MacKaye embraced one countervailing strain of thought—the bioregional vision—that most clearly distinguished him from other early twentieth-century proponents of hiking and outdoor recreation.

In recent years, bioregionalism has emerged as a prominent subfield within environmental history and a focus among some environmental and land planning groups. The bioregional vision emphasizes seeing the world with respect to physiographic—biological, geological or geographical—features rather than as a set of political entities defined by somewhat arbitrary delineations. Despite its failure, John Wesley Powell’s proposal for political entities in the American West to conform to watersheds is probably the best-known bioregional vision in American history. Not surprisingly, MacKaye expressed admiration for Powell’s plan and later in life promoted his own plans of social reorganization by “watershed democracy.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Benton MacKaye. *From Geography to Geotechnics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968), 178.

⁶⁷ Benton MacKaye. *The New Exploration: A Philosophy in Regional Planning* (Harpers Ferry, West VA: The Appalachian Trail Conference, 1990. Originally published in 1928), 57.

⁶⁸ Anderson, 289.

Thirty years after Powell promoted his vision for the American West, Europe witnessed a profusion of bioregional thinkers. Throughout the 1910s, some European scholars who emphasized understanding the world in terms of geographic regions included Vidal de la Blache, Frederick Ratzel, Frederick Le Play, and Patrick Geddes, the latter of whom used metaphors about watersheds in *Cities in Evolution* that influenced MacKaye's writing.⁶⁹ But the German Oswald Spengler proved most influential on MacKaye's thought. Spengler argued that the "Megapolis" would prove the ruin of western civilization. Cities without curtailed growth, he believed, inspired a herd mentality and ambivalence between the desire of freedom and a fear of loneliness. Conversely, he thought that landscape provided the foundation for small towns and villages to develop higher forms of culture and speech.⁷⁰

Spengler also found traditional western land-use patterns senseless. He disparaged the mathematical grid pattern of land organization that was conceived by the Babylonians, an "utterly land-alien product of pure intellectual satisfaction." In talking about twentieth century cities, he continued, "In all civilizations alike, these cities aim at the chessboard form, which is the symbol of soullessness."⁷¹ Ironically, while MacKaye explicitly celebrated Jefferson's vision that culture should be diffused throughout the nation and formed from localities' relationship to the land, Jefferson embraced the very grid pattern that Spengler and, in turn MacKaye, disparaged.⁷² MacKaye stated that the

⁶⁹ Sutter, 165.

⁷⁰ Oswald Spengler. *The Decline of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962. Originally published in 1922), 245. Although this book appeared in 1922, MacKaye was intimately familiar with Spengler's thought when he conceived the Appalachian Trail in 1921.

⁷¹ Ibid, 441.

⁷² *From Geography to Geotechnics*, 44-57. MacKaye celebrates Jefferson's idea that the culture of the United States should be grounded in the land. This, he believed, would promote decentralized, vibrant, and unique cultures.

new planner, “does not create his own plan; he discovers nature’s plan.”⁷³ To be sure, nature’s plan can be discovered in many ways; the Appalachian “bioregion” could be subdivided innumerable times depending on what criteria a person used to define such a region. Yet this should not obscure the fact that MacKaye viewed the Appalachian Mountains as a coherent, singular, organic entity—“nature’s plan”—without any consideration of the many political boundaries they crossed.

Ironically, Frederick Jackson Turner, though most remembered for his frontier thesis, dedicated most of his career to regional studies. In 1924, he wrote a paper, “The Significance of the Section in American History,” that noted the arbitrary nature of state lines and emphasized geography’s influence on individual and group character. In turn, he contended that political rivalries stem from the competing interests created by these geographical differences.⁷⁴ But during the interwar years, interpretations that challenged notions of national identity failed to gain acceptance within the academic community. Turner’s proved no different. One professional reviewer conveyed the sentiments of much of academia by stating that Turner’s theory “comes pretty close to treason.”⁷⁵ Rejected by the historical community, Turner died a despondent man in 1932.

MacKaye’s plan for resettlement, which emphasized regionalism within Appalachia, failed for the same reasons the historical community refused to accept Turner’s new theory. But the trail nonetheless succeeded for the same reasons that Turner’s frontier thesis retained so much clout: Americans had a long romance with the frontier heritage and a trail provided the opportunity for individuals to recapture it, if only

⁷³ MacKaye. *The New Exploration*. P. 33.

⁷⁴ Kirkpatrick Sale. *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985), 137-141.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 140.

briefly. Only two years after proposing the trail, MacKaye seemed to accept realistically the limits of his idealistic vision of social transformation and look to its future with optimism, focusing on aspects of the trail that appealed to the broader public.⁷⁶ The eastern hiking community responded quickly to the idea and in only a few years after the trail's proposal a number of hiking clubs had begun scouting various sections. MacKaye, however, proved a better visionary than an overseer of the trail's construction.

Consequently, Myron Avery, a lawyer by training, spearheaded much of the Appalachian Trail's development. During the 1930s, Avery's acceptance of the Blue Ridge Parkway—a road that would parallel much of the trail through Virginia—created a permanent rift between him and MacKaye that would further marginalize MacKaye's already limited role in its development. Nonetheless, by 1937, less than twenty years after Benton MacKaye proposed the AT, the efforts of trail clubs throughout the Appalachians combined to complete the trail, making it arguably the most successful bioregional vision in American history.⁷⁷

Twelve years after MacKaye envisioned an Appalachian Trail, Clarke began promoting a trail along the rim of the Cascades and Sierras for similar reasons and as place where groups could go to develop “moral stamina”—mainly leadership skills,

⁷⁶ Benton MacKaye. “Progress towards the Appalachian Trail.” *Appalachia*, Vol. XV, 1920-1923. In this article, MacKaye does not mention his resettlement vision. He focuses exclusively on hikers coming to it.

⁷⁷ Obviously, many different criteria could be applied to gage a bioregional project's success. With respect to length/size, at 2,100 miles the AT could potentially be the most successful project in history. One aspect of successful bioregional projects is their ability to transcend political boundaries, whether that and inspire collective action based on a draw to landscape/land etc... The Appalachian Trail crosses 14 states, national forest and park land, and some easements on private property. While trail construction and relocation has not always come easily, conflicts along the trail corridor have been kept to a minimum. See Charles H Foster. *The Appalachian National Scenic Trail: A Time to be Bold* (Harpers Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1987), 7-9, 135-144.

intimate relationships and a cooperative spirit.⁷⁸ Clarke vied for support with many different organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America, before enlisting the help of the YMCA. After Clarke established the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) in 1937, Warren L. Rodgers, a close personal friend of Clarke, led the Pacific Crest Trail relays in 1938 in which he scouted over 2000 miles of the potential trail with the help of YMCA branches throughout the Sierra/Cascade region. Although the trail's development remained largely incomplete for decades, the PCT had its foundational support in the PCTA, an organization that would promote and organize its development.⁷⁹

As Benton MacKaye touted the Appalachian Trail throughout the 1920s, leaders within Rocky Mountain National Park continued building trails, which corresponded to the increasing calls for America's public agencies to further recreation opportunities for the broader public. But this rhetoric was not heeded until Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal conceived government organizations, like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), to provide relief to unemployed young men. During its existence, from 1933-1942, the CCC dedicated significant efforts to advancing the nation's recreation facilities. Such organizations transformed American's perceptions about the role and the limits of the federal government.⁸⁰

Perhaps encouraged by the federal government's seeming interest in outdoor recreation, Harold Roberts of the Colorado Mountain Club conceived the idea of "The High Trail" during the Summer of 1934.⁸¹ The proposed trail would extend to the

⁷⁸ Clinton C. Clarke. *The Pacific Crest Trail Way* (Pasadena: The Pacific Crest Trail System Conference, 1935).

⁷⁹ William R. Gray. *The Pacific Crest Trail* (Washington: National Geographic Society, 1975).

⁸⁰ John A. Salmond. *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967).

⁸¹ Harold Roberts. "Timberline Trails" from *Trail and Timberline*. July, 1935. No. 201. 84.

north, south and through Rocky Mountain National Park, from Mount Evans to Longs Peak. As conceived, the trail would have stayed between elevations of 9,500 and 12,000 feet and extended more than 150 miles. Over the course of two years, Roberts and other members of the mountain club exhorted club members to scout, map, and construct trail segments of the would-be trail. They did, in fact, complete a preliminary map. Although Roberts emphasized that the High Trail was “distinctly Mountain Club project,” he expressed hope that the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Administration would construct one or more sections each year.⁸²

From 1934 to 1936, the Trail Committee worked with the Forest Service to try to get CCC camps involved in the construction of the trail. They hoped to build shelters at vital points along the trail and envisioned that the trail would eventually become a small part of a Colorado Trails System.⁸³ Moreover, they reflected the emphasis on the strenuous “tramp” by expressing their hopes that club members would hike it from end-to-end. But in the end, the committee dissolved and the trail idea lay dormant, not dead. The nation—individuals, citizen groups, and the federal government—was only beginning to contemplate the wealth of recreation opportunities that it could create on federal lands, and more specifically in its three North-South mountain ranges. The continued escalation of such hopes would lead to grand designs by the federal government, including a proposal for a Continental Divide Trail.

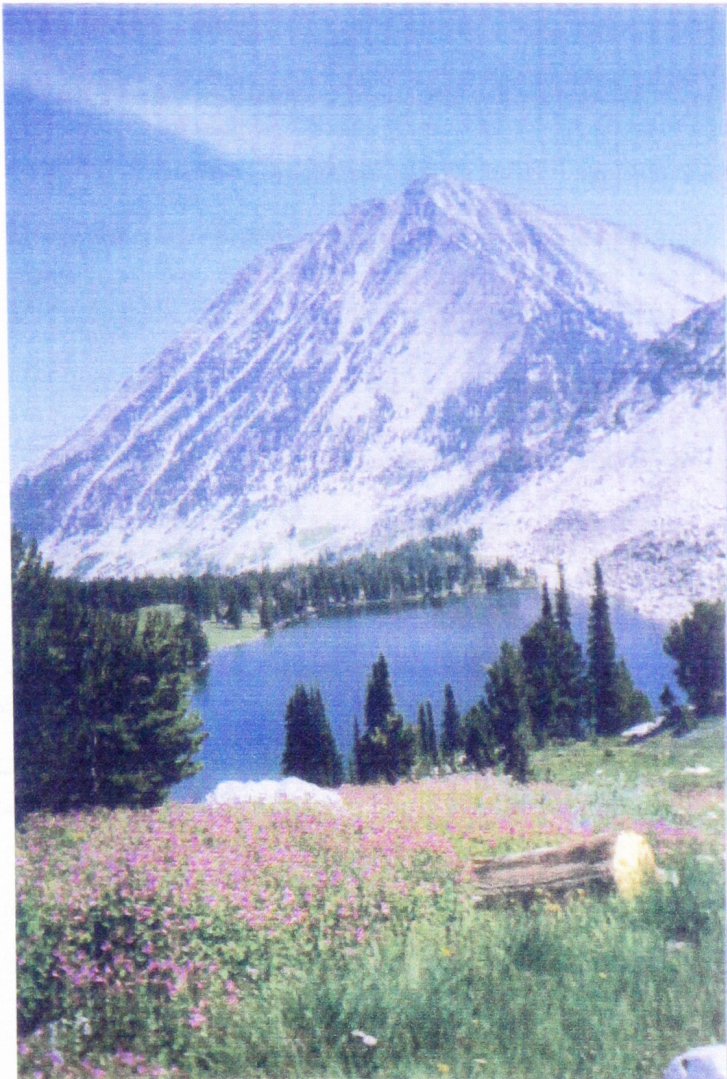
⁸² Harold Roberts. “The High Trail” from *Trail and Timberline*. August 1934 No. 190. 114.

⁸³ Ibid, 114. See also: Bill Nagel. “Wanted: A Trail Trestle” from *Trail and Timberline*. November, 1934. No 193. 152

--Chapter 2: Preserving a Heritage: Recreation and the Forest Service, the Beautiful Society, and the Continental Divide Trail—

We are creatures of our time; we cannot escape it. The simple life is not a substitute, only a corrective.

--Colin Fletcher, *The Complete Walker*



On a hot July day in the summer of 2003, I sat before Homer Young's Peak in Bitterroot National Forest. Indian paintbrush, pink monkey flower, and tall bluebells abounded at the edge of a meandering stream, fed by snowmelt off the divide. This colorful display provided a mellifluous contrast to the stark domed granite behemoth towering behind them in the distance. Cupping my hand, I reached into a swirling eddy and lifted it to my parched lips. I then lay back, relishing the slight burn of the early afternoon sun upon my skin. Four weeks earlier, burned out on school, frustrated by my routine, and exhausted from maintaining a façade

of normalcy as I quietly grieved the loss of my mother, I often became despondent and irritable. Or at least I felt so, regardless of how well I might have disguised it. I went to hike the Continental Divide Trail to find silence, beauty, and simplicity. Few tonics could have been more effective. As I napped before Homer Young's Peak, none of those concerns seemed the least bit relevant. And by the end of my hike three days later, I looked forward to all of the things that seemed superficial, mundane, or burdensome just a few weeks before.

Diversions, some trifling others meaningful, from what some would argue constitutes the most important things in life—friends, family, community, God—abound in our consumer culture. Many environmental historians argue that the very idea of wilderness diverts the environmental community's focus from more important places, like home and hearth.¹ I agree that wilderness has probably distracted environmentalists from effectively addressing other, more pressing, issues, such as the pollution, toxic waste disposal (or lack thereof), that more immediately impact the daily lives of many communities, frequently impoverished ones. And yet, recreating in wilderness areas—not just designated wilderness but undeveloped expanses in general—seems to hold an indescribable curative quality for myself and others seeking escape from civilization's complexities and a reminder that the world is much larger than our temporal concerns. Critics, philosophers, historians, and academics of other persuasions, might label my solo journey escapism, the lingering residue of an adolescent drive to abdicate responsibility,

¹ The number of works critiquing wilderness is nearing endless proportions. See William Cronon's "The Trouble with Wilderness or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" from William Cronon ed. *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994). Other works on this subject include J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson ed. *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988)

or exaggerate my self-importance. If he knew me, William Cronon might argue that I was simply “evading responsibility” for the life I “actually lead.”²

Academics can critique sentiment all they want, but they will, for better or for worse, have serious limitations in their ability to change it. For both deep-seated cultural and biological reasons, consciousness, instincts, sentiments and the like have led innumerable Americans to find similar respite through backpacking and hiking in undeveloped areas. If one of the foundations of a free and open society is to trust people to make decisions that suit their best interests, then we can only conclude that the wilderness excursion is a necessary and healthy diversion for many people.

When it works, democratic society also reflects the sentiments of its population. While the federal government—mainly the Forest Service—was slow to respond to the increasing popularity of outdoor recreation for much of the twentieth century, it could not ignore the rampant increase in the recreational use of federal lands by the late 1950s. Under increasing pressure by recreation groups, the Eisenhower administration agreed to set up an Outdoor Resources Review Commission, which advised the establishment of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.³ As two Democratic administrations governed the country for most of the 1960s, federal efforts to provide quality recreation further increased. Bound to the faith that a strong federal government could remedy most social ills, the Lyndon Baines Johnson administration undertook a series of grandiose projects, including a national system of trails, characterized by some historians as “qualitative

² In *The Trouble with Wilderness*, Cronon asserts, “to the extent that we live in an urban-industrial civilization but at the same time pretend to ourselves that our real home is in the wilderness, to just that extent we give ourselves permission to evade responsibility for the lives we actually lead.” Cronon et al., 81.

³ Records of the Heritage and Conservation Service (Record Group 368), 1946-1985. National Archives at <http://www.archives.gov>.

liberalism.”⁴ Influenced by increasing recreation demand and the era’s trend towards bigger and more centralized government, the Forest Service strove to expand its recreation programs, with many arguing that doing so demanded legislative mandates and stronger centralized authority. The National Trails Act of 1968, which laid the groundwork for the Continental Divide Trail, was an outgrowth of this development.

From Voices in the Wilderness to a Central Goal: Recreation and the Forest Service

The establishment of federal Forest Reserves in 1891 and the subsequent creation of the Forest Service in 1905 found its impetus in the same perception that motivated fin de siècle proponents of outdoor recreation: historians, land speculators, fur traders and ordinary Americans believed that America’s proud frontier era was over. At the time, this measure seemed radical—a fact easily lost to the twenty-first century observer. The West had always been the region of free land, open to those willing and vigorous enough to undertake the daunting challenge of settlement. Success and failure both became seen as highly individualized, independent of government influence. Restricting settlement by designating portions of the continent as federal domain countered this longstanding



understanding, flawed as it might be, of the West. A predominantly regional (in areas near the new federal lands), vociferous opposition caricatured the agency’s most renowned leader, Gifford Pinchot, as a monarch

⁴ Irwin Unger. *The Best of Intentions: The Triumphs and Failures of the Great Society under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon* (New York: Doubleday Publishers, 1996), 22. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. coined the term “qualitative liberalism” to describe the goal of the Kennedy and Johnson administration to make the federal government active in addressing quality of life issues. This differed from Roosevelt’s quantitative approach, which strove to meet the quantitative needs of the citizenry.

locking up lands for his own personal benefit and castigated the new bureaucracy as unfair, undemocratic, and un-American.⁵

Declaring land federal domain undoubtedly compromised its availability to some local populations. But the new agency aimed to provide benefits for the largest number of Americans, not simply the relatively unpopulated regions where most of these reserves lay. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson expressed this in the agency credo; stating that the service sought to provide “the greatest good, for the greatest number in the long run.”⁶ Of course, different interests could construe the vague principle of “greatest good” to varying ends. At the time, however, Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, and later Gifford Pinchot envisioned that the new agency would ensure a steady future supply of timber, which, they believed, the juggernaut of unregulated capitalism threatened irrecoverably.⁷

Celebrants of the wilderness tramp, like John Muir, Stewart Edward White, and Bliss Carman, undoubtedly found the newly administered forest lands prime recreation grounds. The Rocky Mountain West quickly became one of America’s most popular recreation destinations.⁸ Some critics seized upon this as evidence that the reserve system catered to eastern dilettantes who used them for hunting and fishing reserves.⁹ Early in its history, however, the new bureaucracy never considered recreation uses.

⁵ Char Miller. *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Island Press: Washington, 2001),

⁶ Arthur Carhart. “Historical Development of Outdoor Recreation.” *Outdoor Recreation Commission Study Report* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), 127.

⁷ Samuel Hayes. *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Era Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

⁸ The establishment of Glacier, Yellowstone, and Rocky Mountain National Parks is a testament to this fact. Paul Sutter’s *Driven Wild* provides a thorough treatment of the Rocky Mountains’ emergence as a popular recreation destination.

⁹ Donald Francis Cate. “Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service: A Study of Organizational Response to Changing Demands” (Dissertation: Stanford University, 1963) 26.

Compared to unregulated resource extraction, recreation left little mark on the land, at least until the 1920s, when the boom in the automobile industry resulted in a mass infusion of recreationists into the forests. The lack of regulation regarding recreation use enabled early backcountry visitors to the national forests to alter their surroundings by constructing shelters and building fires. In their minds, the forests provided an opportunity to relive the frontier heritage.¹⁰ Yet the agency paid little attention to this use during its early years, especially before the increase in automobiles brought campers to the national forests en masse during the 1920s. An 1897 law categorized recreation as a “special use,” but offered no policy guidelines or directives for managing it, and throughout the agency’s early years leaders continued to deem recreation an “incidental use,” which fell outside its responsibilities to the American public.¹¹

Yet some employees and government officials began recognizing recreation as an important forest asset in the agency’s first years. In 1908, Treadwell Cleveland Jr. explained that roads, bridges, and trails constructed for administrative and commercial purposes also served hikers, picnickers, and anglers.¹² But the agency’s first effort to analyze recreation’s value came in 1918, when the Forest Service commissioned landscape architect Frank A. Waugh to conduct a study of recreational use of National Forests.

Recreation Uses on the National Forests, a concise summation of Waugh’s findings, unequivocally asserted that recreation was the oldest use of the national forests.

¹⁰ James Turner. “From Woodcraft to ‘Leave No Trace’: Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America.” *Environmental History* (yep: trip to bibliotheque)

¹¹ Cate, 152.

¹² Treadwell Cleveland Jr. “National Forests as Recreation Grounds.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XXXV (March, 1910), 241-247.

Proclaiming outdoor recreation as a “necessity of civilized life” that “becomes more necessary as civilization becomes more intensive,” Waugh had views that resembled those that Benton MacKaye developed as he conceived the Appalachian Trail.¹³ Because of its popularity and importance, Waugh asserted that recreation should receive equal priority to logging and called on the agency to develop a systematic recreation plan, hire recreation professionals, and assess what areas deserved prioritization.¹⁴

Some individual national forests took Waugh’s recommendations to heart by publishing recreation pamphlets that espoused the value of recreation in their respective forests.¹⁵ One year after the Service published Waugh’s study, the agency hired Arthur Carhart as its first recreation professional.¹⁶ Yet these examples were aberrations; as a whole, the Forest Service did not follow Waugh’s recommendations. By viewing national forests as venues for recreation, he presented, by and large, an unwanted challenge for the agency to expand its responsibilities into an area foreign to professional foresters.¹⁷

Further complicating this call for reassessment, the National Park Service began claiming that recreation fell outside the Forest Service’s jurisdiction.¹⁸ As a decentralized agency without recreation mandates, responsibility for recreation facilities laid with local foresters, most of whom proved unwilling to enter this conflict by

¹³ Frank A. Waugh. *Recreation Uses of National Forests* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35-37.

¹⁵ Some of these pamphlets included *Handbook for Campers in National Forests of California*, *Vacation Days in the Routt National Forest* (1917), *A Vacation Land of Lakes and Woods: The Superior National Forest* (1919), *Vacation Days in Colorado’s National Forests* (1919), *Trail Construction in the National Forests* (1915/1923). From Cate 182.

¹⁶ Cate, 55.

¹⁷ Sutter, 47.

¹⁸ Hal K. Rothman. “A Regular Ding Dong Fight’: The Dynamics of Park Service-Forest Service Controversy during the 1920s and 1930s,” ed. Miller, Char. *American Forests* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997), 109-124.

prioritizing recreation in their forests.¹⁹ Furthermore, day hikers, overnight campers, and backpackers littered the forests and sometimes unintentionally caused forest fires, raising the ire of many foresters. According to Donald Francis Cate, the author of a comprehensive thesis on recreation in the Forest Service, most foresters welcomed hikers and campers as much as the “pine bark beetle, the spruce budworm, or the dwarf mistletoe.”²⁰ They often tried to conceal trails from the “swarming hordes.”²¹ Nonetheless, these “hordes” continued to increase dramatically as Americans, newly equipped with automobiles, privileged with discretionary income, and inspired by the military’s idealization of outdoor life during the WWI era, traveled to the national forests en masse during the 1920s.²²

Understanding the cool reception individual foresters gave to recreationists, in 1920, Henry S. Graves wrote an article for *American Forestry*, “A Crisis in National Recreation in American Forestry.” He asserted that the Forest Service needed strong centralized authority to promote recreation—a theme that would repeatedly resurface among agency proponents of recreation. He also argued that establishing a more coherent recreation program would weaken the Park Service’s attempts to create new national parks from Forest Service lands, a persistent issue of contention between the agencies.²³ One year later, Chief Forester William Greeley declared recreation “a major

¹⁹ Sutter, 66.

²⁰ Cate, 50. The best work on the pioneer attitude embraced by the early hikers/backpackers in national forests is James Turner’s “From Woodcraft to Leave no Trace.”

²¹ Louis F. Kneipp. “Recreational Use of the National Forests” *Journal of Forestry* XXVIII (May, 1930), 618.

²² Sutter, 25-26. Although it is difficult to assess how much the experience of World War I influenced the growth of outdoor recreation, soldiers did much backpacking, camping, and living in the open. After the war, the types of equipment used by soldiers became frequently used by campers.

²³ Henry S. Graves. “A Crisis in National Recreation.” *American Forestry* Vol. 26, No. 318 (June 1920), 391-400.

use.”²⁴ In the following years, Greeley, and assistant foresters Leon Kneipp and E.A. Sherman supported recreation in national forests, but often found field foresters apathetic towards making it a priority.²⁵ During a meeting at the Washington office, Kneipp told a group of foresters that they needed to provide recreation facilities. To this statement, one of the foresters in attendance retorted, “Oh, hell, if we’re going to be foresters, let’s be foresters.”²⁶

Despite the support of prominent figures within the agency, Congress refused to allocate any funds for recreation development.²⁷ In a letter to Sherman, Waugh stated that Congress was “doing everything possible to prevent the rational and natural development of existing resources.”²⁸ Despite these roadblocks, recreation continued to receive more attention, if not funding, from the federal government throughout the decade. During the early 1920s, hiking clubs—the Sierra Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Mountaineers—and the Isaac Walton League, the foremost outdoor recreation organization of the day, pleaded with President Calvin Coolidge to hold a conference on outdoor recreation. In 1924, Coolidge appointed Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., to chair what would be the first of three outdoor recreation conferences over a four year span.

Throughout all three conferences, participants hailed outdoor recreation as a quintessentially American interest, evoking the frontier tradition to bolster their cases for

²⁴ Cate, 58.

²⁵ Ibid, 58.

²⁶ Ibid, 52.

²⁷ Many in Congress agreed with the National Park Service’s contention that recreation development remained this agency’s responsibility. Throughout the early 1920s, the Annual Report of Foresters complained about a shortage of funds to improve campgrounds for the growing number of recreationists, some 13 million in 1925. Congress nearly allocated the Forest Service 50,000 dollars in the early 1920s but, in the end, reverted to the convenient argument that recreation fell outside the Forest Service’s jurisdiction. Sutter, 65.

²⁸ Cate, 65.

recreational development. Roosevelt opened the 1924 conference with an address entitled “Perpetuating the National Spirit.” He proclaimed, “The spirit of America is our greatest national asset. That spirit is bequeathed to us by the wilderness-tamers who made this country—backwoodsmen who worked west, ever west.”²⁹ He continued, “We are met here today at the call of President Coolidge, as I see it, to endeavor to aid in preserving for the people of our country that which made our national character—the out-of-doors.”³⁰ Coolidge hailed recreation for these same reasons and claimed that transformations within the American economy, mainly the increase in clerical activities that were not physically demanding, made opportunities for strenuous endeavor invaluable. He stated, “Those who are engaged in our industries need an opportunity for outdoor life and recreation no less than they need opportunity for employment.”³¹

Over the course of the three conferences, many speakers extolled the value of recreation: Aldo Leopold spoke on his emerging ideas about wilderness, Benton MacKaye spoke about the Appalachian Trail, Chancy Hamlin touted recreation as the “fundamental desire to do something to escape the drabness of civilization”³² and Thomas Greeley referred to recreation as “a necessary and unavoidable development of the national forests.”³³ Bob Marshall asserted:

As society becomes more and more mechanized it will be increasingly difficult for many people to stand the nervous strain, the high pressure, and the drabness of their lives. To escape these abominations, increasing numbers will seek the primitive for the finest features of life.³⁴

²⁹ Theodore Roosevelt Jr. “Perpetuating the National Spirit” *National Conference of Outdoor Recreation* 68th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), 196.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

³² Chauncy Hamlin. “Review of Project Studies.” *National Conference on Outdoor Recreation*. 70th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928),

³³ William Greeley. *National Conference on Outdoor Recreation*, 1928. 41.

³⁴ Robert Marshall. “Volume and Value of Forest Recreation.” *National Conference of Outdoor Recreation*. 70th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928) 466.

Such fundamental desires, most participants believed, transcended class distinctions. In fact, many thought that outdoor recreation could lessen workplace monotony and strife, thereby mitigating class conflict: an interesting perspective given the fact that primitive recreation is almost exclusively enjoyed by the middle-upper classes today.³⁵

All told, these conferences laid the groundwork for future wilderness areas, created the Division of Wildlife Management—the predecessor to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and, perhaps most importantly, gave official recognition to recreation as both a permanent and legitimate use of the national forests. Indeed, the agency that Roosevelt had established to conserve resources once thought inexhaustible now acknowledged that conserving the best opportunities for Americans to rediscover this heritage, albeit briefly, also required governmental acknowledgement.³⁶ Yet most participants at these conferences believed that grassroots recreation projects were more democratic, more in line with the pioneer ideal of self sufficiency. In turn, they generally expressed reluctance for the federal government to fund recreation projects.

By 1930, over 120,000 miles of trail, most built for administrative and firefighting purposes during the agency's early history, existed in the national forests.³⁷ Mixing idealism with political opportunism, agency leaders continued to advocate primitive development of recreation resources to provide a glimpse of “what the West once was” and “vivify the finest traditions of manhood and womanhood, the outstanding qualities of endurance and hardihood and woodcraft.”³⁸ This goal converged with Franklin Roosevelt's expansion of the federal government, a development that fundamentally

³⁵ Sutter, 43.

³⁶ American Forests, 1962.

³⁷ James R. Udall. “Downhill from Here?” *Wilderness Magazine*, 51, No. 181 (Summer, 1988), 40.

³⁸ Kneipp, 625

compromised the doctrine of laissez faire individualism—a doctrine grounded in the pioneer heritage. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), an organization that provided work for men aged 18-25, sought to expand the nation’s recreation opportunities within the national forests at an unprecedented level. During its brief nine-year history, the CCC built over 20,000 miles of new trail and 40,000 miles of new roads, which many forest users viewed as necessary to access many parts of the forests.³⁹ Some CCC trails lay directly along the Continental Divide and would eventually be incorporated into the CDT.⁴⁰ But despite their magnitude, CCC projects lacked comprehensive planning. Moreover, the corps responded to the perceived needs of individual forests, rather than coordinating projects between forests, as became a goal during the 1960s. CCC efforts spurred greater recreation use of the forests, from 14.3 to 34.8 million visits from 1933 to 1939.⁴¹

In 1940, a Forest Service publication, *Forest Outings*, which included the writings of thirty foresters, extolled recreation’s value in the agency through the heartfelt ruminations of many of its employees. These contributors extolled the forests as a place of healthful rebellion from the mainstream and as a necessary antidote for a civilized society. Some celebrated the forests and the opportunities they provided as quintessentially American. One forester, juxtaposing the “grandiose outing” of American settlement to the “overcrowded civilizations” of Europe, stated simply “the days of our pioneering are not ended.”⁴²

³⁹ Udall, 40.

⁴⁰ The Crag Crest Trail was the longest section of trail built on the Continental Divide by CCC work camps. This trail spanned from Cottonwood to Island Lake in Grand Mesa National Forest. From Alison T. Otis, William D. Honey, Thomas C. Hogg and Kimberly K. Lakin. *The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942* (Washington U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1986), 26.

⁴¹ Cate, 222.

⁴² Russell Lord Ed. *Forest Outings* (Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, 1940), 20.

Not surprisingly, outdoor recreation waned during World War II. After the war, buying power and leisure time increased as the economy experienced unabated growth and the development of the interstate-highway system during the 1950s made extended vacations more practical for many Americans. Consequently, recreational use of the forests grew at unprecedented rates, from six million visitor days in 1945 to 82 million in 1960.⁴³ Although appropriations for recreation increased from 1947 to 1956, they failed to keep up with demand.⁴⁴ Existing facilities proved completely inadequate to accommodate the throngs of people and many trails became unusable. New conflicts between hikers and motorized users, who most frequently rode primitive motorbikes, referred to at the time as “tote-goats,” emerged, providing much of the impetus for the wilderness legislation that Congress began debating in 1957.

Earlier tensions between the Forest Service and the National Park Service reignited during these years. The threat of the National Park Service annexing Forest Service lands combined with the glaring inadequacies in recreation infrastructure within the forests forced the Forest Service to reexamine its recreation policies. In turn, the Service undertook its most genuine effort to address recreation needs in the agency’s history. The Service launched “Operation Outdoors”—a study on how to make the Forest Service a top-flight recreation provider—in 1956. In 1957, Samuel T. Dana, an agency employee, published *Problem Analysis Research in Forest Recreation* in which he contended, as Graves did over thirty years earlier, that recreation might require stronger centralized leadership than the agency had historically granted.⁴⁵ One year later,

⁴³ Cate, 169.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 222.

⁴⁵ Samuel T. Dana (United States Forest Service). *Problem Analysis Research in Forest Recreation* (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1957), 27.

the agency began “Operation Multiple Use,” a forty year plan to spend more than a billion dollars to develop all national forest values. This project culminated in the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960. In 1959, the Service began a National Forest Recreation Survey that sought to evaluate all aspects of recreation, formulate policies, plan to meet future demands, and provide for the recent increases in forest recreation use.⁴⁶

These efforts to address recreation concerns shared three commonalities. First, they clearly expressed that recreation use of the national forests had increased to a point that demanded the agency become proactive in providing recreation opportunities. Second, each stated that recreation use would continue to increase in the future. Third, none of these studies presented specific policy guidelines that would guide the Forest Service in achieving its goal of becoming a good recreation provider. Moreover, when evaluating recreation next to other priorities, these studies employed vague language that did not provide a legal mandate for making recreation an equal priority. The Recreation Survey asserted that “Recreation resources on the national forests will be made available for public use and enjoyment, insofar as this is consistent with the overall management of the national forests for the greatest public good.”⁴⁷ Such vagaries fill the pages of these reports. Consequently, without policy directives, the goal of the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act—to place all forest uses on equal footing—was incoherent when it came to recreation use. Furthermore, this act never clearly defined what it meant in asserting that all uses were equal. Did they demand equal funding? Did they seek equal attention by

⁴⁶ United States Forest Service. *National Forest Recreation Survey: A Review of the Outdoor Recreation Resources of National Forests* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959).

⁴⁷ USFS Recreation Survey, 21.

administrators? These questions would plague the service for years to come, including its efforts to articulate its vision and plans for the Continental Divide Trail.

The Beautiful Society

The economic growth and affluence of the post-war era had a deleterious effect on America's scenic and recreational resources. During the 1950s and into the 1960s, industrial development left many of the nation's waterways grossly polluted. Junkyards and billboards cluttered landscapes while the growth of suburbia filled much of the nation's hallowed pastoral valleys with homogenous, cookie-cutter houses.

Lyndon Baines Johnson, who became president in 1963 following John Kennedy's assassination, believed that these conditions countered his vision of a "Great Society" where individuals could lead emotionally and spiritually fulfilling lives. Acting on the dictum "ugliness is bitterness," that "our peace of mind, our emotions, our spirit—even our souls—are conditioned by what our eyes see," the Johnson Administration developed an approach, "New Conservation," which sought to improve and beautify the natural environment.⁴⁸ Under this program, the Johnson administration, led by the president's wife "Lady Bird," signed three hundred conservation and beautification measures into law while appropriating more than \$12 billion dollars to support them.⁴⁹

The confluence of the Forest Service's goal of becoming a quality recreation provider with the Johnson Administration's ambitious beautification agenda resulted in the passage of much legislation designed to further the development of federal lands for recreation. To be sure, the deliberations on some of these bills, such as the Wilderness

⁴⁸ Ibid, 11362.

⁴⁹ Marvin V. Melosi. "Lyndon Johnson and Environmental Policy." P. 113-114; Lewis L. Gould. *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988).

Act, began in the late-1950s, making it inaccurate to give sole credit for their passage to the Democratic presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson. Yet Kennedy and especially Johnson ushered in an era of legislative activism, which passed the most recreation legislation in American history. Following the “Multiple-Use-Sustained-Yield Act” of 1960, the “Outdoor Recreation Act” passed in 1963. This act charged the Secretary of the Interior with taking specific steps to assure that the American people could enjoy recreation opportunities. After seven years of intense debate, negotiations, and compromises, the widely celebrated “Wilderness Preservation Act” became law in 1964. One year later, Congress established the Land and Water Conservation Fund to provide for large sums of federal money to be used for acquiring additional land for the national parks.

Three years later, in 1968, the “National Trails Act” became law.⁵⁰ The impetus for the bill emerged during the late 1950s, when intellectuals and social critics began questioning how Americans could best use their ample leisure time. In 1958 a University of Chicago Study worried that the “most dangerous threat hanging over Americans is the threat of leisure.”⁵¹ Reacting to this general anxiety, the longstanding idea that outdoor recreation was vital to the American character, and its dramatic increase, the Eisenhower administration created the Outdoor Resources Review Commission, which conducted a series of extensive recreation studies that cited dramatic increases in the number of Americans who walked for pleasure.⁵² While the study estimated that Americans walked

⁵⁰ Charles I. Zinser. *Outdoor Recreation: United States National Forests, National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1995), 241.

⁵¹ Robert Putnam. *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 16.

⁵² U.S. Department of the Interior: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. *The 1965 Survey of Outdoor Recreation Activities*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965).; in 1960, the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission did an in depth study that acknowledged the popularity of walking for pleasure and the desirability of a National Trails System.

for pleasure 566 million times in 1960, it projected that the number would increase to one billion times in 1965 and more than 1.5 billion times by 1980.⁵³ The Johnson Administration believed that this increase, coupled with the continued spread of highways and interstates across the country, demanded that the federal government ensure ample opportunities for pedestrian travel in urban, mountainous and rural areas. Moreover, Johnson wanted to develop more long distance trails that would serve as arteries to side and connecting trails, which would eventually become an interconnected trail system. In a speech on natural beauty in 1965, Johnson stated his desire to replicate “the great Appalachian Trail in other parts of America.”⁵⁴

The Disparate Roots of the CDT

Johnson did not take this idea out of thin air. With the long distance trail idea firmly established by the successes of the AT and the PCT, the idea for a trail spanning the Rocky Mountains surfaced for the third time in the early 1960s. Senator Peter Dominick claimed that George Cranmer, the founder of Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Denver, proposed a border-to-border trail through the Rocky Mountains in the early 1960s.⁵⁵ Arch White began promoting the idea for a trail along Colorado’s Continental Divide within the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) in 1962. As MacKaye and Clarke had desired for the Appalachians and Sierra/Cascades respectively, White and other CMC

⁵³ U.S. Department of the Interior: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. *National Symposium on Trails*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 7.

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress. House, Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation of the Committee of Interior and Insular Affairs. “National Trails System.” *Congressional Record* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), 202.

⁵⁵ Dominick made this claim in the House Subcommittee Hearings. He did not give any verifiable proof that Cranmer in turn influenced other champions of this idea or federal agencies.

members shared their desire to increase accessibility to the Colorado Rockies for spiritual uplift.⁵⁶ His letter in the June 1964 issue of *Trail and Timberline* postulates:

Exploring the many forests and valleys of the Rockies, coming face to face with million-year-old beauty, future generations will feel the same inspiration you feel today. They too will sense the force and man's need of her wonders for bodily refreshment and spiritual satisfaction. Man is a natural creature, and will always need Nature for his well being.⁵⁷

During the fall of 1962, president of the Appalachian Mountain Club, John H. Hitchcock, expressed both approval for this project, and bewilderment at the fact that no trail similar to the Appalachian Trail existed in the Rockies.⁵⁸ For the next few years, over two-hundred members of the CMC, led by Gale Kehmeier, mapped the trail, built new segments of it, linked existing ones, marked forks in the trail with blue cans and attempted to write a guidebook. In turn, they made recommendations to the Forest Service.⁵⁹

Benton MacKaye had conceived the idea to develop a “national system of wilderness belts” that would include the Appalachians, the Sierras/Cascades, and the Rocky Mountains in 1945.⁶⁰ Nothing came of this idea. But as he approached ninety, MacKaye, undoubtedly inspired by the success of the Appalachian Trail, still concerned about the discontents of uncurbed commercial development, and acutely aware of the hiking boom throughout the country, touted the idea of a trail that would traverse the Rocky Mountains. In a 1965 article entitled “Of Wilderness Trails and Areas: Steps to Preserve the Original America,” MacKaye advocated the development of a “Cordilleran”

⁵⁶ Many of the articles in *Trail and Timberline* (the monthly magazine of the CMC) reflected this viewpoint. See: Balwin Ranson. “Trail Planners.” *Trail and Timberline*_No. 516. December 1961, 214. Arch White. “A Trail—Why Not?” *Trail and Timberline*_ No. 521. May 1962, p. 84.

⁵⁷ Letter to the Editor. *Trail and Timberline*_ No. 546. June, 1964. p. 94.

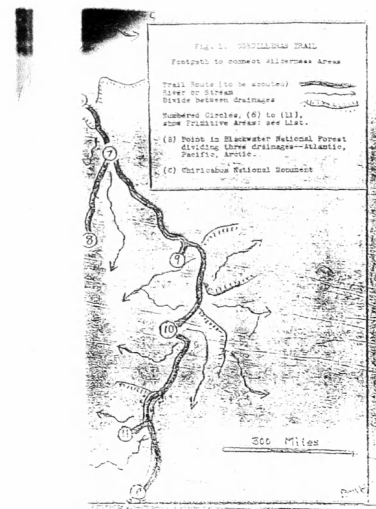
⁵⁸ Arch White. “A Trail—Why Not?” *Trail and Timberline*_No. 521. May 1962. p. 84

⁵⁹ U.S. Congress. House Subcommittee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Hearings on a nationwide system of trails.. “Statement of Dr. Ruth Weiner, Colorado Mountain Club: Denver Colorado.” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), 115

⁶⁰ Anderson, 319.

or “Rocky Mountain Trail” that would follow the Continental Divide from the Canadian to the Mexican border. His plan proposed using existing wilderness areas as connecting points for the trail in order to work towards protecting an entire recreation/wilderness corridor.⁶¹

MacKaye’s proposal fused the traditionally distinctive eastern concept of linear preservation to the area preservation approach heralded in the West.⁶² From the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and throughout the early to mid-twentieth century, designating National Parks and Wilderness Areas—both requiring federal support—characterized the preservation movement in the West. With less undeveloped land and a small portion of the federal domain, the eastern part of the country held fewer tracts of land appropriate for such designations. Thus, MacKaye’s Appalachian Trail—an unmistakably grassroots project—became the most visible testament to preservation in the East. He hoped that a continuous trail in the Rocky Mountains would connect some designated wildernesses and provide the impetus for designating more. Eventually, he hoped the whole Continental Divide would be protected as a recreation reserve. Making this project more ambitious, he expressed enthusiasm at the possibility of extending this trail beyond the Canadian border as “a first step toward



⁶¹ Benton MacKaye. “Of Wilderness Trails and Areas: Steps to Preserve Original America.” Dartmouth College Library: Benton MacKaye Papers, 1965), 3. In possession of Larry Anderson.

⁶² U.S. Congress. House Subcommittee Hearings on National Trails System Act. “Statement of the Sierra Club and National Committee for Protection of Trail Country by Frederick Eissler.” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), 203.

dealing with continent-wide problems.”⁶³

Always more a visionary than pragmatist, MacKaye ignored the tradition of timber harvesting and mineral extraction in the Rockies. This made it impossible to mandate a fully protected wilderness belt for the region. But MacKaye’s ideas probably heightened the enthusiasm of the recreation-minded Secretary of the Interior under Lyndon Johnson, Stewart Udall. Throughout 1966 and 1967, Udall corresponded with MacKaye about the nature of such a trail. An avid proponent of outdoor recreation, Udall admired MacKaye, placing him alongside Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt in the early conservation movement.⁶⁴ Udall repeatedly referred to the “great wisdom” of the AT as the model for scenic trails.”⁶⁵ Throughout their correspondence over the next year, MacKaye emphasized that any legislation should clearly state that such a trail would serve hikers, not motorized recreation.⁶⁶

The Appalachian Trail relied on hiking clubs throughout the range to construct the trail. Secretary of the Interior Udall asserted, “I think it is a great example of democracy in action. They have not come to the Government for help to this point.”⁶⁷ In fact, MacKaye and many others closely involved in the AT resisted any federal involvement throughout its construction, declaring it a grassroots project. This was also true of

⁶³ Benton MacKaye. “Of Wilderness Trails and Areas: Steps to Preserve the Original America.” , 3. In possession of author. Today, the Great Divide Trail extends 700 miles into Alberta and British Columbia where the Continental Divide Trail leaves off.

⁶⁴ Letter from Stewart Udall to Benton MacKaye. Benton MacKaye Papers: Dartmouth College Library, not dated. In this letter he said to MacKaye, “From the early days of your career when Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot began to marshal support for conservation of the nation’s forest resources, not only was your foresight added to the vision but the great breadth of your humane insight gave depth and perspective to the growing movement.”

⁶⁵ U.S. Congress: House Subcommittee Hearing before the House Committee of Interior and Insular Affairs. “Nationwide System of Trails.” 19.

⁶⁶ Letter from Benton MacKaye to Stewart Udall. Benton MacKaye Papers: Dartmouth College Library, July 26, 1966. Today, the use of off-road vehicles on many parts of the Continental Divide Trail is a very contentious issue.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 27.

Clinton Clarke's Pacific Crest Trail.⁶⁸ But the idea for the Continental Divide Trail surfaced without strong regional support (probably because fewer metropolitan areas existed adjacent to it) and it emerged when faith in large domestic federal programs reached its apex. Consequently, the Johnson administration co-opted it into their broader plan to develop a National Trails System, making it distinctively federal in character despite misplaced hopes that the AT effort could be replicated. This development charted the course of the trail for years to come. The American trail, once a symbol of life beyond the horizon, life beyond the reach of an intrusive government knocking at the door, had become dependent on the munificence of the very government that past trail blazers sought to escape.

Pragmatism and Grandiosity: The Peculiarity of the American Long Distance Trail

Much like the other beautification measures passed during the LBJ administration, the idea of a National Trails System reaped widespread support and adulation from disparate groups and bipartisan support from Congress. Daniel K. Hoch first proposed a bill for a national system in 1944.⁶⁹ As proposed, the bill would have included 10,000 miles of trail and sought to “preserve as far as possible the wilderness values of the areas they traversed.”⁷⁰ Nothing came of this effort, but the legislative focus on trails became reinvigorated by Gaylord Nelson's introduction of S. 622, a bill designed to protect the Appalachian Trail. Concerned that population pressures threatened to destroy the Appalachian Trail, Nelson drew up a bill granting the Secretary of the Interior authority

⁶⁸ Time constraints. First thing on my agenda before I turn this over to Jeff and Judy.

⁶⁹ *Congressional Record: House*. “Public Bills and Resolutions.” Vol. 91, Pt. 1. 79th Congress, 1st Session (February 19, 1945), 1080.

⁷⁰ Anderson, 319.

to coordinate rerouting and land acquisition efforts with states and trail organizations.⁷¹

After the passage of S. 622 in 1965, Lyndon Johnson proposed developing a national trail system and replicating the Appalachian Trail in other parts of America. In turn, he assigned the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation the task of conducting a study for a nationwide system, which resulted in the informative promotional publication, *Trails for America*, in 1966. For the next two years, from 1966 to 1968, Congress debated the details, but rarely the merits of a National Trails Bill.

Throughout the deliberations, often drawing on personal experience, senators and state representatives praised the system for the opportunities it could provide for reflection, rejuvenation, and inspiration. Advocates of the act often invoked the frontier heritage and Arcadian juxtapositions between cities and undeveloped nature. Early on in the House Subcommittee Hearings for the National Trails Act, Lester Wolff, a Colorado representative, conveyed this sentiment by stating, “The high rise cities in which over 70 percent of our people live could become asphalt cages if there were not the respite of the forest greenery. National Trails safeguard a sanctuary that is the relaxation and inspiration of many Americans.”⁷²

Congress debated the priority level that different types of trails—urban, historic, and scenic—would receive. Some members of the committee, including Chairman Wayne Aspinall, expressed a fear that grandiose and less practical long distance scenic trails like the CDT unjustly overshadowed the greater importance of urban trails.⁷³

Emphasizing the importance of historic trails, Senator Ernest Gruening from Alaska

⁷¹ U.S. Congress: Senate. “Management, Use, and Public Benefits from the Appalachian Trail.” *Congressional Record*. 88th Congress, 2nd Session. Vol. 110, Pt. 9. p. 11458-11461. “Facilitation of Management, Use and Public Benefits from the Appalachian Trail.” 19 January, 1965. 906

⁷² House Hearings on Nationwide System of Trails, 21.

⁷³ A number of quotes in this long footnote.

proclaimed, “Trails were a chapter in the great westward march of the American people in search of greater opportunity.”⁷⁴ He and others, like Joe Skubitz of Kansas expressed their belief that the legislation should give historic trails highest priority. Skubitz even argued that the Appalachian Trail: “Should be rated below the Chisholm.”⁷⁵ This sentiment was not widely shared.

With a romantic nostalgia for the America of yesteryear, most proponents focused on the scenic trails, despite their being further removed from large population centers. This emphasis displayed the peculiar appeal of the long distance mountain trail idea. Such trails lacked the nostalgic value of East-West pioneer trails, yet most participants in this debate perceived them as superior recreation opportunities because of the scenery they traversed and the frontier values of hardihood and self sufficiency that they encouraged.

In the House Subcommittee debate, Peter Dominick, a senator from Colorado, stated, “The Continental Divide Trail would preserve for future generations these values of outdoor recreation if we establish it now.”⁷⁶ A minority contingent remained unconvinced of the value of long distance trails, especially the CDT. Not convinced of the project’s urgency, Wayne Aspinall later exclaimed in the hearings, “Where is time running out, close to the city or out there in that great West—the Continental Divide? You could not change it, and man could not change it, and it will be there for centuries to come.”⁷⁷ Ostensibly, Aspinall was right, though his point was overstated. Natural resource extraction would compromise some of the scenic value of the area along the

⁷⁴ U.S. Congress. Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. “Nationwide System of Trails.” *Congressional Record* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), 34.

⁷⁵ House Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 45.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 19.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 163.

divide, but it would not fundamentally change this 60 million year old creation of geologic uplift.

Asserting that “an improved trail is pretty much a lazy hiker’s ambition,” Aspinall seemed to transfer his literal understanding of wilderness—an area where only the strenuous could enter—to outdoor recreation and hiking as a whole.⁷⁸ In reality, however, his literal association of hiking and wilderness with the pioneer heritage probably served as a convenient, though clichéd, rhetorical device to support his belief that funding recreation, specifically the Continental Divide Trail, would divert government money from more important priorities. To be sure, others praised the values of trails as opportunities to perpetuate strenuousness within individuals. By the time of these deliberations, however, Aspinall seemed like a relic of the bygone reclamation era.⁷⁹ In the era when multiple-use became the credo of the Forest Service and a bureaucracy formed to research recreation patterns and make plans for its increased use, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Aspinall’s sentiments represented a small but vocal minority.

Without the Appalachian Trail’s notoriety and respect as a successful grassroots project, the CDT would probably have not generated enthusiasm. Supporters of the CDT looked confidently to the AT as an affirmation that a trail spanning the spine of the Rocky Mountains, from the Mexican to the Canadian border, was a good idea. Echoing the words of LBJ two years earlier, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall stated at the

⁷⁸ Ibid, 30.

⁷⁹ Steven C. Schulte. *Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2002), X. Aspinall continued to champion economic development at the expense of environmental protection during the 1960s, when the United States underwent an “environmental revolution.” Consequently, Aspinall fell out of favor with his constituents and was defeated in the 1972 primary election.

Subcommittee Hearings on the National Trails Act, “We are really borrowing from the great wisdom of the Appalachian Trail that was started over 40 years ago.”⁸⁰ In the Senate Hearings, Gaylord Nelson similarly stated, “The Appalachian Trail is a great example of what can be done.”⁸¹ When speaking on the value of a continuous trail in the Rocky Mountains, Stanley A. Murray, Chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conference argued that, “The long continuous trail provides a stimulus and a challenge to both the trail club and the user.” In emphasizing the importance of seeing a trail as a cohesive, organic entity, he continued, “I would venture that if the sections of the Appalachian Trail were simply disconnected segments of trail, unbound by a common name, not only would many never have been built but even those built would have fallen into abandonment.”⁸²

The newly-built, sprawling interstate system undoubtedly made continuous areas seem closer when trail proponents argued the merits of a Continental Divide Trail. Using this perspective for criticism, representative Steiger exclaimed that continuity “does not mean anything except the mapmaker will be able to draw an unbroken line....I think we may be obsessed with the highway syndrome in preserving this line of continuity.”⁸³ In belittling the desirability of continuous trails, Senator Allott stated, “It makes a pretty red line.”⁸⁴ With his pragmatic eye, Aspinall asked, “Is there any real necessity of having a continuous trail at the present time, or should we take care of those areas and build in those areas where people want to use them?”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ House Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 23

⁸¹ Senate Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 17.

⁸² House Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 102.

⁸³ Ibid, 62.

⁸⁴ Senate Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 39.

⁸⁵ House Committee on a Nationwide System of Trails, 66.

Widespread support from senators, state representatives, and disparate groups overshadowed the naysayers. Representing the Izaak Walton League, William Fortney wrote a letter about national trails that stated, "It is the Continental Divide Trail which I personally find the most exciting."⁸⁶ Ruth Weiner expressed the Colorado Mountain Club's wholehearted support of the project and credited Gale Kehmeier with mapping the potential route in the state. Despite recent criticisms of outdoor recreation being an elitist pursuit, trail supporters found a staunch and probably unexpected advocate for the CDT in AFL-CIO spokesman, Mike Wallick.⁸⁷ To this group's seemingly peculiar interest, Aspinall rebutted:

You are not in this position because you are an impractical man. I am asking you: Do you want these trails built near the metropolitan areas so that your people can use them, or do you want to have a grandiose scheme to which you give a great deal of publicity.⁸⁸

Wallick rejoined that he did not want to compromise the development of urban trails and optimistically stated:

I just do not feel that we have to make that choice. I think that this is a big country. We have great resources. Our gross national product is constantly growing. We are growing at \$50 billion a year, and I think it is capable of doing all that has to be done to provide for outdoor recreational needs of our people.⁸⁹

Wallick could only speak in generalities about the prospects for such a project, though he did so with the unmitigated enthusiasm for large public works so common at the time. The same proved true with the Forest Service.

⁸⁶ Find

⁸⁷ A number of environmental historians have written about how primitive recreation is almost exclusively enjoyed by the middle/upper classes. See Richard White. "Are You an Environmentalist or do You Work for a Living." *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (W.W. Norton and Company: New York, 1994), 171-185.

⁸⁸ House Committee on a Nationwide System of Trails, 163.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 163.

A “Conspiracy of Optimism”: The Grand, Unplanned Designs of the Forest Service

Throughout the proceedings, Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman, Chief of the Forest Service Edward Cliff, and Assistant Secretary of Agriculture John A. Baker expressed unqualified enthusiasm for the Continental Divide Trail. Looking to the Appalachian Trail as a testament to the benefits of long distance trails, they celebrated the project as an opportunity to “preserve nature’s heritage,”⁹⁰ asserted that this project provided opportunities for “the richest and poorest,”⁹¹ and claimed that it could help the Service’s beleaguered trail system. Moreover, their testimonies seized upon the effusive language that dominated the beautification debate of the day. The transition from an agency established strictly to oversee the use of natural resources and one where foresters sought to fend off “swarming hordes” of recreationists to one promoting its ability to provide the experience of “dawdling barefooted along a farm land,” or “seeing a robin feed its young” was indeed striking.⁹²

The Forest Service lacked the planning to match its high-flown rhetoric. In the House Proceedings, a few individuals, mainly Wayne Aspinall, exposed how woefully unprepared the service was for undertaking the CDT. In so doing, he was prescient in exposing many problems that would hinder the trail for years to come. The consummate pragmatist, he thought the grandiosity of new trails such as the CDT would further undermine the agency’s woeful inability to maintain its existing facilities. He stated to Stewart Udall, “I look with just a little bit of a jaundiced eye on a great program when we

⁹⁰ Senate Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 57.

⁹¹ Ibid, 57.

⁹² House Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 56.

are inclined to slight what we have.⁹³ Aspinall's point was well-founded. With recreation use of the national forests having increased at 11% a year since the end of World War II, the Forest Service's recreation maintenance backlog exceeded \$400,000,000 by 1967.⁹⁴ Moreover, in the previous twenty five years, the agency's usable trail dropped from 120,000 miles to 100,000. Of the usable recreation trails, 73,000 required maintenance. Baker claimed that all of these existing trails would be upgraded in 15 to 20 years at a cost of \$80 million.⁹⁵

Despite embracing the era's abiding faith that a strong centralized government could alleviate social ills, the Forest Service's goal of upgrading all of its existing facilities and creating many new ones proved as elusive as the Johnson Administration's goal to eliminate poverty. With strong, if uncritical, faith that the agency would remedy its recreation woes, its high-level administrators believed that the construction of new trail would help it adjust to the dramatic increases in recreation in the post-war period and the projections for its continued growth. Yet the unqualified praise that representatives gave to the CDT combined with their brief and almost nonchalant mentions of the existing backlog as an easily resolvable problem suggests that the Forest Service wanted to gain attention as a first-rate recreation provider through promoting a grandiose vision rather than focusing on the nuts and bolts ways that it could achieve it. At the same time, no one presented even a cursory plan necessary for the agency to develop the CDT or an overall vision about how it could best improve its recreation program.

With his characteristic pugnacity, Aspinall questioned the estimated figures that the Forest Service presented regarding the expenses required to complete the trail.

⁹³ House Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 29.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 70.

Having not conducted a survey for the trail, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the Forest Service only knew that the trail would fall within a fifty mile east-west corridor. Nonetheless, they stated with confidence that the trail would cost sixteen million dollars to complete. The study predicted that land acquisition for the trail would be shored up in five years for 2.5 million dollars. To this conclusion, Aspinall rebuffed:

You have not had such a massive proposal for easements as I think are necessary for this particular legislation. I suppose that as far as the Continental Divide Trail is concerned, having seen these hikers going up first one point and then down, and then up another and all the way down, that you have got that line right on top of the Continental Divide. You know doggone well that you are not going to traverse the peaks of the Continental Divide. The fact, of course, is you have no survey.⁹⁶

In addition to making these overoptimistic estimates in the preliminary

study, the Forest Service representatives presented only vague ideas for how the construction of new trail or the improvement of existing ones would be accomplished.⁹⁷ In referring to the system as a whole, Secretary of Agriculture

Orville L. Freeman stated:

Making a program such as a nationwide system of trails effective takes State and local initiative, leadership, and planning. The bill would provide for encouraging the kind of participation and cooperation at all levels that will make a nationwide system of trails effective. It will be creative federalism at its best.⁹⁸

Throughout the hearings, other agency employees referred to the need to enlist private sector support—a foundational element of “creative federalism”—to National Trails in general and the Continental Divide Trail specifically.

By the time of these hearings, the Appalachian Trail had over 65 hiking clubs working with the National Park and National Forest Services. At the time of the passage of the National Trails Act, only four clubs that promoted hiking existed in the Rocky

⁹⁶ Ibid, 47.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 68.

⁹⁸ Senate Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 72.

Mountain West—the Colorado Mountain Club, New Mexico Mountaineers, the Rocky Mountaineers of Missoula, and the Rocky Mountain chapter of the Sierra Club in Denver.⁹⁹ Of these organizations, only the Colorado Mountain Club expressed support for the Continental Divide Trail but it had no intention of leading the effort to build the trail. The club’s spokeswoman at these hearings, Ruth Weiner, simply expressed their interest and hopes for the Colorado section. Throughout their eighteen years of development on the Appalachian Trail, Benton MacKaye and later Myron Avery championed the trail through the then newly established ATC and used this organization as an artery to communicate and network with other hiking clubs, which would help build the trail near their home base.

The absence of grassroots support for the CDT made emulation of the AT impossible. Yet throughout these hearings, no one gave even scant mention of the fact that the Rocky Mountain West lacked the large grassroots contingency to help with the trail’s development. Consequently, the Forest Service would long be limited, though they did not seem to recognize this, in their attempts to employ “creative federalism” to the CDT project. The agency had come a long way; foresters no longer tried to fend off the “swarming hordes” but rather sought, sometimes enthusiastically, to accommodate and encourage the use of forestlands. But without private grassroots support to provide leadership and still not fully confident as a recreation provider, the whims of politicians, the apathy of some agency leaders and the decentralized agency structure would compromise and constrain the Forest Service’s ability to develop the largest single recreation project in history.

⁹⁹ Colin Fletcher. *The Complete Walker* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1974, 2nd edition), 448-461.

Chapter 3: Mapping the Divide Trail Alone: Jim Wolf, the Silent Trail, and the

Nearly Forgotten Dream--

The mountaineer looks forward eagerly, gladly, till pass or ridge-crest is gained, and then, turning with a fonder interest, surveys the scene of his march, letting the eye wander over each crag and valley, every blue hollow or pine-land or sunlit gem of alpine meadow... With a lingering look he starts forward, and the closing pass-gate with its granite walls shuts away the retrospect, yet the delightful picture forever hangs on the gallery wall of his memory.--Clarence King

On July 1, 2003, I stood atop a narrow ridgeline near the divide just south of the Anaconda Pintler Wilderness in west-central Montana. Three triangular peaks surrounded a lake about two miles to the north. A pyramid shaped peak, which marked the actual Continental Divide, stood roughly four stone throws away to the northeast. On both sides of me, precipitous talus slopes looked primed for an avalanche. I was supposed to be hiking the Continental Divide Trail, but ironically there I stood without a trail in sight. I had lost the official trail more than a day before and as I looked into the dense forest at the base of the eastward slope, I knew that it would be several more hours before I would relocate the marked trail. The sun had begun its descent to the westward horizon; the southeasterly peak flushed crimson under the glow of the late afternoon light. Resting my pack on a rock for a moment, I bent down to pick up a piece of the gneiss that formed the ridge I stood upon, and steadied the nearby slopes. Holding the rock firmly in my right hand, I traced its smooth contours with my left, wondering how long ago it formed and how it had changed over a span of time barely comprehensible to the human mind. Then, I tossed it down the slope on my right to see what would happen. Luckily, it didn't start an avalanche.

The base of the slope formed one side of a glacially-carved cirque, which encircled Sullivan Lake, the reflection of the divide taking center stage on the shimmering turquoise pool. Fed by snowmelt, the pond narrowed into a meandering creek that gradually faded in the woods, which I had bushwhacked not long before. About two miles downstream, the creek bed disappeared in the foliage, shrouding my



route. Not far to the east, logging roads crisscrossed the landscape, forking every which way. The Continental Divide Trail must have lain on one of them, but which one? Though designated, the trail was unmarked and my rudimentary

orienteeing skills and Jim Wolf's meticulous guide book that I frequently relied upon proved insufficient to keep me on it. After much frustration, I simply improvised my own route.

These sorts of scenarios recurred throughout my five weeks on the Montana portion of the CDT. About 150 miles north of the Anaconda Pintler Wilderness, I lost the trail in Helena National Forest for hours on end, nonetheless certain that I would relocate it by following one of the many Forest Service roads running like latticework across the landscape. In the Bitterroots, near Darkhorse Lake, stray trails led me to steep peaks and ridges, comprised of loose rock at every step. And as I stood on that narrow precipice on July 1 with a spectacular view of rugged peaks gradually fading into the distance, I felt gratified by the incredible opportunity for self-reliance that this poorly-marked and

sometimes nonexistent trail provided. At the same time, these hardships reminded me of a long forgotten promise in a grandiose dream for American outdoor recreation.

That grand model for the national scenic trails, the progenitor of “great wisdom,” the Appalachian Trail, is marked by white blazes spaced on trees one-hundred yards apart, making it virtually impossible for a hiker to get lost. Moreover, shelters are located approximately every seven miles. Consequently, many long distance hikers criticize the AT for being developed to the point that it undermines the need for self-sufficiency, long celebrated by proponents of outdoor recreation. Neither the Forest Service nor the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation wanted this for the Continental Divide Trail. Rather, in accordance with the values espoused by early Forest Service champions of recreation, both agencies wanted a quality *primitive* trail, designed “to the most simple, yet high quality standards for the hiker and horsemen.”¹ Advances in camping equipment during the post-WWII era further decreased the need for infrastructural development, such as shelters, once deemed necessary for overnight travel.²

The National Trails Act, however, never intended for scenic trails to follow roads of any kind, even though having the trail follow them required the least amount of legwork for the Forest Service. Moreover, the legislation intended for these trails to be well-marked. Today, many sections of the CDT remained unmarked, existing only on paper. In the seventeen years following the Forest Service’s seemingly unqualified support for the trail, it did not produce a single related document. Finished in 1985, the

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Report (Washington: Government Printing Office, Sept. 1976)

² See James Morton Turner. “From Woodcraft to Leave No Trace: Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America.” *Environmental History* . Portable stoves, lightweight foam pads, nylon tents, synthetic fabrics, tents, freeze dried meals all became widely available during the late 1960s and 1970s.

Trail's Comprehensive Plan failed to provide the concrete planning, provisions for funding, or the organizational apparatus necessary for the CDT's completion. A far cry from the Forest Service's confident claims during the 1960s that the CDT could be developed painlessly, the Continental Divide Trail was a victim of the trend towards smaller government and the loss of momentum for trails after the passage of the National Trails Act in 1968. It might have been forgotten altogether had it not been for Jim Wolf.

New Exploration Looking West: Jim Wolf and the Continental Divide Trail

In June of 2003, I made a trip to Baltimore to get Jim Wolf's perspective on the CDT's history and its future. A man with thick white hair, bushy eyebrows that protruded over his narrow eyes, and wrinkles that bordered on creases greeted me at the door of a sixth story apartment. At first glance, I could hardly believe someone of this age could still hike long distances along the Divide every summer. He greeted me with firm handshake, solemn pleasantries, upright posture and an offering of coffee, and then dispelled my skepticism about his abilities as he marched to the kitchen with vivacity, purpose, and an air that suggested we did not have a second to lose.

Journals, memoirs, and surveys of western explorers—Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, John Charles Fremont, Zebulon Pike, Ferdinand V. Hayden, Clarence King and many more—filled his bookshelves covering an entire wall of his living room. Alongside them sat memoirs from hikes along the divide, books of maps, and histories of westward exploration. Walking back with a brisk gait, Wolf sat down and handed me my coffee. He was no longer hurried. His gaze fixed, his hands clasped and his speech

inordinately slow, deliberate, and measured, an open vista seemed a more appropriate place for our conversation than a sixth story Baltimore apartment.

At a young age, Benton MacKaye asked the question “Why shouldn’t I, my own self, be an explorer?” as America’s frontier receded into history.³ He proposed a “new exploration” on the personal level of outdoor re-creation and on the societal level of landscape scale planning, known today as bioregional planning. Much of Wolf’s life reflects this vision of exploration, so common among proponents of outdoor recreation throughout the twentieth century. Ever since he was a child, he possessed a consuming interest in maps, confirmed by a well-worn World Atlas sitting on his bookshelf. Wolf fondly recollects childhood experiences of a summer camp in Idaho. He credits a horseback ride through the vast expanses of Yellowstone National Park during his stay for much of his discovered love of the outdoors and the Rocky Mountain West.

Wolf, like so many others, started backpacking during the 1960s. Towards the latter part of the decade, he embarked on trips to the Grand Tetons, the Mission Mountains, the Wind Rivers, and Zion National Park with a group out of Pittsburgh, PA, where he worked as an in-house attorney for the University of Pittsburgh. Hiking the entire Appalachian Trail, a feat never anticipated by MacKaye or other earlier supporters of the trail, became common around this same time as backpacking gear became lighter and Americans enjoyed more leisure time. After meeting with legendary AT champion and hiker, Ed Garvey, in 1970, Wolf decided to hike the trail in 1971 as an opportunity to “play with maps and be outdoors.”⁴

³ Larry Anderson. *Benton MacKaye: Planner, Conservationist, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1.

⁴ Interview with Jim Wolf, Baltimore, MD, June 11, 2003. Notes in my position.

Today, he refers to his 1971 AT hike as an “enriching” and “life-changing” experience.⁵ It inspired Wolf’s interest in long distance trails, specifically the proposed CDT. Concerned with the lethargic pace of activity under the National Trails System Act, he decided that he “could be of assistance by taking some initiative and going and seeing what is there.”⁶ Proclaiming himself a “fanatic in studying the character of a trail,” Wolf contacted the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation about his intent to hike, map, and write guidebooks of the entire trail over a course of a few years.⁷ The Bureau responded enthusiastically and Wolf set out to hike and map the Montana section of the trail during the summer of 1973.



During the summers of 1974-1976, Wolf spent at least two months hiking along the divide, covering most of the Montana and Wyoming. He once stated, “My motivation for writing these books is to reduce this idea from an abstract notion to something you can sink your teeth into.”⁸ Wolf undoubtedly achieved this goal. His guidebooks refer to even the smallest landmarks that the hiker can use so as not to get lost. Because I always seek a sort of transcendental inspiration from nature, I prodded him for journal entries from his first years on the trail, hoping for a few of his own deeper ruminations. But in his words, these entries “do not have many interesting thoughts.” Rather than a template

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ U.S. Congress. House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. “Oversight on the National Trails System Act of 1968.” *Congressional Record* 94th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977), 133.

⁷ Letter from Jim Wolf to Regional Director of Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Mid-Centent Region (unnamed). 3 September 1972. In possession of Jim Wolf in Baltimore, Maryland.

⁸ McCormack, Bruce. “Hiker Envisions Divide Trail.” Rawlins (Wyoming) *The Daily Time*, 14 August 1976, 18 (B).

for transcendental reflection, for Wolf, landscapes provide an intricate puzzle that that he pieces into his guidebooks with a meticulous eye.

A Lone Voice Trying to Be Heard

Wolf's detailed knowledge of the Divide earned him the position as the trail's de facto spokesperson, though he often had to nudge the Forest Service to make his voice heard. In 1976, he heard that the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation would hold hearings on the proposed CDT. He contacted members of the committee and was allowed to speak before it. His testimony evoked the spirit of hikers and backpackers throughout the century:

That is to say, it [backpacking] contributes to most of the development of an individual's personality, his character, his soul, his sense of relationship to nature and the land. I think that is really underlying all of the discussion we have had today, which really is the heart of this program and what makes it so worthwhile.⁹

Despite this enthusiasm, he humbly conceded:

I feel a certain distance from the land, a feeling that although I shared an ecological sensibility but I did not have the kind of identification with nature that I thought would really make me a convincing spokesman and a true believer as someone who can speak from the heart.¹⁰

As I listened to him express his detailed and expansive knowledge of the trail without any semblance of effusiveness, I could see how this role would be difficult for him despite his obvious passion for the trail

This admission notwithstanding, Wolf's efforts constituted the only non-governmental support for the CDT for over twenty years. After publishing two guide books on the Trail in Montana and Idaho in 1976 and 1979, Wolf established the Continental Divide Trail Society in 1980. Soliciting the observations and insights of

⁹ Oversight on the National Trails System Act of 1968, 134.

¹⁰ Ibid, 134.

other hikers of the CDT (which there are still few), Wolf produces, publishes, and disseminates the Society's newsletter, *Dividends*, which informs members about trail conditions, elaborates on issues affecting trail placement and development, and recognizes long distance hikers who have either hiked or plan to hike the trail. Although the society has never held a formal gathering nor promoted volunteer efforts to construct or maintain the CDT, Wolf insists, somewhat idiosyncratically, on using "we" to describe the organization's activities.

The CDT quickly became Wolf's consuming passion. In 1975, he began working as an attorney for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, where he gained an insider perspective on the red tape that beleaguers many large governmental projects. Thus, he no longer laments the slow push to develop the entire CDT, nor does he fault the Forest Service for not acting more quickly to finish it. He stated:

I do not criticize the Forest Service for taking as long as it has. I think it is perfectly reasonable to expect them to take their time, get to know the people, learn the pros and cons. We have a trail that was designated in 1978 and we are not there yet. Well so what? I think that making progress towards that goal is all that can be expected.¹¹

More industrious than most, Wolf often speaks of the CDT's lack of development as an opportunity for the hiker to rely on his or her own wits, ingenuity, and hardiness.¹² But supporters of the trail within the Forest Service desired a well-developed trail that would attract numerous hikers, not just long distance ones. The scarcity of other hikers along the trail during my hike in Helena, Beaverhead, Deerlodge, and Bitterroot National Forests at the height of summer backpacking season made it clear that this simply did not happen.

¹¹ Interview with Jim Wolf, June 12, 2004. Notes in my possession

¹² Ibid.

Working through Red Tape and Complacency

As Wolf mapped the Montana portion of the trail, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation worked on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Continental Divide Trail, which it completed in 1973. The EIS concluded that effective management could mitigate the trail's minimal impact—mainly soil erosion and litter—on surrounding lands. The Bureau solicited opinions from interested groups and individuals—governors, recreation organizations, environmental organizations, natural resource industry. While opinions differed regarding development regulation, and they did not all agree as to what rules should govern trail use and developed, no one expressly opposed the trail's creation, in large part because so little of it (an estimated 424 miles) would require easements from land owners.

Echoing the sentiments of Wayne Aspinall six years earlier, Clifton Merritt, representing the Wilderness Society in a 1973 letter to the Bureau, provided sage criticism of the Forest Service's recreation record and skepticism about the agency's ability to undertake such an ambitious project. He contended:

Considering the present management policies of the Forest Service, we question how the Forest Service can handle such a task. Not only will the Forest Service need proper funding for the trail projects, but it will need new direction for adequate funding and vigorous management for all outdoor recreation programs. Priorities must be realigned to make outdoor recreation a more viable product of "multiple use." The Forest Service must move away from the commodity-oriented single-use of timber cutting.¹³

Such criticisms of the Forest Service's recreation program would only intensify over the next thirty years. Just three years later, in 1976, Robert Lucas, a recreation

¹³ Department of the Interior (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation). *The Continental Divide Trail: A Potential Addition to the National Trails System. Final Environmental Impact Statement* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), 124.

specialist for the Forest Service, made a general yet scathing critique of the agency's failure to prioritize trails. He lamented:

For the hiker, places to hike are as vital as wilderness is to the grizzly bear... Yet, unless we begin to protect existing hiking trails and provide new ones to cope with projected demands, the hiker faces a grim future—more and more hikers will have fewer places to hike. If the current neglect continues, perhaps one day a manikind complete with waffle stompers and pack will stand alongside our passenger pigeon, great auk, and other extinct species. The American hiker will have passed into history.¹⁴

Higher priority trails—mainly those near population centers—undoubtedly suffered as well. But given the Forest Service's optimistic prognostications for the CDT's development along with other trails, it was indicative of this broader agency shortcoming. Red tape, the Forest Service's stubbornness to change and eventual transformations in America's political landscape further retarded its development.

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's study report, completed in 1976, refused to make statements about the trail's ultimate desirability for this would be left to the Forest Service.¹⁵ The study hailed scenic trails, such as the CDT, asserting:

These extended routes would provide trail access to large areas of our Nation and to large numbers of our population. They would be a stimulus for, and the major axis of, an extensive network of trails branching out to our most attractive lands, calling attention and urging us to make wise use of our rich natural heritage.¹⁶

Furthermore, it declared:

This linear pathway, managed and administered within the guidelines for national scenic trails as established by Congress and Executive directive, would further our national goal of promoting public enjoyment and appreciation of our scenic outdoor areas.¹⁷

Feasibility considerations included the ability to develop the CDT, public safety matters, environmental concerns—erosion and litter—and the economic gains (mainly in service sector in communities along the CDT but also in the outdoor retail

¹⁴ James Udall. "Downhill from Here?" *Wilderness Magazine*, Vol. 51, No. 181 (Summer, 1988), 44.

¹⁵ United States Department of the Interior (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation). *Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Report*. (Government Printing Office: Washington DC, 1977), p. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

industry) that the trail would produce compared to the expenses of building and maintaining it.¹⁸ The Forest Service would determine desirability by weighing and evaluating the trail's relationship to other priorities—a complex prospect for the Forest Service, an agency where the mandate for recreational development remained unclear, even in the “Multiple Use” era when agency leaders like Lucas forewarned about neglecting trails.

Since Aldo Leopold, Benton MacKaye, and Bob Marshall championed their ideas of wilderness during the 1920s, champions of primitive recreation had harped on precluding motorized use. Lyndon Johnson clearly expressed that scenic trails would serve as a refuge from the motorcar. When Stuart Udall was asked if he intended to allow bicycle and motorized use on the proposed CDT, he emphatically rejoined, “No indeed. That will be for hikers and horseback riders.”¹⁹ In corresponding with Udall over the wording of the legislation of a potential trails bill, Benton MacKaye cautioned:

A word of warning, one based on forty years of struggle with the obvious. Let us not get lost in the treacherous woods of semantics. Let us be sure that we know what we want. We say we want a “Trail.” But what's that? Unless agreed by all, from the very start, that a foot trail is what we want then we want nothing to do with the enterprise herein contemplated. And foot trail for foot, and not for any size or sort of vehicle on wheels.²⁰

Probably concerned with how the trail would fall into the “multiple use” credo, the Bureau Report, however, advised including 424 miles of primitive road rights-of-way, allowing ranchers to use the trail “occasionally to take salt, etc., to his stock summering in the forest.”²¹ The contributors to the study report could not see the proliferation of

¹⁸ Ibid, 2.

¹⁹ House Hearings on a Nationwide System of Trails, 30.

²⁰ Benton MacKaye. “Of Wilderness Trails and Areas.” From Benton MacKaye Papers Dartmouth University. Also in possession of MacKaye's biographer Larry Anderson.

²¹ Study Report, 10.

ATV use on public lands in the decades to come. But by straying from the intent of scenic trails, they sowed the seeds for future user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreationists. On my hike on the CDT in Montana in the summer of 2003, I saw more ATV users than hikers. Today, many trail advocates continue to push for a non-motorized trail.

The Bureau's study also included generic guidelines for the trail's development. It proposed vesting the secretary of agriculture with overall responsibility for the trail's administration. Yet it also proposed delegating authority over the different sections of the trail to regional land managers—mainly chief foresters—in order to mitigate local conflicts surrounding the trail and localities. The fact that the potential route crossed three national parks, 26 national forests, BLM land in five states—New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana—and over 400 miles of private land, made this approach understandable. But without specific suggestions as to how the secretary of agriculture should coordinate trail development with individual foresters or specific goals for the trail's progress, the trail would be completely dependent on the interests and efforts of local foresters, not legal or agency directives. Champions of recreation within the Forest Service had long warned of leaving recreation development to the whims of local foresters, most of whom had traditionally not sympathized with recreation.

Despite ambiguities surrounding the trail's development, on March 6 1978, Congress designated the CDT a National Scenic Trail. The text of the legislation echoed Arch White's statements, the champion of the Colorado Mountain Club's Rocky Mountain Trail, and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation during the 1960s, hailing the

recreation opportunities that the Continental Divide Trail would provide.²² Yet as with other trails, commitment to the Continental Divide Trail proved tenuous despite appraisals of the trail's potential value.

Feel Good Legislation: Paper Trails and the CDT

On September 22, 1980, the House of Representatives deliberated on the “Omnibus Trails Act”—an amendment to the National Trails Act that provided for assistance to trail volunteers and added seven new trails to the national system, the Shawnee, Santa Fe, Chisholm, Western, Potomac Heritage, Natchez Trace and Florida National trails. Since the passing of the National Trails Act, the scene had become familiar: Congress designated new trails without providing any direction or funding for their completion.

Acknowledging the problem, Keith Sebelius, a representative of Kansas, observed:

We are indeed deeply in the rut of creating ‘paper trails’—good stuff on paper, but fairly worthless on the ground where they really count....Indeed, we are preoccupied with the glamour of designating and creating new stuff, but are unwilling to make the stuff work well that we created. The attitude of general non-interest and low priority attention to the trails system by all administrations since the 1968 inception of the trails system act has also constituted a significant part of the overall problem.²³

No one responded to Sebelius's insights and, as it had become routine, members of the house continued to hash out more “paper trails.”

By 1980 the Continental Divide Trail was the archetypal paper trail of the system. Twelve years after the National Scenic Trails Act proposed that the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation conduct the trail study, not one mile of the remaining 1200 had been developed. The hope expressed by Benton MacKaye that the proposed trail would create

²² U.S. Congress. Senate. *Congressional Record*. Vol. 124, No. 5. 95th Congress, Second Session. 6 March, 1978. 5663.

²³ U.S. Congress. House. “Omnibus National Trails Act.” *Congressional Record*. Volume 126 Part 20. 96th Congress Second Session. September 22, 1980. 26465.

a grassroots constituency of hiking clubs that would find it “more fun to make a trail than to walk it” did not pan out, making the Forest Service’s “creative federalism” untenable.²⁴ Jim Wolf’s Maryland-based Continental Divide Trail Society provided the only private support for pushing the trail’s planning committee to finish the trail. Yet Wolf never intended his organization to participate in trail building and the Forest Service did not eagerly seek his expertise on trail-related issues. When the Forest Service initially formed the advisory council for the CDT in 1979, it did not even include Wolf, although he eventually found a place on it after contacting Rupert Cutler, the assistant secretary of the Department of Agriculture.²⁵

The advisory council, which met for the first time on June 3 of 1980, demonstrated a concerted effort by the Forest Service to solicit opinions of all interested parties, save hikers. Led by the regional forester for the Rocky Mountain Region, Craig Rupp, it included the Montana Wilderness Association, the Sierra Club, Backcountry Horsemen of Colorado, Colorado State ORV, and several academics from universities throughout the Intermountain West. Les Scharnberg, who hiked the entire proposed trail in 1979, was the only CDT hiker besides Wolf included on the council.

After another meeting in January of 1981, the advisory council went a year without meeting, then three more. They started afresh with a largely new committee in 1984. Again, Wolf was one of two hikers the Forest Service appointed to the council. The other, Gudy Gaskill, spearheaded the development of the Colorado Trail—a Colorado Mountain Club project—but, while not antagonistic to the idea of a Continental Divide Trail, she did not actively promote or endorse the CDT. At the time, Wolf

²⁴ “Of Wilderness Trails and Areas,” 3.

²⁵ Interview with Jim Wolf, June 13, 2004.

repeatedly expressed frustrations with the Forest Service's efforts in his newsletter. The February 1985 issue complained, "The Forest Service continues to sit on the comprehensive management plan for the Trail—now more than three years overdue! It's time to shake it loose."²⁶ The September newsletter reiterated, "The Forest Service continues to drag its heels on developing the CDT. The Comprehensive Plan is long overdue, the Advisory Council does not meet, most of the individual forest plans fail to deal meaningfully with issues of route location and protection."²⁷

The Forest Service at last completed the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan in 1985, more than four years after the projected date. The plan showed much greater interest in upholding the antiquated status quo of the Forest Service than in developing an imaginative or even practicable plan for the trail's development. The plan took every opportunity to insist that the National Trail Designation did not grant it protection from traditional land uses, such as mining and timber extraction. This is best revealed by one of the three listed principal factors for managing the trail. It reads,

The Continental Divide Trail is a people's trail. A trail would facilitate, but not dictate, the opportunity for the recreation user to actively experience the magnificent variety of landscapes, natural phenomenon, prehistoric and historic actions of humans, and current uses of the resource rich backbone of America.²⁸

The plan later declared that clearcuts within view of the trail would not diminish the trail experience. After my hike in Helena National Forest, where the trail crosses landscapes more closely resembling tree farms than the nation's finest scenic resources, I could not disagree more.

²⁶ Jim Wolf Ed. *Dividends*. Biannual Newsletter of the Continental Divide Trail Society. February 1985.

²⁷ Jim Wolf Ed. Biannual Newsletter of the Continental Divide Trail Society. September 1985.

²⁸ United States Department of Agriculture. *Continental Divide Comprehensive Plan* (USDA Forest Service: Rocky Mountain Region, 1985), 30.

While the plan designated the Chief Forester as head of the trail's development, it followed the recommendations of the 1976 study report and maintained the agency's decentralized approach



by making regional foresters responsible for all the decisions regarding the trail within their respective forests. The framework for coordination between the chief forester and individual forest districts was, again, tenuous at best. Thus leadership remained virtually nonexistent. Additionally, the plan did not outline the necessary steps for the trail's development beyond general planning. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's Study Report (1976) had estimated that the trail would cost \$26 million. It declared:

Were the establishment of the trail to receive authorization without funding above and beyond current funding levels it would not be possible to develop the route to sound criteria nor to adhere to the necessary high standards of operation and maintenance.²⁹

Plainly stating that no funds would be allocated for the trail, the Comprehensive Plan ignored the Forest Service's earlier claims that the agency could and would fund the trail.³⁰ On most every count, the Comprehensive Plan (1985) failed to deal with proscriptive steps towards developing the trail. Consequently, though Jim Wolf and a

²⁹ Study Report, 13.

³⁰ Comprehensive Report,

small cadre of others continued to hike the largely undeveloped Trail, it witnessed no substantive development over the next nine years.

A Cultural Dilemma: Recreation's Uphill Battle in the Forest Service and the Downsizing of the Federal Government

Despite the many champions of recreation within the Forest Service, the agency's timber-oriented culture, largely derived from the paucity of recreation professionals and inept fiscal policies, explains the Forest Service's lackadaisical effort to develop the CDT.

In 1979, Roy Feutcher, the Director of Recreation Management, asserted:

Foresters are generally timber oriented, not people oriented. Timber pays the freight in most wildland management activities. Lack of recreation values exists everywhere, including within the Forest Service. I think the biggest job is to convince wildland managers, not the public of the value of outdoor recreation.³¹

One year later, the Chief of the Forest Service, R. Max Peterson, analyzed the problem:

“We've trained a cadre of experts in silviculture for decades. Not so with natural resource recreation managers. We need to produce a cadre of recreation specialists to develop a technical base for planning and management and put it to use.”³²

The inept fiscal policies of the Forest Service have somehow proven long resistant to reform. While forest managers keep timber receipts for logging on their forests, the appropriations for infrastructure necessary to accommodate timber operations come from the Chief Forester in Washington D.C. Thus while the entire Forest Service sells timber at a loss, individual foresters benefits from maintaining a status quo that promotes below cost timber sales.³³ On the other hand, foresters channel recreation receipts (where fees are collected) back through Washington D.C, thereby depriving regional foresters of the

³¹ Michael Frome. *The Forest Service* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 152.

³² *Ibid*, 153.

³³ Randal O'Toole. *Reforming the Forest Service* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1987), 197.

economic benefits of recreation use within their forests.³⁴ This fact, coupled with the agency's decentralization, swallows the impetus for prioritizing recreation. Moreover, while the sum economic benefits of utilizing National Forests for recreation far outweigh benefits derived from timber, regional foresters do not see these benefits, which stay within private sectors such as tourism and recreation industries.³⁵

The Reagan Administration's pro extraction agenda and disdain for large federal programs further complicated the development of the plan. As the Forest Service stumbled towards developing its Comprehensive Plan for the CDT, the Reagan administration demanded that individual National Forests redraw their forest plans to meet new "streamlining" requirements that would essentially cut much of the red tape that stood between timber companies and their product.³⁶ This system was indicative of Reagan era deregulations, often associated with the infamous Secretary of the Interior James Watt who expressed a desire to give much of the public domain to individual states, a tide running against the trend towards greater protection of the public lands over the previous twenty years. This recoil shattered ten years of a bipartisan environmental consensus.³⁷

Forming new plans also took time and money. At the same time, the economic recession of the early 1980s hit the timber market, forcing the government to buy back contracts until midway through the decade. These two factors, coupled with Reagan's downsizing of the federal government, decreased the Forest Service's disposable funds. While funding for timber production remained steady, amenity and environmental

³⁴ Ibid, 210

³⁵ Ibid..

³⁶ Ibid, 23-24.

³⁷ Hal Rothman. *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 169-174.

programs took the brunt of the cutbacks.³⁸ The Reagan Administration completely blocked grants to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, forcing states, counties, and cities to reduce recreation programs.³⁹ In 1981, James Watt announced the abolition of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, formerly the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, which had, to that time, provided the most contributions towards the Trail's progress.⁴⁰ The Administration also proposed turning recreation management over to commercial entrepreneurs.⁴¹ Consequently, recreation funds dropped precipitously, barely receiving one half of the agency budget targets set in 1980.⁴² Yet the Reagan Administration cut the budgets for parks and recreation by nearly one-third, the numbers of Americans who participated in outdoor recreation ballooned throughout the 1980s.⁴³

A Forgotten Promise: The Erosion of Recreational Trails

These trends exacerbated the Forest Service's traditional neglect of recreation trails. In 1989, the poor state of America's trails prompted a subcommittee report for the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs on maintenance and reconstruction backlogs on national forest trails.⁴⁴ The report asserted that the fluctuating budgets throughout the 1980s prevented the Forest Service from hiring subcontractors to maintain, repair, or

³⁸ Paul W. Hirt. *The Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests since World War Two* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 267-269.

³⁹ Frome, 143.

⁴⁰ Robert W. Douglass. *Forest Recreation* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 57.

⁴¹ Frome, 143.

⁴² *Ibid*, 267-269. In 1974 Congress passed the Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA). This act demanded that the Forest Service develop long range multiple use plans where the agency would draw up a target budget for the next five years. 243.

⁴³ Leslie Albrecht Popiel. "Businesses Push Conservation." *The Christian Science Monitor*. April 13, 1994.

⁴⁴ Do it.

construct trails.⁴⁵ It highlighted the fact that the Forest Service possessed 106,750 miles of usable trails, down from its peak of 145,000 in 1945.⁴⁶ Of those 106,750 miles, the report concluded that more than 59,000 needed repair or complete reconstruction at a cost of \$155 million.⁴⁷ Twenty-six thousand of these miles, requiring \$94 million in upkeep, fell within the Northern, Rocky Mountain, and Southwestern Regions, home of the Continental Divide. Wayne Aspinall's comment that he looked on grandiose projects with a "jaundiced eye" when the Service could not fund existing ones now seemed prescient; the Forest Service had not delivered on its grandiose plans for a Continental Divide Trail, nor had it successfully maintained existing trails.

Cutting the Ribbon and Looking Ahead

But the Continental Divide Trail existed on paper. And on June 21, 1989, the Forest Service officially dedicated the Montana-Idaho portion of it at Chief Joseph Pass in the Bitterroot National Forest of Montana. Appropriately, Wolf was the only non-government employee who spoke during the ceremony. After the opening and one other speaker, Wolf took the podium. He conveyed his passion for the landscape and the trail:

The backbone of North America, the Continental Divide is the world of mountains, forests, grassland and desert. Its scenery is grand and often inspiring, its wildlife and flowers exceedingly diverse, its landmarks reminders of the country's turbulent history. The idea of a foot trail close to the Continental Divide has excited the imagination of hikers for years. The trail would pass through some of the most beautiful and wild country in the nation and would help to meet the growing demands of backpackers for paths stretching hundreds and thousands of miles.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ U.S. Congress. House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. "Parks and Recreation: Maintenance and Reconstruction Backlog on National Forest Trails." (Washington: General Accounting Office, 1989), 22.

⁴⁶ Subcommittee Report, 8.

⁴⁷ Subcommittee, 20.

⁴⁸ Continental Divide Trail Dedication Ceremony. "Remarks of James R. Wolf." June 21, 1989. Copy of speech in possession of Wolf.

After emphasizing the need to get “greater enthusiasm and involvement from the folks who live nearby,” he continued, “First, there must be strong leadership; someone must set the goal to make the CDT a reality and apply whatever may be required to bring it about.”⁴⁹ Since mapping the potential route in the 1970s, Wolf acknowledged that his reserved disposition made him uncomfortable in any sort of promotional role for the trail. But as he cut the red ribbon to cap the dedication ceremony, he could not have anticipated the leadership that would soon emerge to push the trail’s development forward. It would undoubtedly push the CDT towards becoming a physical reality. At the same time, it would both marginalize his role and raise fundamental questions about the future of America’s public lands.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

**--Chapter 4:
From a “Retreat from Profit” to a Corporate Stake in the Trail: The Continental
Divide Trail and the Transformation of the American Recreation Trail--**

There are not too many places left in our world that are not commercialized. It’s important not to lose that.
--Jim Wolf

Going after private money is the only way this is going to happen. --Bruce Ward, Director of the
Continental Divide Trail Alliance

Sitting atop Pintler Pass in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, the sound of trekking poles broke my contemplative silence. Click, click, click, click; as it came closer, I could hear footsteps within this rhythmic procession. A white hat emerged from the horizon; a body followed. This man’s features looked more familiar the nearer he came, those of a seasoned hiker: sinewy calves, stringy arms and a hollowed face covered by a beard. The young woman who followed behind him walked briskly to keep pace.

I greeted them with the standard hiker’s greeting, “So where are you coming from?” He held his stare toward East Pintler Peak to the north for a second before looking at me and then responding, “Canada.”

“Are you through hikers?” He and his companion put down their packs as he responded to my question.

“We started at Glacier on June 23. When did you start? Are you hiking the whole trail?”

He continued rummaging through his pack as I told him about my hike. They had a clear routine: put down the pack, open it, find food and eat it.

Bernie “Wayfarin Bern” Whitaker and Stacey “Enchanted Wart” Mathews ate their granola bars ravenously as we traded hiking tips, stories and email addresses. “You really should consider one of these MSR, titanium lightweight pots.

It only weighs three ounces,” he stated emphatically. I could get one at the cost of sixty dollars—a seemingly absurd price for a camping pot. Bernie continued to point to various space-saving and weight-reducing items, such as his frameless ultra-light pack, a space blanket, a lightweight tarp and ground pad. By comparison, I felt like a relic. While I had recently bought a lightweight Sierra Designs tent and a variety of other accessories, my well-worn Kelty backpack was practically falling apart at the seams.

Speaking of his quest for finding comfort through acquiring the appropriate gear, Bernie continually repeated, “It’s all about getting your mind, body and spirit in sync.” A strange irony—getting in the right frame of mind through having the right stuff. Indeed, turn-of-the-twentieth century proponents of the wilderness tramp found motivation in escaping the world of stuff, the world of consumer and material culture where the quest for the almighty dollar, they believed, reigned supreme over everything else. Benton MacKaye once called the camp community “a sanctuary and refuge from the scramble of everyday worldly commercial life.”¹ In speaking of tramping, Vachel Lindsay, a poet near the turn of the twentieth century, ruminated, “Only the deserts and mountains of America can break the business hardened skulls of the East...the source of the American spirit is in the mountains of the West.”²

Today outdoor recreation is a booming business; the \$300 worth of new gear in my backpack—a tent, poncho, and stove—and \$150 dollar shoes on my feet exposed my susceptibility to this trend. But as a more educated connoisseur of gear, Bernie reminded me of how David Brooks conveyed the gear industry’s transformation of outdoor

¹ Larry Anderson. *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Baltimore: John’s Hopkins University Press, 2002), 146.

² Stephen Graham. *Tramping with a Poet in the Rockies* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1922), 35.

recreation in his 2000 book, *Bobos in Paradise*, observing the clientele of an REI store. Brooks wrote, “Nature used to mean wildness, abandon, Dionysian lustfulness. But here was a set of people who went out into nature carefully, who didn’t want to upset the delicate balance, who studied their options, prepared and trained.”³

I cannot begin to count the number of conversations that centered around comparisons of gear and apparel during my through-hike of the Appalachian Trail in 2001. People would begin their hike equipped with new state-of-the-art gear—thermal underwear, ultra light weight tents, space blankets....the list goes on—that cost them upwards of \$1500 to \$2000. I knew one hiker with the trail name “Gadget” who wrote two months worth of turgid online journal, almost all of which focused on his daily ruminations and ponderings about what gear he lacked and wanted, before the start of his AT through hike.

The backpacking boom was concurrent with the outdoor recreation industry’s ascendance in the late 1960s. By the mid-1970s, the industry comprised a \$400 million market.⁴ Today, with such household names as REI, Patagonia, Sierra Designs, The North Face, Jansport, MSR, and many more, outdoor recreation is a multi-billion dollar industry. In 1999 the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America (ORCA), estimated that the sales of human-powered outdoor recreation products exceeded \$17.9 billion dollars, with \$374 million coming from the sales of hiking footwear alone.⁵ The outdoor

³ David Brooks. *Bobo’s in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 215.

⁴ James Morton Turner. “From Woodcraft to Leave no Trace: Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America.” *Environmental History*, 475.

⁵ U.S. Congress: House Resources Committee. “Statement of Bruce Ward, Executive Director, Continental Divide Trail Alliance.” 18 May 2001. From <http://www.resourcescommittee.house.gov>.

recreation industry is illustrative of consumerism's pervasive influence, even on facets of life that long valued rhetorical positions against it.

Filling the Void: The CDTA and the Growing Influence of the Private Sector on Public Lands

The Comprehensive Plan for the Continental Divide Trail emphasized that, "The perception and character of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail has been evolutionary in nature, and undoubtedly will continue to be so."⁶ Today, this evolution provides an example of the growing influence of consumerism, mainly via the "gear" industry, in outdoor recreation. The Forest Service's early inability to develop an interested constituency for the CDT and its perennial difficulty in funding recreation left a void in the leadership necessary to make the CDT a physical reality. That leadership came in the development of the Continental Divide Trail Alliance (CDTA). Relying largely on private funding, much of which comes from the thriving outdoor recreation industry, this organization has achieved tremendous success in building and reconstructing the CDT, garnering Congressional support for it, and fomenting a previously nonexistent grassroots constituency. With dependence on corporate benefactors, however, the CDT is now a far cry from the "retreat from profit" that MacKaye envisioned as foundational for the long distance trail.

From Forgotten Promises to a Transformed Perspective: Recreation and the Forest Service

⁶ United States Department of Agriculture: Forest Service. *Continental Divide Trail Comprehensive Plan* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), 6.

As outdoor recreation and hiking continued to grow in popularity into the 1990s, the maintenance backlog on public trails continued to increase. In 1995 the Deputy Chief of the Forest Service, Gray F. Reynolds, appeared before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. He warned, “Without adequate resources, especially to service our recreation maintenance backlog that now exceeds \$1 billion, the Forest Service will not be able to continue a quality recreation program.”⁷ That same year the Agriculture Department’s Undersecretary of Natural Resources avowed, “Timber is not the agenda of the future. Recreation is. If aesthetic appreciation of nature is deemed a facet of recreation, then recreation is the most frequent, if not dominant, land use of federal lands.”⁸ In 1998, Jim Lyons, the Director of the Forest Service, called the Forest Service the “Microsoft” of outdoor recreation—an ironic characterization given the Service’s increased reliance on private funding of recreation projects. He asserted that “Looking towards the 21st century, recreation is our future.”⁹

The acknowledgement of the agency’s longstanding difficulties of maintaining and developing recreation facilities and the trend towards smaller government prompted the Forest Service to seek new solutions for maintenance and development beginning in the late 1980s. But unlike the grassroots-federal-state cooperation, referred to as “creative federalism” during the 1960s, the Forest Service now looked to private industry to address its recreation and trail maintenance backlog. The agency 1988 “National Recreation Strategy” declared, “We want investors to seek us out as attractive

⁷ U.S. Congress: House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. “‘Visitor Improvements and Outdoor Legacy Act of 1995’: Testimony Gary Reynolds, Deputy Chief of the Forest Service.” *Federal Document Clearing House*. 3 August 1995.

⁸ Jan G. Laitos and Thomas A. Carr. “The Transformation of Public Lands.” *Ecology Law Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 140 (Spring, 1999), 10.

⁹ Steve Steubner. “Trail Politics: Is the Forest Service the ‘Microsoft’ of the Recreation World?” *Continental Divide Trail News*, Vol. 3, Issue 2. (Spring, 1998), 8.

opportunities to provide quality service while realizing a reasonable return.”¹⁰ Similarly, a 1992 interagency document report read, “The mission of the Forest Service is to provide for recreation by attracting private capital.”¹¹ This direction, which began during the Reagan Administration, led to the establishment of the National Forest Foundation (NFF) in 1990. This quasi-private organization spearheads recreational facility development, conservation and fire management efforts through private funding.¹²

Three years after the establishment of the NFF, Elizabeth Estill, the regional forester for the Rocky Mountain Region, approached then vice chairman of the NFF, Steve Fausel, about establishing an organization to spearhead the development of the Continental Divide Trail. Then President of the American Hiking Society, Bruce Ward and his wife Paula, a landscape architect, wanted to move to the West. While in DC, Fausel met with a number of people for ideas on the CDT. Having read Karen Berger and Dan Smith’s memoir about their through hike on the CDT, *Where the Waters Divide*, Bruce and Paula heard were intrigued with the CDT. After hearing about Fausel’s inquiries, they put together their proposal for spearheading the new organization. Fausel was impressed and decided to grant the Ward’s the opportunity to blaze the path towards making the CDT a physical reality.

Interlude: The Power of Conveying Place

Before Berger and Smith finished *Where the Waters Divide*, only three other writers had written memoirs about their hikes along the Continental Divide. Eric and Tim Ryback

¹⁰ Tom Quinn. *Public Lands and Private Recreation Enterprise: Policy Issues from a Historical Perspective*. (Pacific Northwest Research Station: United States Forest Service, 2002), 23.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 23.

¹² <http://www.natlforests.org>. This is the National Forest Foundation webpage.

co-wrote (though most of it was written by the older Eric) the not-so-unassumingly titled book, *The Ultimate Journey*. While the authors include some vivid descriptions of the Divide, the book largely fails to move beyond self-aggrandizing reveries.¹³ In 1981, Michael Robbins wrote *High Country Trail: Along the Continental Divide*, a book with excellent photographs and descriptions of both the landscape and communities adjacent to the Divide, but lacking the literary flair to thoroughly engage most readers. Steven Pern, an Englishman, wrote an irreverent account of his 1989 hike, *The Great Divide*, in which he never spares an opportunity to deride anyone he encounters.¹⁴

Of these books, Berger and Smith's is clearly the best. This husband and wife team's lyrical narrative fluidly weaves reflections of their experiences with the history of settlements along the Divide. Its vivid descriptions leave an indelible impression; it played no small part in making the CDT an obsession of mine. Hence, I can see how the Wards, inspired by the Divide's majesty and the opportunity to trammel new terrain, jumped at the opportunity to reinvigorate the push towards making it a physical reality.

Getting Things Underway for a New Non-Profit

In collaboration with the Foundation, the Wards drew up a general plan for the trail's development with the subtitle: "The Nation's Next Great Trail!" It emphasized what had become apparent given the exorbitant recreation and trail maintenance backlog, much of which was concentrated in higher demand areas: completion of the trail would require private funding. The Foundation's proposal for the development of the CDT explained :

The basic problem is that the rate of construction and improvements is too slow to meet

¹³ Eric and Tim Ryback. *The Ultimate Journey* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1973).

¹⁴ Stephen Pern. *The Great Divide: A Walk Through America Along the Continental Divide* (Penguin Books: New York, 1987).

the time lines of legislation. The Forest Service is making a good faith effort to complete the trail, and to do so without seriously compromising our responsibilities for other trails, we are seeking financial help from non-federal partners.¹⁵

Described as a “public/private endeavor” that would combine corporate and grassroots support, the new organization could utilize the vibrant outdoor recreation industry as a stalwart for sponsorships.¹⁶

After drawing up a plan for the trail’s development, the Wards approached Merrill Hastings, Jr., a magazine publisher who also chaired the committee that landed the 1980 Winter Olympics in Colorado before Governor Richard Lamm’s controversial and highly-publicized decision to turn down the Olympic Committee. Of particular interest to the Wards, in 1972 Hastings had conceptualized the Colorado Trail and then successfully acquired a \$300,000 startup grant from the Gates Foundation to begin work on it.¹⁷ In June 1994, Bruce Ward introduced himself to Hastings at National Trails Day in Denver. After agreeing to serve on the Board of Directors where he would soon become chairman, Hastings with the Wards approached the Gates Foundation about attaining a grant for the new non-profit and received \$50,000. As it started to accrue such significant capital, the new organization was well underway.

His experience as president of the American Hiking Society made Bruce Ward acutely aware of the poor state of the nation’s trails and a consummate realist about recreation’s perennial uphill political battle for receiving federal funding. In a 1994 interview with Leslie Albrecht Popiel for the *Christian Science Monitor*, he emphasized

¹⁵ National Forest Foundation. “Proposal for the Development of the Continental Divide Trail.” (Lakewood, CO: USDA Forest Service, 1994).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <http://www.coloradotrail.org>. Website for the Colorado Trail. This information also comes from my interview with Merrill Hastings, interviewed by Alan Roe. 4 April 2004 (Transcribed notes from interview in my possession. Missoula, MT).

that there was “a real sense of desperation” among trail enthusiasts.¹⁸ This understanding, the fact that he worked within the outdoor retail industry for REI for ten years, and his proclivity for compromise solutions undoubtedly influenced his opinion that utilizing private sector money was not only acceptable but the right thing to do for the future health of public recreation facilities.¹⁹

Divergent Visions: The CDTS/CDTA Conflict

Throughout the years that he was the CDT’s lone advocate, Jim Wolf frequently emphasized the need for strong leadership to spearhead on-the-ground development of the CDT, though, as mentioned, he never thought himself capable of providing it. At the same time, he possessed an uncompromising vision about the direction and shape of the trail’s development. He once bluntly asserted, “The people who think as I do will continue to be members. And if they don’t, they won’t.”²⁰ He maintained a user orientation, concerned mainly with the experience of long distance hikers who were willing to negotiate a less-developed trail. Accordingly, he greeted the new organization with cautious enthusiasm, hopeful that it would bring the CDT’s development to fruition while concerned at how that development might occur. On July 4, 1994, Wolf wrote a letter to Bruce Ward in which he expressed, “I’m sure you know that the organization will have too much of a corporate top-down image rather than the user orientation that I believe is most important.”²¹ He also expressed his concern that the new organization

¹⁸ Leslie Albrecht Popiel. “Businesses Push Conservation.” *The Christian Science Monitor*.

¹⁹ Interview with Bruce Ward. April 28, 2004 (Transcribed notes in my possession. Missoula, MT)

²⁰ Candus Thomson. “The Great Divide; Supporters Split over Vision of Trail Tracing Continental Divide.” *Austin American-Statesman* 18 May 1997. D-1. Thomson’s article initially appeared in *Baltimore Sun*. It ran subsequently in *The Tampa Tribune* and *The Seattle Times*.

²¹ Letter from Jim Wolf to Bruce Ward, July 4, 1994. (Wolf’s home/CDTA archives in Baltimore, MD).

used a name that would not be confused with the Continental Divide Trail Society and recommended they use the name “Colorado Continental Divide Trail Club.”²²

Despite these concerns, Wolf remained sanguine in the Continental Divide Trail Society newsletters. In the August 1994 issue of *Dividends*, Wolf wrote:

The organization he (Bruce Ward) has in mind—which would be separate from the CDTS—would publicize the Trail and develop programs for people to get into the field to enjoy, build, and maintain the route. The Forest Service seems quite supportive, as it has long felt the need to ‘develop a constituency’ for the Trail. Bruce has the experience and contacts to get this going, and it may be a great success, especially if it attracts a leadership of dedicated and experienced backpackers.²³

The Wards, however, would focus their energies on potential big money contributors, not long distance hikers, as funding would be necessary to their survival as a non-profit organization. Coupled with their interpretation that Wolf’s suggestion of the “Colorado Continental Divide Trail Club” displayed his desire to undermine the role and importance of the new organization, they perceived that fissures, which would turn into “deep wounds,” had started to develop.²⁴

As the Alliance began to take shape, philosophical differences between Wolf and Ward became more apparent. Expounding on his concerns about using corporate sponsors to jumpstart the Trail’s development, Wolf wrote Bruce Ward in a March 8, 1995 letter:

I think it is somewhat misleading to characterize your activities—at least to date—as a ‘grassroots movement.’ In fact, the real grassroots movement is the Continental Divide Trail Society, for all our members are people who have experienced the trail (at least vicariously) and recognize its outstanding qualities and potential. I contrast that with an organizational strategy that is built up and funded by non-grassroots sources, some of whom may be motivated more by commercial considerations than by the aesthetic and recreational values of the trail.²⁵

²² Ibid.

²³ Continental Divide Trail Society. *Dividends*. (August 1994), Bethesda, MD.

²⁴ This quote comes from my interview with Bruce and Paula Ward. The hiking community has lamented their falling out for they both possess tremendous dedication to the CDT.

²⁵ Letter from Jim Wolf to Bruce Ward. February 8 1995 (From CDTS/CDTA archives. Pine, CO and Baltimore, MD)

As is characteristic of his personality, Wolf refused to mollify his language for the sake of affability. This same uncompromising attitude, which undoubtedly stemmed from being the trail's foremost expert, earned him the respect and admiration of the long distance hiking community. Indeed, by Bruce and Paula Ward's own admission, the small long distance hiking community seems more drawn to Wolf and the CDTs than the CDTA.²⁶ Proponents of the National Trails System Act and the Forest Service, however, while acknowledging that some people might hike the entire Divide, viewed this constituency as a small and affluent minority of the would-be-users of the CDT.²⁷

The Wards, unlike Wolf, get things done mainly through compromise solutions rather than rigidly fighting for principles, which they think would prove untenable in the actual process of developing the trail. As he energetically conveyed his enthusiasm for the project to me in the spring of 2003, I asked him if he and Paula ever planned to hike the trail. With two young children, they would not be in a position to do so for a long time. But Ward told me that he would want to hike the trail in segments with the people "who helped make it happen." I cannot see Ward hiking alone in the pure solemnity, silence, and majesty on the trail for days on end. He thrives off interaction, progress, and compromise, making him, in some ways, the type of leader necessary to develop the trail, yet making him less likely to hike it alone as Wolf has done, for months-on-end.

Bruce Ward and Jim Wolf's radically different temperaments made them unlikely friends from the start. (Offered to serve on the advisory board and then he said he would sue) Their brief cordiality dissolved when the Wards named the new organization the Continental Divide Trail Association despite Wolf's concern. Wolf continued to express

²⁶ Interview with Bruce Ward. 2 April 2003 (Transcribed notes in my possession. Missoula, MT)

²⁷ U.S. Congress: House Subcommittee for Interior and Insular Affairs. "Nationwide Trails System." 90th Congress, 2nd Session. 6,7 March 1967.

his concerns about the name in characteristically blunt fashion. After Wolf threatened legal action, the new organization embraced the more distinctive Continental Divide Trail Alliance. Yet the damage had been done, leaving the indelible impression with the Wards, rightly or wrongly, that Wolf would make a cantankerous and uncompromising partner. In turn, they never gave Jim Wolf any mention in their newsletters. In an April 25, 1998 letter assessing the failure of the two organizations to develop a positive working relationship, Wolf correctly informed Paula Ward that the Alliance newsletter had never once mentioned the activities of the CDTS, or even its past contributions to the CDT. Additionally, Forest Service employees had essentially cut off communication with Wolf, rarely, if ever, responding to his letters and queries.²⁸ (land agencies get inundated)

The early Alliance newsletters undoubtedly present a bleak picture, as if nothing with respect to the CDT had been achieved before the Alliance's arrival. Indeed, the Wards told me that they believed that they created something from the beginning.²⁹

Paula said to me:

When we first developed the strategic plan, Wolf talked about it in his newsletter like it was a Forest Service led thing. Well, that's not true. We are not trying to pat ourselves on the back here but we instigated so much to get this through and they [Forest Service] weren't doing a thing. We were the ones leading here; they were following behind and half the time they didn't

²⁸ From September 10 to December 2, 1999, Jim Wolf wrote Steve Deitemeyer and Lyle Laverty, Director of Recreation and Public Affairs and the Regional Forester of the Rocky Mountain Region respectively, four letters with various queries and comments. Neither ever responded. In a January 5, 2000 follow-up letter to Laverty, Wolf referred to the National Park Service stating of his efforts, "your achievements as the driving force behind the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail are to be commended, and have left an indelible mark on our country's endeavor to establish a nationwide system of trails... The legacy of your efforts will continue to be appreciated for years to come, providing a foundation for those who follow in your footsteps." He concluded by writing, "In view of this history, I am unable to account for the Forest Service's apparent unwillingness to consult and cooperate with the Continental Divide Trail Society." Letter from Jim Wolf to Steven Dietemeyer, 10 September 1999 (From CDTS archives. Bethesda, MD); Letter from Jim Wolf to Steven Dietemeyer, 30 September 1999 (From CDTS archives. Bethesda, MD); Letter from Jim Wolf to Steven Dietemeyer, 10 November 1999 (From CDTS archives. Bethesda, MD); Letter from Jim Wolf to Lyle Laverty, 2 December 1999 (From CDTS archives. Bethesda, MD); Letter from Jim Wolf to Lyle Laverty, 5 January 2000 (From CDTS archives. Bethesda, MD).

²⁹ Interview with Bruce and Paula Ward. 4 April 2003.

have anyone paying attention. Now, this year, they are trying to get ahead of us, trying to get out there with us and walk together.³⁰

From the standpoint of raising public awareness and to a certain degree planning, the Wards were, in fact, essentially starting from scratch. But having dedicated most every summer to hiking the Divide since 1973 and writing guidebooks that in Karen Berger's and Dan Smith's words have "more information, word for word, than in any others we've ever seen," Wolf possessed a more optimistic view of the trail's progress.³¹ In the words of Merrill Hastings, whether it was planned or intended, "Jim Wolf got screwed."³²

When I first contacted the Wards about the Trail, Paula asked me early in the conversation if I had talked to Jim Wolf. At the time, I had not, but she made it a point of saying that he never wanted another organization championing the trail that might compete with the CDTS. Indeed, the relationship is so poor today that neither the Wards nor Wolf even subscribe to the two organization's respective newsletters. Paula told me "he simply refuses to like anything that we do."³³ They would shrug their shoulders and roll their eyes at the mention of Wolf, convinced that he wanted the trail to himself. When I met with Wolf, he would simply shake his head at their mention, conveying an unmistakable sense that they completely slighted him. With all concerned to the cause of protecting and furthering planning and development of the CDT, their falling out is both unfortunate and deleterious to the furtherance of their respective causes. But personal suspicions and temperament differences notwithstanding, the Wards utilization of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Karen Berger and Dan Smith. *Where the Waters Divide: A 3,000-Mile Trek Along America's Continental Divide* (Woodstock, VT: The Countryman Press, 1993), 328.

³² Interview with Merrill Hastings, 29 April 2004 (Transcribed notes in my possession. Missoula, MT)

³³ Interview with Bruce and Paula Ward. 4 April 2004 (Tape/Notes in my possession. Missoula, MT)

corporate sponsors of the Continental Divide Trail might have proven irreconcilable with Wolf's principles.

A Touchy Issue: Corporate Sponsorship on the CDT

Having worked for REI for more than ten years, Bruce Ward understands the recreation industry in a way that has provided him with great success in bringing in money for the Alliance. After enlisting the support of REI, the CDTA gained sponsorship from L.L. Bean, Vasque, Mountainsmith, Trails Illustrated Maps and many more. By early 1997, the Wards had received donations from more than thirty corporations.³⁴

For the general public, the CDTA's efforts went largely unnoticed until July 13 1997, when the magazine of *The Denver Post's* Sunday edition, *Empire: Magazine of the West*, ran a cover story on the CDTA.³⁵ This article marked Bruce Ward's most prominent public announcement that the Alliance intended to sell corporate sponsors the opportunity to post their insignias on trailheads. In a later article, Ward articulated the compromise, seemingly self-assured:

The companies get to put up a logo and a phrase. We get a nice trail that might not have been there otherwise. I think that's an acceptable payback. It's not like we're talking about neon signs on the trail.³⁶

Wolf rebutted Ward's approach in this same article, stating, "There are not many places left that are not commercialized. It is important that we not lose that."³⁷ Three days prior to the *Empire* article, Hal Clifford, a columnist for *The Denver Post*, wrote an

³⁴ Steven Wilmsen. "Trail gets a boost at a price: Continental Divide ads draw purists ire." *The Denver Post*. July 5, 1997. Section A, pg. 1.

³⁵ Tom Jones. "Take a Hike! The Continental Divide Trail offers a breathtaking tour across the breadth of the country." *The Denver Post: Empire Magazine of the West*. 13 July 1997.

³⁶ Associated Press. "Capitalism to point way on Divide Trail."

³⁷ Ibid,

editorial, “Trails Show Signs of the Times,” in the *Post* that lamented what the Alliance’s approach signified about contemporary America. He wrote:

Enough already. If the choice is no trail or This Switchback Brought to You By Powerbar, let’s skip the trail. I’ve had it with the endless greed, the corporate demands to be given credit, the desire for personal ownership of common resources, all cumulatively bleeding the life out of public spaces, public places, public responsibility.³⁸

He concluded the article with the sentiment, “All that’s left now is to sweep up the scraps of the human spirit.”³⁹

Several more articles about the Alliance’s plan appeared in articles throughout the country. Candus Thomson ran a story on it in the *Baltimore Sun*, which several papers nationwide ran after the *Empire* article.⁴⁰ In a July 15 editorial for *The Denver Post*, Ed Quillen pointed to the CDTA approach as a lamentable example of the inability of public land agencies to fund their projects. Asking “why shouldn’t the Continental Divide Trail be any different?,” he asserted, “I and most of us don’t head for the mountains to see billboards, even tasteful ones, of any size.”⁴¹

The Alliance’s Board of Directors rebutted the Wards’ decision at their meeting on September 7, 1997. But this event solidified Merrill Hastings’ belief that corporate interests, specifically the outdoor recreation industry, held too much influence on the new organization. He told me:

We were trying to build a trail to get people away from corporate America and there we were trying to bring corporate America to the trail. I always thought the whole purpose of outdoor recreation was to get away from commercialism.⁴²

³⁸ Hal Clifford. “Trails to Show Signs of the Times.” *The Denver Post*, 10 July 1997.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Candus Thomson.

⁴¹ Ed Quillen. “The Right Signs could produce a truly educational trail.” *The Denver Post*. July 15, 1997.

⁴² Merrill Hastings, interviewed by Alan Roe by phone. April 29, 2004 (Transcribed notes in my possession, 8 April 2004)

The Board agreed, however, that the CDTA could sell its insignia to corporations and that they would recognize corporate sponsors on promotional materials. Hastings' concerns, however, extended beyond this one issue. Not long before *The Denver Post* ran its article on the sponsorships, Bruce Ward had approached L.L. Bean, a Maine-based company, about their potential interest in having someone from the company serve on the CDTA board. According to Hastings, the position was "sold" to the company, which donated \$9,000 around the time that the Alliance appointed Fred Prescott, an L.L. Bean employee, to the Board of Directors. In turn, Prescott explicitly stated in a letter, according to Hastings, his intention of working with the CDTA to "expand the Maine-based company's marketing in the West."⁴³ Ward informed me that for its survival the Alliance has to look to people who can offer financial support, making Prescott a reasonable choice.⁴⁴ After opposing Prescott's acceptance onto the Board and fighting the insignia issue tooth and nail, Hastings failed to get reelected by a 6-5 vote. Largely out of loyalty to Hastings, Andy Weissner, Bob Turner, and Jo Lyn Reeves resigned from the Board of the Alliance.⁴⁵

The CDTA has yet to determine what constitutes appropriate recognition of corporate sponsors. Bruce Ward spoke about this dilemma:

It is still kind of a moving target within the Forest Service about what is not legal and from an organization standpoint it was about what is and is not appropriate from our membership and constituency. Where we are at now is that we think we have an understanding with the Forest Service that in what they refer to as built environments, like the top of a mountain pass at a highway or visitors center or parking lot to acknowledge a corporate supporter where it would be considered by most people an acceptable way to acknowledge that support.⁴⁶

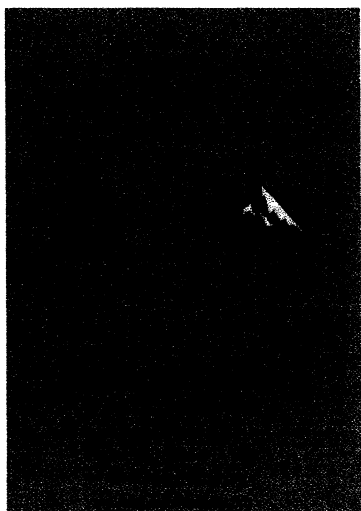
⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Interview with Bruce Ward. April 28, 2004. (Transcribed notes in my possession. Missoula, MT)

⁴⁵ Turner and Reeves resigned following the September 8, 1997 Board of Directors meeting in Vail, CO. Andy Weissner stayed on for the expressed purpose of bringing a motion to reinstate Merrill Hastings Jr. to the Board. The Board denied the motion by a 6 to 1 vote with one member abstaining. Continental Divide Trail Alliance Board of Directors Meeting. Keystone, CO. August 30, 1999. From CDTA archives

⁴⁶ Interview with Bruce and Paula Ward, April 4, 2003. (On tape and in my notes: 320 Kiwanis Park Lane)

Paula made sure to add that they did not have the go-ahead with that. Yet in some instances, public land managers have agreed to let the Wards and the CDTA disseminate information about the trail that also acknowledges corporate support. A trail map of Colorado provides one such example.



In 2000, Rocky Mountain National Park agreed that the Wards could put this map in the park's visitors' center. Ward fully acknowledged that not too long ago the Park Service would have completely rejected the idea. Yet, in his words:

I think now, in part as a recognition of the political and financial realities for these land managers, they will allow things that are considered discrete and not in your face advertising as a way to deal with their tremendous lack of resources.⁴⁷

Of course, "in your face" is in the eye of the beholder, and they will likely continue to face difficulties in muting the perception by purists that they are beholden to corporate interests.

The public's perception of the CDT as a corporate trail has also proven a hindrance in working with one local community. In the Rio Arriba region of New Mexico, ongoing land grant controversies stem from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo's unjust, but legally sanctioned, appropriation of lands possessed by Latino communities since the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ Led by Moises Morales, the residents neighboring Carson and Santa Fe National Forests have vehemently opposed locating the Trail within

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ A number of books have been done on this subject. See Devon Pena. *Chicano Ecology, Culture and Politics* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998); deBuys, William. *Exploitation and Enchantment: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985).

these forests, believing that a National Scenic Trail would further impede their attempts to reacquire their land. While they would probably oppose the CDT whether or not it received corporate funding, this issue has proven a focus in their opposition. Noting that REI backed the CDTA effort, Morales contended, "It's the rich against the poor. They're just promoting their products."⁴⁹

Indeed, the Continental Divide Trail is a far cry from a "retreat from profit."

Ward is correct, however, in asserting that comparing the CDT to the AT, that, "It [AT] is a great model. But the Appalachian Trail has been around for seventy years. It's not the reality of the world we live in. The world is a whole lot different than it was."⁵⁰ In a September 27, 1995, Bruce Ward explained his position to Jim Wolf. He wrote, "Given the federal budget situation, it is clearly apparent that without the support of trail users and partners the trail cannot be established, signed or maintained over time."⁵¹ One needs not look far to see that Ward is right. The world is also profoundly different than it was during the 1960s, when most Americans viewed large and ambitious federal projects as inherently good and raising taxes was not yet politicized through Manichean rhetoric. Today, a middle-school is being closed two miles north of where I live in Montana because the state budget will not accommodate it. Half a mile east, where I attend graduate school, the University of Montana is increasingly dependent on a sponsorship from Coca Cola. The list could go on across the nation; funding shortages have resulted in the closure of public libraries and state parks, unprecedented overcrowding in school. All the while, budget deficits continue to increase, largely because of the insistence of

⁴⁹ Mark Oswald. "Stumbling Block." *Santa Fe New Mexican*. 11 August 1996. Section E-1.

⁵⁰ Steven Wilmsen. "Trail gets a boost at a price: Continental Divide Trail raises purist's ire." *The Denver Post*. 5 July 1997. A-01.

⁵¹ Letter from Bruce Ward to Jim Wolfe. September 27, 1995. (From the CDTA archives. Pine Colorado)

many politicians on lower taxes. One need not look far to see how the shortsighted politicization of tax hikes has created the budget shortfalls that plague services traditionally offered by both state and federal governments.

Most Americans do not consider recreation as important as education. Thus, in the absence of dramatic restructuring within the Forest Service, the situation is not likely to change anytime soon through federal funding. The Wards do not sit back and lament or critique this situation, but rather accept it and attempt turn it into something positive. Ever the consummate optimist, Bruce Ward emphasized to me, “I think it is actually a good thing that the Forest Service didn’t lead the charge. We have given the trail its heart, soul, and equity that the Forest Service could not have garnered on its own.”⁵²



The face, if not the soul, of outdoor recreation is indeed changing. Many early champions, like MacKaye and Bob Marshall, touted its democratic appeal. Taylor stated, “Hiking and bicycle riding are simple pleasures within the economic reach of all-American citizens.”⁵³

Similarly, in championing the Continental Divide Trail, Chief of the Forest Service Edward Cliff stated in the deliberations on the national trails system, “Walking or riding horseback along an open trail can be enjoyed by the richest and the poorest.”⁵⁴ Bob Marshall once deemed the national forests “the people’s forests.”⁵⁵ Detractors of the

⁵² Interview with Bruce Ward. April 28, 2004 (From CDTA archives. Pine, CO).

⁵³ U.S. Congress: House Subcommittee for Interior and Insular Affairs. “Nationwide System of Trails.”, 18.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁵ Robert Marshall. *The People’s Forests* (New York: H. Smith and R. Hass, 1933).

private sector's growing influence undoubtedly believe that present trends undermine this characterization. If the trend continues, many believe, prohibitive costs will follow, making our public lands too expensive for the have-nots.

The National Park Foundation, Paying to Play, and the American Recreation Coalition

In seeking corporate funding for work on public lands, the CDTA is hardly unique. For over a decade, the National Park Service has also shown interest in funding initiatives with corporate dollars through the National Park Foundation (NPF). While the NPF was established in 1967, the influence of corporate money has become increasingly apparent over the past few years. Within the NPF, several corporate foundations fund individual initiatives. For example, in the 1990s, the Coca Cola Foundation built twelve National Park Discovery Centers, which aimed to expand education opportunities within the parks. Tom's of Maine, Ford Motor Company, Sylvania, UPS and many more corporations also sponsor programs that both "promote education" within the parks and "support conservation."⁵⁶

Instituted in 1996 but initially proposed during the 1980s, the recreation Fee Demonstration Project has provided, for many, the most illustrative and worrisome example of private sector influence on public lands. Congress instituted the program to address the funding shortfall for a two year trial period, but they have now extended it indefinitely. The project allows private concessionaires the opportunity to charge user

⁵⁶ <http://www.nationalparks.org/Home.asp>. This is the National Park Foundation home page. It gives a list of the corporate programs within the Foundation.

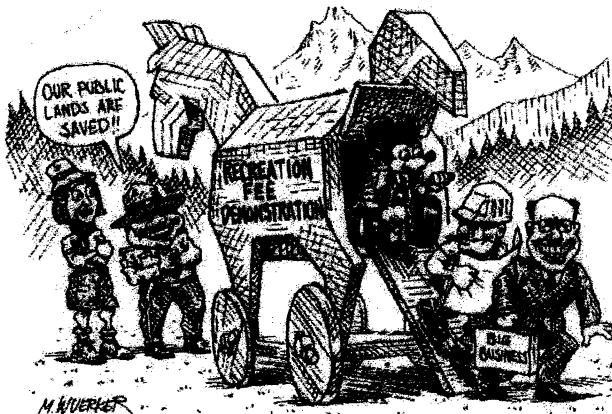
fees at popular recreation destinations, including campgrounds, trails, rivers, or caves.⁵⁷

While the fees still remain relatively cheap (most do not exceed \$5), many fear that the project could create a slippery slope that will make Congress more reluctant to appropriate money for recreation projects, necessitating increases in the fees. In a 2001 editorial for the *Washington Post*, columnist Jeff Milchen expressed a common fear:

If the program is allowed to continue past 2002, there will be a scarce chance of ever removing it. After years of paying this user tax, many Americans will have forgotten that public lands were intended to be accessible to all Americans—a birthright to protect, not a commodity available only to those who can afford it.⁵⁸

Similarly, a 1998 San Francisco Bay Sierra Club statement, entitled “The Corporate Takeover of Nature,” read:

Today, a major shift in federal land management policy is being developed and implemented. Instead of extracting commodities from nature, nature itself is being converted into a commodity to be repackaged, marketed and sold in the form of value added recreation products.⁵⁹



The American Recreation Coalition’s (ARC) formative influence on passing the Fee Demonstration Project undoubtedly accounted for many of the negative reactions to it. Founded in 1979, the organization is comprised

of twenty sustaining

members, including Walt Disney Company, Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association,

The Coleman Company, and International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, and

⁵⁷ U.S. Congress: House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands. “Implementation of Recreational Fee Demonstration Program: Prepared Statement of Lyle Laverty.” *Federal News Service*, 26 February 1998.

⁵⁸ Jeff Milchen. “The Land of the Fee.” *The Washington Post*. 24 June 2001. B-03.

⁵⁹ <http://sanfrancisobay.sierraclub.org>.

more than one hundred others.⁶⁰ This non-profit's mission is to forge public/private partnerships that will help fund existing recreation facilities on public lands and create new ones. The organization claims credit for the creation of the President's Commission on American Outdoors, which operated from 1985 to 1987, where it introduced the idea of fee programs that the Reagan Administration endorsed wholeheartedly. The ARC also refers to the fee demonstration program as, "an ARC initiative."⁶¹

The ARC has also called for legislation that would allow the organization to sell Golden Eagle Passes, which would be year long passes required for National Forest visitation, on consignment through individual members, like L.L Bean and Coleman Company. While the ARC touts this approach as an opportunity to "provide the public with valuable information about recreation opportunities at lesser known sites," it would also allow these companies to promote their products in the process.⁶² In 1993, the Department of the Interior objected to this particular provision of the legislation, but similar legislation continues to surface in the chambers of Congress.⁶³ Of greater alarm to many is the ARC's desire to allow corporations to sponsor national parks in compensation for the National Park Service's dwindling budgets. In 1997, ARC director Derrick Crandall asserted:

We would very much like to see corporations have a role in helping people enjoy public lands and have that role be appropriate. Why not have Kodak, in its own best interests, but also in the interest of its customers and the public lands, make sure people have the best possible memories of a visit to public lands.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ <http://www.funoutdoors.com/facts.html>. Website of the American Recreation Coalition.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² <http://www.funoutdoors.com/policy.html>. Website of the American Recreation Coalition. "Position of the American Recreation Coalition on Recreation Fees at Federal Sites."

⁶³ U.S. Congress: House. "Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act." Congressional Information Service. 108th Congress, 1st Session. (8 October 2003). This bill, proposed by Ralph Regula (R-OH) would allow expansion of the existing fee program. Additionally, as drafted, it would implement the America the Beautiful Pass—an \$85 pass for yearly visitation to national forests. Sponsored by six Republicans and no Democrats, the bill has received the wholehearted support of the Bush administration.

⁶⁴ Hal Clifford. *The Denver Post*. Cited previously

Given the perpetual shortfalls in public lands recreation budgets, Crandall's vision might be around the corner, or perhaps it is already here.

--Conclusion--

Building a Constituency, Building a Trail....At what Cost?

The evolution of the idea of a trail along the Continental Divide has indeed proven as malleable as the winds of political change. The hope of a grassroots project by both Benton MacKaye and the Colorado Mountain Club's was repackaged by the Forest Service's grand designs to build a trail through both grassroots constituency and the federal largesse. Despite Jim Wolf's Herculean efforts of almost single-handedly mapping it, the failure of the Forest Service's grand designs left a void to be filled, hence the arrival of the CDTA. Criticisms of their methods notwithstanding, the CDTA has made dramatic progress towards making this nearly forgotten dream in American outdoor recreation a reality. Before its existence, the trail received virtually no federal funding. But led by Colorado Congressmen Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Scott McInnis, Congress has often proven willing to allocate funds for the trail that match private sector donations. Moreover, the CDTA has successfully lobbied for several congressional earmarked funds, from \$500,000 to \$1 million.⁶⁵

By enlisting private sector support, the CDTA has made the trail a bipartisan issue in a region where public lands debates stoke the coals of partisan fervor. Former board member Andy Weissner still praises the Wards for their success in this regard. He said to me that, "They have done a masterful job in making the trail a bipartisan issue and that is what you have to do, especially in this political climate."⁶⁶ Every year, the Wards organize a trail ride in which they take congressmen from the Rocky Mountain Region on a horseback ride along the Divide to garner support for the CDT. From these efforts, they

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⁶⁶ Interview with Andy Weissner.

have made trail champions out of Republicans not known for strong environmental positions: Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Idaho senator Larry Craig, and Colorado senator Scott McInnis, who has sponsored willing seller legislation, which would enable federal agencies to buy land from private holders within the CDT corridor.⁶⁷

The Alliance also firmly acknowledges the complicated spectrum issues presented by the trail's bisection of local cultures, most of which hold tightly to traditional/pro-extraction views towards public lands. Thus they often temper their enthusiasm for the trail's development with compromise and education of local communities. By taking a "middle of the road approach" that respects western traditions while pushing for the trail's development, the CDTA does not appeal either to fringe environmental or anti-environmental groups. Such "collaborative conservation" is increasingly popular in the West.⁶⁸ In our conversation, Paula explained this approach:

We recognize that this is the West, the trail is going through the West. There are a lot of traditional uses, there is a lot of history, there is a lot of stuff happening here. And we don't have a big issue with that and we can't really because we would be shooting ourselves in the foot if we did."⁶⁹

This approach has enabled the CDTA to develop a variegated grassroots constituency, which includes Rotary Clubs, New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors, Montana Conservation Corps, many equestrian organizations and more.⁷⁰

If success is gauged by progress towards the physical completion of the trail, the CDTA has made tremendous strides. While certain areas along the proposed route remain contentious and more than 900 miles of trail are incomplete, the CDTA has succeeded in planning, building and reconstructing hundreds of miles. Every summer the

⁶⁷ Forthcoming

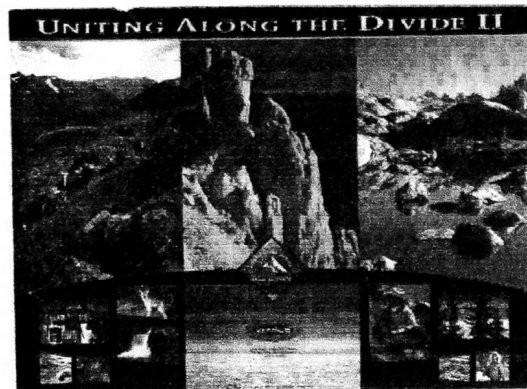
⁶⁸ Donald Snow, .Crossing the Great Divide:

⁶⁹ Interview with Bruce and Paul Ward. April 30, 2003.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

CDTA sponsors several volunteer projects in all the states—Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico—that the trail traverses. In 1998 they unveiled the first comprehensive “State of the Trail Report” as well as a “Ten Year Plan” in which, for the first time, an interested group outlined the practicable steps necessary to complete the trail. That same year they led volunteer groups across the entire trail to build, plan and maintain the trail in a project called “Uniting along the Divide.” Two years later, they led a similar initiative “Uniting along the Divide 2.”

The Alliance has helped organize up to 48 volunteer projects during the summer; the momentum is still building. In an era when civic engagement has reached record lows, seeing people unite and work towards a common goal is refreshing.⁷¹



Get Your Uniting Along the Divide II Poster!
Limited edition, 18" x 24" color poster commemorating the historic UAD II event is available at 75% off (CDTA members and \$10 for nonmembers) call or send check to CDTA. Made possible with a grant from Vasquez and Spiker Communications.

The list of CDTA achievements could go on; for the first time the trail has the strong grass-roots constituency geared towards the trail’s development that it desperately lacked for so long. But at what price will this development take place?

The Lingering Heritage in the Face of Change

On May 18, 2001 Bruce Ward appeared before the House Resources Committee to speak on the recreation maintenance backlog within national forests, the importance of passing

⁷¹ For information on this subject see Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

willing seller legislation to amend the National Trails System Act, and to highlight the importance of the Continental Divide Trail as a landmark opportunity to enhance the nation's recreation opportunities. Quoting Aldo Leopold, he conveyed the complexity of addressing recreation issues:

Recreation is a perpetual battlefield because it is a single word denoting as many different things as there are diverse people. One can discuss it only in personal terms. There is no unit of either volume or value where diverse persons can impersonally measure or compare recreational use.⁷²

The complex cultural evolution, which Ward did not allude to, further complicates the task of sifting through recreation's variegated social and cultural meanings. Benton MacKaye and other fin de siècle proponents quite literally believed that Americans needed opportunities to create themselves again (at least temporarily), hence the phraseology re-creation. During the 1960s, the federal government thought it could preserve opportunities for individuals to do so. This failure has resulted in the very commercial forces that early proponents of recreation sought to escape, in some cases, taking the reins and leading the charge.

So where are we now? My experience hiking the Continental Divide Trail did not, by any stretch of the imagination, seem undermined, trivialized, or tainted by the corporate influence undoubtedly influencing the trail's development. I suspect, on most levels, the experience would have not proven much different had the Alliance's Board of Directors given Bruce Ward the go-ahead to sell corporate sponsors the opportunity to place their insignias on trailheads. Regardless of the degree of influence corporate America might come to exert on public lands and the development of recreation infrastructure within them, the pace of life will always be slower and calmer away from

⁷² U.S. Congress: House Resources Committee. "Statement of Bruce Ward, Executive Director, Continental Divide Trail Alliance." 18 May 2001. From <http://www.resourcescommittee.house.gov>.

the epicenters of commercial activity, which now stretches into our hallowed wilderness. This influence could never obscure the sober mind's understanding that these lands, which have come under increasing corporate influence, will live on well after the corporations, which might desire an ephemeral, illusory control over them, have gone bankrupt, been riddled with scandal, or simply vanished with the rest of humankind. We need reminders that humankind is a mere drop in a rich pageant of geological and evolutionary history, and much of our federal domain can continue to provide it, barring the prohibitive fees that some corporations, or those representing their interests, undoubtedly desire.

Regardless of one's political views on this issue, our associations of outdoor recreation with our frontier heritage seem universal. In the same speech before the House Resources Committee, Bruce Ward stated:

When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark crossed the Continental Divide, it was a defining moment in history for both these intrepid explorers and our country. The Continental Divide has always been profoundly defining in the hearts and souls of the American people. How often do we as citizens and do you as our Representatives have the opportunity to support something so grand as to tie together our past and our future with such majesty of time and place?....A trail of history, freedom and the American spirit is what we are charged to pass to future generations.

Corporations or the non-profits beholden to their interests might repackage our heritage in a variety of ways. But that heritage will remain present. I suspect that memories of intrepid explorers crossing the Divide, once viewed simply as an obstacle to overcome, will continue to motivate people to take a pleasurable and challenging tramp every now and again on the Continental Divide Trail or someplace else that evokes this heritage and taps into humankind's insatiable urge to feel something wilder than the many developed places that most of us call home.

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