REMARKS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR.,
at 10 A.M., MONDAY, MAY 8, 1961, AT A CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE
MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION AT THE INDIAN
SPRING COUNTRY CLUB, GLENMONT, MARYLAND

While we are meeting here, the city of Washington is honoring an American
who only ninety-six hours ago experienced for a few minutes a dimension of Open
Space the rest of us will only imagine, never experience, in our lifetimes.

It seems to me, however, that two lessons from that leap into open space
have relevance to this conference: First, that it is not necessary personally
to leave the sights, sounds, smells and horrors of our atmosphere, to thrill
vicariously in a fellow man's sampling of such escape.

The second lesson is more mundane -- the escape may be enormously expensive.
For Alan Shepard's five minutes out of this world the cost, I read yesterday,
was $400,000,000.

In such terms, we must learn to think about man's need for parkland and open
space here on the planet -- the paradox that man needs some openness, though he
himself may never sample it; and that to get it will not be easy or cheap.

The front page of the program for this conference says that Prince Georges
and Montgomery Counties will have 700,000 more people by 1980 than they now contain.

Population experts tell us that by the same year Greater Metropolitan
Washington's population will be between 3 million and 3 1/2 million. These statistics
creep upon us inexorably -- most of you here can remember, as I do, when it was
announced that the Metropolitan area had passed the million mark.

By 1980 about 60 million additional humans will be added to the population
of our country's metropolitan centers, and 50 million of them will live in new
suburbs, in new houses on new streets. The children will attend schools which
are not yet built. Country which is open space today will furnish their driveways.

In order to accommodate these new Americans, many wild and beautiful countrysides
will be buried beneath the waves of population, pollution, profligacy and what
some people call progress.

Those areas will have vanished like so many of the forests and grasslands of
the past; like the clear water from our springs and streams; like the topsoil we
have spilled into the seas; like the departed heath hen, the Eskimo Curlew, the
Atlantic Salmon and the passenger pigeon.

It is a cruel hoax to dismiss the thought with a comfortable recollection
that vast open areas still exist in the West. In my own state of Idaho, the
struggle in which you are here engaged seems more abstract, but it goes on
nonetheless. "What meaning", they ask in the West, "can a mountain lake in the
Sawtooths have to an Easterner who never in his lifetime will see it?"
The same meaning, I submit, that Alan Shepard's voyage has to all of us. Man's spirit soars in the escape of others. John Muir said it:

"* * * if I should be fated to walk no more with Nature, be compelled to leave all I most devoutly love in the wilderness, return to civilization and be twisted into the characterless cable of society, then these sweet free, cumberless rovings will be as chinks and slits on life's horizon, through which I may obtain glimpses of the treasures that lie in God's wilds beyond my reach."

I am not here to paint a rosy picture of the future for our crusade to save the Nation's Parkland and open spaces. With the cooperation of groups like yours, we can win, but it will be a grinding battle all the way.

It is an honor to join your conference as the representative of Secretary Udall and the Department of the Interior. President Kennedy's special message to Congress on natural resources charted the broad outlines of the most ambitious park conservation program in our lifetime. Secretary Udall's immediate action to move ahead on that program I think is the greatest stimulus to the park movement since the days of Teddy Roosevelt.

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for a vast Department with a multiplicity of duties. He is the Cabinet member responsible for the operation and administration of huge dams and enormous reservoirs, giant public land holdings, mining, grazing, fisheries, wildlife management, government of the insular territories and the real estate of about 350,000 American Indians. He is responsible for finding a way to turn ocean water into drinking water economically and for running a railroad in Alaska.

Yet of all these assignments and more, he has chosen for his burning personal interest the program for parks and open spaces.

The President has instructed him to take the lead in setting the course of the Executive Branch in meeting the challenge of our vanishing parklands.

It is no news to you, but a lot of Americans do not realize how far we have gone already in using up and wasting our national heritage. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission merits high praise for its forward-looking five-year plan to quadruple the public park lands in its two counties.

In the entire Metropolitan Washington area, the goal for park and recreation lands by 1980 is 200 square miles, including Federal, State, County and community facilities. It does not include the farmland and other open country we need.

The pressure to commit the available land to commercial exploitation is terrific. For instance, the fate of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Prince Georges County is probably being settled on Capitol Hill today at the final Senate Subcommittee hearing on appropriations for right-of-way funds.
Frankly, the chances do not seem good for saving the riverfront for a parkway down to Fort Washington. If it goes, it is gone forever, for the brutal realities of governmental finance argue against converting apartment buildings back into park sites.

Similar conflicts are taking place across the face of our country. And time is our mortal enemy, in the struggle to get park and recreational areas for present needs and to save them for future needs.

Secretary Udall defines it as a quiet crisis in conservation. One of our first needs is to turn it into a noisy crisis, with Americans from coast to coast realizing their predicament and clamoring for action.

We in the Federal Government need you to put the heat on, to step up the temperature.

Appeals from the White House, glowing promises in Congressional bills, dramatic pledges by the Interior Department are all very fine intellectual exercises--but they are meaningless unless the general public gets behind them and pushes.

It is up to you to bear down hard so that your splendid plans won't get bogged down in public apathy or break into bits against a stone wall of bureaucratic excuses.

The nightmare rate at which the open country has been sacrificed to the concrete mixer has shown clearly that the task of protecting adequate parkland is simply too big for most individual communities to handle alone.

The Federal Government is forced by events to play a major role in helping towns and counties with the job. The Department of the Interior is concentrating major efforts on the evaluation of the national park needs. We are trying to do everything we can to see that Easterners are provided with parks in the East. It is a new approach -- and long overdue. The No. One item on our legislative calendar is the Cape Cod Seashore Bill. We want the Cape made part of the National Park System, as Cape Hatteras has been saved for the public.

The preservation of Eastern parklands is expensive. But it will be more costly in terms of damage to the human spirit if we permit them to be buried under blacktop roads, parking lots and barbecue shacks.

Theodore Roosevelt said:

"The great natural resources which are vital to the welfare of the whole people should be kept either in the hands or under the full control of the whole people for the benefit of all our people and not monopolized for the benefit of the few."

President Kennedy had that admonition in mind when he warned in his natural resources message:
"Our entire society rests upon and is dependent upon our water, our land, our forests, our minerals. How we use these resources influences our health, our security, our economy and well being. And if we fail to chart a proper course of conservation and development, if we fail to use these blessings properly, we will be in trouble within a short time."

The public cheerfully spends millions of dollars for highways, cars to fill them with, cloverleaf interchanges, and overpasses. But only pennies are allotted, and then reluctantly, for the acquisition of land for park uses.

Parklands are expensive. But can we afford not to buy them? Costs are doubling about every ten years. Is it economically sound to put off any longer what we should have done years ago?

The soaring rate of the population increase, coupled with the additional leisure time of our people, and their automotive mobility, all combine to exert a pressure on existing park facilities which is becoming unbearable.

The face of the nation has been altered abruptly and without proper planning. Unless we come to grips with the park problems now the spaciousness of our country will be damaged profoundly.

Our abundant land is diminishing rapidly under the demands of the booming population increases. The American wilderness has helped to shape the American character. Something important would go out of us if we destroy our out-of-doors. We need it to maintain our very sanity against the pace of this age of plastics, motorcars, hypertension and tranquilizing pills.

Man does not live by bread alone -- nor by outdoor movies, interstate turnpikes and jet airports. As the quail have disappeared from the edge of our woods, as gadget-filled houses and swimming pools crowd out the bloodroot and the blackberries, as English sparrows and starlings chase away the titmouse and chickadee, our truest standards of living have gone down.

Suburban realty values have increased manyfold. But we confront the paradoxical problem that they may become so valuable in terms of cash that the land will be just about worthless as a fit place to live.

Sherwood Anderson said that when America was new and men were often alone in the fields and forests, they got a sense of bigness outside themselves that has now in some way been lost. The bigness of the country took the shrillness out of them and they learned the trick of quietness.

"We simply need some wild country available to us even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in, for it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures and part of the geography of our home."
Historically through the years the Department of the Interior, working through its National Capital Parks, has been concerned with your problems in the field of parklands. Now that we are in a crisis, our concern is more profound, and we will be devoting even more time and attention to them.

If you find yourselves getting tangled in our red tape, we will look around for the sharpest shears we can find. We are all in the same fix, and we have to work together. I know that we can and will.

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