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ADDRESS BY JOHN A. CARVER, JR., UNDER SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, AT LUNCHEON
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ADMINISTRATION OF THE WILDERNESS SYSTEM

The President signed into law the Wilderness Act last September. This
is your first Biennial Conference since that historic occasion, and consider­
ing the single-mindedness with which the goal of legislation was pursued for
so long, it may seem to some quite remarkable that there is very little of the
victory celebration atmosphere here today.

Was the quest the thing? Or is there the feeling that enactment of the
legislation was only the signal for the beginning of a new task, one to equal
or exceed both the importance and the difficulty of the effort to get a bill?

Legislation is the glamorous center ring in the public affairs circus
tent. Many of you acquired considerable virtuosity in this specialized field,
as you fought the long battle to get a wilderness bill. You learned how im­
portant timing is in a legislative struggle. You learned that some of the
opposition you experienced, far from being grounded in base motives, was in
fact traceable to legitimate and praiseworthy concern about matters going to
the heart of our governmental system. Some of your reputed opponents were
responsible for getting, in the end, a better bill.

So it will not be surprising if all the attention of some of you shifts
to new struggles in the legislative arena. The authorization of a Redwoods
National Park is a prime candidate for your attention, a stone upon which
your legislative skills can be further tested and whetted.

If the legislative arena is the center ring, administration is the
kitchen tent. Who can get excited about the process of devising Wilderness
System regulations--of conducting surveys and reviews? Interpretation of
the congressional language about reviews of roadless areas is for the lawyers
and the bureaucrats.

Perhaps in making this speech I have the choice I've consigned to some
of you. Perhaps I should kick off a drive for Redwoods National Park legis­
lation.
I shan't do so, although I will be willing, later, to answer questions on the subject if you wish to ask some. I myself am a kitchen hand. Wilderness legislation is a new kind, and for the administrator there is plenty of excitement and plenty of challenge in considering the hows and the why's of getting an act translated into a program. That is why I shall talk today mainly about implementation of the Wilderness Act.

Wilderness is a new kind of legislation. We all know that ethical considerations are at the root of wilderness legislation. This is not exactly new, for ethical considerations support a good deal of our lawmaking activity, hopefully all of it. Even in the field of laws for the administration of our natural resources, ethical bases have always been present, but in the past they have been those designed to serve a frontier nation, an expanding and developing nation.

As we've opened up the western country, as we've brought water to the desert, we have fashioned as we went along rules and principles which were rooted in sound common sense, and thus calculated to maintain a semblance of order—the doctrine of prior appropriation in water law, the rules of discovery and pedis possessio in the mining claim country, the 160-acre limitation of the reclamation homestead, and even provisions in most of our Western State constitutions for eminent domain powers to force joint or common use of wagon roads, canals, and railroads.

It is not that our forefathers were unaware of natural beauty. The wonders of nature did have meaning to them. But in their scheme of things, the government got into such matters seldom, if at all. The flashes of vision shown by a Yellowstone Park Act in 1872 were special and isolated exceptions to the rule. Even in the private affairs of the time, concern for natural beauty was seldom accorded a very high priority.

To suggest that natural resources should be managed by government to satisfy the needs of the mind and spirit, as well as to meet physical and economic needs would once have been regarded as absurd. Thoreau enjoined no such duty upon government. Jefferson accepted the responsibility of civilized society to provide an environment wherein man might function to his best capacity, but he, too, saw it as a moral structure, not a governmental program objective.

We've come a long way. It is a measure of the vitality of our system that as our population has grown, and as we've become crowded more and more upon each other, we have found that the ethical standards for the management of land and resources have been heightened.

The process has been revolutionary, and not one, but two revolutions are involved.

The two separate revolutionary ideas which have converged upon the Federal Government in point of time in this decade are, one, a governmental concern for outdoor recreation in its broadest aspects, and, two, a governmental concern for the quality of man's total environment. The convergence has caused confusion, for many people think of the two as the same.
Even my admired friend Luna Leopold seems to fall momentarily into this confusion in his fine paper already read to this Conference. In that paper he groups together the maintaining and enhancing of landscape quality and the moral concern for our ecological environment, as part and parcel with outdoor recreation. He puts both under the same heading of social objectives which may not be amenable to "multiple use" handling.

But he does point out that for "wilderness recreation" any regular utilization is detrimental and thus he zeroes in on the dilemma.

I don't care to try to justify wilderness legislation as recreation legislation, or to make "wilderness" a specialized kind of recreation. Rather I see wilderness as a new and heightened ethical concept governing the management of natural resources. The Wilderness Act is concerned with the management of natural resources committed to the stewardship of the Federal Government.

In this age of maturity of our society, we have come to the realization that the land itself, which is the base not only of habitation and of food, fuel, fiber, and minerals, as a resource base contains also certain soul-satisfying elements. We have come to see that these may be both vital and exhaustible.

The steward's task is to manage the resource base according to the policies set forth by the Congress. The Congress has added a new objective for this management, and has called it "wilderness."

The addition, however satisfying intellectually or emotionally, complicates the management task. For the manager must now accommodate conflicting contentions as to what the standard for wilderness really was intended by the Congress to be. The procedure for that accommodation is the rule making and the administrative process. For me this is the primary unfinished wilderness agenda.

Fortunately, the Congress took direct responsibility for a major segment of the task when it placed 9.1 million acres of National Forest Wilderness into the Wilderness System. And it specified that additions had to have legislative approval. But it also provided that the Department of the Interior should remain responsible for administering the mining laws and mineral leasing laws under special provisions of the Act. In this connection, the House and Senate Conferees, in reporting and recommending a compromise Wilderness bill to the Congress made the following statement:

"The conference committee expects that the mining industry and the agencies of the Department of the Interior will explore existing primitive areas so that when legislation pertaining to such primitive areas is considered at a later date Congress will have the benefit of professional technical advice as to the presence or absence of minerals in each area."

Regulations implementing these special provisions are reaching final draft form. When ready, they will be exposed to public scrutiny and public discussion. You have a stake, a major stake, in these discussions.
We already know the general shape of a major problem facing the Interior Department with respect to the national forest "primitive areas"—5.5 million acres not yet within the System.

What are these "mineral surveys" supposed to do?

The Act directs the U. S. Geological Survey and the U. S. Bureau of Mines to undertake planned, recurring surveys in National Forest Wilderness to determine mineral values, and to report the results to the Congress and the public.

The same requirement may extend to other Federal lands being reviewed for possible inclusion, where such lands are at present open to mineral prospecting, leasing, location, or entry.

If the process of administration in this difficult area is, as I think, the process of presenting identified choices to the public, then one philosophy to support the making of the mineral surveys is evident. An intelligent choice between the program ascendancy of aesthetic values and of material values can be made only as reliable knowledge is available as to the nature and extent of both of these values. Where mineral or material potential is absent or slight, the wilderness values have little or no competition.

Admittedly, this doesn't help in making a choice where the mineral or material potential is substantial; but here two subordinate choices or alternatives are open. One is the choice to defer the ultimate decision. We can consciously choose to leave the ultimate choice to the next generation.

But this kind of choice is unsatisfactory on several counts, absent at least some general knowledge of the mineral values. For example, one mineral may be much more vital than another, or the trend of demand may be up or down.

The other choice requires even more specialized knowledge. We have the choice of consciously paying a higher price for available substitutes or modifications for the material values whose use is to be denied.

In some areas of decision making, this is comparatively routine—routing a highway around a site of historical value, or around a wildlife refuge, for example.

But reliable knowledge is essential.

I bring these matters up because I have the impression that there were, in fact, two schools of thought in the Congress when the mineral survey provisions were agreed to.

Whether there was or was not a congressional intent for a special effort by the government to survey above and beyond normal Geological Survey activities is not an easy question to answer.
The interpretation of the congressional mandate will involve further legislative consideration, in the appropriation process, for it is before this forum that the conflicting views will be presented and decided.

For some, the course to be taken is best stated in terms of ordinary program objectives. The Geological Survey assures that its surveys, although held to a level of reconnaissance for the most part, will be comprehensive, objective, and responsible, and that they will provide the penetrating analysis of mineral potential that the Nation needs for intelligent planning for resource utilization and preservation.

A determination about whether there is any mineral in an area is a geologist's job. Depending on the intensity of his survey, he may be able to quantify his findings with tolerable precision.

But the decision about whether any volume is economically significant is a decision for economists and business managers. And the recent history of mining law, both in executive department administration and before the courts, demonstrates that judgments about the economic significance of mineral deposits is very complex and highly controversial.

Then even after some measures can be worked out on mineral values, there still remains the decision relating its significance to the philosophy and intent of the Wilderness Act. That decision is fundamentally a political one.

It is fortunate that the hard choices probably will be few in number. Reporting of areas as containing no valuable or potentially valuable minerals, doubtful though some of the miners may remain, eliminates a large part of the argument.

So also we are assured that even large ore bodies are relatively small in terms of acreages involved, by definition, in wilderness situations. And, fortunately, sophisticated means of removal and access involving least detriment are feasible if material values are high.

The typical wilderness situation is not notable for the occurrence of valuable minerals, and we do not expect that large areas will prove it to be mineral bearing.

Still, when the chips are all down, choices have to be made, including the immediate choice of how to plan for mineral surveys in the primitive areas. As to this, I must hope that we will be guided by intelligence and knowledge. The Department has always had the duty to identify potential mineral-bearing areas, and to furnish the information to the public and the Congress.

The Wilderness Act did more than establish a legislative policy and standard for wilderness preservation. It put into action a standard of governmental survey and review of resource values conducted in the daylight of public scrutiny.
The procedure seems complex, but it contains important guarantees. The ten-year review schedule assures against undue delays.

No one can say exactly what the future holds, but the net outcome can't help being a growing National Wilderness Preservation System under the firm protection of statutory law.

President Johnson has said: "Only in this country have such positive measures been taken to preserve the wilderness adequately for its scenic and spiritual wealth ... The Congress can justly be proud of the contribution of foresight and prudent planning expressed by this measure to perpetuate our rare and rich natural heritage."

His message of February 8, 1965, to the Congress on the National Wilderness Preservation System stated:

"The wonder of Nature is the treasure of America.

"What we have in woods and forest, valley and stream, in the gorges and the mountains and the hills, we must not destroy. The precious legacy of preservation of beauty will be our gift to posterity."

The President also has expressed in his Natural Beauty Message, a desire to "proceed on schedule with studies required to define and enlarge the Wilderness System as established by the 88th Congress."

With your cooperation and the cooperation of others—and under close and constant public scrutiny—we intend to do our part in this noble effort to preserve the wonder of Nature as the treasure of America.