

gated to the field level—that is, to the superintendent or his supervisor of research—or made by university-based “cooperative park-study units,” on which park administrators or district headquarters often had considerable influence.

Further, each of the Park Service regional headquarters (their number has grown from six in 1968 to ten today) was given control of research and resource management in its region. The major parks were to a large degree autonomous. In these ways superintendents and regional directors acquired nearly total control over scientific activity. Being untrained in ecology, they had little appreciation for the kind of base-line research that was needed to accomplish restoration.

Through the delegation of such powers to the regions and superintendents, the Service was decentralized, preventing any coordinated scientific undertaking. Park studies tended to be short-term and politically directed. Both the flow of information and the chain of accountability between the parks and Washington were broken. Results of research that might reflect badly on a park administration could be—and often were—prevented by the superintendent from leaving the park.

The balkanization of the Park Service was further encouraged by the national park system reorganization of

1964, which divided the parks into three categories: natural, historical, and recreational. The emphasis built into this functional separation effectively discouraged the kind of sustained interdisciplinary research that true restoration ecology required.

While mission-oriented biological research continued in natural zones like Yellowstone, historical research—which the Leopold report had said was “the first step” in restoration—was almost never undertaken.

THROUGH THIS EVOLUTION THE PARK SERVICE, while spending more and more money on research, was making little of the effort necessary to save the park system. To make matters worse, the retrograde nature of this trend was obscured by describing park policy in a new and attractive way: its goal, the Park Service decided, should be to “perpetuate the natural ecosystems.”

Ecosystems management was supposedly the translation into policy of the Leopold report. Yet the committee explicitly declared that parks are *not* ecosystems: “Few of the world’s parks,” the report stated, quoting a 1962 report from the First World Conference on National Parks, “are large enough to be in fact self-regulatory ecological

CHORD

While Keats wrote they were cutting down the sandalwood forests
while he listened to the nightingale they heard their own axes echoing through the trees
while he sat in the walled garden on the hill outside the city they
 thought of their gardens dying far away on the mountain
while the sound of the words clawed at him they thought of their wives
while the tip of his pen moved the iron they had coveted was hateful to them
while he thought of the Grecian woods they bled under red flowers
while he dreamed of wine the trees were falling from the trees
while he felt his heart they were hungry and their faith was sick
while the song broke over him they were in a secret place and they were cutting it forever
while he coughed they carried the trunks to the hole in the forest the size of a foreign ship
while he travelled to Italy they fell on the trails and were broken
when he lay with the odes behind him the wood was sold for cannons
when he lay watching the window they came home and lay down
and an age arrived when everything was explained in another language

—W. S. Merwin

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