



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY
<http://www.wilderness.org>

ENVIRONMENTAL TIMELINE

1872

- Yellowstone becomes the nation's first national park.

1897

- The Forest "Organic" Act establishes the National Forest system for the purpose of "securing favorable conditions of water flow, and securing a continuous supply of timber..."

1903

- The nation's first wildlife refuge is formed when President Theodore Roosevelt protects Pelican Island, FL, from hunters decimating the island's bird population. Nearly 70 years later, the area is designated a Wilderness (in 1970), becoming the smallest designated Wilderness in the system (5 acres).

1905

- The United States Forest Service is established within the Department of Agriculture to manage forest reserves.

1911

- The Weeks Act appropriates \$9 million dollars to purchase 6 million acres of land in the eastern United States for the purpose of establishing national forests.

1916

- The National Park Organic Act creates the National Park Service and establishes the National Park System in order to conserve scenery, wildlife, and "historic objects" for future generations.

1946

- The Grazing Service and the General Land Office are merged to form the Bureau of Land Management.

1960

- The Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act redefined the purpose of the national forests to include not only timber and watershed concerns, but also recreation, wildlife, fishing, hunting, and soil concerns.

1964

- The Wilderness Act is signed into law, designating 9.1 million acres as Wilderness (in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming).
- The Land & Water Conservation Fund Act is established to purchase park and refuge lands with royalties from offshore oil drilling.

1968

- Redwoods National Park in California and North Cascades National Park in Washington are established.
- The National Wild & Scenic Rivers and National Trails Acts are signed into law.
- Congress designates nearly 800,000 acres of wilderness in California, New Jersey, Oregon, & Washington.

1969

- Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin calls for national teach-in on the environment to be called "Earth Day".
- Congress designates 161,500 acres of wilderness in California (Desolation, Ventana).

1970

- April 22 - an estimated 20 million people participate in "Earth Day" demonstrations and activities across the country.
- Environmental Protection Agency established.
- Clean Air Act signed into law.
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) signed into law. Requires an analysis of the environmental impacts of federal actions.
- Nearly 200,000 acres of wilderness are designated by Congress (in Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington, & Wisconsin), including the nation's smallest wilderness area, 5-acre Pelican Island, in Florida.

- President's Council on Environmental Quality established. CEQ advises and assists the President on environmental policies; oversees federal agencies implementation of the environmental impact assessment process.

1972

- Clean Water Act signed into law.
- The carcinogenic pesticide DDT is banned.
- Congress designates nearly 1 million acres of wilderness in Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, & Wyoming.

1973

- Endangered Species Act signed into law. Protects habitat for plants and wildlife.

1974

- Eastern Wilderness Act designates 207,000 acres of wilderness on national lands in 13 states. The Act makes clear that lands that have recovered from prior abuse can be designated as wilderness.
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act establishes planning process for all forest and rangeland resources.
- Congress designates the Okefenokee Wilderness Area in the National Wildlife Refuge of the same name (over 340,000 acres).

1976

- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) Requires the U.S. Forest Service to include economic, wildlife, wilderness and recreational uses in planning.
- Over 1.7 million acres of wilderness designated by Congress in Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, & Wyoming.
- Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) Governs the use of the national lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

1978

- Omnibus Parks Act adds Santa Monica Mountains, Golden Gateway, and Golden Gate National Recreation Areas to the National Park System.

- Over 5.5 million acres of wilderness designated by Congress in Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, & Wyoming.
- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) established 13 new national parks, 16 new national wildlife refuges and 2 new national forests, adding 56 million acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System, including the largest wilderness area in the system, Wrangell-St. Elias in Alaska, which now includes 9,676,994 acres. (Other wilderness designated in Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, & South Dakota.)

1982

- Congress designates 20,000+ acres of wilderness in Florida, Georgia, Indiana.

1983

- Over 500,000 acres of wilderness designated in Alabama, Missouri, Montana, West Virginia.

1984

- New wilderness areas totaling 8.6 million acres established in 21 states (Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming.).

1985

- Kentucky wilderness bill adds 11,662 acres of designated wilderness on national forests in the state.

1986

- Wilderness bills pass, protecting 41,818 acres in Georgia; 7,794 acres in Nebraska; 32,473 acres in Tennessee; and 2,374 acres in Texas -- all on national forest lands.

1987

- Some 91,891 acres of national forest wild-lands in Michigan get the protection of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- In New Mexico, 102,500 acres of BLM wild-lands get wilderness protection.

1988

- **Four wilderness bills pass.**

Alabama - 13,260 acres of national forest land in the Sipsey Wilderness; Virginia - 19,217 acres of national forest lands; Washington - 1,739,771 acres on National Park lands; West Virginia - 2,721 acres of national forest lands.

1989

- Nevada wilderness -- 721,403 acres of national forest and 6,458 acres of BLM wild-lands are designated.

1990

- **Wilderness is designated in:**
- Alaska - 299,531 acres of national forest lands; Arizona - 1,343,444 acres of National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness; 1,133,660 acres of BLM lands. Illinois - 25,549 acres of national forest lands; Maine - 12,000 acres of national forest lands.

1991

- A Georgia wilderness bill adds 24,200 acres of national forest lands to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

1992

- California wilderness bill adds 400,450 acres of national forest lands to National Wilderness Preservation System.

1993

- Colorado wilderness bill adds 609,206 acres of national forest lands and 16,989 acres of BLM lands to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

1994

- California Desert Protection Act brings the National Wilderness Preservation System up to 104.7 million acres and establishes the Mojave National Preserve. Designated U.S. wilderness now amounts to a little more than four percent of the total U.S. land base.
- The bald eagle is upgraded to a "threatened" species on the Endangered Species List (it was originally listed as "endangered," the more critical status).

1995

- Sen. Gaylord Nelson, founder of "Earth Day" awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

- Mojave National Park established in California.

1996

- President Clinton establishes Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah.
- The Omnibus Parks Act establishes the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas, and the Opal Creek Wilderness in Oregon (although Opal Creek will not meet standards for Wilderness designation until 1998).
- Nearly 6 million acres of wilderness are designated, mostly in Alaska (Noatak Wilderness Area).

1997

- **Congress Passes Law Increasing Protection in National Wildlife Refuges**
There are more than 500 national wildlife refuges, located in all 50 states. Despite their name, many of these sanctuaries are threatened by military exercises, jet skiing, livestock grazing, and other activities. The new law, the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act, sets wildlife conservation as the top priority in the refuge system and provides for more science-based management and long-term planning.
- **Ending Gridlock in Major National Parks**
A once-in-a-century flood devastated Yosemite Valley in January, causing physical and economic hardship for many and damaging certain park features and structures. But the flood also prompted the federal government to move ahead, at long last, with a 1980 plan to decommercialize Yosemite Valley. Central to that plan is creation of a transportation system that enables visitors to leave their vehicles outside the park and move into--and around--the valley on public transportation. Yosemite announced its plan in October. Then, in November, the National Park Service and the Department of Transportation signed an agreement to work together to significantly reduce traffic in Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Zion National Parks.
- **Funding to Protect Yellowstone, Headwaters Forest, Everglades, and Other Lands**
Yellowstone National Park was threatened by a proposed mine just north of its border. Logging was planned for the Headwaters Forest, the largest privately-owned stand of ancient redwoods left in California. The Everglades ecosystem needed land bought to help alleviate serious water quality and quantity problems. Congress appropriated money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to tackle all three needs. In addition, money was provided for acquisition of important natural and recreation areas in 38 other states.
- **Ban on Oil and Gas Drilling along the Rocky Mountain Front**
Gloria Flora, Supervisor of the Lewis and Clark National Forest, announced in September that no oil and gas development would be allowed along the 70 miles of the Rocky Mountain Front that lies within that forest. This spectacular area is considered by biologists to rank within the top two percent of wildlife habitat in the U.S. The oil industry has filed an appeal.

1998

- The Opal Creek Wilderness Area in Oregon, at 20,724 acres, is designated by Congress.

- President Clinton issues his directive to the USFS to conduct an EIS leading to possible long-term protection of 50-60 million acres of roadless lands.
- The Dugger Mountain Wilderness Act designates 9,200 acres in the Talladega National Forest, 70 miles east of Birmingham, AL
- Otay Mountain Wilderness, east of San Diego, adds 15,000 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

1999

- Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument, Colorado is made a National Park. Redesignation adds 22,000 acres of park Wilderness and 4,700 acres of BLM Wilderness to the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- President Clinton issues his directive to the USFS to conduct an EIS leading to possible long-term protection of 50-60 million acres of Rodale's lands.
- The Dagger Mountain Wilderness Act designates 9,200 acres in the Talladega National Forest, 70 miles east of Birmingham, AL

2000

- President Clinton designates 3 new national monuments -- Grand Canyon-Parashant (Arizona), Agua Fria (Arizona), California Coastal Rocks & Islands) and expands a fourth (Pinnacles)