WORTH A DAM: GLACIER VIEW AND THE PRESERVATION OF WILD AMERICA

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WORTH A DAM: GLACIER VIEW AND THE PRESERVATION OF WILD AMERICA

By

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Dissertation

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Conceived in the mid-1930s and formally proposed in 1943, the Glacier View Dam was an Army Corps of Engineers’ proposal for the North Fork of the Flathead River in northwestern Montana. This 416-foot tall dam would have provided inexpensive hydroelectric power to the region and helped control flooding on the volatile Columbia River watershed. Glacier View would also have flooded 20,000 acres of Glacier National Park, one of the “crown jewels” of the national park system. An ideologically diverse coalition of National Park Service officials, wilderness activists and outdoor recreation enthusiasts organized the defense of Glacier National Park and convinced both the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of the Army to eliminate the Glacier View Dam from a multi-reservoir plan for the Columbia in 1949.

This dissertation looks at the defeat of the Glacier View Dam from several perspectives and argues that this little-known episode was a seminal moment in the environmental history of the United States. Proponents of the dam believed that Glacier View’s hydroelectric power would create an industrial center in western Montana and help reshape an extractive economy hard hit by the Great Depression, help prevent historic flooding in the region and help win World War Two and the Cold War.

One common alternative to Glacier View was the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork River, still in the headwaters of the Columbia but outside of national park boundaries. Paradise, however, would have flooded 20,000 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation, the treaty-guaranteed territory of the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai peoples. These confederated Native Americans supported the construction of the Glacier View Dam to preserve their lands and economic base in western Montana.

The defeat of the Glacier View Dam was an important moment in the ascendance of the wilderness movement, one that preceded and inspired the more famous Echo Park Dam controversy in the 1950s. This controversy was an early instance where modern conceptions of wilderness swayed public policy in the United States and helped lead to the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.
It will be objected that a constantly increasing population makes resistance and conservation a hopeless battle. This is true. Unless a way is found to stabilize the nation’s population, the parks cannot be saved. Or anything else worth a damn. Wilderness preservation, like a hundred other good causes, will be forgotten under the overwhelming pressure of struggle for mere survival and sanity in a completely urbanized, completely industrialized, ever more crowded environment. For my own part I would rather take my chances in a thermonuclear war than live in such a world.

—Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*
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environmental history of these structures for a four-year-old. Molly for her years of encouragement, joy, proofreading and unicorn hunting skills. Thank you for your love, patience and understanding as I tried to puzzle together this history of a dam that was never built.
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Introduction

Children sing through my locked door, ‘Old stranger, we're going to alter, to alter, alter the river.’ Just when the water was settled and at home.
—Richard Hugo, “Plans for Altering the River”

On a jam-packed train car in the city of Chicago during the summer of 2013, as morning passengers bowed their heads to read newspapers and tapped at smartphone screens with practiced fingers, a pair of shiny black eyes peered at the commuting masses from on high. Although most riders paid little heed, this particular Blue Line “L” car, rattling northwest from the city center on an elevated track toward O’Hare International Airport, carried an additional passenger—a full-grown, if not full-sized, grizzly bear—who stared conspicuously from the top of the car’s fluted steel wall. This two-dimensional bruin paid full freight for passage on Chicago’s public transportation system. Part of a city-wide ad campaign commissioned by the Montana Office of Tourism, the grizzly advertisement encouraged city-weary citizens to “Step Out of Bounds” and visit the wilds of Montana. All across the city, bright, nature-focused photos adorned Chicago busses, train cars, billboards and “L” station walls, promoting far-flung Montana destinations such as Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park. A Montana Office of Tourism spokesperson explained the appeal of such advertising, saying: “What we offer them is what they're looking for—grand landscape, outdoor activities, things they don't have in Chicago.” The million-dollar ad campaign worked well. According to marketing survey statistics, tourist “likelihood to travel” to the State of Montana was at an all-time high in the 2010s.¹

Seven decades earlier, the Army Corps of Engineers, Congressional leaders and regional boosters wanted to make western Montana a little more like industrialized Chicago—a city with thriving steel mills, coal fired power plants and the largest concentration of electronics manufacturers in the country. Initially considered in the mid-1930s and first proposed by the Corps in 1943, the Glacier View Dam would have been a 416’-high earth-fill structure that flooded the North Fork of the Flathead River, the western boundary of Glacier National Park. If built in the narrow canyon between Glacier View Mountain and Huckleberry Mountain in northwestern Montana, this dam would have inundated 30,000 acres of the North Fork Valley with water, creating a reservoir twenty-five miles long, four to five miles wide and filled with 977 billion gallons of usable water storage. Proponents believed that the inexpensive hydroelectric power created by such a dam would draw industrial investment, including aluminum processing plants and potentially airplane production facilities, and help develop a manufacturing empire in the still emergent areas of western Montana. In turn, both the construction of the dam and the progress it initiated would bring high paying jobs to a state hard hit by the Great Depression and thereby increase standards of living, disposable income and local tax bases. Such industrial development might make the wilds surrounding Glacier National Park look and smell like the negative aspects of mid-twentieth century Chicago. Smoke and fluoride pollution from aluminum smelting, for example, would clog the air of western Montana and leach into nearby soils, as industrial wastewater entered the headwaters of the Columbia River system.

Commerce, Staff Presentations, (October 2012): 8, http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/research/staffpre.asp, accessed August 20, 2013. According to these 2012 statistics, among those surveyed, 31% indicated that were likely to visit the state of Montana, and 25% said they would likely visit Glacier National Park. According to the Montana Office of Tourism, this first number is an 82% increase from 2009, the first year Montana ads appeared in Chicago and other select cities in the United States.
Illustration One Map of the proposed Glacier View Dam from 1945, showing possible dam heights and reservoir capacities. Image from Glacier National Park Archives, West Glacier, Montana.

The jerky Blue Line train, with its silent grizzly sentinel, is the first leg of a trip to Glacier for many present-day Chicagoans. Exiting the train at its terminus in O’Hare International Airport, modern-day explorers can board planes that fly directly to Montana and cover the once arduous 1,600 miles to Glacier in mere hours. From the park entrance at West Glacier, visitors can travel picturesque Lake McDonald by boat, traverse the Continental Divide via the Going-to-the-Sun Road, or explore the backcountry wilderness of the North Fork Valley. Such a visit allows for reflection on several important questions. Assuredly, most of Glacier’s 3 million annual visitors come with same motivations highlighted by the Montana Office of
Tourism and use a vacation in Glacier to relieve, temporarily, the pressures of everyday life.² But has this always been the case? Historically, how have human beings valued this place now known as Glacier National Park? And why? More specifically, how did competing visions of nature impact the Glacier View Dam debates of the 1940s and 1950s, and did these debates change how Americans thought about conceptions of nature and wilderness?

A good place to ruminate on such questions concerning place is at the summit of Huckleberry Mountain, high above the proposed Glacier View Dam site. Very few of Glacier’s three million annual visitors ever see Huckleberry Mountain, let alone trek to the top of the nearly 6,600-foot high peak. For one reason, the mountain is located along the western boundary of the park in the remote North Fork Valley, one of the least visited areas of Glacier. For another, the Huckleberry Mountain ascent is little too “out of bounds” and beyond the comfort levels of many Glacier visitors, who often prefer to witness the park’s wonders from the air-conditioned comfort of their cars and campers. Backpacker Magazine, in fact, dubbed the Huckleberry trek one of “America’s most dangerous hikes” due to the frequent intersection of hungry grizzly bears and the wild, eponymous berries on the mountain. To reach the summit, hikers must trudge up six miles of primitive trail, past stands of lodgepole pines and clumps of blooming beargrass, gaining 2,725-feet in elevation gain in the process. Once there, weary hikers are rewarded with a visit to a mid-1960s vintage fire lookout and spectacular views of the North Fork Valley. To the north, visitors can distinguish several 10,000-foot peaks in the Livingston Range and sometimes glimpse the unincorporated town of Polebridge.³ Imagination is powerful tool, both for Glacier

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³ Kelly Bastone, “America’s 10 Most Dangerous Hikes—Huckleberry Mtn., Apgar Range, MT,” Backpacker

visitors and for historians attempting to recreate the conflicting possibilities in the history of this particular place. Looking north, the few hikers familiar with the Glacier View Dam project might envision how the valley would look had the Army Corps of Engineers flooded 30,000 acres of wild landscape in the 1940s and understand what would have been lost.

Illustration Two Proposed site of the Glacier View Dam, looking south from Glacier View Mountain, 2018. Huckleberry Mountain is to the left, across the North Fork of the Flathead River. Photo by Gavin Pirrie. Used with permission.

The remote North Fork River of northwestern Montana is, by most accounts, an exceptionally beautiful place. The headwaters of the river originate in the rills and run-offs of southern Alberta, Canada, and mark the beginning of a convoluted journey to the Pacific Ocean that includes several river systems, two lakes, two international border crossings and more than

one thousand miles of meandering travel. The North Fork of the Flathead River itself is a fifty-mile section of waterway that stretches from the international border to its confluence with the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, and comprises sections of shallow runs, trout-filled riffles and occasionally a churning whitewater rapid or two. Forming the western boundary of Glacier National Park, the North Fork cuts a path through scenic country, surrounded on both sides by stands of old growth timber and snow-capped mountain vistas. The valley is also home to abundant fauna and flora. During winter, the river valley provides key feeding habitat for local ungulates, including moose, elk, deer and the occasional wandering mountain caribou. In summertime, riverside meadows are dotted with a kaleidoscope of Montana wildflowers and the banks of the bubbling creeks that feed the North Fork often smell of wild mint.

While ingenuity might help visitors appreciate the wilds of Glacier National Park, it is also a useful tool for environmental historians. History, in many ways, is simply an active imagination about the past supported by documentary evidence. Historians string together narratives combining concrete evidence and with logical reasoning, a process historian R. G. Collingwood long ago called a “web of imaginative construction.” It would be a lot easier, of course, if historical figures, famous or otherwise, appeared as if ghosts and told their stories directly. On the top of Huckleberry Mountain, a litany of spectral lecturers could tell their own history, in their particular words, and argue amongst themselves about the importance of this remote valley. Ghostly human echoes, from as far back as 13,000 years ago could explain why they appreciated what we now call the North Fork of the Flathead River. Clovis hunters might tell big game stories and recall the one that got away. Kootenai Indians might discuss this valley in terms of spirituality, strategic geography and sovereignty, while European fur trappers might discuss local beaver populations. Nineteenth century goldseekers and oil speculators might
ruminate on the exploitable natural resources in this area of the Northern Rockies, while early twentieth century homesteaders philosophized on a Jeffersonian conception of an agrarian republic. Dam builders, businessmen and wilderness advocates could argue about the proper use of nature in the context of mid-twentieth century fears of world war, Communism and American individualism. Each of these ghostly visitors could look down at the panoramic space below and explain a particular and personal history. And each ethereal echo would tell a different story, in part, because they would all be describing distinctive places.4

In his influential work, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan defined the terms space and place. According to Tuan, “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other.” People live, work, shop, recreate and procreate in places; places are tangible and definable entities. Spaces, however, are more abstract and difficult to define. For Tuan, “open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed.” Individuals and cultures create places as they apply needs, desires and imagination to blank spaces. Tuan explains how human utilization changes spaces into places:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value…The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes possible for location to be transformed into place.

According to Tuan when space becomes place its value becomes a “concretion of value.” He believed that “it is characteristic of the symbol-making human species that its members can become passionately attached to places of enormous size…of which they have limited direct

experience”—such as national parks. Comprehending these complicated concepts helps geographers, or even historians, bring order and understanding to the world at large.\(^5\)

Relating Tuan’s terms of space and place to the history of the Glacier National Park generally, or the North Fork River Valley in particular, helps explain how so many different groups of people throughout history wanted to possess the region for such disparate reasons. The physical features, available proteins, comforting smells, or biological boundaries might be the same for all visitors, but an individual’s culture makes Glacier a very different place for all. The Kootenai call the area along the southern end of Lake McDonald “A Good Place to Dance,” reflecting their long held cultural connection to the area and its nature. Today, the same area in west Glacier is a much different place for most visitors, named Apgar after a homesteading family who built a log hotel in the mid-1890s to profit from tourists arriving on the recently completed Great Northern Railway. The mountain region known to Blackfeet Indians as the “Backbone of the World” is not the same as the place George Bird Grinnell named the “Crown of the Continent” because cultural differences change the meaning of place.\(^6\)

Environmental historian Dan Flores applies this same concept to the writing of bioregional history, contending that the “narrative line of bioregional history is essentially imagining the stories of different but sequential cultures occupying the same space and creating their own succession of ‘places’ on the same piece of ground.” In the case of the North Fork Valley, not only were unique places created by sequential cultures occupying the region, but also

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by concurrent cultures that simultaneously competed to control the area. In the simplest terms, Native Americans looking down from Huckleberry Mountain throughout history would have seen one place, Jeffersonian-style homesteaders another and modern wilderness activists still something else. Their ability to imagine allowed them to extrapolate very different possibilities for the valley, and these differences invariably led to conflict. Making sense of this conflict, then, is the task of environmental historians. As historian Elliott West put it: “Environmental history is, among other things, a lengthy account of human beings over and over imagining their way into a serious pickle.”

The Glacier View Dam was one such pickle. According to its proponents, the Glacier View Dam would provide much needed hydroelectric power for the region, desired especially to fuel war industries such as aluminum processing during World War Two and the onset of the Cold War Era. It would also offer flood control for the volatile Columbia River system and would spur economic development in the State of Montana. For opponents of the dam, the where was more important than the why, as the project threatened to flood 20,000 acres of the western expanses of Glacier National Park, one of the “crown jewels” of the National Park system. A nationwide coalition of influential conservation groups, such as the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society, National Park Service (NPS) officials, outdoor recreationalists and local citizens combined to oppose the construction of the dam. Ultimately, these ideologically diverse activists

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defeated the Glacier View Dam proposal, and this victory was a seminal moment for the burgeoning wilderness movement of the 1950s and 1960s.8

Imagining and telling the history of the Glacier View Dam requires answering numerous questions. Broadly speaking, all these questions are about environmental ideology—what people thought about the natural world and how they applied their beliefs to the physical realities of nature. The first set of questions explains what happened in the Glacier View Dam debates: why did the Army Corps of Engineers want (or need) to build this massive dam in the headwaters of the Columbia River system, why was a dam site in Glacier National Park the best option for this river-altering construction project, and why was the dam defeated? Answering these questions requires an understanding of economics in the mid-twentieth century American West; the anxieties of Americans during the Great Depression, World War Two, and the onset of the Cold War; the federal government’s responsibilities and largesse following the establishment of New Deal principles and programs; the history of the National Park Service; the tense relationship between the United States federal government and Native American groups throughout the country; and conceptions of an ascending wilderness movement bent on the preservation of idealized wild America. More so, these first questions reveal not just what transpired with the Glacier View Dam in the 1930s and 1940s, but also what people wanted to happen in an imagined future with or without this dam. All participants acted earnestly in their own best interests and believed their position would make the United States a better place in the second half of the twentieth century. What these first questions do not address is the most important enquiry embraced by all historians: so what?

8 “Significant Facts Concerning Glacier View Dam Proposal,” undated memo, Box 228, Folder 6, Glacier National Park Archives, West Glacier, Montana, hereafter referred to as GNPA.
A second set of questions probes the historical importance of the Glacier View Dam, from three different perspectives. Dam proponents saw Glacier View as an opportunity to build an industrial center in an undeveloped area of western Montana. What does the failure of this dam project mean for the economic history of Montana and the American West? While it is difficult to prove a negative—that the absence of this dam caused economic harm to the region—by looking at similar sized hydroelectric projects throughout the country and the industrial development these dams fueled, historians can at least sense what Montana might have looked like if Glacier View was built. Second, this is a story of Native American sovereignty and attempted dispossession. The main alternative to the Glacier View Dam was the Paradise Dam, an Army Corps of Engineers proposal to plug the Clark Fork River, and it seemed inescapable that at least one of these dams would be built in the 1940s. If constructed, the Paradise Dam would have flooded 20,000 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana, the treaty-guaranteed home of the Confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai Indians (CSK). What was more important, then, 20,000 acres of sovereign Native American homeland or 20,000 acres of Glacier National Park wilderness? Where does this episode fit within the century-long history of dispossession of Native lands due to the avarices of encroaching Anglo-Americans and the desires of the federal government? Finally, the defeat of the Glacier View Dam, led by National Park Service, wilderness activists and river enthusiasts, seems at first glance like a pivotal moment in the environmental history of the United States. How does this victory impact the development of the modern, mid-twentieth century wilderness movement? How did conceptions of wilderness in national parks change, from the creation of Yellowstone in 1872 to the mid-twentieth century? What role does the Glacier View Dam play in the passage of the
Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968? And why has this episode largely been ignored by historians?

Answering these important questions required the examination of a vast array of primary sources from all over the country. First, I reviewed numerous newspaper collections and popular publications for accounts of this history, from nineteenth century stories on early conservation efforts in Montana to 1976 accounts of the designation of the Flathead River system as a Wild and Scenic River. This included an intense examination of many Montana newspapers, including but not limited to the *Columbian*, the *Daily Inter Lake*, the *Missoulian*, the *Independent-Record*, *Great Falls Tribune*, the *Hungry Horse News*, the *Char-Koosta News*, the *Whitefish Pilot*. I examined a variety of regional newspapers from cities such as Spokane, Denver, Salt Lake City and Seattle, as well as national newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. I also looked at more popular, national publications, including *Century Magazine*, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper’s Magazine*, as well as environmentally themed journals like *National Parks*, *The Living Wilderness* and the *Sierra Club Bulletin*.

Second, I relied on archival research to answer questions about the Glacier View Dam. In Montana, I utilized the archival collections available at Glacier National Park, at the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana and at the Montana Historical Society in Helena. The vast National Archives system was also essential for the successful completion of my dissertation. Of principal importance were the following locations and record groups: Record Group 48—Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior and Record Group 79—Records of the National Park Service at National Archives II in College Park, MD; Record Group 75—Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in both Washington, DC and Denver, CO; and Record Group 77—Records of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Seattle, WA. I searched the personal
papers of the two most important Cabinet members in the Glacier View Dam controversy—Secretary of the Interior Julius A. Krug, whose papers reside at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall, whose papers are collected at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. I also examined the organizational records of the numerous conservation and environmental groups involved in the Glacier View Dam controversy. These include, but are not limited to, records such as the Wilderness Society papers, as well as the papers of Olaus Murie and Howard Zahniser in the Denver Public Library and the Sierra Club Records at the University of California-Berkeley.

Third, I culled a great deal of Glacier View dam material from voluminous stacks of government documents and proposed legislation, from geological surveys of the Flathead River system to the Congressional debates on the Wilderness Act and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. While seemingly austere, these government documents often revealed colorful voices both for and against the Glacier View Dam. Most valuable were collections of testimonies from Army Corps of Engineers hearings in the Pacific Northwest on the development of the Columbia River, which Washington State Library graciously loaned to me, and a copy of Howard Zahniser’s early call for the creation of a federal wilderness system in 1949.

The Glacier View Dam controversy was a pivotal moment in United States environmental history and by answering the above questions, I develop numerous main arguments. Several key ideologies influenced both the early history of Glacier National Park and the Glacier View Dam debates in the 1930s and 1940s. Utilitarian conservation, ultimately guided by Gifford Pinchot’s famous maxim of “the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time, [with] the development and the use of the earth and all its resources for the enduring good of men—both on a national and international scale,” sought control over the
country’s natural resources. During the creation of Glacier in 1910, this popular form of conservation led to concessions that allowed for natural resource use in the national park, including the construction of reclamation dams. In 1916 Congress created the National Park Service with a paradoxical mandate. The new bureaucracy was to facilitate the “enjoyment” of the parks while leaving nature “unimpaired” for future generations. In its first decades, the park service emphasized aesthetic conservation, privileging the enjoyment part of this seeming contradiction. In the 1930s, park leaders shifted to the modern conception of wilderness, which focused on unimpaired nature. This shift reflects the evolution of the wilderness idea in national parks during the first century of their existence, from the constructed fiction of “pristine” nature in the first nineteenth century national parks, to the roadless areas preferred by interwar wilderness activists like Aldo Leopold and Bob Marshall, and finally to a biological understanding of wilderness as ecosystems beyond their utility to human beings. Combined, these three ideologies collided during the Glacier View Dam debates and the wilderness ideal emerged from this conflict as a powerful force in national politics.9

The Glacier View Dam was one of the first times that environmental activists defeated a major federal dam project in the United States. Federal dams were enormously popular in the first half of the twentieth century. The building of massive hydroelectric dams in remote river systems throughout the country but particularly the Pacific Northwest put tens of thousands of Americans to work, produced cheap electric power that drove industrial development and mitigated flooding in developing regions along riverbanks. Proponents also promised that these dams would help overcome the country’s numerous problems, including the crippling impacts of the Great Depression, America’s fascist and imperial foes during World War Two and the spread

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of worldwide Communism during the Cold War. The defeat of the Glacier View Dam—while a clear victory for wilderness preservation in the United States—came at an economic cost. The failure to build Glacier View contributed to the stagnation of Montana’s economy during the post-World War Two era and compelled the state to embrace new commercial opportunities such as outdoor recreation and tourism.

Debates over hydroelectric dam development on the Montana headwaters of the Columbia River system resulted in a historic victory for Native American rights in the United States. Concurrent with the Glacier View Dam debates, wilderness activists suggested the Army Corps of Engineers examine and approve alternative dam sites. The most likely substitute—the Paradise Dam—was a multi-purpose project on the Clark Fork River, southwest of the Flathead Indian Reservation. If built, the Paradise Dam would have flooded significant portions of Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai landscapes in defiance of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, which guaranteed Native sovereignty rights to the reservation. Broadly speaking, the construction of this contested dam would have been a continuation of century-long effort by the federal government to displace Montana’s Native peoples from their traditional homelands. Between the signing of the disputed Hellgate Treaty and the debates over the Glacier View and Paradise Dams, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai lost 98 percent of their long-held territories in the American West, including lands in what became the western expanses of Glacier National Park. National Park Service officials and wilderness activists in the 1940s would have gladly taken another 20,000 acres from the Flathead Reservation to preserve the 20,000 acres of the wilds of Glacier already dispossessed from Native control. Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai led the opposition to the Paradise Dam, in an effort to protect the sovereign borders of the Flathead
Indian Reservation and their efforts resulted in a remarkable triumph for Native American sovereignty in the middle of the twentieth century.

The defeat of the Glacier View Dam was a seminal moment in the concerted efforts to preserve wild America. The Glacier View controversy helps link the origins of Progressive Era ideology on conservation and preservation with the ascendancy of the wilderness movement in the late-1950s and 1960s. It was also a victory that predated the more famous Echo Park Dam in the 1950s. Historians use two famous dam projects to characterize environmental thinking during these two periods. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, utilitarian conservationists led by former mayor James Phelan and Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot blamed private water companies for most of the destruction in the city and set their sights on the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park as an ideal location for a modern, municipal water system. In 1913, the Raker Act authorized the construction of the O’Shaughnessy Dam on the Tuolumne River in Hetch Hetchy, to the consternation of preservationists like John Muir. Most national park enthusiasts saw Hetch Hetchy as a massive failure for regional and grassroots efforts to protect national parks and used this fiasco as a launching point for the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Four decades later, unwilling to repeat the botched efforts to protect Yosemite, a nationwide coalition of wilderness and national park activists successfully opposed the construction of the Echo Park Dam, a Bureau of Reclamation project to control the headwaters of the Colorado River in Dinosaur National Monument. For many environmental historians, the defeat of the Echo Park Dam marks the beginning of the campaign to compel the creation of a federal wilderness system, which culminated in the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Before Echo Park, the Glacier View Dam was a significant and unexpected defeat of federal dam building efforts in the United States and an origin point for legislated efforts to
preserve wild America. In the 1940s, a grassroots alliance of national park officials, wildlife biologists, wilderness activists, wild river runners and nature-focused legislators melded older concepts of aesthetic-based conservation with modern conceptions of ecology and health and protected the western expanses of Glacier National Park from human-instigated flooding. In doing so, these activists provided a proven blueprint for oppositional forces in the famous Echo Park controversy that followed in the 1950s. In fact, the Glacier View Dam and the Echo Park Dam are essentially two volleys in the same campaign to defeat dams in national park properties in the mid-twentieth century and to push for the creation of federal systems to protect modern wilderness and free-flowing rivers in the United States. Glacier View and Echo Park are linked by the similarities of their arguments and their impact on one another. Glacier View helped prove the efficacy of grassroots efforts on a national level to defeat a federal dam and provided established methods and arguments employed by the protectors of Echo Park. These were often delivered by the same people and organizations, using the same language and similar techniques—blurring whatever lines might separate the two events. Activists like Olaus Murie, Howard Zahniser and David Brower and organizations like the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club cooperated to defeat both dams. In turn, Echo Park impacted Glacier View by providing a definitive and public repudiation of the Bureau of Reclamation and its dam building efforts in a National Park Service property, which reinforced the victory at Glacier View.

There are direct lines between the defeat of Glacier View in 1949 and the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968. The Glacier View Dam ushered in a new era in federal wilderness protection in the United States. In 1949, Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society used the Glacier View as evidence of the need for a new system of wilderness protection. “It should be national policy—that is the policy of the dominant
governmental unit—to see that the maximum area of wilderness…is maintained in its wildness,” Zahniser contended, “and that no type of the primeval still in existence is permitted to be ‘exterminated.’” That included the remote North Fork Valley of the Flathead River, threatened with inundation by the proposed Glacier View Dam. Zahniser concluded that the “Glacier View case is an outstanding current illustration of the sanctity” of national park wilderness and the need for a federal system of wilderness designation. Over the next fifteen years, Zahniser honed his arguments and wrote numerous drafts of what became the Wilderness Act of 1964. The defeat of the Echo Park Dam in the mid-1950s pushed Zahniser’s wilderness efforts into the national spotlight, but in many ways his movement began in opposition to the Glacier View Dam.

Likewise, the Glacier View Dam controversy led to the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 and the preservation of thousands of miles of American rivers in their free-flowing conditions. In the early 1950s, the Army Corps of Engineers and Montana legislators struggled to revive the defeated Glacier View Dam and looked for alternative dam sites in the upper forks of the Flathead River. In addition to Glacier View, the Corps of Engineers proposed a dam at Spruce Park on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, just south of Glacier National Park. Combined, these dams on the upper Flathead enraged and inspired John and Frank Craighead, twin wildlife biologists and wild river enthusiasts. In a proactive attempt to stop dams on the Flathead, the Craigheads proposed a classification system for wild and scenic rivers in the United States to complement the wilderness movement led by Zahniser. In 1957, John Craighead first published his call for this designation and together the two brothers led the efforts that

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climax with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, legislation designed to offer some balance to the
destructive realities of federal dam building efforts.\textsuperscript{11} In fact, the Craighead brothers wrote much
of the text of this seminal legislation. Taken together, the legislated efforts to preserve wilderness
and wild rivers in the United States owed a great deal to the defeat of the Glacier View Dam.

The Glacier View Dam had the potential to destroy a significant and wild portion of one
of America’s most famous national parks. Despite this fact, historians have largely ignored the
Glacier View controversy as a subject of academic inquiry and overlooked its importance to the
formation of the modern American wilderness movement. That does not mean that historians
have disregarded water, hydroelectric dams and federal reclamation projects as important events
in the history of the American West. Quite the contrary, a vast body of literature exists detailing
the impact of the construction or the defeat of dams throughout the region. My work both fills in
a significant gap in the environmental historiography of the American West and complements
and revises this existing scholarship.

In his book \textit{Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, & the Growth of the American West},
environmental historian Donald Worster applies Karl Wittfogel’s conception of “hydraulic
civilizations” to the American West and argues that the health and economic prosperity of the
West is dependent on humankind’s ability to manage and manipulate natural resources,
particularly valuable water. According to Worster, the American West “can best be described as
modern hydraulic society, which is to say, a social order based on the intensive, large-scale
manipulation of water and its products in an arid setting…[that] is increasingly a coercive,
monolithic, and hierarchical system, ruled by a power elite based on the ownership of capital and

expertise.” Worster concentrates his work on the states of California and Arizona, while contending that his thesis applies to all other “clones and satellites” throughout the West, including (presumably) western Montana. The purpose of this water-based empire, according to Worster, is “the rational, calculating, [and] unlimited accumulation of private wealth.” 12

Journalist Marc Reisner, in his book *Cadillac Desert: The American West and its Disappearing Water*, argues that the water-based empire described by Worster is doomed to failure. For more than a century, Americans have attempted to convert the “Great American Desert” that is the American West into farmable and livable environments. This man-versus-nature narrative escalated in the 1930s and facilitated “a half-century rampage of dam-building and irrigation” at the hands of two bureaucratic rivals—the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. This escalation produced dubious results. According to Reisner, “all we have managed to do in the arid West is turn a Missouri-size section green—and that conversion has been wrought mainly with nonrenewable groundwater.” The “vainglorious rivalry” between the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, a competition present throughout Reisner’s text, degenerated into efforts to build frivolous and expensive projects to ensure funding superiority. 13

The history of the Glacier View Dam supports these big-picture syntheses, with some significant revisions, concerning the intersection of power and water in the American West. Applying Worster’s interpretation to the specific episode of the Glacier View Dam shows that two sides of the multifaceted argument might be considered part of “power elite” in the West.

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While proponents of Glacier View fit neatly into Worster’s argument, given their expressed desire to use the Glacier View Dam as an engine for economic growth and wealth accumulation, opponents such as Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society and David Brower of the Sierra Club sought social capital as opposed to material wealth. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of western Montana were not part of this “power elite” structure, yet their voices were the loudest during the defeat of the Paradise Dam and the protection of the sovereign borders of the Flathead Indian Reservation. Reisner’s account of the bureaucratic rivalry component of federal dam building provides important historic context for the Glacier View Dam controversy, since the Corps of Engineers’ proposals for the North Fork of the Flathead River occurred concurrently with Bureau of Reclamation to build the Hungry Horse Dam on the Middle Fork of the Flathead and the Echo Park Dam at the confluence of the Green and Yampa Rivers in Colorado. Yet, the defeat of the Glacier View Dam counters Reisner’s conception of the mid-twentieth century as a “rampage of dam-building” in the United States. In 1949 at least, the efforts of a grassroots coalition of National Park Service leaders, wilderness activists and wild river runners stemmed the unrelenting pressures of federal dam-building bureaucracy.

The study of specific dams in the twentieth century American West has provided ample fodder for environmental historians. According to historian William Cronon, “Among the more familiar but suggestive ways to narrate the history of conservation in the United States is to tell a tale of dams and the changing ways Americans have perceived them.” In the historiography of dams in the West, two projects stand out in both fame and significance: the Hetch Hetchy controversy in California and the Echo Park Dam project in northwestern Colorado. In his book, "The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America’s Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism" (2005), historian Robert Righter writes a revisionist history of the damming of
the Tuolumne River in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park, two hundred miles east of San Francisco, California. Unlike previous histories of this famous event, especially Roderick Nash’ treatment in *Wilderness and the American Mind* (2001), Righter does not frame the battle over the Hetch Hetchy Valley as a confrontation between proponents of wilderness preservation and those of the progress of civilization. For Nash, “the principle of preserving wilderness was put to the test” during the Hetch Hetchy controversy and “For the first time in the American experience competing claims of wilderness and civilization to a specific area received a thorough hearing before a national audience.” Righter, however, contends that the “defenders of the valley consistently advocated development, including roads, hotels, winter sports amenities and the infrastructure to support legions of visitors…the Hetch Hetchy fight represents the seminal battle not over wilderness, but over public power.” Despite John Muir’s veneration of wilderness and the spirituality of sublime nature, the Hetch Hetchy controversy came down to competing arguments over the best economic use for the remote valley in Yosemite National Park and who had enough influence to enact their vision. In his penultimate chapter, “The Legacies of Hetch Hetchy,” Righter argues that the opponents of the Glacier View reclamation project, especially the National Park Service, learned valuable lessons from the Hetch Hetchy controversy and that the “new committed agency, with many of its leaders tested in the crucible of Hetch Hetchy, thwarted the ambitions of the bureau [of Reclamation] and the [Army] corps [of Engineers].”

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In the mid-1950s, unwilling to repeat the failures of Hetch Hetchy, conservationists successfully defeated a Bureau of Reclamation proposal to dam the Green River at Echo Park, as part of the larger Colorado River Storage Project, in the middle of Dinosaur National Monument. Historian Mark W. T. Harvey, in his book *A Symbol of Wilderness* (1994), argues that a national alliance opposed the damming of Echo Park, including local interests, the National Park Service and national conservation groups and that the “battle over Echo Park was the first major clash between preservationists and the dam builders in the postwar American West, and it established a major theme in the region’s history.” He contends that Dinosaur’s remote location and secondary status as a national monument rather than a national park allowed the possibility for damming of this federally protected landscape. Echo Park was a pivotal moment in the environmental history of the United States, according to Harvey, and “never before had so many sporting, wildlife and wilderness organizations come together into such a powerful coalition.” This confederacy of outdoor interests “had to find a strategy for winning,” which they did through denying the need for the dam and proposing alternative dam sites, promoting the beauty and wilderness of Dinosaur to a nationwide audience, challenging the scientific expertise of the Bureau of Reclamation and forging alliances with anti-dam and pro-wilderness politicians. In victory, “Echo Park became a prime symbol of the American wilderness, at once magnificently beautiful as well as in danger of disappearing under development pressures.” This victory was not absolute, however, as “Interest in the dam remained sufficiently high that some lawmakers tried to revive the project, and their efforts effectively thwarted a move to create Dinosaur National Park.”

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This dissertation fits neatly between these two books in a temporal sense, while adjusting some of Harvey’s conclusions on the uniqueness of the Echo Park Dam controversy. Unlike Righter’s interpretation of Hetch Hetchy, which pitted competing, Progressive Era visions of conservation against one another and only cursorily involved debates over wilderness, the Glacier View Dam brought the concept of modern wilderness forward in the American environmental conversation. It did so before Echo Park. First conceived in the mid-1930s, initially proposed in 1943, and defeated in 1949, the Glacier View Dam debates occurred ahead of the Echo Park controversy in the mid-1950s. According to Harvey, “If Dinosaur had been one of the better-known parks, such as Yellowstone or the Grand Canyon, this controversy might not ever have come about. But Dinosaur? What did it matter if a dam were built there? Who cared about a few old fossils?” Yet, the Glacier View Dam project would have flooded 20,000 acres of the western expanses of Glacier National Park, a preserved area Harvey calls one of the most “famous parts of the national park system.” While the significance of Echo Park has intrigued numerous environmental historians, to the point that Harvey calls the controversy “a milestone to the fledgling wilderness movement and a critically important episode prior to the Wilderness Act of 1964” and Roderick Nash contends that the victory was the American wilderness movement’s “finest hour to that date,”16 scholars have largely ignored the efforts to build a dam designed to flood significant portions of one of America’s most famous national parks. An almost identical coalition of wilderness activists and outdoor organizations successfully opposed the Glacier View Dam in the 1940s, pioneering the same strategies and arguments they would repeat in the Echo Park Debates in the 1950s. As with Echo Park, the defeat of the Glacier View Dam was a crucial event in the twentieth century environmental history of the United States.

16 Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, xvi, 6, 23; and Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 219.
This history of the Glacier View Dam project and all its proposed alternatives also contributes to Native American historiography, by contributing to the scholarship on nineteenth-century federal efforts to dispossess Native Americans from their homelands and reimagined histories of the creation of the first national parks, and connecting this scholarship to histories concerned with the construction of dams impacting Native American reservations. Over the past twenty years, environmental historians studying the early national park movement have revealed the negative impacts of park creation—what historian Karl Jacoby calls “the hidden history of conservation.” In his book Dispossessing the Wilderness (1999), historian Mark David Spence’s points out the fiction of pristine wilderness in national parks. He argues that “uninhabited wilderness had to be created before it could be preserved, and this type of landscape became reified in the first national parks.” Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana was not untouched wilderness and it has not been for millennia. Park architects carved Glacier out of lands taken by the federal government from the Blackfeet Indians east of the Continental Divide and from territory ceded by the Kootenai Indians west of the divide and then convinced the American public that these lands were pristine. In The Hunter’s Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America (1997), historian Louis Warren scrutinizes the intersection of culture, class and status in the struggle between the United States government and local citizens to control access to natural resources, namely the ability to hunt unmolested on public land. Warren argues that “one of the dominant features of western history is the struggle between local polities and outsiders (nonlocals) for exclusive control over land and the critical resources on it.” According to Warren, this land struggle resulted in the loss of vast expanses of Blackfeet homeland during the second half of the nineteenth century, some of which became preserved by the federal government as “wilderness” in the eastern half of Glacier National
Combined, these works point out the distasteful truth about national parks wilderness. The American construct of pristine wilderness is a fiction born from the dispossession of Native peoples from their homelands. This dissertation continues this argument by linking the continued preservation of national park wilderness to the attempted dispossession of Native Americans in western Montana. In both the creation of America’s first national parks and during debates over the Glacier View Dam and its alternatives, the wilderness of Glacier National Park was more important to many than the treaty guaranteed sovereignty of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana. To protect this constructed ideal of national park wilderness, activists promoted the Paradise Dam as a viable alternative to Glacier View and were willing to condemn 20,000 additional acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

Numerous scholars interested in Native American history have examined the negative effects of large, federally funded water projects on American Indians and their traditional homelands. In his book *Command of the Waters*, political scientist Daniel McCool examines the complex policy-making processes that determine both the water rights of disparate groups of people and the necessity of reclamation projects throughout the United States. Specifically, McCool situates “Indian water development within the larger context of the politics of federal water resource development.” McCool uses the concept of “iron triangles,” defined as reciprocal, tripartite relationships between politicians, federal agencies and local interest groups, to describe how distributive water policies developed in the twentieth century, including federally funded dams. In 1908, the Supreme Court handed down its seminal Winter’s Decision, a water rights

case resulting from conflict between white settlers and Fort Belknap Reservation Indians in Montana over the use of the Milk River for the irrigation of farmland. Justice Joseph McKenna ruled in favor of the Native Americans, arguing the “Indians had command of the lands and the waters” and they never relinquished those rights. Following World War II, the Bureau of Reclamation and its allies emerged as a viable “iron triangle” in water development issues in the American West. Successfully utilizing the “mystique of science,” the Bureau positioned itself as the expert agency on water issues, earned favorable support throughout the halls of Congress, and witnessed a “meteoric growth” of federal funding in the second half of the century. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) failed to use the Winter’s Doctrine to push for Indian water rights during this same period, relying instead on state prior appropriation law whenever possible. The BIA’s cautious approach had negative, long-term effects on Native Americans and hindered the development of a successful Indian “iron triangle.” Several factors hampered the Indian water lobby, particularly the overrepresentation of western Congressmen on the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, legislators who often revealed an anti-Indian bias and the poor image of the BIA in legislative circles. McCool concludes that by 1985 only 7 percent of irrigable Indian lands had been irrigated, a situation caused by “inherent weakness of the Indian iron triangle.”

Scholars such as Michael Lawson, Paul VanDevelder and Joy Bilharz focus on displacements caused by the construction of hydroelectric dams. In his book Dammed Indians (1982), historian Michael Lawson examines the contentious negotiations and deleterious effects of twentieth-century dam building projects on numerous Missouri River Sioux groups in North and South Dakota. The Pick-Sloan Plan, an amalgamation of multi-goal water development

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proposals of the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation in the 1940s, wreaked havoc on the economic and social well-being of the Sioux tribes involved, to the point that Lawson argues that the plan “caused more damage to Indian land than any other public works project in America.” Similarly, in his book *Coyote Warrior* (2005), Paul VanDevelder utilizes the story of Mandan lawyer Raymond Cross and his influential family, to tell the tale of the hundreds of Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras displaced by the “The Flood” caused by the construction of another Pick Sloan reclamation project called the Garrison Dam in North Dakota. In her book, *The Allegany Senecas and the Kinzua Dam* (1998), anthropologist Joy A. Bilharz documents the continuing, thirty-year impact of this compulsory relocation on the Senecas of western New York. Between 1959 and 1964, the construction of a 179’ high dam on the Allegany River near Warren, PA flooded more than one-third of the Allegany Reservation of the Seneca Nation in western New York State and forced the relocation of 550 Native Americans from their homes.19

This history of hydroelectric dam development in western Montana fits within these two subsections of Native American historiography. Clearly, the construction of the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork River would have been another case of Native dispossession caused by the construction of a large, multipurpose dam. The defeat of the Paradise Dam demonstrated the success of an “Indian iron triangle” because the Army Corps of Engineers, Montana legislators like Mike Mansfield and the concerted efforts of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes combined to remove the dam from plans to control the Columbia River system. Unlike the Pick-

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Sloan dams or the Kinzua Dam, the Paradise Dam involved the preservation of wilderness. To preserve the wilds of the North Fork Valley, lands already taken from the Kootenai and reimagined as a national park, wilderness activists were comfortable with the additional dispossession of Confederated Salish and Kootenai lands. In a continuation of the “hidden history of conservation,” for these wilderness proponents and wild river campaigners, wild America was more important than Native America.

Combined, the following six chapters answer the questions and support the claims posed above and mostly follow a chronological order. Chapter One: The Pinchot Park examines the contentious creation of Glacier National Park in 1910. After years of debate and at the insistence of Montana legislators, the legislation creating Glacier included language allowing a great deal of natural resource use, including the opportunity to build reclamation dams within the boundaries of the nascent park. Chapter Two: A Wild Paradox assesses the creation of the National Park Service in 1916 and the inherent contradiction and competing ideologies of the founding Organic Act, which charged the new federal agency with both the preservation of national parks in an “unimpaired” condition and the facilitation of tourism in the parks. These first two chapters set the stage for the Glacier View Dam debates. On one hand, both pieces of legislation protected Glacier National Park from many levels of violation. On the other, these safeguards did not preclude the Army Corps of Engineers from proposing a dam on the North Fork in 1943 that would flood 20,000 acres of the national park.

The next three chapters tell the main history of the Glacier View Dam debates, but in a more thematic approach. Each of three major positions in these debates is covered in its own chapter. Chapter Three: Victory Rivers evaluates the pro-Glacier View Dam position, in the context of the Great Depression, World War Two and the onset of the Cold War era. Proponents
believed the dam would transform the economy of western Montana, by putting thousands of unemployed to work and by drawing new industrial development, all while defeating tyranny throughout the world. Chapter Four: “Holler Stop to the Dam Builders” explores the anti-Glacier View Dam stance and the coalescence of a nationwide alliance of National Park Service officials, hunters and other outdoor recreationalists and ascending wilderness organizations who defeated the dam. Their efforts mark a seminal moment in the environmental history of the United States. Chapter Five: The Third Road investigates the difficult position of the Confederated Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai Indians in these debates. Ultimately, these Native Americans supported the construction of the Glacier View Dam to forestall the construction of the alternate Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork River and to preserve the sanctity of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

Finally, Chapter Six: The Wild Hour demonstrates the impact of the defeat of the Glacier View Dam on the rise of the modern wilderness movement, between 1950 and 1976. Glacier View influenced the famous Echo Park Dam fight in the mid-1950s, contributed to the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968 and ultimately led to near-permanent preservations for the western expanses of Glacier National Park through de facto wilderness protection and the designation of the North Fork of the Flathead River as a national scenic river.

Yi Fu Tuan believed the creation of places occurred when successive cultures applied their values to blank spaces, resulting in a tangible place that passionate humans could appreciate because of a “concretion of value.” In Glacier National Park and especially the North Fork Valley, one of these values is a fervent impulse towards the protection of wildness in the far-flung corners of the United States. From the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910, through
the Glacier View Dam controversy in the 1940s, to the designation of the Flathead River as a part of the wild and scenic rivers system, there is now a concretion of preservation centered on the narrow canyon between Huckleberry Mountain and Glacier View Mountain on the North Fork of the Flathead River. This preservation is most likely impermanent, and some future culture will endow this remote location with different values and create a brand-new place. Until that happens, however, the Glacier View Dam site is one of the most guarded places in wild America.
Prologue

Worship is no good without action. With action, it’s only useful if it steadies you, focuses your efforts, and eases your mind.
—Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower

Deep in the backwoods of northwestern Montana, a sweaty, seventy-one-year-old man swung a well-worn pickaxe at scrub brush and saplings. The old man was dressed simply enough, sporting a green t-shirt, faded blue jeans, a yellow hard hat and thick-lugged work boots. His axe cleaved the unruly vegetation, clearing limbs and leaves from a gravelly path that wound to the top of Glacier View Mountain. But sometimes, the old man’s blade dug deep into the desiccated soil or bounced noisily off half-buried granite, sending sediment or sparks into the air. He continued his rhythmic work, regardless of the outcome of any individual swing. He seemed to thrive on the physicality of the manual labor. A determined man and a dirty axe—such a sight was once common along the North Fork of the Flathead River. More than a century earlier, for example, hopeful homesteaders carved rough farms out of pine forests and verdant meadows with similar tools, on both sides of this remote river valley. Most of those homesteads are now overgrown and long forgotten—faded lines on a yellowed map. The lithe old man with the axe, however, was not there to farm 160-acres in the Jeffersonian tradition. He had much loftier goals. Instead, he wanted to stake his claim to hundreds-of-thousands of acres of the river’s watershed. Senator Max Baucus swung that pickaxe in the summer of 2013 to publicize his efforts to preserve the entire North Fork Valley.¹


Senator Max Baucus, a “congressional power broker” and influential Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, was fast approaching the end of a nearly forty-year career in public service in 2013. He announced his retirement from the Senate that April and planned to serve out his final term into 2015. During his long career in the United States Congress, which began in the House of Representatives in 1975 and continued uninterrupted in the Senate since 1978, Baucus sponsored more than 1,800 pieces of legislation, many of which concerned the protection of America’s environment and natural resources. One of his first bills as a freshman representative designated portions of Montana’s Flathead River, including the North Fork, as a National Wild and Scenic River. One of his last introductions, the North Fork Watershed Protection Act of 2013, would have removed “approximately 362,000 acres of Federal land located along the Flathead River in northwestern Montana from the mining laws and mineral and geothermal leasing laws.” This act, co-sponsored by Montana’s other senator, Jon Tester, would
provide federal weight to an existing agreement between the State of Montana and the Canadian Province of British Columbia, which prevented mining and oil exploration in the North Fork Valley. It was this bill, an environmental capstone to a prolific political career, which brought Baucus and his pickaxe to the east bank of the North Fork River. Baucus posited that the protection of the valley would be a lasting legacy of his service: “In my 40 years in public office, I have found no place like the North Fork. When I leave the Senate, I want it to stay that way.”

A concern for the environment, and the conservation of the vast natural resources of both Montana and the United States, has been a hallmark of Max Baucus’ political career. During his long tenure in Congress, Baucus repeatedly pushed for the protection of America’s national parks, including shielding Yellowstone National Park and its surrounding ecosystem from threats from mining operations and land exchanges. Baucus helped protect many of Montana’s scenic landscapes from development, including the Swan Valley, the Blackfoot Valley, areas all along the Rocky Mountain Front and, of course, the North Fork River Watershed. The Wilderness Society presented Baucus with the prestigious Ansel Adams Award for “exceptional commitment to the cause of conservation and the fostering of an American land ethic” in 2014. When bestowing the award, Wilderness Society President Jamie Williams said that “we recognize Senator Baucus for his passionate commitment to protecting Montana’s and America’s

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wild places and outdoor heritage. Senator Baucus set a new standard for what people can achieve by working together to sustain America’s unparalleled natural heritage.”

By birthright, Baucus’ “passionate commitment” to the outdoors might have taken a much different tract. Born Max Sieben Enke in 1941, son of a Stanford University professor father and cattle ranching mother, Baucus grew up splitting time between life and schooling in Montana’s capital of Helena, and weekends on his family’s cattle ranch. His mother Jean was the granddaughter of Henry Sieben, who purchased a large, historic ranch along the banks of the Missouri River in 1896, about twenty miles from Helena. Jean and her second husband John Baucus, ran the family ranch for decades, and groomed their oldest son Max to one day take over the family business. Baucus’ cattle ranching calling was interrupted by college, by life experiences and by choice. William Jennings Bryan once argued that “destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.” Baucus, seemingly, took these words to heart. During a summer break from his studies at Stanford, Baucus and a group of friends attempted to hitchhike across the globe and found themselves in the Belgian Congo. The Congo, originally a private colony for Belgian King Leopold II, was an infamous location for both natural resource extraction and race-based exploitation. In the Congo, Baucus had something of an environmental epiphany. While in Africa, Baucus contended “it just hit me. The world is getting smaller. Natural resources are diminishing and somehow we've got to live together.” Baucus abandoned his plans to run his family ranch, rejected a bucolic life surrounded by cattle, mountains and the Missouri River.

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Instead, Baucus chose to enter public service, and devote his life, in part, to the protection of America’s vast natural wonders and resources.⁴

Baucus began his Congressional career at the tail end of one of the most productive eras of environmental legislation and protection in American history. Environmentalism was a mainstream political concern in this country by the mid-1960s. During President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s “Great Society” period, the United States Congress passed nearly 300 pieces of legislation dedicated to some measure of environmental protection—laws that protected endangered species, cleaned up industrial pollution and pushed to stop littering. Two of the more famous bills included the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. Johnson’s successor, Richard M. Nixon, continued this flurry of environmental protection, signing laws such as the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as well as creating the Environmental Protection Agency. Widespread bipartisan support for environmentalism began to splinter in the mid-1970s, as Max Baucus first took office. Baucus, throughout his career though, attempted to maintain this environmental momentum. He focused many of his efforts on protecting the North Fork of the Flathead River. In doing so, he contributed to a more-than-a-century long effort to protect this wild river valley.

The federal government has offered some measure of protection for the North Fork Valley since the late-nineteenth century, although none of these safeguards had permanently preserved the area. In 1897, for example, President Grover Cleveland created thirteen national forest reserves, including the Flathead Reserve that included the North Fork of that eponymous

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river. This provided some protection for the valley while allowing controlled resource extraction. In 1910, the act creating Glacier designated the midline of the North Fork of the Flathead River as the western boundary of the nascent national park, offering stronger protection for exactly half the river. In 1916, the passage of the National Park Service Organic Act increased the protection of all national parks, and created a powerful bureaucracy dedicated to protecting the scenery and wildlife of Glacier. In the 1940s, national park administrators and wilderness enthusiasts fought to protect this river valley, and forced the Army Corps of Engineers to abandon plans to dam the river—one of the first time opponents stopped a major federal reclamation project based on environmental concerns. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 provided the framework for protecting some of America’s most unsullied river systems, and Max Baucus used this tool to apply further federal protections to the North Fork. In 1976, under Baucus’ sponsorship, Congress designated much of the Flathead River system either a wild or scenic river, including the entirety of the North Fork River, from the Canadian border to its confluence with the Middle Fork.5 Seemingly, this designation finally offered permanent protection to this remote and wild river.

The naturalist John Muir once famously argued that “nothing dollarable is safe, however guarded.” This is certainly true in the North Fork Valley. Despite all these layers of protection

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and more than a century of effort to protect this wild river, economic concerns threatened the North Fork of the Flathead once again during the first decades of the twenty-first century. In 2005, Canadian coal mining interests looked to establish operations in the north end of the valley. These proposals threatened to destroy entire mountains and pollute the waters of the North Fork. Similar mines in the nearby Elk Creek drainage dumped toxic amounts of nitrogen, sulfate and selenium into local water supplies. Montana officials, led by Governor Brian Schweitzer and Senator Baucus, negotiated a settlement with these Canadian mining interests. Montana agreed to pay $10 million to the mining companies, and in exchange, these mining interests abandoned claims to the North Fork Valley in Canada. This was a remarkable bargain—Montana paid $25 an acre to protect the 400,000-acre valley. This agreement, while noteworthy, was not necessarily permanent.⁶

Max Baucus wanted an enduring solution. In 2011, supported by Montana’s other United States Senator Jon Tester, Baucus introduced legislation to protect the North Fork of the Flathead River from further development, preventing any new proposals for oil exploration, gas production, or mining claims. Baucus argued: “As Montanans, we have a connection to the land that unites us, but also requires us to act as stewards of our outdoor heritage…This bill sends a signal far and wide that we’re going to fight to protect all the things that make Montana such a great place to live, work and raise a family.” This act would leave a lasting legacy for Baucus and finalize his four-decade commitment to protecting and appreciating the North Fork Valley. According to Michael Jamison of the National Parks Conservation Association, this act would provide a remarkable symmetry to Baucus’ legislative career. Jamison contended that “the North

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Fork and Glacier Park have provided the conservation bookends for Sen. Baucus’ long Senate career…He took on the challenge of protecting this landscape in 1976, and today, four decades later as he prepares for retirement, he’s still pressing tirelessly on our behalf to make sure this important work gets done.”

Things certainly looked promising—the permanent protection of the North Fork Valley seemed, finally, at hand.

Then, in December 2013, only months after his axe-swinging publicity tour of the North Fork Valley, Senator Max Baucus accepted President Barack Obama’s nomination to become the United States’ eleventh ambassador to the People’s Republic of China, ending his senatorial career a year earlier than expected. During his confirmation hearings, Baucus stressed his enthusiasm for this new position, while emphasizing his commitment to environmental issues. One of his main goals for his ambassadorship to China, according to his testimony in January 2014, was working with the Chinese government on global environmental issues. Baucus contended: “The U.S.-China relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. It will shape global affairs for generations to come. We must get it right.” As Baucus moved on to his diplomatic career in China, following a unanimous confirmation vote in early 2014, Montana’s remaining Congressmen pressed forward with his proposals to protect the North Fork of the Flathead River. None of these three, including newly appointed Senator John Walsh, carried the same weight in Congress as Baucus on environmental issues, however.

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That April, three Republican Senators, including soon-to-be presidential candidate Ted Cruz of Texas, blocked Baucus’ bill with procedural maneuvers. The efforts of these three pro-energy ideologues to impede the bipartisan bill was a clear case of “politics…trumping good policy,” according to Senator Jon Tester. Tester testified that none of these Senators had the geographic ability to find the remote North Fork Valley of Montana on a map, and he concluded that “what has happened today is a loss not only for Montana, not only for the great outdoors, but for this entire country.”

And with this contentious exchange in Congress, the promise of permanent federal protection of the North Fork of the Flathead River, the western boundary of Glacier National Park, went to hell. Once again.

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Chapter One: The Pinchot Park

She and my father fought for my soul when I was young, my father wanting me to be a tough guy and my mother wanting me to be a flower girl. So I ended being a tough flower girl.

—Norman Maclean, “The Two Worlds of Norman Maclean”

In 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the United States Congress passed the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), which President Donald Trump signed into law on August 4, 2020. The bill was one of the largest investments in national park management in history and akin to the Mission 66 program of the mid-twentieth century, which authorized $1 billion in infrastructure improvements in the national parks after budgetary shortfalls during the Great Depression and World War Two. The GAOA had a similar purpose. Between 1980 and 2020, visitation to America’s national parks increased 50 percent while park budgets remained relatively stagnant. This disparity led to a backlog of almost $12 billion in maintenance projects in the parks, diminishing the overall experience for park tourists and threatening the National Park Service mandate to preserve the parks “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

The Great American Outdoors Act reflected the will of the people, as an overwhelming majority of American voters have visited National Park Service properties and supported the infrastructure bill. According to a Pew Charitable Trusts assessment in 2019, 87 percent of Americans surveyed had visited a national park or other site managed by the NPS at least once in their life. Furthermore, Americans wanted the national parks protected. That same Pew research

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revealed that 82 percent of those surveyed wanted the federal government to invest in the national parks and supported the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act to fund maintenance and repair of perpetually underfunded parks. Congress agreed and the bill passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. In a reversal of his previous position, and in an effort to stimulate western economies to aid the reelection bids of key western Republican Senators, President Trump signed the bill into law.²

The GAOA authorized billions of dollars in investment in the national parks and other protected areas in the United States. This act established a National Parks and Public Land Legacy Fund, endowed with a maximum of $1.9 billion per year for five years. Congress earmarked 70 percent or $1.33 billion of this fund for National Park Service projects. To pay for this investment, Congress appropriated “50 percent of all energy development revenues due and payable to the United States from oil, gas, coal, or alternative or renewable energy development on Federal land and water.” The GAOA also guaranteed $900 million annually to finance the Land and Water Conservation Fund in perpetuity, a conservation effort started in 1964 that used offshore oil and gas extraction revenues to preserve national parks and other public lands.³

In addition to clearing half of the national parks’ maintenance backlog and preserving public lands, Congress wanted to stimulate economies in the American West during the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. By 2020, the federal government and many westerner legislators recognized the fiscal value of national parks in states like Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, and that national parks were not only a great idea but “America’s Best Investment.” According to economist and public policy expert Linda Bilmes, healthy national

parks lead to robust western economies, since, on average, national parks “deliver at least 30 times the value of what the federal government contributes each year.” In short, the Great American Outdoors Act authorized the investment billions of dollars in the national parks to stimulate local economies in the American West and used revenues from extractive energy development to do so. As Senator Martin Heinrich, a Democrat from New Mexico, put it simply: “This is a big damn deal.”

More than a century earlier, the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910 was almost the exact opposite situation. National parks were little visited wildernesses in far-flung locales—sometimes styled “rich man’s playgrounds.” Most western legislators viewed national parks as hindrances to the growth of regional economies in the American West. Instead of using extractive energy revenues to fund national parks to the benefit of local interests, Glacier was an experiment in hybridization—an attempt to protect the sublime aesthetic qualities of the region as a national park while allowing economy-driving extractive industries and hydroelectric producing dams within park boundaries.

To most present-day Americans, the term national park seems like a stable construct. For the majority of people, the definition of a national park would go something like this: a federally owned and controlled landscape, often a picturesque region or one of great scientific significance, set aside from development and for the enjoyment of visitors. These are the preserved landscapes that more than 80 percent of Americans wanted to sustain and finance in

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2020. They differ from national forests, for example, since national forests allow activities such as the cutting of mature timber and the hunting of game animals. National forests are blue-collar landscapes—their very existence is predicated on conceptions of work. In a hierarchy of federal landscapes, national parks are the pinnacle, the “crown jewels” of the federal land system. Unlike the blue-collar forests, national parks are aristocratic and refined. This stable definition is a product of a century of contentious history.

Glacier National Park, at least at its founding, did not fit within this definition. The creation of Glacier occurred during one of the most transformative eras in American history. Historians from Robert Wiebe to Jackson Lears, to give but two examples, argue that the period between 1877 and 1920 gave rise to modern America—that most of the political, economic and social structures of the present were codified during this seminal period in the past. Corporations rose to prominence in economic life, technological innovations linked the entire country, and the United States developed into an imperial power during this transformative time. And national parks became national parks, at least in our collective definition. Lears stresses contingency repeatedly in his book Rebirth of a Nation—the development of modern America was not preordained. Nor was the development of national parks. These structures, these innovations, these definitions might have developed much differently. The creation of Glacier National Park was an anomaly—different in structure than the handful of parks that preceded it, and certainly dissimilar to our present conception of national parks. And it might have become the standard.  

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5 Numerous writers and historians use the term “crown jewels” when discussing favored national parks, both in the United States and throughout the world. One example is Randolph Delehanty, ed., Crown Jewels: Five Great National Parks around the World and the Challenges They Face, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Instead, Glacier was something unique—a *Pinchot Park*. Here, the term Pinchot Park serves as a neologism for a national park that fits the philosophy of Gifford Pinchot, one of the most influential conservationists in American history. This new kind of park combined the name and prestige of a national park with the utilitarian resource use of a national forest. Glacier promised the protection of sublime landscapes in the Northern Rockies of Montana, while allowing for the possibility of mining, homesteading, timber cutting and hydroelectric dam development within park boundaries.

During this transformative period of American history, this new type of dual-purpose federal landscape might have become the norm and precluded the need for the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020. The dozens of national parks created after 1910 might have combined the aristocracy and blue-collar utilitarianism promised by Glacier’s founding documents and raised revenue for some other preservationist purpose. Instead, with the controversial end of the Hetch Hetchy debates in 1913 and the founding of the National Park Service in 1916, Americans quickly accepted the current configuration of national parks as protected pockets of wild landscapes and impressive scenery. A century later, the vast majority of Americans accept this definition as concrete and support the preservation of national parks with billions of dollars in investment. While it did not ultimately change the paradigm for federal land protection, the founding of Glacier was “a big damn deal” in its own right. The debates and compromises that led to the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910, the first Pinchot Park in American history, set the stage for the Glacier View Dam controversy in the 1940s.

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Conclusion regarding the founding of Glacier National Park. According to Ise, Glacier “was not really a national park, in the proper sense of the word, but sort of a hybrid national forest with a few park features.”
Human conflicts over particular places require the construction of spaces. The geologic history of the space now known as Glacier National Park begins approximately 1.5 billion years ago. The rocky landscapes of Glacier, which at their lowest point are still 3,150 feet above sea level and at their highest well over 10,000 feet, began as a shallow, inland sea known as the Belt Sea, during the middle Proterozoic Eon (2.5 billion years ago-545 million years ago). This sea, which covered parts of the present-day states of Washington, Idaho and Montana, as well as areas of Western Canada, served as a collection area for the region’s erosional sediment. From all directions, and from extraordinary distances, sediment washed into the Belt Sea, accumulating over time on the sea floor. As pressure built on these layers, sedimentary rock layers formed, one atop of the other. These layers included quartzitic argillite, quartzite, siltite, dolomite, limestone and carbonate rocks. Collectively known as the Belt Supergroup Formation, these foundations are some of the best-preserved sedimentary rocks in existence. This geologic foundation lacks uniformity, however. The 25,000-30,000-feet deep formation consisting of three major groups known as the Lower Belt, Ravalli and Missoula groups, which geologists divide further into twelve distinct formations. These compressions resemble an enormous, twelve-layer wedding cake, with each cake sheet representing the union of one unique geologic era to another. The result of this remarkable layering process is still visible on mountainsides and rock formations above the tree-line in Glacier National Park.⁷

The geologic processes that created the sedimentary Belt Supergroup are relatively well-understood by scientists. The origins of the sediment that formed these same rocks remain a mystery of confounding distance. The sedimentary rocks of the Belt Supergroup are significantly older than any other known formations in the United States, suggesting a unique derivation. Instead of a local origin, geologists have looked to other continents, specifically areas of Australia, Asia and Antarctica, for comparable formations, since palaeogeographers posit that these three continents were connected to North America during the time of the Belt Sea. Twenty years ago, geologists Gerald M. Ross, Randall R. Parrish and Don Winston concluded that south-
central Australia was the origination point for the Belt Supergroup’s sediment. According to geologist David Rockwell, however, more current studies indicate a Siberian origin for the ancient rocks in Glacier National Park.  

After roughly 750 million years of unhurried development, a different, more violent geologic process added new rock layers to the Belt Supergroup Formation. In at least two instances near the end of the Proterozoic Eon, liquid magma broke through the floor of the Belt Sea, forcing lava deposits into the developing formation. This lava eventually cooled and formed pockets of igneous rock known as sills. Lava sills impacted the composition of the limestone sedimentary rocks above and below, burning out all dark colored algae remnants and recrystallizing the limestone into white marble. These sills are clearly visible on the sides of some of Glacier’s mountains, such as the Purcell Sill at Granite Park. The alternating seams of dark igneous rock and white marble resemble a classic rugby jersey, with contrasting black and white horizontal stripes.

The vast slab of rock known as the Belt Supergroup, with its dozen layers of disparate sedimentary rock and veins of black igneous stone, remained effectively untouched for more than a billion years—an unblemished block of marble awaiting a sculptor’s chisel. At this point in geologic time, the land masses of Earth looked much different than they do today. Imagine a map of present-day North America. The spine of the Rocky Mountains runs roughly 3,000 miles north-south, from western Canada, along the border between Washington State and Idaho, and

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south all the way into New Mexico. One hundred and eighty million years ago this same north-south axis marked the western coastline of North America. Present-day states such as Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California manifested as enormous islands in the Pacific Ocean. These islands were on the convergence of what is known as the Pacific Plate and the North American Continental Plate. And 180 million years ago, the North American Plate began to slide westward, allowing the Pacific Continental Plate, including the giant islands, to move east. From a human perspective, the Earth’s tectonic plates moved very slowly during this period, with relocations averaging a little more than one inch per year. Scientists now believe that tectonic movement was not uniform, and at certain points in the natural history of Earth, some plates shifted almost eight inches in a single year and maintained that accelerated speed for ten million years. In geologic time, then, the Pacific Plate slammed into the then western coast with enormous force over the course of 100 million years, joining the “islands” of Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California with the North American Continent. In addition, this sliding of tectonic plates formed the Rocky Mountains. In the Glacier region, this tectonic shifting caused the dislocation of an enormous piece of the Belt Supergroup Formation, a chunk of rock measuring 300 miles long, fifty miles wide, and nearly four miles thick. Known as the Lewis Thrust Fault, this slab of Belt rock moved fifty miles eastward, sliding over younger rock formations. This explains why rocks on the top of Glacier’s mountains are often older than rocks at the base. Chief Mountain, a prominent peak near the eastern boundary of Glacier National Park and a site of great significance for the Blackfeet Indian Nation, is a prime remnant of the Lewis Thrust.10

Glacier National Park’s sections of the famed Rocky Mountains include two main ranges and numerous mountain valleys. On the east side of the park, near the present border with the Blackfeet Nation, lies the Lewis Range. Geologist and cartographer Dr. Bailey Willis, one of the key figures in the founding of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 and a founding member of the American Association of Geographers, named the range after Meriwether Lewis, co-leader of the celebrated Lewis and Clark expedition. Willis believed Lewis to be the first white man to traverse the mountains. The Blackfeet Indians, who controlled much of the Glacier region for thousands of years before the arrival of Lewis or any other Euro-American explorers, called the mountains of the area the “Backbone of the World.” According to Willis, the Lewis Range originated in the Canadian Great Plains at a latitude of 49°10’ and ended in Montana at a latitude of 46°45’. On the western side of Glacier, the Livingston Range dominates the landscape, and its southern terminus lies along the southern boundary of the park near a latitude of 47°15’. Willis also named the Livingston Range, which is a misspelled, second-hand reference to the famous Victorian Era explorer David Livingstone. Geologist Clyde P. Ross, in his survey of Glacier, posited that “the line of demarcation between the Lewis and Livingstone Ranges is commonly taken to pass through Waterton Lake, up the Waterton Valley, over or around Flattop Mountain, thence down McDonald Creek and through McDonald Lake to the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.”

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While it does not house the tallest mountains in the Rockies, Glacier does have some impressive verticality. Mount Cleveland, named after President Grover Cleveland, is the highest mountain in Glacier, at 10,466-feet above sea level. Glacier boasts a total of six peaks above 10,000 feet tall, and an additional forty-two mountains above 9,000’. The Glacier View Dam project did not need such striking mountains. The Army Corps of Engineers’ project would have spanned the North Fork of the Flathead River, in a 1.5-mile gorge created by two similarly sized mountains. On the east side of the river, and within the bounds of Glacier National Park, lies Huckleberry Mountain. Huckleberry is 6,580’ tall. Across the river lies Glacier View Mountain, namesake of the Corps’ dam project. Glacier View Mountain stands 6,097’ above sea level. Combined, these two mountains, which rose from the Belt Sea floor some 100 million years, provided some of the geologic space necessary to imagine a 416’-high dam in the 1940s.

The Lewis Thrust Fault did more than move relocated rock into the Glacier region, thereby creating the region’s mountain peaks. As this giant slab of rock pressed its way east, the resulting pressure ripped several fault lines in the Earth’s surface, including the Flathead, Roosevelt and Blacktail faults. The Flathead Fault, the largest of the three, forced the creation of the North Fork Valley, the site of the proposed Glacier View Dam. The Flathead Fault runs along a north-south axis, roughly ten miles to the east of the North Fork Valley. Around thirty-seven million years ago, this fault line ruptured and an enormous chunk of Belt Supergroup rock backslid westward. Over the course of many million years, this rupture and backsliding formed the North Fork Valley. Today, this important valley is thirty-two miles long, and walled by the

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Livingston Range of the Rocky Mountains on the Glacier side of the valley and the Whitefish Mountain range to the southwest.\textsuperscript{13}

While the valley would one day serve as the western boundary of Glacier National Park and provide the site for the Glacier View Dam controversy of the 1940s, its initial role in the region’s history was as a geologic waste sink. Upon its creation, roughly thirty million years ago, deposits of sand, silt, volcanic ash and organic plant material rapidly plugged the newborn basin. Given enough time and geologic pressure, this waste material transformed into two valuable commodities for nineteenth and twentieth century Americans. The varieties of rock, sand and volcanic ash compressed over centuries to form seams of coal throughout the North Fork Valley, while pockets of shale and coal also produced small deposits of oil.\textsuperscript{14} The geologists and prospectors who settled in the North Fork Valley in the beginning of the twentieth century sought to profit from these geological possibilities. In Yi Fu Tuan’s framework, then, these enterprising men and women applied their own values and imagination to this geologic space and created a very specific version of the North Fork Valley.

Human beings have carved and sculpted rock for perhaps hundreds of thousands of years. Greek sculptors, for example, carved intricate marble pieces using Egyptian techniques, beginning 3,000 years ago. Quarrymen cut and moved large slabs of marble, under the direction of Greek artists. Then, these artists used a series of stone-working tools to carve their art. First, powerful tools such as heavy hammers and large blade chisels cut a rough form into the marble. The artists then used finer chisels, awls, rasps and gouges to shape the polished rock into its final

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13} Rockwell, \textit{Glacier}, 33-36.\
form. Millions of years earlier, the geologic forces that created the Glacier Park region followed a similar process on a much larger level. Tectonic plate movements gave Glacier its raw materials, as slamming rock and uplifted seams created the Rocky Mountains. Beginning roughly two million years ago, and continuing until 12,000 years ago, a second geologic force continued to gouge and chisel the Glacier rock into its present form.15

Four major periods of glaciation occurred in North America during the Pleistocene Epoch (2.6 million years ago to 10,000-12,000 years ago), a transformative period in world history that Paul Martin once referred to as the “last lost world.” The last of these glacial periods, the Wisconsin Glaciation, occurred during the last 100,000 years of the Pleistocene and covered a third of the continent in ice. At its peak 18,000-20,000 years ago, this glaciation engulfed the entire Glacier region in an icy shawl a mile deep, with only the tallest peaks of the Lewis and Livingston ranges visible above the ice. This ice was not static, however. Using these mountain peaks along the Continental Divide as a backboard, glacial sheets flowed both east and west, melting and refreezing along the way. Like the rivers that would succeed them, glaciers east of the Continental Divide generally moved eastward, and ice on the west side, including in the North Fork Valley, worked its way west. In doing so, these enormous glacial sheets continued to sculpt the region’s geologic features, creating numerous alpine lakes, and carving U-shaped valleys and trenches.16

Instead of chisels and rasps, these glaciers reshaped the landscape through two types of erosion known as abrading and plucking. Abrading is glacial abrasion. Imagine the tons of glacial ice as a giant leaf of heavy grit sandpaper, used to smooth out rough canyon floors and walls, clipping sharp rock edges and splaying creek and riverbeds. Present-day visitors can view evidence of this finishing work, in the parallel striations still visible on mountain faces and canyon walls. Plucking, in turn, involved the fracturing and removal of rock as the glaciers flowed. Ranging in size from pebbles to giant boulders, this rock debris added grit to the icy sandpaper that sculpted Glacier’s topography. Through abrading and plucking, the Wisconsin Glaciation also fashioned some of Glacier National Park’s most famous bodies of water, including Lake McDonald, the Saint Mary’s Lakes, the Belly River and the Waterton River. Additionally, sequences of lesser, alpine waters appeared, occasionally referred to as “paternoster” lakes due to their resemblance to the stringed beads of a Roman Catholic rosary.17

Norman Maclean wrote one of the most cherished Montana stories of all time. His 1976 novella *A River Runs through It* tells the story of two disparate brothers who grew up fly fishing on the temperamental rivers of western Montana. The novella concludes with an oft-quoted passage. Maclean wrote: “Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world’s great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters.”18

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In Glacier, tectonic collisions uplifted “rocks from the basement of time” into mountains. Glacial movements smoothed rough edges and carved mountain valleys. And in the North Fork Valley of northwestern Montana “a river runs through it” all. The North Fork of the Flathead River begins as precipitation, snowpack and dew in the Rocky Mountains of southern British Columbia. At its headwaters, a single drop of water begins a thousand-mile journey towards the Pacific Ocean. As the river flows southward into the United States, it swells with additional runoff from the Glacier region, including water from Triple Divide Peak. This mountain, a rare continental hydrological apex, provides source water for three of the largest rivers in North America—the Saskatchewan, the Missouri and the Columbia. Through these rivers, water from Triple Divide Peak eventually reaches three different oceans—the Artic, the Atlantic and the Pacific. The North Fork then merges with the Middle and South Forks of the Flathead, flows placidly into Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River, and empties into the Clark Fork River near Paradise, Montana. Up to this point that single drop of water has travelled 200 miles. The Clark Fork flows northwest and dumps into the Pend Oreille River. Combined, the Clark Fork and the Pend Oreille are 579 miles long, making it the longest river in the Rocky Mountains. The Pend Oreille flows north and joins the Columbia River just across the US/Canadian international border. From the confluence of the Pend Oreille and the Columbia, the single drop of water from the snowpack of southern British Columbia travels another 750 miles southwest to the Pacific Ocean, passing over eleven hydroelectric dams, a stretch of water and energy system historian Richard White has called “an organic machine.” Potentially, this drop of water could then evaporate, become part of a storm front that dumps
precipitation on the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia and Montana, restarting this amazing hydrological cycle.¹⁹

Over millions of years, tectonic collisions, backsliding slabs of rock miles long, glacial abrasions, river flows, wind and erosions have created a remarkable physical space marked by impressive verticality, deep lakes and rivers, and fertile canyons and valleys. Human beings, however, are needed to turn this uninhabited physical space into specific humanized places. Successive waves of people, including some of the initial inhabitants of North America, numerous current Indian nations, fur traders, prospectors, homesteaders, conservationists, environmentalists, oil exploiters and tourists, have looked upon the natural wonders of the region and concluded that this place was special and worth fighting possessing or protecting. For many, the value of Glacier is spiritual. The Blackfeet, who christened the peaks of the area the “Backbone of the World,” have performed religious ceremonies and vision quests in the mountains for many millennia. Chief Earl Old Person, leader of the Blackfeet Nation, wrote a letter to President Barack Obama in 2015, pointing out that the Glacier “area has been utilized as a sanctuary for not only the wildlife, but also for our people to come together and realize their spirituality and to be in touch with their creator. This is the landscape which has for hundreds of years served as an altar to the members of the Blackfeet Confederacy.” Nineteenth and twentieth century visitors also responded spiritually to encounters with Glacier, often peppering their praise with Romantic rhetoric concerning the sublime. Romanticism, a literary movement of the first half of the nineteenth century, sought, among other things, to find God in awe-inspiring

nature. According to environmental historian William Cronon, God “would most often be found in those vast, powerful landscapes where one could not help feeling insignificant and being reminded of one’s own mortality... God was on the mountaintop, in the chasm, in the waterfall, in the thundercloud, in the rainbow, in the sunset... [in] the sites that Americans chose for their first national parks.” In short, Romantics, and those influenced by Romantic philosophy, might find God in Glacier.\(^20\)

Walter McClintock, an early historian and photographer of the Blackfeet Indians, offered an illustrative Romantic reaction to the region’s sublime landscapes in his book *The Old North Trail* (1910). He wrote: “Words fail to describe the magnificence of the glaciers and the waterfalls, and the majesty and impressive beauty of the numerous high peaks and stupendous mountain ranges. Although this country is practically unknown... its scenic wonders are probably unsurpassed by any within the United States.” Similarly, the explorer and writer John Muir argued that a visit to the Glacier region was a gift from God. Once you visit the region, Muir argued, “nevermore will time seem short or long, and cares will never fall heavily on you, but gently and kindly as gifts from heaven.” Little has changed in the last century. Many visitors to Glacier National Park still rely on Romantic rhetoric to express spiritual thoughts about the region’s landscapes, and thereby create their own unique places in northwestern Montana. For example, one mountain climbing guide writer advertises Glacier as “The Place Where God Lives,” and contends that “It seems that when I am on a summit [in Glacier National Park] I am just a little closer to the Creator.”\(^21\)

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Human beings have also viewed Glacier through a utilitarian lens for thousands of years, often focusing on the extractability of the region’s natural resources. The continent’s first Americans most likely entered via the Beringia, an expanse of land hundreds of miles wide, uncovered during the Wisconsin Glaciation. This “bridge” temporarily linked the coasts of Siberia and Alaska, creating a coastline linking southern Asia with the Americas, before being recovered with ocean water at the end of the Pleistocene Epoch. Sea levels in the last 15,000 to 20,000 years have risen 400-feet, submerging the landscapes encountered by the first Americans. The peopling of North America most likely occurred in stages and through different migration techniques. Genetic research suggests that a single migration across Siberia toward this land bridge occurred sometime between 22,000 and 30,000 years ago, with a second movement across Beringia sometime after 16,500 years ago. Once across this land bridge, these first Americans trickled southward and eastward, to fill both American continents with a human presence. Archeologists believe that most migrants initially hugged the Pacific Coast and used boats to travel south along a “kelp highway” into the Americas. Archeological sites along the Pacific Coast, dating back 15,000 years, support this hypothesis. Today, researchers call one of the earliest known American cultures Clovis, after the town of Clovis, New Mexico located near the first known archeological site for these early inhabitants. Archeologists date the beginning of the Clovis culture to approximately 13,000 years ago. This culture relied on ingenious hunting and gathering practices for survival, and is most known for the Clovis point technology, a grooved, rock spear point most likely used to hunt large mammals such as mammoths, mastodons and giant long-horned bison. A decade ago, archeologists excavated a Clovis point in the Belly River Valley, in the northeast corner of the present-day park, suggesting that human beings have

hunted in the Glacier region for perhaps 13,000 years. Furthermore, researchers have excavated
kill sites and hunting encampments dating back 10,000 years at places like Siyeh Pass, Boulder
Pass, Hole-in-the-Wall and Saint Mary’s Lake.\textsuperscript{22}

These first human visitors are the only ones to visit a truly pristine Glacier region. Here,
these earliest Americans entered an untouched space and envisioned a place of great value for
their culture. They also consciously reshaped the landscape for their own benefit, most often
using fire. \textit{Homo sapiens}, and our bipedal ancestors, have used fire as a transformative tool for
thousands, perhaps millions, of years. In the Glacier region, evidence suggests that humans have
intentionally torched the landscape for at least 7,000 years. These ingenious landscape engineers
used fire to maintain habitable encampments, to eliminate cover for approaching enemies, to
improve wild huckleberry growth and harvesting, to improve travel routes through the forested
region, and most importantly, to cultivate grasslands and edge environments preferred by game
animals such as deer and elk. In the North Fork Valley, these fires occurred with remarkable
regularity. Between 1650 and 1935, researchers estimate that the North Fork burned, on average,
once every five years and that most of these fires were set by Native Americans intent on
remaking the valley’s ecosystem.\textsuperscript{23}

Anthropologists and historians associate numerous Native American groups with the
Glacier Park region, including societies like the Salish, Pend d’Oreille, Crow, Assiniboine, Gros

\textsuperscript{22} Ted Goebel, Michael R. Waters, and Dennis H. O’Rourke, “The Late Pleistocene Dispersal of Modern Humans in
\textit{Smithsonian Magazine}, (January 2020), \url{https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-humans-came-to-
americas-180973739/#:~:text=For%20more%20than%20half%20a,corridor%20into%20the%20heart%20of},
accessed December 8, 2020; Gary Haynes, \textit{The Early Settlement of North America: The Clovis Era}, (New York:
40-41.

\textsuperscript{23} Kenneth Miller, “Archaeologists Find Earliest Evidence of Humans Cooking With Fire,” \textit{Discover Magazine},
(December 17, 2013), \url{http://discovermagazine.com/2013/may/09-archaeologists-find-earliest-evidence-of-humans-
Ventre, Nakota and Blood Indians. These disparate groups stalked game in the area’s forests, grasslands and river valleys, consumed the region’s flora for food and medicine and practiced native religions at sacred sites within the current park. Two indigenous groups dominate the anthropological and historical records regarding Glacier National Park: the Kootenai Indians (K’tunaxa) in the western expanses of Glacier and the Blackfeet Nation (Piikáni) on the eastern side of the park.24

Ethnographers split the Kootenai Indians into two interrelated groups: the Upper Kootenai who lived in the higher extents of the Kootenai River near the headwaters of the Columbia River, and the Lower Kootenai who inhabited the downriver areas of the Kootenai River below Kootenai Falls. The Kootenai divide themselves into seven contemporary groups, with the Tobacco Plains Band and the Ksanka Band most closely connected with the Glacier National Park region. Collectively, these groups commanded the western expanses of the present-day park, specifically the areas west of the Continental Divide. In the mountains of the Livingston Range, and in especially in the North Fork Valley, these Kootenai peoples benefited from the flora and fauna of the Glacier region and built a culture that stood for thousands of years. According to a recent ethnographic study of Glacier National Park, the “K’tunaxa [Kootenai] are, and have been for millennia, a distinctive mountain culture, long resident of the area, and adapted to a seasonal east slope/west slope transhumance pattern of settlement and subsistence.” Along the North Fork of the Flathead River—which the Kootenai call Wolftail River—this seasonal culture included fishing for whitefish and bull trout with wicker fish traps

in the spring, harvesting plants like late-ripening mountain camas for starch and cambium bark for sweetness during the spring and summer, mining flaky chert for weapon points and “drive-hunting” deer, elk and moose down mountainsides in the fall and wintering in sheltered valleys and groves along the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains. As winter turned to spring, the Kootenai in the North Fork would cross the Continental Divide to hunt bison on the Northern Plains. This cyclical lifestyle sometimes brought them into martial conflict with the powerful Blackfeet Nation, who controlled the eastern foothills of the Glacier region, including famous battles at Red Rock Canyon and Copper Mountain.25

Like the Kootenai, the Blackfeet Indians are linked with the history of the Glacier National Park region. For millennia, the Blackfeet controlled an empire centered on the northern Great Plains through martial ability and diplomacy and they benefited from the natural resources of the region to support a thriving population and culture. Historian Theodore Binnema maintains that the modern Blackfeet Nation developed during the Old Women’s phase of Paleo-Indian development as early as A.D. 750 and that the Blackfeet “probably have ancient roots on the northwestern plains.” Ethnographers Brian Reeves and Sandra Peacock, using Blackfeet oral traditions, archeological evidence and linguistic analysis, conclude that the Blackfeet have resided on the Rocky Mountain front and northwestern plains of Montana and Alberta, Canada for thousands of years, possibly arriving 8,000 or more years ago. For upwards of 8,000 years, then, the Blackfeet Indians have hunted ungulates in the regions meadows, drove bison herds off buffalo jumps in and near the current park’s eastern border, harvested dozens of species of plants

25 Reeves and Peacock, “Our Mountains are Our Pillows,” 26-27, 28-36, 64-72; Thompson, Kootenai Culture Committee and Pikunni Traditional Association, People before the Park, 8, 91-97, 111; and James Willard Schultz (Apikuni), Signposts of Adventure: Glacier National Park as the Indians Know It, (Chassell, MI: The Slothmore Press, 2019): 105, Kindle. See also Bailey, “Colonization of the Crown,” 41-42.
for a multitude of purposes and used the mountains known as the Backbone of the World as “our church.” Applying the theories of Tuan to this region, the Kootenai and the Blackfeet Indians transformed this fecund space into a permanent place of residence and subsistence through many millennia of perpetual occupation and control.

Like the Kootenai and Blackfeet Indians, Europeans and Americans became enthralled with the inherent natural abundances of the Glacier region, but for different reasons. Originally, they came to the region George Bird Grinnell called the “Crown of the Continent” in order to exploit the vast natural resources available in the area for profit, including marketable animal pelts, the prospective possibilities of oil drilling and mineral wealth and to hunt the local game animals. Beginning in the late-18th century, fur companies like the Hudson Bay Company sent trappers and traders into the region, in search of valuable beaver pelts, several years before the arrival of the transient Lewis and Clark expedition. Later, extractive industries sought fortunes in the Glacier Park region. Petroleum interests drilled for oil near Kintla Lake in 1891 and 1900, miners sought viable coal seams throughout the region from 1887 to 1910 and prospectors hunted gold, silver and copper claims as early as 1876, all without any sustainable success. These initial arrivals had little interest in a permanent relationship with this valuable space. Instead, they sought to profit from the marketable commodities available to enterprising


capitalists. Over time, many Americans sought a more permanent relationship with the Glacier region, either by homesteading within the area or by conserving the land for future use and enjoyment. As they endowed this area with personal value, they converted this space in northwestern Montana into a cherished place of residence or recreation. But in debating these land use patterns, they codified an atypical form of federal land use known as Glacier National Park and set the stage for the Glacier View Dam controversy of the 1940s.

* * *

Thomas H. Carter was an unlikely candidate to propose the creation of a national park during the first decade of the twentieth century. A Republican United States Senator from Helena, Montana, Carter viewed political power like many elected officials of his era—as a public means for expanding private interests, mostly through the utilization of the vast natural resources of his state. Besides his own pursuits, Carter advanced the financial interests of several important Montana businessmen. He owed much of his political clout to the patronage of men such Marcus Daly, James J. Hill, E.L. Bonner and A.B. Hammond, giants in the nation’s mining, railroad and timber industries. Carter saw little value, personal or otherwise, in the preservation of natural resources for future use and he admitted that he disliked “the fallacious new doctrine of conservation.” For Carter, Montana’s vast natural reserves were simply stands of timber to be milled for lumber or pulped for paper, ore deposits be extracted and smelted for precious minerals and rivers to be dammed for irrigation and hydroelectric power. Despite these beliefs, Carter introduced the first of three bills to designate Glacier National Park in the northern Rocky Mountains of Montana on December 11, 1907.²⁸

This seemingly incongruous event reflects the compromises needed to create a new national park in turn-of-the-century Montana. As he became concerned that the natural resources of the Glacier area might not bear great wealth for Montanans and in an effort to create new revenue streams for his state and for his railroad friends based on tourism, Carter bowed to the pressures of vocal conservationists and introduced legislation designed to protect thousands of acres of northwestern Montana in some measure of perpetuity. But the park he proposed was something anomalous. Unlike the standard-setting Yellowstone National Park in 1872, which privileged a constructed fiction of pristine wilderness, Glacier would allow extractive industry in the wilds of Montana.

Much of the pressure placed on Thomas Carter originated with one man. George Bird Grinnell, a man the New York Times referred to as the “father of American conservation,” was the driving force behind the creation of Glacier National Park. An avid hunter, a Yale-trained naturalist and a friend of prominent conservationists such as Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, Grinnell lobbied for the creation of a new national park in the northwestern Montana beginning in the late nineteenth-century. From his pulpit as editor and owner of the influential Forest and Stream magazine, Grinnell wrote numerous articles extolling the environmental virtues and sublime beauty of what is now Glacier National Park, and the pressing need to preserve these wonders. Grinnell organized a coalition of disparate interests in support of his park proposals, including James J. Hill and Louis W. Hill of the Great Northern Railway. And he encouraged a reluctant Thomas Carter to introduce legislation to designate Glacier National
Park. Like Carter, Grinnell needed to compromise some of his own principles to ensure the creation of the park. In the end, Grinnell supported bills that allowed for the possibility of railroads, dams, extractive industries and other development within Glacier Park boundaries.29

Combined, Carter and Grinnell helped create an atypical national park, a Pinchot Park, unlike the parks that both preceded and succeeded Glacier. This conservation hybrid fit the environmental philosophies of Gifford Pinchot well. The United States’ Chief Forester from 1898 to 1910, Pinchot modernized the forestry profession in this country, melding European scientific principles regarding forestry, with American ideals concerning economic opportunity for all and democratic government. In doing so, he elevated the conservation of natural resources to a national concern during the Progressive Era. He was not, however, overly influenced by Romantic notions of nature. Unlike his friend John Muir, Pinchot’s interest in a space like Glacier was for the most part practical not poetic. As historian Frederick Turner put it: “Pinchot personified the new conservationist. Honest, ambitious, energetic as he was, yet there was a sparseness to him more than physical. The woods were not home to him, and he never seems to have been touched by their mystery.” Gifford, instead, was a conservationist who sought to protect natural resources from overexploitation by using scientific management, for the benefit of all Americans. His guiding conservation ethos for American forests was, in his own words, “the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time, [with] the development and the

use of the earth and all its resources for the enduring good of men.” As such, Pinchot rarely agreed with the setting aside of national parks based solely on preservationist principles.

Pinchot worked tirelessly to have control over America’s national parks ceded to the United States Forest Service (USFS) within the Department of Agriculture. In 1905, only two years before the introduction of the first Glacier Park bill, Pinchot professed that “I am very strongly of opinion that the National Parks ought to be in the same hands as the Forest Reserves.” Pinchot’s good friend and sometimes sparring partner, President Theodore Roosevelt, agreed. Roosevelt urged Congress, in his final annual address as President, “that all our national parks adjacent to national forests be placed completely under the control of the forest service of the Agricultural Department, instead of leaving them as they now are, under the Interior Department.” In 1908, only three national parks did not share a border with a national forest: Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, which is near but not adjacent to San Juan National Forest, and two now-decommissioned national parks, Sully’s Hill in North Dakota and Platt in Oklahoma. Roosevelt wanted the remaining parks, especially Yellowstone and Yosemite, transferred to Pinchot’s control in the United States Forest Service. A few years later, during debates concerning the creation of a new National Park Service, Pinchot reiterated that national parks should be “handled by the Forest Service, where all the principles of good administration undeniably demand that they should go.” He accentuated the similarities between the national parks and national forests and contended that a new bureaucracy was redundant—a “needless duplication of effort” that “would not…be wise.”

31 Letter from Gifford Pinchot to Robert Underwood Johnson, April 17, 1905, quoted in Righter, The Battle over Hetch Hetchy, 195; Theodore Roosevelt, “President’s Annual Message,” December 8, 1908, Journal of the Senate of
While he had little to do with the creation of Glacier in 1910, Pinchot must have appreciated the “wise” policies concerning railroad construction, natural resource use and water reclamation allowed in the world’s first Pinchot Park. These compromises, negotiated in the Congress by Thomas Carter, capitulated to by ardent park supporters like George Bird Grinnell, and in line with the vision of Gifford Pinchot concerning the future of America’s public lands, foreshadowed the Glacier View Dam controversy of the 1940s.

The thrust for Glacier National Park began with a hunting trip. In August 1885, James Willard Schultz invited his friend and editor George Bird Grinnell to visit the wilds of northwestern Montana. A regular writer for Grinnell’s Forest and Stream magazine, Schultz wanted Grinnell to help publicize the pecuniary problems of the Blackfeet Indians and he used the promise of a hunting trip through what is now Glacier National Park to entice his editor to make the arduous 2,100-mile journey from New York City to Montana. Schultz described his initial thoughts of Grinnell, writing, “He arrived on the mail stage—a slender, quiet man, fine-appearing man of medium height; in outing clothes that showed much use; his baggage a canvassed covered bedroll, a war sack, a Sharps .45 caliber rifle, and a fly rod.” Grinnell spent several days with the Blackfeet, assessing the hardships of the reservation, visiting local schools and talking with tribal leaders, and eventually he agreed to use his influence to elicit aid for the Blackfeet. After these meetings, Schultz and Grinnell went and played, taking a long hunting tour through present-day Glacier National Park. This excursion did several things: it satiated Grinnell’s desire to hunt big game in Montana, provided the grist for fifteen weeks’ worth of

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exciting travelogues for *Forest and Stream* and solidified Grinnell’s infatuation with this “curiously beautiful” area of the world. The “quiet man” described by Schultz soon became the most vocal proponent of the creation of a new national park in the region.\(^{32}\)

Over the next decade, Grinnell returned often to visit Montana and the Glacier region. He climbed mountains in the Lewis Range, using a barometer to estimate the height of various peaks, he platted the region’s watersheds on his own hand drawn maps, gave Anglicized names to many prominent local features and explored the glacier that now carries his name. As his infatuation with Montana grew, Grinnell began to conceive of a new use for the region—not simply as a personal hunting ground but as a new national park. In 1891, Grinnell ruminated on the possibility of buying a 900-square mile tract of land from the Blackfeet at “fair valuation and turn it into a National reservation or park. The Great Northern R.R. would probably back the scheme and T. C. [Thomas Charles] Power would do all he could for in the Senate…This is worth thinking of and writing about.”\(^{33}\) With one passage, Grinnell neatly summarized three important planks of national park development in the American West—the removal of Native American presence from the land, the economic clout of a transcontinental railroad, and the necessity to convince a western Senator or two of the value of conservation.

Grinnell did not invent the idea of a national park. Grinnell built on an ascending movement of conservation in nineteenth century America, a development with intellectual roots


in Romantic art and Transcendental writing. Artist George Catlin, famous for painting Native American portraits and scenes in the 1830s, offered the first known call for the creation of a national park in the United States. Catlin wished to see part of the Great Plains, “(by some great protecting policy of government) preserved in their pristine beauty and wildness, in a magnificent park, where the world could see for ages to come...A nation’s park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature’s beauty!” In 1864, George Perkins Marsh published the seminal book *Man and Nature*, a foundational work in the emerging field of nature conservation. Fearing that the United States would destroy its environment as European and Asian empires had before, Marsh argued that the federal government should protect sections of American watersheds and forests “in its primitive condition, at once a museum for instruction of the student, a garden for the recreation of the lover of nature, and an asylum where indigenous tree, and humble plant that loves the shade, and fish and fowl and four-footed beast, may dwell and perpetuate their kind.” He wanted these “museums” of nature conserved for as long as “such imperfect protection as the laws of a people jealous of restraint can afford them.” That same year, the federal government took the first steps to heeding Marsh’s advice. In the midst of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation ceding control of the Yosemite Valley of California and the neighboring Mariposa Grove of giant sequoia trees to the State of California, for the sole purpose of creating a state park. Although California administered the park until 1890, this set a precedent for carving protected public areas out of federally owned land. In 1872, Congress created the first national park in the world. Centered on the headwaters of the Yellowstone River, this park was both a playground for American citizens as well as a reserve for vital timber stands and watersheds. Grinnell, who used his pulpit as editor of *Forest
and Stream magazine to campaign for even stronger protections for Yellowstone in 1880s, modeled his vision for Glacier after America’s first national park.34

Grinnell first publicly articulated his vision for a new national park in Montana in an article for Century Magazine. Founded as Scribner’s in 1870, and renamed Century in 1881, this magazine reached a much wider audience than Forest and Stream, which suited Grinnell’s publicity campaign well. Century also had a very specific goal for its content—to promote an idealized American society focusing on genteel, white moral standards of the Victorian Era. A new national park, suggested by the influential George Bird Grinnell, fit this mandate. Many well-to-do Americans during this period saw the nascent national parks as almost personal playgrounds, which offered an escape from the perceived ills of modernity, above all the linked concerns of rapid urbanization, surging industrialization and increased immigration. The park proposed by Grinnell in Century offered such a diversion. Titled “The Crown of the Continent,” Grinnell extended his first public call for the creation of a new national park in Montana and supported his prose with hand-drawn maps and impressive photographs. Grinnell argued: “The fact that it is altogether unknown, the beauty and its scenery, its varied and unusual fauna, and the opportunities it offers for hunting and fishing and for mountain climbing, give the region a wonderful attraction for the lover of nature.”35

Most Montanans opposed the kind of nature preservation proposed by Grinnell. For the majority of locals, the vast natural resources of the newly created State of Montana were a treasure trove of potential profit, not playgrounds for a wealthy few. In 1891, as Grinnell ruminated on a new national park in the region, locals “bitterly opposed” the creation of a vast 6,000 square-mile forest reserve in the northern Rockies, including lands now included in Glacier National Park. According to the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, this new reserve would have prevented the harvesting of timber, the grazing of stock animals, the mining of precious metals and minerals and the building of roads within forest boundaries. Locals, including future Senator Thomas Carter, contested the creation of such a reserve. George Eaton, Surveyor General of Montana, colorfully pronounced that “with the consequent annihilation of all prospects of material advancement of Northern Missoula county, I can only say that I regard such suggestions as emanating from the brain of a mad man.” The “material advancement” favored by most Montanans fit better with the conservation ethos proposed by Gifford Pinchot, not with the outright preservationist principles extolled by men like Grinnell. As Pinchot succinctly put it, the “prime object of the forest reserves is use.” These Montanans wanted the managed use of Montana’s forests that Pinchot advocated, which included access to mature timber, mining claims, waterways and hunting opportunities. And in this instance, local opinion prevailed, and the potentially stifling forest reserve was not created.36

Without this federal protection, enterprising men and women moved quickly to profit from the region’s natural resources. In turn, these developments spurred Grinnell to further action, in an attempt to preserve the “Crown of the Continent.” In anticipation of the arrival of the Great Northern Railway to the region, several towns sprung up in strategic locations, as settlers and land speculators guessed at the final route of the railroad. Investors incorporated the towns of Kalispell and Columbia Falls in 1891 along the rumored route. Within a year, Columbia Falls boasted eighteen saloons, numerous merchants and stores, several hotels, a bank and a newspaper called the _Columbian_. Settlers moved into what is today Glacier National Park, building tourist accommodations near Lake McDonald and platting homesteads in the North Fork Valley. On the east side of the Continental Divide, prospectors and miners encroached on Blackfeet lands in search of long-rumored mineral deposits in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. This influx of new arrivals into the Glacier region contributed to the growing anti-conservation sentiment in Montana and deeply concerned George Bird Grinnell, who continued to push for the creation of a new national park in the region. Grinnell believed that “there is a possibility that paradise will be invaded before long by miners,” despite his fervent efforts “to have the region made a forest reserve, or a National Park.”

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The influx of encroaching miners also angered Blackfeet leaders, who pressed federal officials to remove offenders and enforce trespassing laws. George Steell, Indian Agent on the Blackfeet Reservation, proposed a different solution; instead of protecting Blackfeet interests and enforcing the law, he suggested that the United States buy the western expanses of the reservation and open the lands up to legal mining. In 1894, by a vote of twenty-nine to three, Blackfeet leaders voted in favor of negotiating a sale of western lands to the federal government, in an effort to provide economic relief for the Blackfeet during a very trying economic time.

Blackfeet leaders requested that their friend, George Bird Grinnell, serve on the federal negotiating committee. Grinnell reluctantly agreed to serve for several, somewhat conflicting, reasons. Paternalistically, he believed that the Blackfeet “are not competent to meet the white man in business” and that the “only motive that can influence me in this matter is the good of the Indians, and no other consideration can enter into my view of the case.” Yet, while he expressed his desire to protect his Blackfeet friends, he continued to press for the creation of a national park in the region. A federal purchase of Blackfeet lands, assuming mining interests did not ravage the landscape, would be a good start toward a new national park. Grinnell wrote to numerous friends about his plan, and stopped in St. Paul, Minnesota, while traveling to Montana for the negotiations, to discuss the viability of a national park with Great Northern Railway officials. After several rounds of tense negotiations, the Blackfeet agreed to sell a roughly 1,000-square mile tract of their western lands for $1.5 million. Fifteen years later, this ceded strip became the eastern half of Glacier National Park.38

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The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a steady influx of residents into the areas surrounding what is now Glacier National Park. According to the United States Census of 1900, Flathead County had 9,375 residents while neighboring Teton County held 5,080. While not exorbitant numbers, these two counties that contained the future Glacier National Park accounted for 6% of the state’s population. By 1910, the combined population of the region nearly doubled to 28,331 people. Many of these settlers used the resources of the Glacier region for survival. They harvested timber to build their homes, utilized the lakes, rivers and creeks as a continual water supply, and hunted game such as deer, elk, moose and bears in the region’s forests. Prospectors staked mining claims in the region, including thousands of claims filed in the ceded strip of Blackfeet land east of the Continental Divide. Oil operations sprang up in several areas of the future park, including the Kintla Lake region in the northwest and near Swiftcurrent Creek in the northeast. According to historian Louis Warren, the public lands of northwestern Montana evolved as a “commons” area, where citizens shared the natural resources of the local ecosystem. This “commons” became a vital part of the subsistence patterns of locals in the Glacier Park area, and met the approval, initially, of elected officials like Thomas Carter.

Speaking as chairman of the Public Lands Convention in 1907, Carter extolled the utilization of “common” public lands in the American West as “the most marvelous development to this world’s history…In waste places great states have sprung up, and in places which a few years ago knew only the wigwam and the war whoop we have today the sun of industry and the sun of benediction arising from peaceful, happy, comfortable, and contented homes.” For Carter, “from the beginning this open common [in the West] has been the people’s common.”

praised the widespread utilization of the natural resources of public lands for the benefit of
Westerners, nature campaigners like George Bird Grinnell became increasingly concerned with
the increased human activity in northwestern Montana.

As the region containing the future Glacier National Park attracted settlers and
speculators, George Bird Grinnell envisioned the creation of a new national park in Montana. In
September and October of 1905, Grinnell continued his editorial campaign in the pages of Forest
and Steam, advocating the creation of a national park. Grinnell proposed a new park in the nearly
unpopulated region “known as the St. Mary’s country…It is a region of marvelous lakes,
towering peaks, vast glaciers and deep, narrow fiords. Few people know these wonderful
mountains, yet no one who goes there but comes away filled with enthusiasm for their wild and
singular beauty.” On October 30, 1905, the Great Falls Daily Tribune agreed, and called for the
vocal activism of local Montanans in the creation of a new national park, contending that if
residents “stir actively in the matter they will doubtless receive the support of the president in
their project. Mr. J. J. Hill and the Great Northern railroad would unquestionably aid in every
possible way.” The Tribune argued that beyond potential profit from tourism and the
preservation of natural resources, Montanans “will take pride and pleasure in the thought that
this vast area of splendid natural scenery will be handed down to their children unspoiled, and its
beauties left as God made them. We hope to see some practical steps taken to secure a national
park in the St. Mary’s Lake country.” Besides the preservation of divinely created landscapes,
many citizens and business interests in Great Falls envisioned a new national park in

and Glacier National Park,” 31; DeSanto, “Drilling at Kintla Lake, 26-28; Warren, The Hunter’s Game, 9-12; and
Proceedings of the Public Land Convention, (Denver: Press of the Western Newspaper Union, 1907): 23-24. This
conference concerned public lands in the states and territories of the United States lying west of the Missouri River. Attendees unanimously elected Thomas Carter chairman on the first day of the convention. The “commons” quote comes from a Carter discussion of grazing permits on public lands.
northwestern Montana as potential source of profit for their city. With the proposal of a railroad spur connecting Great Falls with Yellowstone National Park, 275 miles to the south, many community leaders believed that their city might soon develop as a stopping point for ambitious tourists who wished to visit both national parks. The Great Falls Daily Tribune’s stance toward the creation of a national park serves as one example of shift in thinking for some Montanans. As the envisioned profits from timber industries, mining operations and oil explorations failed to materialize, many local interests began to look toward landscape-based tourism as a viable option for the region.

But not all. As a few Montanans looked to the future and foresaw the economic benefits that a new national park in the Glacier region might offer, other residents looked to the past for guidance on economic and political matters. Specifically, many Montanans held on to a Jeffersonian ideal of land management in the United States. Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States and architect of the Louisiana Purchase that brought the Glacier region into federal possession, envisioned an American empire built on agrarian principles. For Jefferson, the ideal American, and the key to healthy democracy, was the yeoman farmer. This hardworking American owned and worked his own piece of property, fed his family through his own labor and ingenuity and was beholden to no superior when making political decisions. In 1787, Jefferson proclaimed that “those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit of substantial and genuine virtue…Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no

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Many Americans still embraced this Jeffersonian vision of an agrarian republic at the turn of the twentieth century and pushed for new opportunities to parcel out federal land to prospective yeoman farmers.

In 1906, Representative John Lacey of Iowa introduced a bill into Congress, supported by both Senator Thomas Carter and Representative Joseph M. Dixon of Montana, which legalized homesteading on the agricultural lands within the national forests. Passed on June 11, 1906 and signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt, the Forest Homestead Act permitted the surveying and sale of farmable land in the reserves at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture. Based on this law, settlers could claim homesteads up to 160 acres in size and no longer than one mile in length, while paying $2.50 per acre for their new farms. Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot supported the act. He envisioned permanent residents within the national forests as another line of defense against devastating forest fires, timber poachers and other intruders, although he remained troubled that powerful timber interests might acquire federal lands through fraudulent homestead claims. As described in Paul Gates’ history of public land laws, Pinchot’s growing consternation involving land speculation in his national forests was a legitimate threat dating back to the 1880s. For decades, land speculators and timber interests used imprecise language in the 1878 Timber and Stone Act to obtain valuable timber stands on federal property. Pinchot, always focused on the “greatest good,” deemed private homesteading and agriculture was “to put lands within National Forests to their highest economic use.”

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Many Montanans moved quickly to file claims with the Forest Service’s Kalispell Land Office for homesteads on national forest land. In the lands soon to be designated Glacier Park, the new settlers concentrated in the western sections of the region, especially along the North Fork of the Flathead River. By 1910, settlers had established more than fifty homesteads in the North Fork Valley, with most of these claims falling on the east side of the river and therefore within the boundaries of the future park. The availability of an existing road on the eastern side of the river, a rough thoroughfare built by the Butte Oil Company in 1901, encouraged early settlement on that side of the valley. Forest Service rangers laid out the different plots for settlers to choose from. Although most of these homesteads failed to approach the maximum of 160 acres in size, the surveying rangers organized the oddly shaped tracts to maximize the amount of farmable land in a legal claim. Over the next decade, homesteaders filed more than 100 additional claims on the western bank of the North Fork of the Flathead, on land that remained the domain of the National Forest Service. Others filed claims in the Lake McDonald region and in scattered locations throughout the proposed park.43

As homesteaders streamed into the North Fork Valley and other nearby locations, and as fraudulent timber speculators threatened timber in the region, George Bird Grinnell intensified his campaign to foster the creation of Glacier National Park. Grinnell recognized the need for prominent allies in his crusade, and he sought the support of the Great Northern Railway and its chief executives James J. Hill and his son Louis W. Hill. Powerful, western railroads proved to be invaluable collaborators in the creation of America’s earliest national parks. The Northern

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Pacific Railway supported the creation of Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and Montana and the Southern Pacific Railroad allied with conservationists to aid in the designation of Yosemite National Park in California. Aware of these successful collaborations, Grinnell solicited the Great Northern for aid during the final efforts to create Glacier. Grinnell began lobbying for support as early as 1893, the same year the Great Northern completed their 1,700 mile transcontinental railroad that cut through the Glacier region, writing to James Hill to gauge his interest in aiding the creation of a national park in Montana. The elder Hill initially expressed little interest in the preservation of the region and instead supported a Pinchot-style of wise-use conservation. For Hill, “conservation should mean the saving of our resources for future use by providing for an economic, scientific, and self-perpetuating use for them.” In fact, James Hill’s primary interest in the Glacier region for a long time was hunting, a sporting pursuit Grinnell could appreciate, and he sometimes entertained clients and investors with extravagant hunting expeditions in the area in search of grizzly bears.44

The position of the Great Northern Railway toward a new national park in Montana pivoted in 1907, when James J. Hill ascended to the position of Chairman of the Board of the Great Northern Railway and his second son, Louis W. Hill, replaced him as President and ran the day-to-day operations of the railroad. Louis Hill had several reasons for joining Grinnell in the push for Glacier National Park. More so than his father, Hill envisioned the potential windfalls

his company might reap for shuttling wealthy tourists to and from a national park in remote Montana, as well as transporting freight to the new tourist centers in Glacier, Columbia Falls, and Kalispell. Hill anticipated building high-end hotels, chalets and campgrounds in Glacier to cater to well-to-do visitors, in an attempt to create an American Switzerland in northwestern Montana.\(^{45}\)

The Great Northern Railway’s support for Grinnell’s plans for a new national park carried considerable political weight, both in Montana and Washington, DC. James J. Hill was a friend and advisor of President William H. Taft, and even helped Taft select some of his Cabinet members in 1909. Both Hills were also close with Montana’s Thomas Carter, to the point that some conservation interests argued that this relationship negatively influenced numerous environmental issues in the West. Gifford Pinchot, for example, had a very adversarial relationship with the Montana senator, in part due to his connections with the Great Northern and other big businesses in the West. Pinchot, writing to Minnesota Governor Adolph Olson Eberhart, contended that Carter was “a railroad senator, who has been for years the most dangerous enemy of Conservation policies in Congress.” The railroad that Pinchot and other political opponents connected with Carter was of course the Great Northern Railway.\(^{46}\) These seemingly disparate men, Grinnell, Hill and Carter, soon compromised their visions of place and created the first Pinchot Park in United States history.

On December 11, 1907, more than fifteen years after George Bird Grinnell’s initial ruminations concerning a new national park and two years following his heartfelt statements in


the pages of *Forest and Stream* magazine, Thomas Carter introduced the first of three Glacier National Park bills in the United States Senate. The proposed park, according to Carter’s legislation, was “dedicated to use forever as a public park and pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States.” Carter did not intend the complete preservation of these lands in northwestern Montana. While failing to mention timber or mining rights in the proposed park, the first Glacier bill contained language allowing for the construction of hydroelectric dams in the park until 1957, under the auspices of the Secretary of Agriculture. Almost immediately, according to Carter, “considerable opposition to the park…developed.” This opposition, which included Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester of the Forest Service, wanted the bill to include much more access to the region’s vast natural resources. Because of these strident objections, Carter did little to try to pass his initial Glacier Park bill.47

Challengers included Flathead County residents, who wanted a park open to agriculture, railroad construction and mining. These Montanans sent a petition to Thomas Carter, demanding a park bill that protected these resource extraction interests. “We do not particularly object to the establishment of the proposed park, if the same is confined to the mountainous country,” the petitioners argued, “and does not include thousands of acres of land, every 160 acres of which may some day in the near future support a family.” To ensure homesteading opportunities in the region, these residents “strongly object[ed] to our beautiful valleys along the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Flathead river being included within the boundaries of the proposed park,” which included the future site of the proposed Glacier View Dam. This petition also called for mining claim protections in the park, including promising coal fields in the western expanses of

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the park. Finally, these Flathead residents demanded railroad easements in the proposed legislation. They wrote Carter: “We also desire to see that all passes and river bottoms, through and along which you hope someday in the near future to see railroads building, shall be left open for any railroad that might be induced to build along these natural routes.” Local hunters wanted access to the game animals of Glacier and according to the *Whitefish Pilot*, at least one prominent hunter favored a “plan to have the state game laws regulate the hunting and fishing if the park is created, instead of having these sports prohibited, as in the Yellowstone national park.”

What these local interests wanted was the creation of a Pinchot Park.

Ten weeks later, Carter introduced his second effort to create Glacier National Park and this new bill called for increased access to the region’s natural resources. Carter was not a staunch conservationist and was only too willing to include revisions that opened the proposed park to multiple types of use. Carter also changed the western boundary of Glacier, from the obvious North Fork of the Flathead River to a jagged, man-made line designed to excise all existing homesteads and agricultural lands from the park. In this version, the future site of the Glacier View Dam remained part of the national forest. “The proposed Glacier park embraces a most interesting region,” Carter told Montana reporters, “The mountain peaks are bold and grand, the lakes are numerous and the whole is covered with a lacework of small streams. Many great glaciers exist within the boundaries of the proposed park, and I believe, are the only glaciers readily accessible within the jurisdiction of the United States outside the limits of Alaska.” This nascent park was carefully platted to make sure valuable lands and resources remained open to use. According to Carter, the “irregular” lines of the park ensured “that there is

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48 “Want All Agricultural Lands Excluded,” *Great Falls Tribune*, January 3, 1908; and “Game Will Always be Plentiful,” *Whitefish Pilot*, January 10, 1908.
little, if any, agricultural land and no indications of mineral [deposits] within the boundaries.”

This legislation was still not enough to satiate the resource demands of many objectors.

Powerful cabinet members wanted the same thing as Flathead County residents—almost open access to the natural resources of the proposed park. Both Secretary of the Interior James Garfield and Thomas Carter wanted the Department of Agriculture to run the national park, believing their experience managing the nearby national forests would suit the hybrid park. In a letter to the Senate Committee on Public Lands, chaired by Montana’s other Senator Joseph M. Dixon, Garfield asked that language be included in the bill that stated: “That any use of the products, land, and resources in aid of or not inconsistent with the objects of its creation and reservation may be permitted by authority of the Secretary of the Agriculture, on such terms or payment, tenure, and other conditions he may by rules and regulations prescribe.” Likewise, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson wanted legal guarantees of resource use added to the bill. His letter to the committee pushed for allowances for the harvesting of mature timber, the construction of dams and reservoirs within park boundaries and the construction of a railroad along a tributary of the North Fork of the Flathead River in the far northwest corner of the park. Unsurprisingly, the Secretary of the Agriculture and overseer of the United States Forest Service wanted a national park that looked more like a national forest.

While the bill did not go far enough for Garfield and Wilson, at least initially, it did gain support from Grinnell. Accepting the increased access to Glacier’s resources, Grinnell wrote a congratulatory letter to Carter expressing his confidence that Montanans would energetically

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49 United States Senate, To Establish Glacier National Park in Montana, April 29, 1908, Serial Set Volume No. 5219, Session Volume No. 2, 60th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Report No. 580, 3-4; and “Scenes in the New National Glacier Park,” Anaconda Standard, April 19, 1908.

50 United States Senate, To Establish Glacier National Park in Montana, 3-4; and “Scenes in the New National Glacier Park,” Anaconda Standard, April 19, 1908.
support the creation of the park. Despite his encouraging letter to Carter, Grinnell remained unconvinced that the Montana senator would push through the Glacier legislation. In numerous letters to friends, an exasperated Grinnell expressed his concerns about Carter, contending that Carter’s consistent anti-conservation politics offered little reason for hope regarding the creation of the park.  

Despite Grinnell’s concerns to the contrary, Carter introduced a third version of his Glacier National Park legislation on June 26, 1909. In support of his bill, the traditional anti-conservationist offered some decidedly Grinnell-like arguments. During Senate debates on his proposals, Carter countered objections that Glacier was an unneeded expense since Yellowstone National Park was relatively nearby and contended that the United States needed more national parks for its citizens. He held Yellowstone up as a model national park, and argued that “no one who has ever visited Yellowstone National Park can fail to realize that it would have been a public calamity to have permitted that wonderland to have passed into private ownership.” The park, according to Carter, was “a source of pride to the American people.” Carter touted both the diverse wildlife in the Glacier region and the magnificent scenery easily accessible for future visitors. He proclaimed: “It is an extremely rugged country [with]…Cliffs rising thousands of feet perpendicularly, great waterfalls, glaciers, forests, and all that goes to make bold and unique scenery.” Carter urged his colleagues to think of future generations of Americans. He concluded: “The time will come…when our successors here will thank us for having taken appropriate action in due season to preserve from vandalism and invasion the few remaining places of

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striking grandeur and interest belonging to the Government on this continent.” Despite Carter’s impassioned support, the Glacier National Park bill was once again sent back to the Committee on Public Lands for revising.52

The United States Reclamation Service used this respite to push for the inclusion of language allowing dam-building within the park. Director Frederick Newell wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger and explained that the Reclamation service had already drawn up plans to impound the St. Mary’s Lake region on the proposed park’s east side. Newell presented Ballinger with a draft of an amendment to Carter’s legislation, which allowed the Secretary of the Interior to authorize reclamation projects within Glacier boundaries under the auspices of the Reclamation Act of 1902. At Ballinger’s urging, the final draft of the Glacier National Park Bill contained Reclamation’s request. The final bill stated that the “United States Reclamation Service may enter upon and utilize for flowage or other purposes any area within said park which may be necessary for the development and maintenance of a Government reclamation project.” This amendment, along with similar provisions allowing for the construction of railroad lines within the confines of Glacier and the harvesting of mature timber, helped turn a bill to create a preserved national park into a bill allowing measures of utilitarian resource extraction. Both branches of Congress passed this act on April 29, 1910.53

On May 11, 1910, President William H. Taft signed the Glacier Park act into law. This act was the first of its kind in American history—it created a Pinchot Park. The final bill, the

result of years of revisions and compromises, contained language allowing for considerable
development of Glacier’s vast natural resources. The legislation endorsed the construction of
inter-park railroad spurs, most likely in the North Fork or Middle Fork River Valleys, protected
the rights of homesteaders and mining claimants “for the full use and enjoyment” of their lands,
allowed the United States Reclamation Service complete access to any of the park’s waterways
for dam-building projects and permitted the harvesting of mature timber within park boundaries.
In essence, with the passage of Glacier Park legislation, the federal government created a new
form of protected land. Prior to May 1910, the United States federal government created eleven
national parks, with all but one park in the American West. In each instance, the legislation
creating these areas, from Yellowstone in 1872 to Mesa Verde in 1906, called for some version
of “the preservation, from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities,
or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition,” with very few
exceptions. Certainly, none of these previous national parks came close to Glacier in terms of
allowed resource use and all these acts failed to mention anything about reclamation rights or
dams, although this did not stop the construction of the O’Shaughnessy Dam in the Hetch Hetchy
Valley of Yosemite National Park in 1913.\textsuperscript{54} The Glacier Park Act, and the compromises

surrounding its passage, was the first of its kind in the United States in regards to natural resource use in national parks. Grinnell, Carter, Hill, the members of Congress, and even President Taft all acceded to a hybridization of federal land use, combining the growing public prestige of national parks with the utilitarian access of national forests. They all compromised on their different conceptions of place and their various valuations of nature and created a new hybridized form of preservation. The creation of this Pinchot Park, especially the language allowing the construction of dams and other reclamation projects, proved eventful for both the history of America’s national parks and protected areas in general, and to Glacier National Park specifically.

Contemporary national park proponents recognized the potential of this new kind of park. New Jersey Congressman Richard W. Parker, a supporter of several national park bills in the early twentieth century, predicted the dangers that resource utilization posed for the future of

benefit of the people of the United States, and for the protection and preservation of the game, fish, timber, and all other natural objects therein, a tract of land herein described, and so forth [Crater Lake], May 22, 1902, U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 32, Part 1, Chap. 820, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902): 202-03; United States Congress, An Act To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park, to be known as the Wind Cave National Park, U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 32, Part 1, Chap. 63, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903): 765-66; Theodore Roosevelt, “By the President of the United States: A PROCLAMATION,” June 2, 1904, [Sully’s Hill National Park], Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Charles J. Kappler, ed., Vol. 3, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913): 597-599; United States Congress, An Act Creating the Mesa Verde National Park, U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 34, Part 1, Chap. 3607, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1906): 616-17; Excerpt from An Act to ratify and confirm an agreement with the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes of Indians, and for other purposes, July 1, 1902, reprinted in Hillary A. Tolson, Laws Relating to the National Park Service, the National Parks, and Monuments, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933): 118-119; United States Congress, Joint Resolution Directing that the Sulphur Springs Reservation be named and hereafter called “Platt National Park,” June 29, 1906, reprinted in Hillary A. Tolson, Laws Relating to the National Park Service, the National Parks, and Monuments, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933): 121-122; and Righter, The Battle over Hetch Hetchy, 66-95. Prior to the creation of Glacier National Park on May 11, 1910, the United States federal government created eleven other national parks. In order, by date of creation, these parks were Yellowstone (1872), Mackinac Island (1875), Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant (1890), Mount Rainier (1899), Crater Lake (1902), Wind Cave (1903), Sully’s Hill (1904), Mesa Verde and Platt (1906). Of these eleven, four (Mackinac Island, General Grant, Sully’s Hill, and Platt) are no longer official national parks. Only two of these eleven national parks have specific references to the permitted use of natural resources within their boundaries, and none of these parks came close to Glacier in terms of potential use. Mount Rainier allowed for the possibility of a railroad to be built within the boundaries of the park, designed to connect the park with nearby national forest land. Crater Lake’s founding act references the opportunity of mineral leases being granted inside park boundaries.

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Glacier National Park. In 1910, Parker argued that “there is no better way to destroy a park intended for beauty and use, such as Glacier…no way so absolutely successful and so absolutely sure to be successful as the granting of a right to …do business within it. This precedent will come to roost.”55 And it came to roost quickly.

William Logan was the first superintendent of Glacier National Park. Logan’s appointment to this post owed much to his friendships with Senator Thomas Carter and Louis Hill of the Great Northern Railway and set an early precedent of politically expedient candidates being offered this important position. Based on his record as Superintendent of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana, Logan appears in hindsight to be, at best, a curious choice to head a new national park. As part of his responsibilities as head of Fort Belknap, Logan oversaw the stewardship of the reservation’s valuable natural resources with disastrous results. In the early twentieth century, the reservation held a significant tract of forested land adjacent to the Little Rockies National Forest. In 1908, during Logan’s tenure at Fort Belknap, the United States Forest Service and the Indian Service within the Department of the Interior reached a cooperative agreement in which the forest service assumed responsibility for the management of Indian forests. Under the terms of this agreement, the forest service conducted a thorough review of the forests on the reservation and found near-ruinous conditions. According to USFS Assistant John F. Preston, the forest harvesting at Fort Belknap included poor forestry techniques and resulted in almost half of the timber being wasted, even though the reservation contained larger and better timber reserves than the contiguous national forest. Logan also speculated on land adjacent to the reservation, raising the suspicions of many of the Assiniboines and Gros Ventres who lived at

Fort Belknap, and invested tribal funds in a failed sugar beet operation on the banks of the Milk River. These events did not dissuade Logan’s supporters. Carter, in his recommendation letter to Secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger, contended that Logan was “as thoroughly conversant with that [Glacier] region as any man in the country. He would take a special interest in the Park work, would be vigilant in guarding it, courteous to visitors and faithful to the trust in every way.”

Logan administered Glacier as a Pinchot Park. He commendably coordinated teams of resident volunteers and federal troops to combat devastating forest fires in 1910, conflagrations he described as “the fire fiend, which for a time on account of the unusually dry weather threatened to wipe out the entire park.” The following year, he began construction on an ambitious plan—a road spanning the Continental Divide designed to give tourists easy access to some of the more spectacular vistas in Glacier. The initial two-and-a-half mile stretch up to Lake McDonald, began by Logan on the park’s western side, was the first section of the now-famous Going-to-the-Sun Highway. Logan also pushed forward with plans to turn Glacier’s vast natural resources into revenue streams for Glacier. Logan purchased a sawmill and shingle machine, and contended that “the cutting of fully matured timber will not in the least mar the beauty of the park…and in short time it is believed lumber will rank first among the sources of income” for Glacier. At Louis Hill’s request, Logan supported the construction of hotels within the boundaries of the park, financed by the Great Northern Railway. Most importantly for the history

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of dams in Glacier, Logan supported the Reclamation Service’s plan to build a hydroelectric dam on the eastern edge of the park and offered to pay part of the construction costs. In return, Logan wanted the physical plant and excess electricity to become property of Glacier National Park, with the idea that the park could sell electric power to the Great Northern’s hotels in the region. Logan’s desire for revenue-producing activities in Glacier reflected both his Pinchot-esque views toward resource conservation and his practicality concerning the funding necessary to run a national park, as the federal government invested very little money in Glacier during its earliest years. For example, Logan’s operations budget for 1911 was only $15,000, most of which he spent constructing the road from Belton to Apgar on the park’s west side. In comparison, Louis Hill and the Great Northern Railway invested $1.5 million in park development during the first seven years of Glacier’s existence.\(^57\) This kind of resource use might have become the norm, not just for Glacier but for all American national parks. Instead of islands of preservation, wilderness and ecotourism, American national parks might have morphed into utilitarian Pinchot Parks.

In 1908, Jack London published the dystopian novel *The Iron Heel*. “Never in the history of the world was society in so terrific flux as it is right now. The swift changes in our industrial system are causing equally swift changes in our religious, political, and social structures,” London wrote. “An unseen and fearful revolution is taking place in the fibre and structure of society. One can only dimly feel these things. But they are in the air, now, to-day.” Through his

fiction, London tried to make sense of the Progressive Era. Historians, especially, emphasize the both the plasticity and relevance of the time—to help explain the development of modern America during the period between the end of Reconstruction and the conclusion of World War One. According to historian Jackson Lears: “During those decades, a widespread yearning for regeneration—for rebirth that was variously spiritual, moral, and physical—penetrated public life, inspiring movements and policies that formed the foundation for American society in the twentieth century.”

While Lears emphasizes Protestant influence on American development, historian Robert Wiebe stresses the rise of bureaucratic organization. According to Wiebe, the “search for order” in the United States led to the development of “scientific government” during this period, which provided the solution to an American “society without a core.” No longer able to rely on the constancy of familiar, isolated communities, Americans during this period forged a new national order, relying on the regularity of bureaucracy for comfort. The national park experiment in the United States, from the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 to the formation of the National Park Service in 1916, occurred during this metamorphic period in American history, and in many ways blends this same religious fervor with bureaucratic officiousness.

The developments of modern America during this period, however transformative, were not inevitable. The changes in economic theory, in foreign policy, in gender relations, in racial discourse, in political structure and in environmental ethos were all hotly contested and vehemently debated by men and women throughout the United States. Things could have been much different. And America’s parks might have morphed into a new form. Gifford Pinchot

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59 Wiebe, The Search for Order, 12, 166, 170.
certainly envisioned a much different future for America’s national parks, and so did his friend Theodore Roosevelt. If these influential conservationists had their way in the early twentieth century, the United States Forest Service would have gained control of the parks and allowed measured and managed access to the natural resources within. In addition to dams in picturesque Glacier Park valleys, timber companies might hold leases in Sequoia National Park, miners could file claims in Yellowstone, and major petroleum corporations might well drill for oil in the wilds of Denali. Instead, the federal government created a brand-new bureaucracy to manage the national park system in 1916, at the end of this period of American rebirth, an organization charged with preserving the scenery and natural resources of parks in perpetuity. And Pinchot-approved dam projects are one of the reasons why.

The resource debates surrounding the creation of Glacier would reappear two decades later with the Glacier View Dam controversy. The Pinchot Park elements of Glacier’s founding documents allow for the construction of dams within in the boundaries of the park. In the 1940s, influenced by the residual impacts of the Great Depression, the experiences of World War Two and the onset of the Cold War, development minded interests in Montana supported Army Corps of Engineer proposals to dam the North Fork of the Flathead River. In essence, this coalition of dam supporters wanted to revitalize the Pinchot Park aspects of Glacier’s history. They imagined a very specific version of the North Fork Valley—a place where control over the environment led directly to economic development and political stability. This was much more difficult in the 1940s than it was in the first decade of the twentieth century, however. By mid-century, most Americans had accepted a modern definition of national parks as places apart, places of preservation and not landscapes of labor. Nowhere was this definition of national parks more accepted than within the National Park Service. From the top down, NPS administrators fought
to protect the sanctity of national park boundaries—they had no interest in the development of multi-purpose facilities that blended the preservation of natural wonders with the industrial use of natural resources. From Director of the National Park Service Newton Drury to Glacier Park Superintendent John Emmert, the NPS put forth a united front with regards to the Glacier View Dam project. In their imagination, the North Fork would remain a place of preserved wildness. But like all history, these events were not predestined—it could have gone a different way.
Chapter Two: A Wild Paradox

Species other than man have rights, too. Having finished all the requisites of our proud, materialistic civilization, our neon-lit society, does nature, which is the basis for our existence, have the right to live on? Do we have enough reverence for life to concede to wilderness this right? —Margaret “Mardy” Murie, unpublished manuscript

In the three decades following the creation of Glacier National Park, national park enthusiasts struggled to define the meaning and purpose of America’s wildest lands. Some advocates and legislators continued to see national parks as Pinchot Parks—troves of consumable natural resources with the power to transform cities and enrich regional economies. Others prized the aesthetic qualities of American parks and believed sublime scenery was the equal of extractive industry as an economic use of public lands. And an increasingly vocal few redefined wilderness as a roadless paradise that protected fragile habitats and endangered species. Sometimes these three activist archetypes were expressed by the same person.

William Kent was a bundle of Progressive Era contradictions. Raised in Marin County, California and educated at Yale, where he was the Class of 1887 historian and a member of Skull and Bones, Kent took over his family’s meatpacking interests in Chicago following his graduation. In addition to industrial interests, Kent owned tenements on the South Side of Chicago. When reformers accused him of being a “slumlord,” Kent donated his holdings to the Hull House, razed the crumbling structures and built a public park for the children of the area. He was both an ardent supporter of women’s suffrage and a racist bigot, supporting the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment the same year he asserted that “we who happen to be of English descent are proud and happy in the fact that the country from we came was not overrun by successions of peoples yellow and black and indiscriminate in their breeding.” Chattel slavery was a “good system” economically, according to Kent, and when he ran for Congress in 1910 he told supporters: “We must exclude Asiatics or forfeit the future of the
Pacific Coast as a home of democratic opportunity.” Much of his family’s wealth came from the commodification and bloody disassembly of nature, but he came to view natural resources less as a source of personal prosperity and more as an antidote to the social ills propagated by industrial capitalism. Despite the appearance of an eternal supply of natural resources, Americans were “the victims of a system of distribution unjust and inadequate” to the needs of the entire nation, Kent argued as early as 1896, and that “want and misery, already at our doors, make riot inevitable and revolution more than probable, unless the verdict of the people is for fairness and efficiency.” The answer was the abolition of private land ownership and the conservation and public control of all natural resources.¹

William Kent exemplified the competing ideologies surrounding national parks in the first half of the twentieth century, at times supporting utilitarian conservation, aesthetic veneration and the preservation of wilderness within the public wildlands of the United States. The coherence of his belief system regarding national parks was anthropocentric—he believed in an encompassing theory of conservation that privileged the most efficient use of public park resources for the benefit of Americans. In 1903, Kent and his wife purchased 300-acres of land in a canyon full of old growth redwood trees near Mount Tamalpais in California for $45,000 and hoped to create a “wilderness park for San Francisco and the Bay Cities.” Five years later, Kent donated the endangered land, which he called “the most attractive bit of wilderness I have ever seen,” to the federal government for permanent protection and helped President Theodore Roosevelt designate Muir Woods National Monument. Kent wanted Muir Woods left in an

untouched state with no human manipulation. No plants should be harmed or removed from the monument and even fallen trees should be left to rot on the picturesque valley floor. According to Kent, “When we save nature we save up an undimining hoard of peace and joy for millions who will never hear of us. If we have enjoyed let us pass the joy on. For our debt to the past can be paid in no other way.” The eponymous John Muir was thrilled at the gesture and wrote Kent a thank you letter, contending that “saving these woods from axe and saw, from money changers and water changers is in many ways the most notable service to God and man I have heard of since my forest wanderings began, a much needed lesson to saint and sinner alike.”² Kent and Muir’s budding friendship was short lived, however.

In 1910, Kent was elected to the House of Representatives on a platform centered on the conservation of nature. In his first few years in office, Kent supported the Raker Act, which allowed the construction of the O'Shaughnessy Dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park to create a publicly owned water supply for rebuilding the city of San Francisco. For Kent, a Yosemite dam was “the highest and best type of conservation” and that “ideal conservation is [the] public social use of resources of our country without waste.” Kent would gladly surrender even the sublime Niagara Falls to hydroelectric dam construction, if that loss would assuage “the burdens of the overworked in sweatshops of New York City…[or] slush out the greed, corruption, and misery of New York and others of our great cities, that, too, would be worth the sacrifice.”³


Traditionally, most historians view the Hetch Hetchy controversy, and the pro-dam utilitarian conservation of people like Kent, as the impetus for the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. This is complicated by the fact that both Kent and Congressman John Raker, the California legislators who pushed hardest for the construction of the Hetch Hetchy dam, also introduced the bills that created the park service. A national park, according to Kent, must be preserved “in a state of nature” and that park wildlife must be “forever free from molestation.”

The conservation efforts and inconsistencies of William Kent reveal a fundamental fact about national parks in the early twentieth century: their meaning and definition were still open to interpretation. The Organic Act of 1916, which created the National Park Service, should have settled this debate. Fittingly given the contradictions of Kent’s philosophy of conservation, this legislation instead contains a fundamental paradox. Written primarily by Kent and Frederick Olmsted Jr., passed by Congress, and signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on August 25, 1916, the Organic Act preamble states that the NPS “shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations” and mandates that the new federal agency “is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” The question the National Park Service has now grappled with for more than a century: how to “provide for the enjoyment” of the national parks while still protecting “the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife” of the parks, leaving them “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations?”

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Leaving the wilderness of national parks in a relatively untouched state might safeguard wild nature for future generations, but staunch preservation would do little to ensure the satisfaction of most visitors to these protected landscapes. Conversely, the construction of roads and trails, camping sites and visitor centers, and the like, would improve the tourist experience in America’s parks, but also mark and mar the presumable untrammeled conditions.

Not all scholars agree that the Organic Act of 1916 contains an inherent paradox. Historian Robin Winks, for example, argues that Congress created a National Park Service without incongruity and that “the language contained in the preamble to the National Park Service Act of 1916 is not, in fact, contradictory and that Congress did not regard it as contradictory.” He examined six years of debates and public comments that preceded the passage of the Organic Act and concluded that Congress intended the National Park Service to promote and manage the national parks as scenic “playgrounds” for the benefit of all Americans. According to Winks, the “enjoyment” of America’s national parks required access and infrastructure development. Congress did not view road construction, luxury hotels, camping sites and park administrative buildings as “unduly invasive.” Despite inherent “ambiguity and a potential source for future conflict,” Winks contends, “the act cannot have meant that ‘unimpaired’ was to be taken in its strictest sense, particularly since the act included specific approval for certain inevitably compromising actions: leasing for tourist accommodation was the most obvious example.” If proposed access meant permanent damage, then the NPS was required by law to protect America’s greatest scenery and leave it “unimpaired.” In this

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interpretation, tourist desires and access requirements did not take precedence over the
conservation requirement.\(^6\)

Original intent is only one piece of the legislative puzzle. By failing to define key terms,
such as “conserve,” enjoyment,” and “unimpaired,” Congress left their 1916 bill open to future
interpretation and paradoxical desires. Winks admits “that the intent of the whole of Congress in
passing an act, and the intent of the individuals who framed that act, do not perfectly coincide;
that intent must nonetheless be interpreted as individual; that intent changes; and that the law of
unintended consequences looms large in any legislation.”\(^7\) This happened often with
Congressional bills impacting American nature in the early twentieth century.

A decade before the Organic Act of 1916, Congress passed the Antiquities Act of 1906.
This important law gave the president the power to create national monuments out of federal
land by declaration. The original intent of the law, according to its chief sponsor Representative
John Lacey of Iowa, was to facilitate the protection of small, Native American archeological
sites in the American Southwest from despoilation. When asked if the bill would allow the
preservation of large-scale landscapes, potentially encompassing millions of acres of federal
land, Lacey was adamant: “Certainly not. The object is entirely different. It is to preserve these
old objects of special interest and the Indian remains in the pueblos of the Southwest.”
Originally, Lacey set a maximum size for potential national monuments. In 1904, the Senate
passed a version of the Antiquities Act that limited the size to a maximum of 640 acres. The final
version was much vaguer. In 1906, Congress enjoined the president to create monuments “which
in all cases shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and

management of the objects to the protected.” “Smallest area compatible” was open to interpretation and subsequent presidents went well beyond the original intent of the law. Two years later, President Theodore Roosevelt declared 800,000 acres of the Grand Canyon a national monument. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter used the Antiquities Act to preserve 56 million acres of federal lands in Alaska as wilderness. Likewise, the Organic Act of 1916 was open to interpretation beyond any original intent of its framers.

Throughout the twentieth century, and especially during debates concerning dam construction in the parks, the National Park Service vacillated between the competing sides of their organizational mandate, sometimes privileging the protection of wilderness in the national parks but often focusing on fulfilling the desires of paying tourists who visited the remote playgrounds. In its first two decades, the National Park Service—under the leadership of Stephen Mather and Horace Albright—committed to the conception of aesthetic conservation, which combined environmental protection instincts with economic development arguments. Essentially, aesthetic conservation was a “wise use” argument for national parks. Parks could be drivers of economic growth in rural regions of the United States as tourists flocked to these preserved landscapes. Protecting nature in national parks, therefore, was a good business decision. This bottom-line interpretation left the parks open to resource extraction arguments and the construction of hydroelectric dams. The economic benefits of eco-tourism in the 1910s and 1920s paled in comparison to the financial windfalls promised by cheap hydro-power and industrial development in the American West. Aesthetic conservation ideology failed to protect

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the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park in the early 1910s and by continuing to promote these ideas, the National Park Service left itself vulnerable to new dam projects in the national parks, like the Glacier View proposal in the 1930s and 1940s. At this time, under the leadership of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and NPS Director Newton Drury, there was an internal shift away from aesthetic conservation to wilderness preservation as the guiding principle in national park management. Glacier National Park wilderness became more than just a facilitator of economic growth, it evolved into a key feature of the American experience—valuable to the maintenance of mental health, the preservation of fragile ecosystems and endangered animals and the essence of the human soul. This shift from competing economic ideologies in the national parks to a more ethereal conception of wilderness changed the conversation about dams and national parks, facilitated the defeat of the Glacier View Dam in 1949 and ushered in a new era in American environmental thought.

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The creation of Glacier National Park, on May 11, 1910, occurred during Progressive Era debates concerning the proper function of wilderness in the United States. Historians traditionally labeled these debates conservation versus preservation. In simplest terms, preservation is the setting aside of seemingly "pristine," aesthetically pleasing American wilderness for the benefit of all citizens—current and future alike. Seemingly, national park proponents fit neatly in this camp. George Bird Grinnell wanted to preserve the "virgin" wilderness of Glacier as a national park; John Muir, the archetypal preservationist in American history textbooks, wanted to protect the American "temple of nature," a vision of wilderness imbued with fervent Romantic spirituality. Wilderness preserved in national parks, according to Muir, was an antidote to modernity, and the fin de siècle pressures of urbanization, increasing
immigration, wage labor, frontier anxiety and the fear of declining Anglo-American masculinity. Muir argued that Americans needed national park wilderness, and that “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 the mountain parks and reservations are…fountains of life.” Glacier offered this kind of escape. Grinnell’s Crown of the Continent was “the best care-killing scenery on the continent” and a visit to the Glacier region would “make you truly immortal,” according to Muir.  

Conservation, on the other hand, was the wise use of natural resources for the benefit of the nation. The epitome of Progressive Era conservation, for most historians, was Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot-style conservation melded Jeffersonian visions of an agrarian empire, where yeoman farmers protected American democracy by planting fields delineated by right angles and straight map lines, with an appreciation for wild nature. Conservationists rejected the pell-mell aspects of much of American development, especially the “land skinners” despised by Theodore Roosevelt, “whose idea of developing the country is to cut every stick of timber off it and leave a barren desert for the homemaker who comes in after him.” Instead of Jefferson’s yeoman farmers, the chosen people of the conservation ethic were university-trained scientists and foresters, who would ensure the measured and managed use of the nation’s natural resources, and thereby safeguard American greatness. In Pinchot’s words, “Conservation means the wise use of the earth and its resources for the lasting good of men. Conservation is the foresighted

utilization, preservation, and/or renewal of forests, waters, lands, and minerals, for the greatest
good of the greatest number, for the longest time.”

Conservationists and preservationists were more alike than a traditional dichotomy might
reveal and portraying these Progressive conceptions of wilderness as antithetical to one another
is the result of “unfortunate…caricatures,” according to historian Char Miller. Conservationists
and preservationists all cared deeply about the United States’ environment and
saw the protection of nature as fundamental to the American experiment. Both had clear,
anthropocentric conceptions of nature, where national parks and national forests served human
needs—whether as building materials for American society or as sanctuaries for American souls,
or perhaps for both. Conservationists and preservationists wanted to protect nature they deemed
necessary for America’s very existence.

On April 18, 1906, the city of San Francisco, California trembled for twenty-eight
seconds. A massive earthquake, possibly as strong as 8.3 on the modern Richter scale, struck two
miles off the coast of the city in the Pacific Ocean at 5:12 in the morning. The earthquake
devastated the region, leveling buildings, fracturing gas lines and destroying the city’s antiquated
water system. A series of conflagrations consumed a four-mile stretch of San Francisco. 3,000
people died because of the earthquake and subsequent fires and an estimated 250,000 of the
city’s 410,000 residents were left homeless. Unable to blame anyone other than God for the
earthquake, the citizens of San Francisco focused their wrath on the private water companies

whose broken system failed to provide enough water to fight the ruinous fires. Senator Key Pittman, a Democrat from Nevada, was visiting San Francisco at the time of the earthquake. He later recounted: “I saw the hillside covered by homeless people. I saw such suffering as I never expect to see again…I know that it was largely due to the greed of that water monopoly in its efforts to spend as little as possible and to grasp just as much as possible, and I never want to see such a condition again exist in any city.”

In true Progressive Era fashion, a cadre of local and national leaders, led by former San Francisco mayor James Phelan and Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot, sought the construction of a publicly owned water system to replace the private companies. These leaders proposed a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park. For Pinchot, a dam in this picturesque valley fell squarely with his overall conservation ethos of the “greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time.” A vocal group of national park enthusiasts, led by John Muir and the Sierra Club, vehemently opposed the construction of the dam. Evoking Romantic conceptions of nature, Muir argued: “These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar. Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people’s cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man.”

Despite its customary historiographical use in explaining the differences between utilitarian conservation and wilderness preservation, the Hetch Hetchy dam controversy revealed

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the similarities between these two views of American nature. Traditionally, historians agreed with Roderick Nash’s assessment of the controversy—that the “principle of preserving wilderness was put to the test” at Hetch Hetchy, and “For the first time in the American experience the competing claims of wilderness and civilization to a specific area received a thorough hearing before a national audience.”14

The Hetch Hetchy controversy was about different types of conservation and over public power during the Progressive Era. Former San Francisco Mayor James Phelan, allied with Gifford Pinchot, sought control over the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park as water source for rebuilding the metropolis after the devastating 1906 earthquake, and wanted to dam the Tuolomne River in the process. As Phelan told Congress: “To provide for the little children, men, and women of the 800,000 population who swarm the shores of San Francisco Bay is a matter of much greater importance than encouraging the few who, in solitary loneliness, will sit on the peak of the Sierras loafing around the throne of the God of nature.” Using a little visited valley to provide potable water for hundreds of thousands of people also fit Pinchot’s conception of conservation—that it should benefit the many not the few. Equitable benefit from the use of America’s natural resources was a core component of Progressive Era conservation. Progressive conservationists, like other reformers at the time, believed in the “gospel of efficiency.” A faith in the gospel of efficiency would ensure that the wise and public use of the nation’s natural resources would benefit the majority in the United States, not just a wealthy few. Pinchot favored this form of equitable benefit in the Hetch Hetchy debates since it fit his understanding of conservation. As Pinchot testified to Congress, “if we had nothing else to consider than the delight of the few men and women who would yearly go into the Hetch Hetchy

14 Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 162.
Valley, then it should be left in its natural condition.” These seldom-seen delights were obscured by the overwhelming need of San Francisco. Pinchot concluded: “But the considerations on the other side of the question to my mind are simply overwhelming, and so much so that I have never been able to see that there was any reasonable argument against the use of this water supply by the city of San Francisco.15

Faced with convincing, populist arguments concerning the wilderness of Hetch Hetchy, John Muir and other defenders of the valley responded in kind. Despite often-quoted Romantic rhetoric, most of the arguments against the dam, Muir’s included, favored the development of the valley for the benefit human beings. In this case, the people in question were tourists, hikers and other national park lovers, rather than the city-rebuilding citizens of San Francisco. Instead of pure wilderness preservation, Muir and his allies practiced a form of conservation called “aesthetic conservation,” which, according to historian Alice Biel, was “a philosophy that adhered to the basic principles of sustainability and efficiency but departed from traditional utilitarian conservation by advocating nonextractive forms of resource use, such as recreation and sightseeing.” These arguments endorsed the construction of tourist-friendly infrastructure in the national park, including the building of hotels and service amenities, roads into the remote valley and even winter sports facilities. In 1907, the Sierra Club sanctioned the construction of a road into Hetch Hetchy and contended that Yosemite National Park would be a “gold mine” of tourism, with Hetch Hetchy as one of “its most prized attractions.” William Colby, Muir’s friend and fellow Sierra Club member, argued that in the twentieth century “the need of the Nation for

Hetch Hetchy Valley and the extensive camp and hotel sites on its floor will be greater than the need of San Francisco for its use as a reservoir site.” In this instance, anti-dam protestors intent on protecting the sanctity of America’s national parks, lost the “battle over Hetch Hetchy.” On December 19, 1913, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Raker Act into law, authorizing the construction of the O’Shaughnessy Dam in Yosemite and guaranteeing a public water supply for the city of San Francisco.16

But they ultimately won the war. One of the major legacies of the Hetch Hetchy controversy was the debilitating blow it delivered for the future of Pinchot Parks. Pinchot’s conception of park conservation seemed in ascendance during this period, with the passage of the Glacier Park bill allowing access to natural resources in 1910 and the Raker Act of 1913 permitting a dam in Yosemite. It was a false summit. As historian Robert Righter put it:

“Pinchot’s uncompromising stance on Hetch Hetchy was evidence enough that neither he nor his Forest Service could be entrusted with the national parks.” Instead, the federal government created a new agency in 1916 to manage the parks—the National Park Service. William Kent, the author and principle sponsor of the Organic Act and Stephen Mather, first Director of the National Park Service, led efforts to create this new bureaucracy. This new agency negated most Pinchot-style conservation in national parks, at least on paper.17 Ironically, the formation of this new service helped codify the exact environmental philosophy that failed to protect Yosemite.

Aesthetic conservation, rather than wilderness preservation, would dominate the philosophy and

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management of the NPS during its first decades of existence, thus leaving the parks vulnerable to future dam building projects.

A commitment to aesthetic conservation governed most National Park Service policies, from the inception of the agency in 1916 until the mid-1930s. Stephen Mather, first Director of the National Park Service, and his top assistant Horace Albright concentrated on increasing tourist visitation numbers during the agency’s earliest years. Mather made millions selling borax during the Progressive Era, a mineral most commonly used as a cleaning agent. Borax is a mined commodity, like salt or gravel, and is therefore difficult to market in terms of added value. Assuming similar purity, one company’s borax is the same as another’s. In the 1890s, Mather convinced his employer, the Pacific Coast Borax Company, to market their product as a brand name—20 Mule Team Borax—to distinguish themselves from competitors. This brand dominated the American borax market and is still readily available today. After the turn-of-the-century, Mather helped form a new borax company based in Chicago, and it made him a millionaire. His immense wealth allowed Mather to retire and pursue his other passion—America’s national parks. Mather was an acolyte of Theodore Roosevelt—a Bull Moose Republican and ardent conservationist—who soon became the pivotal figure in creation of the National Park Service.18

Mather—a “human whirlwind” and “high-voltage idea man” according to one biographer—was an advertising genius who helped create the NPS in immediate years after Hetch Hetchy. This frenzied energy was most likely the result of serious illness. At times, Mather “was a striking alloy of drive and amiability…a handshaker, a backslapper, and a ready

smiler.” On other occasions, Mather was despondent and suicidal. In 1903 and again in early 1917, Mather required rest and prolonged stays in sanitariums, to alleviate illness caused by what doctors called “exhaustion” and “overwork.” In 1917, for example, Mather organized a conference in Washington, DC to celebrate the creation of the National Park Service, but he was largely absent from the proceedings. Horace Albright remembered that “Mather had been getting more and more depressed …When he should have been pleased, he felt that he had not measured up to his opportunity, that he had accomplished little or nothing… He [believed he] was a failure. He would leave the Park Service. There really was nothing more in life for him.” Mather collapsed in a private room at the conference as Albright and other friends tried ineffectively to console him. Following this medical incident, Mather received treatment at what was then called the Eastern Pennsylvania State Institution for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic. In modern terms, Mather suffered from bipolar disease, which explains both his manic “whirlwind” personality and his sometimes-debilitating depression. According to Albright, Mather was a “brilliant, creative, and successful man who was burdened with a mental condition…His energy and exuberance, which accomplished so many great things, could turn to deep, silent, suicidal depression with little warning.” Many observers, including his wife and doctors, credited the national parks for alleviating some of Mather’s symptoms—national park wilderness and the management of these protected spaces gave Mather something positive to focus on during the lows of his illness.19

In 1915, a recently retired Mather joined the Department of the Interior under Secretary Franklin Lane and ran the national parks. A year later, he became the first director of the nascent National Park Service. As with borax, Mather used his marketing acumen to “promote” brand recognition for the American idea of national parks. Essentially, Mather wanted to sell the national park concept to an American public “surprisingly ignorant of the extent, variety, magnificence, and economic value of their national parks.” During his first years as head of the national parks, Mather initiated “a very active campaign of education to acquaint the people of this country with our scenic, historic, and recreational areas with a view to inducing more extensive American travel at home…No opportunity has been overlooked to utilize the means at our command to proceed with this work of promotion.” Mather and his staff distributed hundreds of thousands of sales pamphlets, illustrated portfolios and automobile maps, circulated almost 350,000 feet of motion-picture film taken in national parks, sponsored lectures and slide shows, primed newspaper contacts for positive coverage and held conferences and art exhibitions around the country. The result of this flurry of advertising? Visitation to America’s national parks more than doubled during Mather’s first few years in charge, from a reported 240,193 in 1914 to 487,368 in the first half of 1917.20 Step one of Mather’s advertising campaign was to convince American consumers he was selling something they wanted and needed—a visit to a national park. Step two was to make these buyers happy with their decision.

In its first decades of existence, under the leadership of Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, the National Park Service favored the enjoyment half of the park service paradox. For Mather, ever the salesman, this was a great opportunity to reformulate the brand recognition of

the national parks. Mather, in his first year as director, argued: “What a brilliant statement of constructive conservation policy this is…The statement breathes hope and encouragement and inspiration to all who study, enjoy, and love the wild places and the sublime works of nature.” As a new federal agency, dependent on the vagaries of Congressional funding and oversight, the early park service focused on increasing tourist numbers as quickly as possible, as a way of justifying their continuing existence. They answered the park service paradox with a commitment to aesthetic conservation, which allowed them to preserve the most popular natural features of the national parks, while increasing infrastructure and reengineering nature to meet consumer desires for a fulfilling wilderness experience.21

Illustration Five Horace Albright (left) and Stephen Mather in 1924. Image from Yellowstone National Park Photo Collection.

Federal dams were a looming threat to the enjoyment of America’s national parks, especially Glacier. The legislation creating Glacier National Park contained language allowing the construction of irrigation dams within the park. The Act states that the “United States Reclamation Service may enter upon and utilize for flowage or other purposes any area within said park which may be necessary for the development and maintenance of a Government reclamation project.” In an effort to irrigate rain-deficient farmlands in northern Montana, including tracts hundreds of miles to the east of the nascent Glacier National Park, the Reclamation Service went forward with a multi-dam project designed to conserve the headwaters of the Milk River. The Milk River, named by Meriwether Lewis because the “water of this river possesses a peculiar whiteness, being about the color of a cup of tea with the admixture of a tablespoon of milk,” is an international river with headwaters on the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains. The Southern and Middle Forks of the Milk River flow out of Glacier Park, working their way north into Canada, where they join the North Fork. The combined river then flows southeast, back into the United States, and eventually joins the Missouri River. Between 1912 and 1919, the Reclamation Service proposed several possible dams in Glacier, and eventually built the Sherburne Dam on the northeast boundary of the park. Constructed using some park resources, including culled timber and stone, the Sherburne project dammed the outlet of Sherburne Lake into Swiftcurrent Creek, creating a reservoir that inundated the park’s Sherburne Valley with water.22

Completed four years before the more famous O’Shaughnessy Dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park, the Sherburne Dam demonstrated the economic potential and environmental impacts of allowing reclamation projects in national parks, and provided an historic antecedent that shaped the Glacier View controversy in the 1940s. But like Hetch Hetchy, this controversial dam helped end widespread support for a Pinchot-style national park system. Concurrent with the construction of the dam was a marked shift in the attitudes of park superintendents towards the tenets of preservation, moving from the Pinchot-style conservation beliefs of William Logan, Glacier’s first superintendent, to the approach of Charles Kraebel in the 1920s, whose administration was much more concerned with the preservation of aesthetically pleasing wilderness and natural resources than outright economic development. John Emmert, superintendent of Glacier National Park during the Glacier View controversy, continued this anti-development approach.23

Following Logan’s unexpected death in early 1912, his immediate successors as superintendent of Glacier continued to support Pinchot-style resource development within the park, and the United States Reclamation Service’s plans for a dam on the northeast border of the park specifically. Robert Chapman, Acting Superintendent of Glacier for several months in 1912, approved the Reclamation Service’s request to conduct logging operations in the Red Eagle Creek Valley. Once again, this logging project demonstrated realities of allowing resource extraction in nominally preserved lands. Reclamation paid prevailing rates for the timber, and promised that their logging operations would “be conducted in accordance with the Forest Service rules for logging and destruction or removal of waste, and with all possible regard for the

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preservation of the National scenic beauties of the Park.” Between May 1912 and January 1913, Reclamation logging crews cut more than 900,000 board feet of timber in Glacier. Despite their promises, the Reclamation Service’s logging operations in Glacier were terribly wasteful. Less than 17 percent of the timber cut during this period actually reached the sawmill at Lower St. Mary’s Lake, as Reclamation crews left most of downed logs to rot on the shores of the upper lake and on steep, nearly inaccessible hillsides. Additionally, the Reclamation Service built a large rock and gravel plant inside Glacier in 1915, three-and-a-half miles from the Sherburne Dam, and sent processed gravel on barges down to the construction site. This timber and gravel production, however wasteful, provided the raw materials for the construction of the Sherburne Dam. Between 1914 and 1919, the Reclamation Service used these natural resources to erect a 116-foot high, earth-filled dam at the outlet of Sherburne Lake, just outside of the park’s eastern boundary, creating a reservoir capable of impounding more than 25 billion gallons of water within Glacier. As part of the Milk River Rehabilitation Project, the reclaimed waters of Sherburne irrigate farms along Montana’s Hi-Line, sometimes hundreds of miles east of Glacier National Park.24

On a slighter scale than Hetch Hetchy, the construction of the Sherburne Dam on the eastern edge of Glacier National Park also helped solidify the shift away from utilitarian reclamation projects in preserved parks. While certainly smaller and less famous than the O’Shaughnessy Dam in Yosemite, the Sherburne Dam was large enough to anger National Park Service Director Stephen Mather. For Mather, dams were an immediate and paradigmatic threat

to the sanctity of the national parks. Speaking against the 1920 Federal Water Power Act, which permitted the construction of dams and other reclamation projects within the boundaries of national parks for a brief period, Mather contended that the rejection of the commodification of nature separated national parks from national forests. Both areas contained “recreational areas of beauty and sublimity,” but only the national parks protected such nature from “definite commercial uses prescribed by Congress, notably, lumbering, irrigation, and power.” If the federal government permitted the construction of hydroelectric dams in national parks then, like environmental dominoes, other protections would follow. The parks would be thrown open to the dredging of irrigation ditches, the harvesting of timber, the grazing of cattle and the hunting of game animals. Allow one dam-builder to “start the national parks toward national-forest status and it will be logically impossible to stop short of all. One misstep is fatal… [and America] will lose by the debasement and eventual destruction of the National Park System,” Mather concluded. Mather described the Sherburne Dam and resulting reservoir as a “scene of havoc,” and contended that the rising water levels would drastically impair the picturesque beauty surrounding the Swiftcurrent Valley and eventually flood the entry road into the Many Glacier area of the park. He hoped that the Sherburne project might serve as a lesson concerning the preservation of national park resources, writing: “The only satisfaction that one can gain from the situation is that it becomes a glaring example of what is to be avoided in all the national parks having lakes still untouched, and hence may serve some good purpose in national park protection.”

Not everyone agreed, including Mather’s own boss, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane. For Lane, the natural resources of the United States, including those ostensibly protected within the boundaries of national parks, should be developed for the benefit of mankind. Lane contended: “Every tree is a challenge to use and every pool of water and every foot of soil. The mountains are our enemies. We must pierce them, and make them serve. The sinful rivers we must curb.” Lane’s environmental beliefs led to dams in Yosemite and Glacier, and trumped Mather’s commitment to aesthetic conservation in the national parks. And they almost led to the construction of dams in Yellowstone National Park.²⁶

In the early 1920s, farmers in Montana and Idaho wanted projects similar to the Sherburne Dam built in Yellowstone National Park and many national leaders supported the plans. For proponents, such as Idaho Representative Addison Smith and Montana Senator Thomas Walsh, these dams were the highest use of remote areas of the national park. Smith wanted to dam the Bechler Valley, in his mind a little visited, swampy, southwestern corner of the park, for the benefit of sugar beet farmers in his district. This proposed reclamation project would ease the “suffering among the children of parents out there whose crops have dried up because they cannot use the water to mature them.” This corner of Yellowstone was not more important than starving children, according to Smith. “There is nothing in the way of unusual scenery or other interesting features in this part of the park,” Smith contended, although he later admitted he had yet to visit the valley when he made that statement. Likewise, Walsh wanted to build an irrigation dam on Yellowstone Lake, to aid Montana farmers.²⁷

²⁶ Franklin Lane quoted in Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy*, 197
To the ire of National Park Service leaders, Secretary Lane supported these projects. Both Stephen Mather and Horace Albright fought the position of their boss and almost lost their jobs in the process. For Mather and Albright, reclamation projects in Yellowstone evoked “the memory of the “Hetch Hetchy steal’ of 1913.” Albright wrote a memorandum to Lane, defending the inviolability of Yellowstone National Park. Lane tore the memo in half and threw it away. As Lane prepared to terminate the two top leaders of the National Park Service and move forward with these dam projects, he received a job offer from the Pan American Oil Company. The chance of a well-paying employment opportunity saved Yellowstone National Park from partial inundation, not the aesthetic conservation arguments of Mather and Albright. John Barton Payne replaced Lane as Secretary of the Interior and he quickly pivoted to support the sanctity of the national park. The dams that seemed likely in 1921 were officially defeated in 1923.28

This episode demonstrated the limits of aesthetic conservation arguments at the time, as the majority still sided with utilitarian conceptions of economic progress. More importantly, the Yellowstone dam controversies confirmed the top-down nature of dam decisions in national parks. Conservation groups could write letters, local interests could lobby representatives, the Director of the National Park Service could stake a position, but ultimately the ideology of the Secretary of the Interior would prevail most often in debates over dams in national parks. This would be especially true in the Glacier View Dam debates of the 1940s.

Mather’s clear desire for more careful preservation of aesthetic resources in national parks was reflected in the changing protocol for appointing Glacier superintendents, moving away from marginally qualified but politically expedient candidates to professional engineers

and foresters. William Logan’s three immediate permanent successors, James Galen, Samuel Ralston and Walter Payne were all examples of political appointees who met with limited success as Glacier administrators. For example, Galen’s most obvious qualifications to be superintendent were his influential connections. His brother was Albert Galen, Attorney General of Montana and his brother-in-law was the late Senator Thomas Carter, who died in 1911. By appointing J. Ross Eakin as Payne’s permanent successor in 1921, the Park Service and the Department of Interior moved away from selecting superintendents based primarily on political recommendations. Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall appointed Eakin, a longtime topographical engineer for the United States Geological Survey, over the wishes of Montana U.S. Senator Henry Myers and Congressman Carl Riddick. Stephen Mather, in his recommendation of Eakin to Secretary Fall, countered these political appeals, calling Eakin “the best man possible [for the job], irrespective of politics or religion,” and pointed out that the “last superintendent of Glacier Park was a political appointee from Montana, and as a result of his mismanagement the park has to be rebuilt from the ground up.”

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29 Telegram from Albert J. Galen to William H. Taft, March 1, 1912, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, James Galen’s Personnel File, Box 2, Folder 5; Telegram from Albert J. Galen to Walter Fisher, March 6, 1912, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, James Galen’s Personnel File, Box 2, Folder 5; Letter from Walter Fisher to William Taft, August 7, 2011, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, James Galen’s Personnel File, Box 2, Folder 5; Letter from William H. Taft to Walter Fisher, November 7, 1912, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, James Galen’s Personnel File, Box 2, Folder 5; “Personnel Sheet for Samuel Franklin Ralston,” Department of the Interior, National Parks, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, Samuel Ralston’s Personnel File, Box 4, Folder 5; Telegram from Franklin Lane to Horace Albright, July 13, 1917, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, Walter Payne’s Personnel File, Box 4, Folder 4; Letter from Horace Albright to Franklin Lane, July 22, 1917, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, Walter Payne’s Personnel File, Box 4, Folder 4; Letter from Franklin Lane to Walter Payne, July 27, 1917, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, Walter Payne’s Personnel File, Box 4, Folder 4; Telegram from John Payne to Walter Payne, June 17, 1920, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, Walter Payne’s Personnel File, Box 4, Folder 4; Letter from Walter Payne to John Payne, June 26, 1920, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, Walter Payne’s Personnel File, Box 4, Folder 4; “Personal Statement of Employee: J. Ross Eakin,” July 1, 1920, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, J. Ross Eakin’s Personnel File, Box 1, Folder 6; Memorandum from Stephen Mather to Albert Fall, April 18, 1921, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, J. Ross Eakin’s Personnel File, Box 1, Folder 6; Letter from Carl Riddick to George Christian, May 9, 1921, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, J. Ross Eakin’s Personnel File, Box 1, Folder 6; and Stephen Mather to Albert Fall, April ? [day destroyed by hole punch], 1921, GNPR, Manuscript File Two, J. Ross Eakin’s Personnel File, Box 1, Folder 6.
The appointment of Charles Kraebel, the assistant forester for the Territory of Hawaii, as Eakin’s successor as superintendent of Glacier in 1923, continued Stephen Mather’s desired policy of selecting trained professionals for the post rather than politically expedient choices. And as Kraebel began his tenure at Glacier, the Reclamation Service started repair work on the Sherburne Dam spillway in hopes of completely filling the Sherburne Reservoir, giving Kraebel an opportunity to express his preservationist principles. In 1924, Kraebel wrote a brief article detailing the destruction caused by the Reclamation Service project, complete with a set of before and after photographs, an essay he titled “The Rape of Sherburne.” Three years later, as the Reclamation Service prepared to close the now-repaired spillway and increase the volume of the Sherburne Reservoir by nearly sixteen billion gallons of water, Kraebel spoke out once more against what he described as the “wanton destruction” of the Sherburne Valley. He asked Stephen Mather: “Is it not rather shortsighted for the government to build with one hand and destroy with the other, particularly when the thing destroyed is something which nature has taken centuries to produce and which no government, however powerful, can ever replace?” Although he recognized the need for irrigation for Montana’s farmers, and he hesitated in speaking out against another federal agency, Kraebel concluded that the “preferable thing would be to prohibit this flooding altogether, but…that may appear too visionary.” 30 Too visionary, perhaps, to save the Sherburne Valley from inundation during the 1920s, but not too farsighted to impact the course of Glacier National Park history during the remainder of the twentieth century.

One of the first things Mather and his service did was embrace the paradigm shifting technology of the automobile. The automobile would be the great “open sesame” for the democratization of the national parks, according to Mather, and helped turn little visited park wilderness into America’s “playgrounds.” Here, Mather followed the lead of his wilderness mentor, John Muir, who argued that “hoped-for crowds” of automobile tourists, driving “useful, progressive, blunt-nosed mechanical beetles,” might forestall the construction of a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park. In 1913, Henry Ford first started mass-producing Model T cars using an assembly line process, and in doing so, made what was once a rich man’s novelty into an accessible means of transportation for the American masses. As other car manufacturers attempted to mimic Ford’s production, thousands (and eventually millions) of new car owners drove their Fords, Chevrolets and Dodges into America’s national parks, piquing the interest of Mather. In 1916, months before the creation of the National Park Service, Mather came to an inescapable conclusion: “in the early future travel in private machines will overtake the increasing railroad travel and constitute the greater portion of all [national] park travel. This makes it incumbent upon the Federal Government to prepare for the great influx of automobiles by constructing new roads and improving existing highways.”

Mather wanted roads to and through the national parks. Auto-tourism was the future of the national parks and Mather implored the federal government to spend whatever was necessary to build highways and thoroughfares to accommodate these multiplying legions of park enthusiasts. In 1916, Mather concluded that “no policy of national-park management has yielded

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more thoroughly gratifying results than that which guided the admission of motor-driven
vehicles to the use of the roads of all the parks.” Road building met the requirements of aesthetic
conservation in the national parks. These roads would get tourists from population centers in the
east to far-flung locales in the American West, bring these visitors right to the most scenic areas
of the national parks, and ensure that the National Park Service turned a profit during its nascent
and most vulnerable years. Mather supported the platting of the Park-to-Park Highway in 1915, a
mapping of existing roads to connect all national parks in the American West via a continuous
loop, allowing enterprising auto-tourists the opportunity to visit numerous national parks on a
single, scenic road trip. He also decided that all national parks needed a bisecting road through
the most scenic areas of the park, so visitors could get close to the most aesthetically pleasing
attributes with relative ease.32

These scenic parkways were the future of parks like Glacier, but not the present. Prior to
construction of the Going-to-the-Sun Road, auto-tourists could enter Glacier either on the east or
west sides of the park for a small fee, via gravel “macadam” roads. The lack of roads limited
access to the most scenic areas of Glacier, and wet weather often made the park’s primitive
thoroughfares impassable. Louis Hill, in defense of his million-dollar investment in Glacier,
implored the Department of the Interior to build better roads in the park so that visitors could
reach the most scenic areas of the park. In 1916, Hill wrote Secretary Lane and called Glacier “a
dismal failure this year” on account of unnecessary expenditures, Cabinet patronage job
assignments and corrupted road construction on the west side of the park, all of which originated
in Washington, DC. “It really is an outrage to hundreds of tourists to advertise the park,” Hill

32 Mather, Progress in the Development of the National Parks, 5-6; Herbert Corey, “Steve Mather Sells the Parks,”
Colliers, Vol. 73, No. 25, (June 21, 1924): 10; “What the Government is Doing,” Evening Star (Washington, DC),
September 12, 1915; and Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks, 94.
complained, “and then not make good on the roads and trails…I hope you realize that nothing has been accomplished in this park that has not come by [the Great Northern Railway] directing a serious appeal to Washington.” Hill used this opportunity to announce his opposition to the creation of the National Park Service, hoping that park authority would be placed with local officials, presumably more amenable to the wishes of the powerful railroad.33

A few weeks later, Stephen Mather made his first official visit to Glacier for the Department of the Interior, on the eve of the creation of the National Park Service. Mather condemned the deplorable road conditions and told Secretary Franklin Lane that Glacier’s future as a popular tourist destination was tied to the construction of a transcontinental highway across the park. If car owners wanted to visit both sides of the park, prior to this road, they often freighted their automobiles across Glacier on the Great Northern Railway at significant expense. Despite these limitations, automobile traffic into Glacier increased drastically during Mather’s tenure as head of the NPS. In his first few years in charge of the parks, for example, automobile entries into Glacier increased 400 percent.34

To improve the experience of tourists, Mather pressed engineers to build a road across the entirety of Glacier based on scenic access, not ease of construction or travel, and in 1921

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34 Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks, 158-159; Mather, Progress in the Development of the National Parks, 11-13; Klussman, A Trip to the Northwest by Automobile Touring Yellowstone Park and Glacier Park, 37, 41, 43. According to Klussman, Glacier charged automobile tourists $2.50 to enter on the east side of the park, from the Park-to-Park Highway, but only $0.50 on the west side of the park. The Great Northern Railway charged between $15 and $63 to transport a car across Glacier; and National Park Service, “Going-to-the-Sun Road—An Engineering Feat,” https://www.nps.gov/glac/learn/news/upload/Going-to-the-Sun-Road-An-Engineering-Feat.pdf, accessed December 21, 2019
Congress appropriated funds to complete the highway. There was nothing approaching wilderness preservation in the conceptualization and construction of the Going-to-the-Sun highway. According to Mather, national park highways should provide motor-tourists access to the most scenic areas of the parks. “Our purpose,” Mather told Congress, “is to construct only such roads as contribute solely toward accessibility of the major scenic areas by motor without disturbing the solitude and quiet of other sections.” In Glacier, Mather rejected the simplest plan, which required a series of fifteen, aesthetically unpleasing switchbacks to cross the Continental Divide, in favor of an engineering marvel “benched” into Glacier’s famous Garden Wall. Mather called the plan “the finest piece of work ever conducted” by federal roadbuilders. What resulted is one of the most famous roads in national park history, completed in 1933, a fifty-mile highway one reporter later called “America’s most savage and beautiful road.”

By the end of his tenure as Director of the National Park Service, Mather oversaw the construction of 1,298 miles of new roads in parks throughout the country. The National Park Service’s embrace of automobile tourism, led by the aesthetic conservation of Stephen Mather, resulted in a reconsideration of the meaning of national parks. Automobile access redefined national parks as “windshield wilderness,” where millions of Americans could experience wild nature from the safety and comfort of their cars. Instead of viewing the paintings of Thomas Moran or the photographs of William Henry Jackson, and feeling a jolt of Romantic nationalism in the process, Americans could now witness the monuments of American greatness through the

reinforced panes of glass installed in their cars.\textsuperscript{36} This still implies a level of separation, of course, but technology and wilderness appreciation combined to bring millions of new visitors into America’s national parks and closer to sublime nature, just as Stephen Mather hoped and predicted.

Once they got tourists into the national parks, Mather and the National Park Service wanted to make sure they had a memorable visit. Certainly, sublime scenery played the biggest role in this process, and park proponents continued to sell the park experience in Romantic nationalist terms. In 1917, Mather convened a National Park Conference in Washington, DC, to discuss the present and future plans for America’s wilderness monuments. Congressman Scott Ferris of Oklahoma, Chairman of the House Public Lands Committee and champion of the National Park Service Organic Act, extolled the patriotic virtues of the national parks, telling attendees: “Let the mission of the parks be to stimulate and promote the higher and better instincts of men. Let them be a breeding station for patriotism...[and] make every citizen their defender. This will make them as enduring as the flag of the Nation, a niche in the heart and affections of every citizen.” He connected these patriotic beliefs to the Romantic splendor of the parks, and the Progressive’s commitment to equity. America’s national parks, Ferris argued, “are charged and surcharged with the beauties and grandeur of nature more sublime than any wrought by the hand of man...These parks are the spots that the God of the Universe would preserve for all of us as distinguished from the few of us; to keep inviolate for the multitude as long as the tide of them shall stand.” The National Park Service did not rely solely on the machinations of God to please park visitors—park leaders began “playing God” in the national parks

themselves. In effort to meet rising visitor expectations, park managers and park service leaders began to engineer ecosystems during the interwar years, to satisfy the desires of consumers.

In addition to verticality and sublimity—the jagged peaks, rushing waterfalls, and yawning canyons of the national parks in the American West—tourists increasingly wanted to see charismatic wildlife during their journeys into the wilderness. They wanted to glimpse, to photograph and occasionally to touch wild animals like bears, elk, moose and bison—a visceral experience for the middle-class urbanites who flocked to the national parks in their production-line automobiles. To meet this demand, park leaders artificially manipulated populations of popular animals in places like Yellowstone and Glacier, while eliminating ostracized species from their natural habitats, to the detriment of the overall ecological health of the parks.

One way they accomplished these unscientific goals was through predator control. In Glacier, the NPS employed professional hunters and multiple killing techniques to eliminate wolves and mountain lions from the region, and these hunters also reduced park coyote populations as well. In 1918 and 1919, two park-approved hunters culled seventy-nine “predatory animals” from the wilderness of the North Fork Valley in Glacier, and the park service raised needed funds by selling the pelts of these animals at auction. This predator hunting increased populations of prey animals, especially ungulates like elk, moose and deer, and therefore increased the chances that these animals would be seen by tourists.38


To reinforce this manipulation, park managers fed well-liked animals during the stark winters of Wyoming and Montana, ensuring higher than normal survival rates for these animals. For example, Yellowstone National Park ran hay ranches to feed to hungry animals such as elk, deer, bighorn sheep and antelope during snowy months, and park leaders argued that the park was “the greatest wildlife sanctuary in the world.” Yellowstone rangers distributed 212 tons of hay during the austere winter of 1916-1917, which minimized the loss of these popular game animals in the park. Additionally, Yellowstone rangers maintained a “tame herd” of American bison, an iconic symbol of wilderness in the United States, and fed them an additional 200 tons of hay during the same winter. Park rangers regularly stampeded these bison, for the delight of park tourists. In both Yellowstone and Glacier, park officials facilitated the interaction of keen vacationers and another charismatic animal—park bears. These parks fed both grizzly and black bears garbage at “bear shows” near in-park hotels and provided bleacher seating and armed rangers to ensure tourist comfort and safety. In 1924, Horace Albright argued that bears “seriously compete with geysers, and waterfalls and magnificent canyons” in terms of tourist responsiveness, and they were the most popular animals in the national parks.\(^39\)

While sport hunting was illegal in Yellowstone and Glacier, the park service courted outdoorsmen by operating trout hatcheries in these parks and stocking local waters with the farmed, biologically inferior fish. In 1926, Glacier dispersed more than 3 million trout fry into the park’s waterways, all of which they raised at the park’s hatchery. In a similar story to the gray wolf or the mountain lion, park managers even hunted pelicans in Yellowstone National Park Service to the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1919, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919): 235.

Park, in an effort to protect both wild and stocked trout populations.\textsuperscript{40} Despite their self-aggrandizing rhetoric, then, the park service operated western parks more like an open land zoos or circuses, rather than as wildlife sanctuaries, privileging the desires of eager tourists over the biological needs of the parks’ wild animals.

The modern wilderness movement rose in response to these kinds of efforts at road building and ecosystem engineering. During the interwar years, as historian Paul Sutter points out, wilderness activists were “driven wild” in response to the aesthetic conservation ethos of the early National Park Service. As leaders like Mather and Albright privileged the enjoyment side of the parks’ paradox, and built thoroughfares to and through our national parks, a new grassroots movement to protect America’s wildest lands emerged—and once again redefined the concept of wilderness in the process. Modern wilderness, for these activists, was not Biblical, rational, or aesthetically Romantic, nor was it solely an unpeopled monument of American greatness. Instead, wilderness was a response to the rapid mechanization and democratization of the wild in the United States, a transformation wrought by the affordability of assembly-line automobiles and the construction of paved roads. As millions of Americans drove their modern cars on new highways into national parks and national forests, to public beaches and state-run campgrounds, to secretive fishing holes and scenic lookouts, the nation got incrementally smaller and a whole lot tamer. Wilderness protectors focused on preserving lands seemingly untouched by these machinations. This grassroots environmental movement redefined wilderness as roadless and organized to protect these unpaved landscapes throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{41}


The modern wilderness movement began in the United States Forest Service, not in the National Park Service. At the very moment Mather and Albright embraced auto-tourism as the future of national parks in the United States, a couple of like-minded foresters pushed the federal government to create the first designated wilderness areas in the country. In 1922, Yale-trained forester Aldo Leopold proposed the creation of the Gila Wilderness Area out of 500,000 acres of forest service lands in the American southwest, a radical proposal that set the baseline for federal wilderness in the twentieth century when approved two years later. Leopold, lamenting that so much American nature had already been “spoiled by tourists,” defined wilderness as a “continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb a two week's pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man.” He recognized that modern wilderness preservation in the United States was a marginal position and that the majority preferred to experience nature in comfort, and perhaps through the windshield of their car.42

Wilderness should be preserved for the “minority”—those nature lovers who eschewed “all the automobile roads, summer hotels, graded trails, and other modern conveniences that we can give them.” While possible, wilderness designations in national parks were less likely, according to Leopold, in part because the “Parks are being networked with roads and trails as rapidly as possible.” Like Thoreau, Leopold contended that such wild lands were essential for a healthy human condition and were the right of every American. In A Sand County Almanac, as

he defined his famous land ethic, Leopold wrote that “Now we face the question whether a still higher ‘standard of living’ is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.”\(^{43}\)

Likewise, Bob Marshall also pushed the federal government to protect American wilderness. Marshall earned a doctorate in plant physiology from the Johns Hopkins University and worked as a forester for both the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 1920s and 1930s. His first assignment for the forest service was at the Northern Rocky Mountain Forest Experiment Station in Missoula, Montana, a posting that cemented his love of the wild region with an evolving, “radical” approach to the conception of wilderness that mirrored Leopold’s. In August, 1925, in one of his first declarations on wilderness, Marshall lamented that “when all of the once wild places of the country are dissected with highways and the honk of the auto horn on one road can be distinctly heard on the next, I will probably adjust my false teeth, and tuning up trembling falsetto voice, tell my grandchildren about the rousing ‘wilderness’ of the Northern Rockies.”\(^{44}\)

In 1930, Marshall published “The Problem of the Wilderness,” defining wilderness as “a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means and is sufficiently spacious that a person in crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out.” In this article, Marshall differentiates the appeal of true wilderness from typical aesthetic scenery found in places like national parks, arguing that the “sheer


\(^{44}\) Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 203, 205-206.
stupendousness of the wilderness gives it a quality of intangibility which is unknown in ordinary manifestations of ocular beauty.” Ocular beauty (observed in Romantic art or at scenic lookouts) was a static, external event—something unchanging to be seen, evaluated and hopefully enjoyed from a distance. Marshall believed that wilderness, on the other hand, was a dynamic, immersive experience, where appreciative visitors could engage in the thrilling and always changing aspects of wild nature. This, of course, could not be accomplished from the comfort of a car. The “automobilist,” according to Marshall, was the foremost opponent of wilderness—the “irrational” American who wished to visit nature in creature comfort and required that all nature seekers do the same.45

Like Leopold, Marshall recognized the tenuous position of modern wilderness in the United States. “For it is admitted at present only a minority of the genus Homo cares for wilderness recreation,” Marshall allowed, “and only a fraction of this minority possesses the requisite virility for the indulgence of this desire. Far more people can enjoy the woods by automobile.” Marshall asked: “Why then should this majority have to give up its rights?” The answer to this logical question was time. “Just a few years more of hesitation.” Marshall argued, “and the only trace of that wilderness which has exerted such a fundamental experience in molding American character will lie in musty pages of pioneer books and the mumbled memories of tottering antiquarians.” To forestall this permanent but preventable loss, to push the minority position, wilderness activists must “unite” in opposition to the “tyrannical ambition of civilization to conquer every niche on the whole earth.”46

Five years later, Leopold and Marshall, along with other principals like Robert Sterling Yard and Benton MacKaye, founded the Wilderness Society to unify this movement. From the beginning, these founders established a pugnacious tone for wilderness protection. In the inaugural issue of The Living Wilderness, the official journal of the Wilderness Society, the nascent group responded to the “emergency in conservation” sounded by Marshall five years earlier, and heralded a revolution of thought with regard to the natural world. The Progressive Era faith in experts and top-down federal bureaucracies was misplaced and contributed to a feeling “prevailing helplessness” in those who cared most about American nature. Powerful, antagonistic and self-perpetuating federal agencies like the National Park Service, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior, the presumptive protectors of American wilderness, were failures. “Each sees the wilderness crashing around it,” the Wilderness Society argued, “but is powerless against the pressure of its own specialties to more than cry aloud with a pointed finger. All could help a little, but none could plan and lead without tragic sacrifice of its own responsibilities.” Instead, a new generation of youthful activists would assume responsibility for “wilderness salvation,” and fight against the “popular craze” of automobiles and road building.⁴⁷

In a final salvo, the Wilderness Society concluded their “summons to save the wilderness” by contending: “The craze is to build all the highways as possible everywhere while billions may yet be borrowed from the unlucky future. The fashion is to barber and manicure wild America as smartly as the modern girl. Our duty is clear.”⁴⁸ Despite their criticism of the federal government, the Wilderness Society found allies in the administration of President

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⁴⁷ “A Summons to Save the Wilderness,” The Living Wilderness, Vol. 1, No. 1, (September 1935): 1. This article has no byline, but most historians conclude that Robert Sterling Yard wrote this piece. He was editor of The Living Wilderness at the time and the language and issues raised in the article are consistent with Yard’s known works. See Paul Sutter, “New Deal Conservation: A View from the Wilderness,” in Harry L. Henderson and David B. Woolner, FDR and the Environment, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005): 105, footnote 12.

⁴⁸ “A Summons to Save the Wilderness,” 1.
Franklin Delano Roosevelt in their effort to protect the last vestiges of roadless America. Combined, a shift in philosophy regarding the meaning and scientific management of national parks within the executive branch of the federal government, along with the growing power of grassroots organizations like the Wilderness Society, helped usher in a new era in environmental thought in the United States and ultimately prevented the construction of the Glacier View Dam on the western border of Glacier National Park.

In addition to the roadless aspects desired by Leopold, Marshall and the Wilderness Society, a second component of modern wilderness concerned the burgeoning science of ecology. While Stephen Mather and Horace Albright adopted aesthetic conservation and the artificial manipulation of populations of popular animals like elk and bears in the national parks, biologists within the National Park Service pushed for scientific principles regarding the preservation of wildlife. These researchers embraced the modern conception of the ecosystem and argued that national parks should be managed based a biological understanding of nature, not on tourist desires or even political boundaries.

One of the first park scientists to suggest this kind of management was Vernon Bailey. In 1918, Bailey and his wife Florence Merriam Bailey, released *Wild Animals of Glacier National Park*, a comprehensive survey of the mammalian and avian populations of the park. In a review of the physiology of Glacier, Vernon Bailey argued that the park contained a series of “life zones,” amorphous belts of life defined by factors such as altitude, climate and flora and fauna populations. Unlike the park itself, these life zones did not have rigid boundaries, and often overlapped with other zones outside of park margins. The North Fork of the Flathead River, Vernon Bailey posited, was part of a “transition zone”—a mild, fertile area partially in the western expanses of Glacier, but “mainly outside of the park.” This transition zone, regardless of
park boundaries, was vital for the health of “important game animals” living in Glacier, ungulates Mather and Albright believed attracted tourists to the park. An understanding of these realities was essential “to protect and control the animals living within the park and to make the interesting species accessible to the visiting public.”

Illustration Six Vernon Bailey’s map of Glacier National Park “life zones” (1919). Image from Mapping Montana and the West, Montana Memory Project.

George Melendez Wright, the first chief of the nascent National Parks Service Wildlife Division, went a step farther than Bailey, arguing that a modern conception of ecology should be the governing principle of the management of the national parks. In 1929, Wright headed the first comprehensive scientific survey of vertebrates in the national parks and co-wrote the influential *Fauna of the National Parks* four years later. In this work, Wright recognized the appeal of wildlife for tourists and the link between these wild interactions and rising visitation numbers in the national parks. Wright posited: “The thrill of being in the same meadow as an elk, no fence or bar between, reaches everyone, young and old. Without the scurry and scratch of a chipmunk along the bark or the call of a jay and the flash of its blue, the high mountain and deep gorge would be cold, dead indeed.”

Regrettably, as visitation numbers in national parks rose, faunal populations suffered. The major problem, Wright concluded, was that national park boundaries resulted from political decisions, not biological conclusions, and sometimes made very little ecological sense. Wright recommended that national parks be established with biological concerns in mind—“That each park shall contain within itself the year-round habitats of all species belonging to the native resident fauna…[and] That a complete park project shall include a survey of the fauna as a critical factor in determining area and boundaries.” Each national park should be an “independent biological unit.” Furthermore, park managers should not interfere with “biotic relationships” in the parks, and that artificial feeding programs and predator control should be

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eliminated as soon as possible. Park managers should also restore native animals eradicated by human beings, such as wolves and other unpopular predators, in these new wilderness habitats.\textsuperscript{51}

A review of Glacier National Park’s fauna helped prove this conclusion for Wright, as the political boundaries of the park proved ineffective in the protection of complete fauna habitat. As a general “rule,” Wright argued, “streams make the poorest boundaries for wild life.” Glacier, in both the south and west, uses branches of the Flathead River system as park boundaries. The North Fork of the Flathead, the western boundary of the park, was an ineffective line that bisected the winter range of park animals. Park ungulates, unaware of the protective properties of a national park border, migrated west across the North Fork into national forest land in search of winter browse. There, remnant homesteaders and local sportsmen threatened game populations, as they hunted and trapped animals in the valley, thereby contributing to human-caused “faunal maladjustment.”\textsuperscript{52} Unfortunately, Wright died prematurely in an automobile accident in 1936, and his ideas concerning the biological importance of wilderness failed to take complete root in National Park Service management policies. For the most part, the National Park Service continued to favor the enjoyment part of the national park paradox, with occasional vacillations towards the conservation of wildlife in the parks, until the apex of the modern wilderness movement in the 1960s.

The Murie family joined Wright’s crusade for wilderness and wildlife. The Olaus Murie, his wife Mardy and brother Adolph pushed the park service to recognize the centrality of wildlife biology in proper park management. In addition to his work on elk in Wyoming, and his efforts to increase the size of Grand Tetons National Park to encompass an entire habitat for these

\textsuperscript{51} Wright, Dixon, and Thompson, \textit{Fauna of the National Parks of the United States}, 147-148
\textsuperscript{52} Wright, Dixon, and Thompson, \textit{Fauna of the National Parks of the United States}, 101-102, 147-148.
ungulates, Olaus Murie studied caribou in Alaska for the National Park Service and pushed for the expansion of Olympic National Park in Washington State, all in an effort to protect America’s dwindling wilderness areas. Like Wright, Murie recognized that predator control in nature led to unhealthy and manipulated populations of game animals. “I have a theory,” Murie once wrote, “that a certain amount of preying on caribou is beneficial to the herd, that the best animals survive and the vigor of the herd is maintained…we have been accustomed to reverse the process [by] killing off the finest animals and removing the natural enemies which tend to keep down the unfit.” According to Murie, human technology, particularly hunters’ guns and tourists’ roads, interrupted the natural processes of a healthy wilderness. “Wilderness must be kept whole,” Murie proclaimed.53

As he became a more outspoken public figure, Murie connected the human values of wilderness professed by the early Wilderness Society, with the biological realities of ecological science. He recognized the importance of intact ecosystems for the biological health of wildlife, and that mid-century American scientists were “rising to the challenge of our social problems [like wilderness preservation] more than ever before,” but he also believed that wilderness areas were vital for human well-being as well. He called for the permanent reservation of wilderness in America, arguing: “It is a fragile thing, this natural wilderness, consisting of the material for poetry and art and vigorous clean living. It is easily degraded or destroyed by heedless

men...Surely it is wisdom to guard the original material on which our culture is founded—and ‘save some of it.’”

Olaus’ wife, partner and researcher, Margaret “Mardy” Murie, also fought for wilderness protection. By the Glacier View Dam debates of the 1940s, Mardy served as Olaus’ business manager and collaborator, convincing him to accept the position of Director with the Wilderness Society in 1945. According to Mardy Murie, “We had become immersed in the conservation battle…and we both knew that life was blooming, expanding, growing because of the new work Olaus had undertaken [with the Wilderness Society]. It demanded a great deal of us both.”

Mardy Murie was much more than her husband’s assistant, however, and she proved a pivotal advocate for the creation Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. She later contended: “I hope the United States of America is not so rich that she can afford to let these wildernesses pass by—or so poor she cannot afford to keep them.”

Adolph Murie, like his brother and sister-in-law, pushed the National Park Service toward to accept ecological principles as the basis for wilderness management. He studied predator-prey relationships in Yellowstone and Mount McKinley National Parks and urged federal officials to leave nature in the parks alone. In 1944, Adolph Murie contended that wolves were vital for the ecological health of Mount McKinley and posited: “In a national park the objective is to preserve a piece of primitive nature where natural interrelationships may prevail. The more complete the biotic unit and the larger the area the greater is the opportunity to achieve the ideal.” Wilderness in the parks must be enlarged rather than restricted, according to Adolph

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Murie. “But unfortunately,” he argued, “few national parks are large enough to be uninfluenced by artificial activities taking place both within and outside their boundaries”—especially the construction of intrusive roads.\textsuperscript{56}

The majority in the United States disagreed with the conclusions of George Melendez Wright and the Murie family and believed that human progress and desires outweighed the needs of a few animals in the national parks. Belmore Browne, a mountain climbing landscape artist and prominent opponent of the ecological approach to wilderness in the parks, believed that “the only persons in America who could take interest in [Adolph] Murie’s ideal would be a handful of biologists. It was on account of the Park Administrators being misled by these theories that the park has been depleted of its game [animals].”\textsuperscript{57} Increasingly, some federal officials began listening to the appeals of wilderness advocates from the Wilderness Society, and from scientists within the National Park Service. In the 1930s and 1940s, these modern wilderness ideals found an ally in one of the most powerful Cabinet officials in the history of the United States.

Harold Ickes was a cantankerous man. A self-proclaimed “curmudgeon,” Ickes cultivated an effective public image, and a domineering thirteen years as Secretary the Interior under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, based on this personality trait. Horace Albright, onetime Director of the National Park Service once called Ickes “the meanest man who ever sat in a Cabinet office in Washington,” but admitted that his former boss was “perfectly fearless” and “the best Secretary of the Interior we ever had.” Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Arthur Krock christened Ickes “a professional man of wrath,” and historian Harold Swain contended that Ickes was “an

administrator who often got what he wanted by calculated intimidation and vituperation. His towering rages, his constant vigilance, and his refusal to tolerate mistakes…account for his administrative success.” Ickes, himself, nurtured this image. He titled his own memoir *Autobiography of a Curmudgeon*. In the introduction, Ickes wrote: “If, in these pages, I have hurled an insult at anyone, be it known that such was my deliberate intent, and I may as well state flatly now that it will be useless and a waste of time to ask me to say I am sorry.”

This public persona was effective, but essentially contrived, according to long-time friends and associates. Walter Lippman, another Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, argued that Ickes “was a kind and generous and warm-hearted man. The Old Curmudgeon business was a false front to protect him against it being generally realized how violently virtuous, how furiously righteous, [and] how angrily unboged he was almost all the time.” As Secretary of the Interior under Roosevelt, Ickes helped implement the New Deal, administering the Public Works Administration and parts of the National Recovery Administration, putting millions of unemployed Americans to work during the Great Depression. Ickes attempted to desegregate the Department of the Interior including the National Park Service, amid the Jim Crow Era in American history. During World War Two, he fought against the “stupid and cruel” policies that led to Japanese internment and proposed acceptance for Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe. Amongst his many accomplishments, Ickes is probably best remembered as a

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conservationist—someone who understood the value of the natural world for mid-century Americans.\textsuperscript{59}

As Secretary of the Interior, Ickes attempted to revolutionize the federal government’s relationship and control over American nature, and in doing so offered the first concerted effort for a federal designation of modern wilderness in national parks. Ickes’ own ideas of nature were an amalgamation of contemporary conceptions about the natural world, and he saw no contradiction in the fact that he loved dams, picturesque scenery and roadless wilderness all at the same time. For Ickes, the appreciation of nature was a big tent, and his Department of the Interior was the perfect bureaucracy for managing the contentious circus of conservation in America. Ickes attempted to reorganize the Department of the Interior into the Department of Conservation, and he desperately wanted to wrest control of the United States Forest Service and the Biological Survey away from the Department of Agriculture. In 1935, Ickes announced this intention during a speech broadcast on NBC radio, arguing that if the United States wanted to properly protect its vast natural resources, “the administration of conservation activities should be concentrated in one department, under a sincere conservationist, so that conflicts may be avoided, jealousies stilled, and an opportunity given to drive ahead along a broad front in the cause of conservation.”\textsuperscript{60}

Ickes saw himself as this ideal conservationist. He was a Bull Moose Republican during the formative years of his political life, and he identified initially as a utilitarian conservationist.


under the altar of the Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot. When he assumed his position of Secretary of the Interior, Ickes wrote a letter of praise to Pinchot, revealing: “I learned the principles of conservation at your feet, just where T.R. [Theodore Roosevelt] learned his.” Ickes’ attempt to control the national forests angered his conservation hero, who two decades earlier wanted to seize control of the national parks from the Interior. Pinchot called the conservation reorganization plan “old evils in new clothes,” and described Ickes as a “gentleman so befuddled by the lust for power that actually sees himself handling the problems of the farmer, the stockman, the dust bowl victim, the lumberman, the victim of erosion, the hunter, the fisherman, and the forester—all under his new and unnecessary Department of Conservation.”

Despite Pinchot’s rebuke, Ickes was at times a utilitarian conservationist, as demonstrated by his love of massive, multi-purpose federal dam projects. The construction and public management of these enormous dams was a core goal of Ickes’ tenure as Secretary of the Interior. At the dedication of the Boulder Dam in 1935, Ickes evoked Pinchot’s famous mantra by saying the “prudent use of all our natural resources for the greatest good of the greatest number of our people,” and proudly proclaimed: “No better example of understanding, cooperation between man and nature can be found anywhere than this imagination-stirring project, that in grandeur of conception and in skill and speed of execution ranks as one of the greatest engineering undertakings in the history of the world.” He once called the Grand Coulee Dam “unquestionably the greatest edifice ever built by the hand of man,” and he believed that investment in “the greatest hydroelectric development in all history” was necessary for the

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United States to conquer economic depression, win world wars and assume the mantle of a world superpower.62

But Ickes was not only a utilitarian conservationist. He appreciated the Romantic beauty of sublime locales like Glacier and wanted to create a federal roadless wilderness system in the National Park Service. Ickes was a friend of Stephen Mather, a relationship struck during their mutual time in Chicago, Illinois. And like Mather, Ickes embraced the aesthetic qualities of the parks. In 1916, for example, Ickes took a trip through Glacier National Park on horseback. He later described the trip as formative and told an NBC radio audience in 1934: “I love nature. I love it practically in any form—flowers, birds, wild animals, running streams, gem-like lakes, and towering, snow-clad mountains. All of these Glacier Park has—and much more besides.”

Where Ickes split from his friend Mather was on the subject of roads. Mather, of course, welcomed the assembly-line automobile and paved motorway as the great “open sesame” for the democratization of nature in the United States, and pushed for road construction in almost all national parks.63

Ickes, on the other hand, embraced the roadless wilderness conceptions of Leopold and Marshall. Ickes fought the extension of Skyline Drive into Great Smoky Mountains National Park, arguing: “I am not in favor any more roads in the National Parks than we have to build…This is the automobile age, but I do not have much patience with people whose idea of enjoying nature is dashing along a hard road at fifty or sixty miles per hour.” Leaning into his

63 Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks, 299; and Watkins, Righteous Pilgrim, 470-472.
curmudgeonly public persona, he sided with the rights of the minority reasoning of the Wilderness Society and believed that not all Americans needed guaranteed access to wilderness—not the infirmed or elderly and certainly not the lazy youth of America. Ickes also agreed with wildlife biologists regarding national park wilderness, judging that the Interior “ought to resolve all doubts in favor of letting nature take its course.” The scarring of nature through human interference was a preventable “atroc...
designation was both well-meaning and paternalistic. In language approved by Ickes, the new wilderness order posited: “From the standpoint of the Indians, it is of special importance to save as many areas as possible from invasion by roads. Almost everywhere they go the Indians encounter the completion and disturbances of the white race. Most of them desire some place…where they can escape constant contact with white men.” Ironically, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council proposed a similar designation on their own one year earlier. In 1936, the nascent tribal government proposed a 100,000-acre roadless, wilderness “park” in the Mission Range, but their request was never approved by the BIA.65

Marshall left the Interior in May 1937 and returned to the United States Forest Service as Head of the Division of Recreation and Lands. There, Marshall revolutionized wilderness designations in the national forests. He created wilderness U-Regulations for the USFS, the “crowning achievement of Marshall’s career with the agency,” according to historian Paul Sutter. These regulations allowed the USFS Chief Forester to designate primitive lands at least 100,000 acres in size as “wilderness areas.” There would be “no roads or other provisions for motorized transportation, no commercial timber cutting, and no occupancy” in these new wilderness areas. Marshall died unexpectedly in 1939, and Harold Ickes trusted that the “wild areas he worked so hard to perpetuate [would] remain as his monuments.” The United States Forest Service agreed and used Marshall’s own U-Regulations to reorganize three primitive areas as the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1940. This designation protected almost a million acres of wilderness in Montana, including parts of the Flathead River Watershed, in Marshall’s honor. Ickes now had an Indian

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wilderness classification in the BIA, and he hoped to soon control the burgeoning wilderness
areas in the USFS.66

Buoyed by these successes, Ickes proposed the creation of wilderness system within the
National Park Service. In 1939, Ickes issued a request—“I shall welcome it if the Congress of the
United States will define and set standards for wilderness national parks, as well as provide for
wilderness areas to be proclaimed and similarly protected by law in other national parks.” With
the force of law, rather than departmental guidelines and revisable codes, national park
“wilderness can be maintained forever in its present grandeur, and dedicated to recreational use
consistent with its wilderness aspect.” Ickes pushed wilderness recognition farther than anyone
with this demand, tasking Congress with defining and designating wilderness by law. Congress
failed to act, and another twenty-five years passed before Ickes got his wish of a legislated
wilderness system in the United States.67

In 1933, Harold Ickes declared: “If I had my way about national parks, I would create one
without a road in it. I would have it impenetrable forever to automobiles, a place where man
would not try and improve upon God.” During his tenure as Secretary of the Interior, Ickes
facilitated the creation of several national parks that approached this ideal, and he had to fight off
dam builders to do so. In 1934, Ickes supported the creation of Everglades National Park in
Florida. According to its establishing legislation, Everglades “shall be permanently reserved as a
wilderness, and no development of the project or plan for the entertainment of visitors shall be
undertaken which will interfere with the preservation intact of the unique flora and fauna and the

History, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April, 1989): 80-82; and Barry Mackintosh, “Harold Ickes and the National Park Service,”
essential primitive natural conditions now prevailing in this area.” Four years later, Ickes helped convince Franklin Delano Roosevelt to support a bill converting Mount Olympus National Monument, then part of the United States Forest Service, into Olympic National Park. Such legislation would prevent the harvesting of Sitka spruce and other old growth trees from the Olympic rain forest and stop the timber industry’s attempt to “destroy the last wilderness,” according to Ickes. Congress created Olympic National Park on June 29, 1938.68

Ickes also facilitated the creation of the first wilderness park in the State of California, which he wanted to name Kings Canyon National Wilderness Park. To do so, he needed to overcome the objections of hydroelectric power interests, who saw the steep canyons of the Kings River as prime opportunities to build large, multi-purpose dams. Like Olympic, the creation of this new national park also required subsuming land from the rival United States Forest Service, who had their own recreation plans for Kings Canyon. Using fears that the City of Los Angeles sought control over the Kings River for its own reclamation projects, a not unfounded concern give San Francisco’s acquisition of Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite and Los Angeles’ disreputable procurement of water rights in the Owens Valley earlier in the twentieth century, Ickes negotiated a compromise with local interests. The Bureau of Reclamation would build a large dam at Pine Flat on the Kings River, twenty-five miles downriver from the proposed park, and the new wilderness park would omit several key power dam sites in the region. In return, Ickes got his roadless park in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. During debates on

the proposed park, Ickes urged Congress to “guarantee protection of the Kings Canyon
wilderness forever, because a true and beautiful wilderness has become the most priceless thing
in America. Let us keep this one for the benefit of ourselves and our posterity.” Congress agreed,
in part, and the act creating Kings Canyon National Park promised “to insure the permanent
preservation of the wilderness character” of the region, although the final bill did omit the
strident roadless restrictions of earlier drafts.69

The Kings Canyon controversy had many of the same elements as Glacier View. Varying
conceptions of nature—including utilitarian conservation, aesthetic conservation and a
burgeoning idea of modern wilderness—influenced these debates and, most obviously, the
construction of a large, multi-purpose, federal dam was at the heart of the conflict. In the end,
antagonists on multiple sides reached a necessary but unsatisfactory exchange, at least with
consideration to the wilderness aspects of the nascent national park. Ickes secured his roadless
wilderness—but at a significant cost. The construction of the Pine Flat Dam, and especially the
removal of several key dam sites on the Kings River from the boundaries of the park, left the
idealized wilderness in the Sierra Nevada Mountains incomplete and compromised.

The Army Corps of Engineers introduced plans to build the Glacier View Dam, on the
North Fork of the Flathead River, within this broad context of wilderness debates in the United
States. Initially conceived in the mid-1930s and first proposed in 1943, Glacier View would be a
416’-high dam built in a narrow canyon between Huckleberry Mountain in Glacier National Park

69 Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 220; Lary M. Dilsaver, “Conservation Conflict and the Founding of
Kings Canyon National Park,” California History, Vol. 69, No. 2, (Summer, 1990): 201-203; United States
Congress, Establishing the John Muir-Kings Canyon National Park, California, Hearings before the Committee on
the Public Lands, House of Representatives, 76th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, DC: Government Printing
Office, 1939): 4, 9, 11; and United States Congress, An Act to establish the Kings Canyon National Park, California,
to transform thereto the lands now included in the General Grant National Park, and for other purposes, H.R. 3794,
76th Congress, 3rd Session, March 4, 1940, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/76th-congress/session-
and Glacier View Mountain in the neighboring Flathead National Forest. This dam would have flooded 30,000 acres of North Fork Valley wilderness with water, creating a reservoir twenty-five miles long, four to five miles wide, with a capacity of 977 billion gallons of reserved water. More importantly for opponents of the dam, the project threatened to flood 20,000 acres of wilderness in the western expanses of Glacier National Park, one of the “crown jewels” of the National Park system. Instead, a nationwide coalition of influential environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society and the Isaak Walton League, National Park Service officials and local citizens combined to contest the erection of the dam, arguing against the development-minded proponents of the project. These sometimes-incongruent interests, often motivated by contrasting ideologies, unified in the 1940s with a singular goal—the defeat of the Glacier View Dam.

Illustration Seven Glacier View Project Plan and Sections (1948). Image from Army Corps of Engineers, Columbia River and Tributaries, Northwestern United States.

70 “Significant Facts Concerning Glacier View Dam Proposal,” undated memo, Box 228, Folder 6, GNPA.
Chapter Three: Victory Rivers

“Got yourself a dam to build, Ownie, huh?”

“That hadn’t come out as lightly as Owen wanted, but Bruce seemed to take it as teasing. “You’re the expert. We’re just here to fill in around the edges, aren’t we, Neil?””

“Four bits an hour, up from nothing.” Neil smiled around his words. “That’ll be different.”

“Yeah, helluva deal,” Bruce backed that by an even bigger smile. “When did somebody come up with this wage idea, anyway? The Old Man never told us it existed.”

“Uncle Sam is here now. You’re going to see a lot that didn’t exist before five minutes ago.” —Ivan Doig, Bucking the Sun

During the first half of the 1940s, a young woman named Aurelia Carter of Yonkers, New York devoted much of her waking day to helping the United States win World War Two. She worked for the Otis Elevator Company, after many of her neighbors—as well as her two brothers—left and joined the armed services. Otis Elevators, in addition to making their namesake people carriers, pivoted during the war to construct all manner of martial necessities, including “recoil mechanisms for heavy guns, ammunition racks, assemblies for combat aircraft, machine tools, motors, and generators”—all of which required a great deal of electrical power to create, from the processing of raw metals such as steel, aluminum and magnesium for materials to the actual construction of these munitions. Carter helped build these valuable devices. She started at Otis in the packing department but worked her way up through the manufacturing side of the business--first as an assembler, then as a drill press operator, until finally becoming a champion electric arc welder. She was part of an “inadvertent revolution,” in which millions of American women supported their country by going to work in war industries or by serving in the armed forces. Carter recognized the importance of her own contribution to this effort. “When you work in a war plant…you do a lot of thinking,” she explained. “And with the roar of
machinery you sort of get a message which seems to say to you that this job must be well done, because the stake in getting it out is perhaps the life of some boy fighting on the beachheads.”¹

In her spare time, away from the reverberations of Otis machinery and thousands of miles away from any contested beachheads, Carter continued her personal war efforts. In the backyard of her south side Yonkers home, like millions of other patriotic Americans, Carter heeded the federal government’s “call to farms” and planted a victory garden. By 1943, canned food was in short supply in the United States, as 25 percent of the nation’s food went overseas to feed American soldiers, and tin normally used in food preservation was needed in war industries and munitions. Victory gardens helped fill this home front supply gap on a local level. According to federal publications, often written by Howard Zahniser, future architect of the Wilderness Act, victory gardens were thrifty, produced better tasting food, provided exercise, relieved anxiety and promoted “neighborliness, sociability, [and] cooperation,” all while aiding the war effort. Between 1941 and 1945, Americans tended 20,000,000 victory gardens across the country and at times produced 40 percent of America’s vegetable supplies. The Department of Agriculture convinced millions of Americans that “FOOD PRODUCTION IS WAR PRODUCTION,” arguing that “By growing a victory garden you can make it easier for your boy or your neighbor’s boy or your big brother somewhere in our armed forces, or the soldiers in the Russian Army, or the British Army, or any of the other United Nations’ armies to get the food they need to fight for you.” President Franklin Delano Roosevelt added his voice as well. In 1944, Roosevelt told his nation that “I hope every American who possibly can will grow a victory

garden this year… Victory gardens are of direct benefit in helping relieve manpower, transportation, and living costs as well as the food problem” needed to win the war. Behind her Yonkers home, Carter planted rows of tomatoes, beans, corn and the like to feed her family, and to help the prosecution of the war. As one federal propaganda poster put it, Carter was growing a “war garden for victory.” In recognition of her efforts, both at Otis and at home, Carter earned the national title “Miss Negro Victory Worker of 1944” and was personally thanked in a ceremony by New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.²

American nature was a definitive factor in the winning of World War Two, as much as any rifle, bomb, or well-conceived invasion plan. Famously, millions of Americans like Aurelia Carter tended victory gardens in their back yards and in vacant lots to aid the war effort. But on a larger scale, the United States weaponized its vast natural resources to defeat its enemies, both in Europe and the Pacific. Between 1941 and 1945, for example, the United States timber industry produced about 172 billion board-feet of lumber for war industries. National forests throughout the American West might accurately be renamed “victory forests.” Despite critical labor shortages, large-scale agriculture boomed during World War Two, with gross production increasing 26 percent during the war and profits increasing from $9 billion in 1940 to $22 billion

in 1945. These “victory farms” fed the soldiers who won the war. Mining companies ramped up the extraction of most metals and minerals during the war, from common requirements such as copper and silver for electrical wiring, and coal for power, to more exotic materials such as manganese, molybdenum, tungsten and uranium. These extraction sites can be properly considered “victory mines.” American industry turned nature’s bounty into war munitions. William H. Harrison, Director of Production for the War Production Board, believed that “The job now in hand is to organize our vast [natural] resources…toward a single goal. There is only one answer to those who seek to rule the world by force of planes and ships and tanks and guns. The answer is more planes, more ships, more tanks, and more guns.”

Turning the natural resources of the United States into an “arsenal of democracy” required a lot of things—labor, ingenuity, capital investment, secrecy and patriotism. It also needed an enormous amount of electricity. In 1942, the Department of the Interior projected that the production of airplanes, tanks, guns, ships and other munitions needed for the war would require 154 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity. One problem—that amount of electricity outpaced the entire production of electricity in the United States in 1940. To solve this shortage, the United States turned again to its natural resources. In remote locations throughout the country, in both the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains, the federal government built or expanded massive hydroelectric dams that fueled the war effort. On once wild watersheds such

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as the Columbia, the Colorado and the Tennessee, the United States created “victory rivers” that helped end the Great Depression and win World War Two.4

The history of the proposed Glacier View Dam, on the North Fork of the Flathead River, is illustrative of the relationship between western economic interests, wild and sometimes dangerous rivers and the military might and growing power of the federal government in the middle of the twentieth century. On many occasions during the 1930s and 1940s, western political leaders and economic boosters looked to the federal government to control volatile rivers in the American West, including the Columbia River, the Missouri River, the Colorado River and many others. For millennia, these rivers ran unencumbered, starting as snowpacks and trickles high in the Rocky Mountains and ending up as rushing discharge into the Pacific Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico. Human cultures often enjoyed, feared and appreciated these expansive waterways, but they never dominated this landscape physically. By the middle of the twentieth century, human ingenuity, bravery and sometimes arrogance allowed Americans to engineer these natural wonders into “organic machines.” In turn, these industrialized rivers offered hope and opportunity for local residents, and for a country at war. As the folk singer Woody Guthrie put it, western rivers might “ramble to the sea, But river, while you're rambling, you can do some work for me.”5 Hard work, in the mythology of American history, leads to good fortune. On the North Fork of the Flathead River, on western edge of Glacier National Park, federal control over a wild river promised prosperity on many fronts. With federal intervention, and the application of force, Glacier View Dam proponents sought to end historic floods on local rivers, to increase

recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts, to power the development of an industrial epicenter in the northern Rocky Mountains of Montana, and most importantly, to build aluminum aircraft and atomic weapons necessary for victory in a war against Fascists and imperialists in Europe and the Pacific Rim. In the 1930s and 1940s, champions of the Glacier View project sought to reconfigure the North Fork of the Flathead as a “victory river.”

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Dams serve many purposes. Most obviously, dams allow human beings to dominate and control previously unrestrained nature. Dams plug wild rivers, many of which ran undisturbed since the end of Pleistocene Epoch. Dams impound water, often billions of gallons of water that would normally flow toward an ocean or sea. Reclamation projects mitigate potential floods, saving lives and millions of dollars in property damage. Stored water, in turn, can completely alter landscapes and improve the lives of Americans near and far. Irrigation in arid regions can turn deserts into agrarian empires, reservoirs can sate the thirst of homeowners and water manicured lawns and hydroelectric power can ensure industrial development in rural areas and turn the tide in worldwide wars. Dams also spoil landscapes and destroy lives. Dams block the spawning grounds for salmon, destroy estuary habitat, force the dislocation of families from their homes, threaten the sovereignty of Native American nations, drown picturesque valleys and submerge sites of great historical importance. Unsurprisingly, then, dams are often the cause of emotional and contentious debate.

Dams can be powerful symbols of human achievement. During the Great Depression, for example, the federal government funded the construction of massive dams, mainly in the American West and the Tennessee River watershed. These concrete monoliths mesmerized observers. According to historian David Nye, Depression Era dams were examples of the
“technological sublime.” He defined sublime, in the philosophic tradition of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, as “repeated experiences of awe and wonder, often tinged with the element of terror, which people have had when confronted with particular natural sites, architectural forms, and technological achievements.” These engineered marvels, like the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls for Romantic artists, were so great that observers might be paralyzed with astonishment and awe. This emotional response to sublime dams welded conceptions of nationalism, religious faith and technological achievement into symbols of American greatness. In 1935, for example, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt opened his dedication of the Boulder Dam by proclaiming: “This morning I came, I saw and I was conquered, as everyone would be who sees for the first time this great feat of mankind.” Dams also symbolized the projected health and prosperity of the American republic. In 1933, the Army Corps of Engineers finalized plans for Bonneville Dam, a run-of-the-river dam on the Columbia. Engineers designed Bonneville to deliver not only inexpensive hydroelectric power to the Pacific Northwest, but also less quantifiable benefits such as ensuring the “future of the Nation” and “better living and greater happiness for our children,” according to President Roosevelt. The dam provided thousands of jobs for out-of-work Americans. Funded by Roosevelt’s Public Works Administration, a New Deal jobs program that focused on modernizing the country’s physical infrastructure, the colossal project eventually employed thousands of laborers who worked round the clock shifts for $4 a day. But the dam would also have less obvious impacts on the region as well. The Oregonian newspaper, from nearby Portland, gushed at the revolutionary power of the planned dam, positing: “The march of progress finally has overtaken Old Man River. The Columbia will undergo transformations, both
visible and invisible, at the hands of man.” These invisible transformations were psychologically important for a nation squeezed in the economic vise of the Great Depression.6

Marc Reisner, in his book *Cadillac Desert*, contends that Great Depression dams signaled a structural change not just in a local river system like the Columbia, but in the fundamental conception of the nation as well. Reisner argued that “symbolic achievements mattered terribly in the thirties, and the federal dams going up on the western rivers were the reigning symbols of the era…The dams announced that America could still do remarkable things; they also said that the country would never be the same.” Dams helped solidify a consensus, for better or for worse, that the federal government was responsible for the physical, economic and emotional health of its citizens. When Montanans, a decade-and-a-half after the announcement of the Bonneville project, wanted to industrialize the western landscapes of their state, they looked to the federal government to facilitate that life changing transformation. Dams, with their physical domination of nature and their symbolic value to Americans, are democratic pyramids, according to philosopher and architectural critic Lewis Mumford. The equal of the Egyptian pyramids, these federally funded dams symbolized American preeminence and were designed to last for millennia.7

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7 Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 159; and Lewis Mumford, “The Architecture of Power,” *New Yorker* 17, no. 2 (1941): 58. Although he is often quoted as calling dams “democratic pyramids” in this review of an exhibition of Tennessee Valley Authority photos, Mumford does not appear actually to use this exact phrase. His sentiment, however, is clear—federal dams were symbols of American greatness and ingenuity, akin the ancient pyramids of Egypt.
Dams are also “useful pyramids,” according to civil engineering historian Nicholas Schnitter. By impounding and diverting natural water flows, by irrigating deserts and ensuring potable water supplies, dams have engineered the rise of human civilizations for thousands of years. The oldest known large-scale dam in the world was built in the basalt desert of present-day Jordan, more than five thousand years ago. At Jawa, a Bronze Age “proto-urban development,” hydrologists built a water system designed to collect and store water from a nearby wadi, a gully that only received water during violent winter floods. The largest dam in this system measured fifteen-feet high, and more than 260-feet long. All told, the Jawa reclamation system stored enough water in five reservoirs to maintain a population that approached 5,000 people, at least for a short while. In Egypt, the civilization that produced the most famous pyramids, engineers built “useful pyramids” that ensured continuous irrigation for Egyptian farmers for thousands of years. Almost 4,000 years ago at the Faiyum Depression, fifty-five miles southwest of present-day Cairo, engineers built a stone dam nearly five miles long, designed to redirect Nile flood waters into this natural hollow. This dam-fed reservoir, known as Lake of Moeris, operated until the end of the 18th century. Since these first dams, cultures and nations throughout the world used hydrology to build their civilizations, including Greek city-states, the Roman Empire, the Ottomans, Chinese dynasties, the Hohokam Empire in the American Southwest and eventually European nations.8

In the United States, federal interest in hydrology and dam building began at almost the same time irrigation operations at Lake of Moeris ceased in Egypt. Commissioned by the Continental Congress during the American Revolutionary War in 1775, the first iteration of the

Army Corps of Engineers sought to combine military hierarchy and authority with an emerging vision of professional engineering, all influenced by French allies and advisors. According to Major Pierre Charles L’Enfant, “The duty of said corps shall be to attend to and have the direction of all fortified places [and] that of all military and civil building, the maintenance of the roads, bridges, and every kind of work at the public charge.” This was to be a modern service, headquartered and staffed at a new military academy at West Point, New York, created in 1802. In 1825, the Army Corps of Engineers built the first federally funded dam on the Ohio River, a “wing dam” designed to speed navigation on the river channel about 100 miles downstream from Louisville, Kentucky. A year later, Congress passed the Rivers and Harbors Act, which authorized the Army to assume more control over inland waterway engineering, especially regarding navigability and flood control, and facilitated the rise in power of the Corps. Some critics, especially Jacksonian populists, viewed these professionally trained engineers, and their Congress-appropriated power, with contempt—“a privileged order of the very worst class—a military aristocracy.” Nineteenth century frontiersmen, in rural areas like Tennessee and Kentucky, “often viewed the elite engineer as a military dandy, a bookish man with a vest, snow white pantaloons, a feathered hat, and dangling eyeglass.”

Ironically, decades later, Montana populist leaders and local residents often publicly loathed the intervention of eastern elites and Washington aristocracy into environmental politics in the west, such as the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910, mimicking the language of Jacksonian critics. Romantic nature lovers and national park proponents had become the “dandies” worthy of contempt—non-local elites who were out-of-touch with progress in

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America. Meanwhile, many Montanans embraced the twentieth century version of these “bookish” engineers during the Glacier View Dam controversy. These engineers, who by this time had traded “snow white pantaloons” and “feathered hats” for starchy workpants, scuffed boots and hard hats, would be American heroes who helped win a world war and facilitated an industrial remaking of rural Montana. The reason for this transformation is simple. In the century between the first federal dam on the Ohio River and the proposal for the Glacier View Dam on the North Fork of the Flathead, the Army Corps of Engineers had proven its value to local, rural communities throughout the United States.

Before the 1920s, private interests developed most hydroelectric dams in the United States, although the Army Corps of Engineers often oversaw much of this construction. In 1881, a hydroelectric generating station opened at Niagara Falls in New York. There, an 85-foot cascade of water generated enough electricity to run machinery in local mills and power some streetlights. A year later, the first commercial hydroelectric power plant opened in Appleton, Wisconsin. Known as the Vulcan Street Plant, this private dam and power plant fueled nearby paper mills. The first hydroelectric plant in the American West, High Grove Station, opened in San Bernardino, California. These small, privately funded plants are the origins of hydropower in the United States. In the 1890s, in an effort to oversee ad hoc private development and pollution of navigable waterways, the federal government passed the first environmental protection law designed to protect America’s rivers. The Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899 gave the Corps new powers. It prohibited the construction of any obstruction, including hydroelectric dams, on navigable rivers in the United States, without the prior approval of the Army Corps of Engineers. Section thirteen of this law, sometimes known as the Refuse Act, also regulated the pollution of these rivers, forbidding the discharge of “any refuse matter of any kind” without a
permit issued by the Corps. In 1917, a revision of this act created the Waterways Commission, a powerful seven-member committee that oversaw the “development, improvement, regulations, and control” of “all watersheds in the United States,” including those in national parks and national monuments. By law, at least one member of this council would be from the Corps of Engineers, either an active duty member or a recent retiree, which helped maintain Corps jurisdiction over river development in the United States. Congress empowered this commission to coordinate, among many duties, the “regulation of flow, control of floods, [and] utilization of water power” on all rivers, again including waterways within the boundaries of national parks. By increasing Army Corps of Engineers control over navigable waters in the United States, including within the boundaries of national parks, Congress facilitated an increase interest in Corps managed hydroelectric dam projects, leading to the Glacier View proposal in the 1940s.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States federal government created a second, powerful bureaucracy dedicated to the engineering of river systems and human cultures in the American West. The Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902, named after its principle author Francis Newland, a Congressman from Nevada, established a national policy for irrigating or “reclaiming” arid lands in the American West and a Department of the Interior civil service eventually known as the Bureau of Reclamation. By turning desiccated deserts into arable land, the federal government hoped to spur further western expansion and economic development in the region, while providing an outlet for urbanites and workers weary of industrial city living. As historian Donald Pisani points out, the Reclamation Act was a marriage of reactionary,

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nineteenth century ideology focused on Jeffersonian-style individual land ownership with a modern, twentieth century belief in efficiency and the power of the federal government. Interestingly, one of the major institutional proponents of the bill was also one of the key champions of the creation of Glacier National Park—the Great Northern Railroad. The overarching philosophy of the Great Northern’s support for both Reclamation in 1902 and Glacier in 1910 was exactly the same—turning remote lands in Montana into viable economic properties, and thereby increasing the profits for the railroad that traversed the entire northern third of the state. James J. Hill, the “Empire Builder” who controlled both the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific railroads by the turn of the twentieth century, owned millions of acres of arid land in Montana. In 1902, Hill understood that five million acres of Great Plains grasslands, the “largest area for cheap irrigation in United States” straddled the Great Northern tracks in northern Montana. He argued that “these lands now bring no revenue and are occupied by cattle men as ranges. If there was a good supply of water for irrigation, they would be rapidly settled upon at from ten to twenty dollars and acre.”

The Reclamation Act, passed later that same year, promised to provide that necessary water. The Reclamation Act authorized the sale of arid lands in the American West, with the promise that these revenues would fund “irrigation works for the storage, diversion and development of waters,” specifically dams, reservoirs and canals nearby that would turn arid land into farmable property. Unsold arid lands, now “reclaimed” by irrigation waters, could then be sold for much higher prices, and these profits would fund new reclamation projects. This perpetual cycle would eventually subsidize dam projects on most major rivers in the American

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West. President Theodore Roosevelt signed and supported the bill. After its passage, Roosevelt contended that “the sound and steady development of the West depends upon the building up of homes therein…One hundred and sixty acres of fairly rich and well-watered soil, or a much smaller amount of irrigated land, may keep a family in plenty, whereas no one could get a living out of one hundred and sixty acres of dry pasture land capable of supporting at the outside only one head of cattle to every ten acres.” This almost Biblical ability to turn desert into paradise caused friction between the new United States Reclamation Service and western farmers.

According to Marc Reisner, the “engineers who staffed the Reclamation Service tended to view themselves as a godlike class performing hydrologic miracles for grateful simpletons who were content to sit in the desert and raise fruit.” Despite this apparent antagonism, the Reclamation Act hastened growth in Montana, in conjunction with the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909. The population of Montana nearly doubled between 1900 and 1920, increasing from 243,000 people to 549,000 in those two decades, as men and women rushed onto marginal lands to pursue their American dream.12

In 1920, the federal government codified its control over hydroelectric dam developments even further, with the passage of the Water Power Act. This law created the Federal Power Commission, a powerful triumvirate of bureaucrats tasked with guiding federal water development throughout the country. Originally, the Commission consisted of the Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Interior, appointments that further

entrenched the influence of the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, respectively. Ten years later, Congress changed the composition of the commission to five presidential appointees. In its original iteration, the Commission controlled the licensing and regulation of all hydroelectric dam projects on navigable rivers, and all waters controlled by the federal government. This ended ad hoc efforts by private companies and individual states to dam and develop American rivers and strengthened federal control over waterways, especially in the developing American West. Congress omitted federal “reservations” from the Commission’s purview, thereby protecting “national forests, tribal lands embraced within Indian reservations, [and] military reservations” from dam development without Congressional approval. Interestingly, the act specifically allowed the Commission to approve dams in national parks and national monuments. In theory, then, the Army Corps of Engineers had a very brief window in which they might develop hydroelectric dam sites in American national parks, permitted by the Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899 and licensed by the Federal Power Commission, without further Congressional approval. Congress closed this window quickly. In 1921, Congress amended the Water Power Act so that “hereafter no permit, license, lease, or authorization for dams, conduits, reservoirs, power houses, transmission lines, or other works for storage or carriage of water, or for the development, transmission, or utilization of power” could be issued for sites “within the limits as now constituted of any national park or national monument shall be granted or made without specific authority of Congress.”

simply made it more difficult to attain access to these guarded spots. And in the middle decades of the twentieth century, due to pressure generated by catastrophic economic depression, political desires and global conflicts, both of these powerful bureaucracies increasingly sought permission to build dams in revered places like Glacier National Park.

Five millennia of hydrology and human engineering crested in the middle of the twentieth century, during one of the worst economic downturns in the world has ever seen. The Great Depression, when reduced to raw statistics, is a startling, dehumanized period in American history. During the nadir of the Great Depression, the United States saw unemployment peak at 25 percent, saw the collapse of 9,000 banks and the erasure of billions of dollars of deposits, saw the dislocation of millions of Americans from their homes and saw the deterioration of industry and manufacturing throughout the country. In 1932, with no end in sight, Americans elected New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt president of the United States, with the hope that the Democrat would finally end the years of despair, displacement and perpetual poverty. Roosevelt vowed to do so. When accepting his party’s nomination for president on July 1, 1932, Roosevelt promised change: “I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people.” This “new deal” would attempt to end the Great Depression, and in the effort, would remake wild rivers throughout the United States. Eight months later, as he was inaugurated president of the United States, Roosevelt continued to assuage the doubts of his nation. Roosevelt famously avowed: “This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear
itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert
retreat into advance.”

His words echoed the calming economic rhetoric of John Maynard Keynes regarding the
Great Depression. The “Great Slump,” according to Keynes, “is a nightmare, which will pass
away with the morning. For the resources of nature and men's devices are just as fertile and
productive as they were… We are as capable as before of affording for everyone a high standard
of life … and will soon learn to afford a standard higher still.” Colossal dams on volatile
American rivers proved to be one example of the marriage of “the resources of nature and men’s
devices” mentioned by Keynes and idealized by Roosevelt in his promised fight against the
ravages of the Great Depression. The 1930s and 1940s would be the “go-go years” of massive
dam construction in the United States.

Franklin Roosevelt combatted the Great Depression with an “alphabet soup” of federal
bureaucracies designed to restructure the American economy and put unemployed men and
women to work, often in nature. Like many contemporaries, Roosevelt was uncomfortable with
direct aid and welfare, forms of relief that he once referred to as a “narcotic, a subtle destroyer of
the human spirit.” Instead of handouts during destitute times, Americans needed new
opportunities to work. The alphabet agencies of the New Deal employed millions and millions of
Americans. These agencies included the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works
Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was one

14 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “I Pledge You—I Pledge Myself to a New Deal for the American People,” July 2,
1932, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume One The Genesis of the New Deal, (New
Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume Two The Year of Crisis, (New York: Random House,
1938): 11.

15 John Maynard Keynes, “The Great Slump of 1930,” reprinted in John Maynard Keynes, Essays in Persuasion,
example of the union of nature and labor in Roosevelt’s administration. Between 1933 and 1941, “Roosevelt’s Tree Army” employed more than 3 million Americans men, putting them to work in national parks, national forests and other natural environments. Again, Roosevelt stressed the importance of labor over welfare when creating the CCC. The work of the CCC “is of definite practical value, not only through the prevention of great present financial loss but also a means of creating future national wealth,” Roosevelt told his nation, and “more important, however, than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work.” According to Roosevelt, “The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving private or public relief, would infinitely prefer to work.”

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was another alphabet bureaucracy putting Americans to work taming nature. A couple of months after the creation of the CCC, Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act into law, initiating the TVA. The multifaceted mission of TVA was to modernize the valley, and “make a different type of citizen,” through hydroelectric power generation, electrification of rural locales, reforestation, reclamation, agricultural growth and industrial development. Working with other federal agencies, especially the Army Corps of Engineers and the CCC, the TVA built sixteen dams on the Tennessee River watershed between 1933 and 1944 and assumed control of five others. These multipurpose dams put thousands of Depression Era Americans to work. For example, the Norris Dam, the first

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TVA dam built, required almost 3,000 laborers at peak construction times, working round-the-clock shifts, to build the dam between 1933 and 1936. This was a modest start, in hindsight. In 1942, the TVA employed 40,000 men and women simultaneously building a dozen dams and improving four others, as well as constructing electrical plants and nearby factories. According to its earliest historian, the TVA was “the largest job of engineering and construction ever carried out by any single organization in… [United States] history.”

No single TVA dam approached the size and scope of the largest dams being erected on western rivers during the Great Depression. When completed in 1935, the Boulder Dam—the titanic edifice that left President Franklin Delano Roosevelt awestruck in the Nevada desert—was the tallest dam in the world, towering 726’ high in a narrow canyon of the Colorado River. The Colorado is a relatively modest river—not even in the top twenty-five of largest rivers in the United States. Yet, the “American Nile,” according to Marc Reisner, was a “tempestuous” river, “a forty pound wolverine that can drive a bear off its dinner, it is unrivaled for sheer orneriness.” Sublime dams like Boulder helped “subdue” this wild, free-flowing river, and put thousands of unemployed Americans to work in the process. It required an enormous amount of labor to build the Boulder Dam—more than 21,000 people toiled on the structure. While authorized in 1928, the dam was a boon to thousands of anxious Americans looking for work during the Great Depression. These men and women, from all corners of the United States, braved dangerous work conditions, the very real possibility of death, frightful heat that sometimes reached 140

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degrees Fahrenheit, hastily constructed living quarters, debilitating diseases and round-the-clock supervision by government officials all in the hope of meaningful employment that paid $4.00 to $5.60 a day. As Roosevelt predicted, most Americans preferred hard labor to the social stigma of welfare. On the Boulder Dam construction crew, out-of-work hamburger cooks toiled next to failed financial managers, and struggling musicians labored alongside former bank presidents, all “working so they wouldn’t go on relief.” These employees were often proud of the historic significance of their work. One crane operator later recounted: “There’s a story I’ve always liked about a tourist in France who saw a man carving a stone. The tourist asked what he was doing, and the Frenchman didn’t answer, ‘I’m carving a stone.’ Instead he said, ‘I’m building a cathedral.’ It was like that with us. We weren’t just pouring concrete or operating a crane. We were building a dam.” Despite its staggering dimensions, and because of its enormous and motivated workforce, the Bureau of Reclamation built the Boulder Dam with remarkable alacrity. According to Reisner, the “greatest structure on earth, perhaps the most significant structure that has ever been built in the United States, had gone up in under three years.”

Dedicated in 1935, the Boulder Dam provided cheap hydroelectric power that assured the growth of Las Vegas, Nevada and water storage that helped tame the volatile Colorado River.

How were massive dams like Boulder built? Many tourists visiting the Boulder Dam, awed by the sublime achievement of American engineers, asked the same question. A 1938 guide to Boulder, written and illustrated by a Pulitzer Prize winning political cartoonist, offered readers a short course in the civil engineering required to build such a dam. The key, according

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to Reg Manning’s *Cartoon Guide of the Boulder Dam Country*, is to pick a canyon, “any canyon…will do. In fact, there are still several nice canyons along the Colorado River. You can take one of them—no one will miss it—maybe.” Next, you need to purchase everything on your shopping list—thousands of hard workers and a new boomtown to house them, 5-million barrels of cement and enough rock and gravel to turn that cement into 4.4-million cubic yards of concrete, 110-million pounds of steel plate and valves to make 840-miles of pipe and a rich uncle to pay for the nearly $110-million project. Then, you need to dry out your dam site, by digging several diversionary tunnels a total of fifty miles through the bedrock, upstream from the future dam. Now the hard work starts. Hundreds of workers rappel down the canyon walls armed with dynamite and drills, like high-wire dentists, to clean the decayed walls of the canyon down to the bedrock. Other workers excavate the former riverbed, mix and pour massive columns of concrete or work the icehouse piping cold water over the finished columns to speed the 150-year drying process. Insert intake towers upstream of the dam and connect them through the cooling concrete of the dam to the power station. When finished, an awed and grateful nation will have a new engineering marvel—727’ high, 660’ thick at the base, capable of providing enough water and electricity to allow sunbaked metropolises rise in the deserts of the American Southwest.19

The straightforward engineering of the Boulder Dam is a great example of America’s drive to conquer nature for the benefit of mankind. According to political scientist Daniel McCool, most Americans in the “go-go years” of dam building exhibited a “water hubris mentality” towards the country’s river systems. McCool defines this hubris as “the belief that society has a moral right…to conquer rivers—sort of the water version of manifest destiny. This

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belief is often couched in religious terms—that God gave us the power to divert water for our use, so we must do so.” The faith of such religion is that these God-like efforts to reengineer nature will improve American society for the good. In 1913, for example, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane, the bureaucrat who helped authorize the O’Shaughnessy Dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park, argued that “Every tree is a challenge to us, and every pool of water and every foot of soil. The mountains are enemies. We must pierce them and make them serve. The sinful rivers we must curb.” A 1944 profile of the Army Corps of Engineers praised the organization for making the wild and dangerous rivers of the United States “behave.” And Floyd Dominy, “the most colorful Commissioner in the illustrious history of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation,” once famously declared with Puritanical pomposity that “man serves God, but nature serves man.”

This quasi-religious fervor took hold in Montana. The construction of the Fort Peck Dam, an Army Corps of Engineers project on the Missouri River, gave a template for how a massive federal project could improve life in the Treasure State during the Great Depression. Between 1933 and 1940, the Corps built one of the largest dams in the world in Montana, reserving much of the upper reaches of the Missouri River. The confluence of the Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin Rivers, at Three Forks, Montana, forms the beginning of the Missouri River. The Missouri then flows south and east almost 2,500 miles to the Mississippi River, just north of St. Louis, Missouri. At 529,000 square miles, the Missouri River watershed is the largest in the

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United States and the river’s length is essentially the same as a transcontinental flight between Los Angeles, California and New York City. Such a massive river required an equally impressive dam. Federal engineers had never conceived of a hydroelectric dam project of this magnitude. At a place called Peck’s Point, twenty miles southeast of Glasgow, Montana, the Corps of Engineers built an earth-filled dam 250’-high and four miles across—five times larger than any other earth-filled dam in history.21

Fort Peck was an integral part of New Deal efforts to conquer and control American nature for the benefit of a desperate nation. President Franklin Roosevelt, speaking at Glacier National Park, argued that the United States had entered a new era during the Great Depression, “an era of building, the best kind of building—the building of great public projects for the benefit of the public and with the definite objective of building human happiness.” Like most western dams, Fort Peck promised multiple purposes. Roosevelt guaranteed Montanans that “before American men and women get through with the job, we are going to make every ounce and every gallon of water that flows from the heavens and the hills count before it makes its way down to the Gulf of Mexico.” Given the Corps’ core mandate, the dam improved navigation on the Missouri River, especially downstream between St. Louis and Sioux City, Iowa. The dam also offered the region cheap hydroelectric power. In 1943, one generator at the dam produced 35,000 kilowatts of electricity; by 1961, the Corps increased capacity up to 165,000 kilowatts. Finally, the Fort Peck Dam provided some measure of flood control on the temperamental Missouri River. These three purposes more than paid for the dam. The Fort Peck Dam cost $160 million to build and maintain. By one estimate, the Fort Peck resulted in $70 million in

navigation benefits, $130 million in power generation and $200 million in flood control in its first four decades of existence.  

Yet, the initial benefit of the Fort Peck Dam was not navigation, electricity, nor flood control—it was jobs. One of the more popular of Roosevelt’s “alphabet soup” programs during the Great Depression was the Public Works Administration, designed to stimulate the economy through billions of dollars of federally funded projects. The PWA had “the momentous responsibility of doctoring a sick and sluggish economy, of quickening its lagging pulse, [and] of restoring it to its one-time vigor.” Between 1933 and 1939, the PWA helped build 70 percent of America’s new schools, 65 percent of its courthouses, city halls and wastewater treatment plants and 35 percent of new hospitals. The PWA also built dams, funding the construction of some of the largest reclamation projects in history, including the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River. At the urging of Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, who wanted industrial job opportunities for Montanans hard-hit by the Great Depression, President Roosevelt folded the Fort Peck project into the PWA as well.  

The inaugural issue of *Life* magazine dedicated its cover story to the workers at Fort Peck. *Life* reported: “When the Fort Peck project opened in 1933, the roads of Montana began to rattle with second-hand cars full of children, chairs, mattresses, and tired women…rattling toward some other hopeless hope.” Anticipative workers flocked to the Fort Peck “frontier,” in search of work—there were 12,000 applications for the first 144 positions at the site. Laborers

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worked for fifty cents an hour, marginally enough to support their families given localized inflation on necessities like food and rent. All told, 50,000 people worked on the Fort Peck Dam, with a pinnacle of 10,560 at the peak of construction. This was twice as many workers needed to build the Boulder Dam, and more than 2,500 more working concurrently on the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington. Famed photographer Margaret Bourke-White captured candid portraits of many of these workers for *Life* magazine, and in doing so, gave the nation a pictorial shorthand for the intersection of Depression-era politics, social customs and racism, and the financial boon possible because of a major dam project in the American West. In one photograph, a young woman quaffs a ten-cent beer at one of the many bars in a Fort Peck boomtown named New Deal, Montana. Over her left shoulder is a portrait of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, labeled “A Gallant Leader.” Over her right shoulder hangs a sign that states: “No Beer Sold to Indians.”


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In the mid-1930s, as construction continued apace on the Fort Peck Dam in Montana and in the midst of the Great Depression, the federal government looked for additional sites to build large dams on rivers in the American West. One of the most promising sites found was at the base of Glacier View Mountain, on the North Fork of the Flathead River. In 1921, E.W. Kramer, a hydroelectric engineer for the United States Forest Service, surveyed the hydroelectric power potential for the entire state of Montana and cited the North Fork of the Flathead River as a logical site for a dam. A decade later, Kramer named the Glacier View site specifically, in a report titled “Water Power in Montana.” In 1933, the Army Corps of Engineers referenced this research, in a massive compendium concerning the Columbia River and its tributaries. At Glacier View, the Corps of Engineers hypothesized building a 275’ high dam, creating a reservoir with a total storage capacity of 2 million acre-feet. To be feasible, the dam would need multiple purposes to justify the cost, including hydroelectric power generation, flood control and irrigation. Further study was needed, they concluded. A year later, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) examined the Glacier View site and provided some of this additional research, finding the dam site a plausible option for water storage in the upper levels of the Columbia River watershed. In 1938, pursuant to the Flood Control Acts of 1936 and 1937, Congress authorized the continued study of the Columbia River basin in search for new potential dam sites.25

Despite the assurances of the director of the USGS, who informed the National Park Service that he foresaw “no reason for alarm as to any reservoir construction that could affect...

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Glacier National Park in any way,” a 1939 report from the Northwest Pacific Planning Commission suggested that the North Fork of the Flathead River, near the foot of Glacier View Mountain, provided an excellent site for the construction of a hydroelectric dam and water-storage reservoir. The USGS later admitted that a dam at Glacier View offered “complete control of [the] North Fork of [the] Flathead River,” and that “all other dam sites downstream on the North Fork must be regarded as alternates, not to be considered until the possibilities of Glacier View have been explored carefully and found wanting.” They proposed a maximum 525’-high dam at Glacier View, with a reservoir capacity of 11 million acre-feet.26 In the 1930s, the conception of the Glacier View Dam was mostly hypothetical. The federal government—specifically the United States Forest Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the United States Geological Survey—recognized the vast potential of a reclamation project on the western boundary of Glacier National Park, but groundbreaking on such as massive undertaking was not eminent. The United States’ entrance into World War Two changed the tenor and frequency of these proposals.

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On December 7, 1941, in a surprise attack, Japanese air forces bombed the naval station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, forcing the United States into World War Two. The entrance of the United States into the war heightened the nation’s need for cheap electric power, often produced through the construction of federally funded hydroelectric dams. According to historian Gerald D. Nash, World War Two greatly increased the economic development of the American West. Nash argues that the “colonial economy of the region, heavily dependent on raw materials

production before 1941, now became increasingly diversified and self-sufficient. The erstwhile colony emerged from the war as an economic pace-setter of the nation.” The Defense Plant Corporation, a subsidiary of the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation, bankrolled the construction of numerous wartime industrial factories in the West, including rubber, aluminum, magnesium, plutonium processing plants and aircraft factories.27

Following the completion of the Grand Coulee Dam in 1942, the Pacific Northwest experienced an industrial transformation, to the delight of President Franklin Roosevelt. Aluminum smelting and production required an enormous amount of electricity and inexpensive power attracted numerous aluminum plants to the Columbia River watershed. In 1934, during the early construction of the dam, Roosevelt justified the project by predicting: “We are going to see, I believe, with our own eyes, electricity and power made so cheap that they will become a standard article of use” in the United States. Critics of the Grand Coulee Dam saw it as a government boondoggle, with little practical applications in the remote region. Congressman Francis Culkin, a Republican from Roosevelt’s home state of New York, chastised the project, contending: “Up in the Grand Coulee area there is no one to sell the power to except the jack rabbits and the rattlesnakes and they are not amenable, as you know, to the ordinary processes of an electric meter.” When finished, the Grand Coulee stood 550’-high and a mile long and contained enough concrete to build a transcontinental highway from Seattle to Miami, making it the largest concrete structure in history. Initially, the Grand Coulee produced about 324,000 kilowatts of electricity. The reactionary jackrabbits and rattlesnakes of the Pacific Northwest might not have needed this vast increase in hydroelectric power—but the war effort certainly did,

and dam critics were silenced. By 1943, 96 percent of Columbia River hydroelectric power went directly to building war munitions, leading the Saturday Evening Post to conclude that “our war effort right now has transformed the whole costly project of harnessing the latent power of the Columbia, mightiest power stream on the continent, from a magnificent day-dream of ‘the imagineers’...into one of the best investments Uncle Sam has ever made.” After the conclusion of the war, President Harry S. Truman agreed, remarking: “Without Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams it would have been almost impossible to win this war.”

One example of hydroelectric fueled growth in the region was the Boeing Aircraft Company. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt told his nation that “powerful enemies must be out-fought and out-produced...in the mines, in the shops, on the farms...It is not enough to turn out just a few more planes...than can be turned out by our enemies. We must out-produce them overwhelmingly, so that there can be no question of our ability to provide a crushing superiority of equipment in any theatre of the world war.” Roosevelt called for the production of 100,000 combat planes a year, at a time when the country built less than a thousand annually, as the United States ramped up their air force during the war, most of which required massive amounts aluminum and cheap electricity to build. In 1940, Boeing employed 8,427 people at their Seattle, Washington production plant and they had just started designing the new B-29 Superfortress, the plane that eventually dropped the first atomic bombs on Japan. Over

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the course of the war, the workforce at this Seattle factory grew to 31,750 and Boeing expanded or built nine additional facilities in Washington, employing an additional 13,250 workers. These workers built a lot of airplanes. In 1939, the combined output of all military aircraft manufacturing in the United States, including Boeing, was 921 planes. By 1944, the United States almost met Roosevelt’s utopian quota, producing an astounding 96,318 warplanes, and the total of all planes built during the war surpassed 300,000. At its height, Boeing’s Seattle plant manufactured one B-17 Flying Fortress every ninety minutes and built almost 7,000 of the enormous airships during the war. Boeing also built 2,766 B-29 bombers, which weighed sixty tons each.29

Hundreds of thousands of airplanes required billions of pounds of aluminum, and an almost unthinkable amount of electrical power. During World War Two, airplane manufacturers like Boeing begged the federal government to produce more aluminum. One spokesman remarked: “We’ll chew up the metal and turn it into planes if they’ll give us the aluminum.” The federal government partnered with the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) and delivered on these war time demands. All told, the United States devoted 3.5 billion pounds of aluminum for the construction of warplanes and ALCOA produced 93 percent of this material, much of it in the Pacific Northwest. In 1940, not a single pound of aluminum was produced in the United States west of the Mississippi River. ALCOA, which held a near-monopoly on aluminum

production in the country, centered its facilities near hydroelectric projects in the Appalachian Mountains. With the construction of federal dams on the Columbia River and the cheap electrical power those facilities provided, ALCOA built six aluminum smelters and numerous manufacturing plants in the Pacific Northwest during the war. By 1945, the Pacific Northwest produced 42 percent of the nation’s aluminum, utilizing three-quarters of all the power produced by dams on the Columbia River. The production of aluminum commanded a colossal amount of electrical power. The aluminum needed to build America’s World War Two air force, for example, required about 35 billion kilowatts of electricity to produce. This direct line of natural resource development—from the impounded waters of the Columbia River, to the extrusion and production of billions of pounds of aluminum, to the construction of hundreds of thousands of American war planes—played an essential role in winning World War Two for the United States and its allies. A propaganda poster for the Bonneville Power Administration promised that “The Entire Nation Is Looking Toward The Pacific Northwest For Power—Power To Forge The Weapons We Need For Victory.” After the war, many observers agreed. In 1946, *Fortune* magazine concluded that air superiority based on “aluminum and Alcoa…won the war” in Europe and the Pacific. Like other rivers throughout the United States, which helped produce aluminum and build warplanes, the Columbia in the Pacific Northwest was a victory river that helped achieve American aims in World War Two.30

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If surging air superiority won World War Two for the United States and its allies, then the development of atomic bombs ended the war abruptly. The invention of atomic weapons required a lot of things—brilliant scientists capable of splitting atoms and triggering nuclear fission reactions, stores of uranium and plutonium to fuel the weapons, disposable “wilderness” in which to test these weapons, hundreds of thousands of workers dedicated to the war effort, a fearsome enemy to justify the expensive development and executive leadership willing to fund and eventually unleash such devastation. But like the stockpiles of aluminum and the airplanes that followed, the development of atomic weaponry required the damming of wild rivers in remote areas of the United States. The federal government used hydroelectric power from dams on the Columbia River watershed, in part, to construct the atomic bomb that annihilated Nagasaki, Japan, facilitating an abrupt end to World War Two.

In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt committed the United States to the construction of the world’s first atomic weapons, in mission known as the Manhattan Project. By then, physicists had confirmed that unstable isotopes of the elements uranium and plutonium could cause nuclear fission, where a chain reaction of atoms would split, releasing an enormous amount of energy. For military purposes, this energy could manifest in the form of bomb, the most powerful explosive device ever conceived by human beings. The Manhattan Project was essentially a sprint between Nazi scientists on one side and Allied scientists and American industrialists on the other, with the future of the world at stake. All told, the Manhattan Project employed 500,000 workers across the United States and cost $2 billion to complete. According to historian Brian VanDeMark, “there was something quintessentially American about the Manhattan Project: a
gigantic experiment on the scale of an entire continent. No other country in a world at war had the necessary resources and industrial power to attempt such a thing."\textsuperscript{31}

Racing against Nazi scientists, the Manhattan project developed the bombs that ended World War Two in far-flung locales like Hanford, Washington, Los Alamos, New Mexico and Oak Ridge, Tennessee. At Hanford, the Army Corps of Engineers found an ideal location to process plutonium. What they needed was a massive, remote site roughly 560 square miles in size, mostly uninhabited, with a powerful river nearby to provide clean water and at least 100,000 kilowatts of electricity. In late-1942, the Army visited Hanford, and concluded that “the site was so good that there couldn’t be a better one in the country. It looked perfect in almost every respect.” By the end of the war, the Hanford Engineer Works dominated 670 square miles of desiccated lands in eastern Washington. This “hidden city,” which eventually housed 17,000 residents on the banks of the Columbia River, required the dispossession of 2,000 private landholders to build. At Hanford, the Army partnered with DuPont Chemicals, experienced in the production of explosives, to build and operate a $390 million facility designed to process plutonium-239 for nuclear weapons. The creation of this nuclear material required an enormous amount of energy, provided by dams on the Columbia River watershed and helped end World War Two. The ultimate purpose of the atomic bomb was simple—to crush an enemy’s ability to fight, almost instantaneously, and to end the war.\textsuperscript{32}

President Harry Truman, after the bombing of Hiroshima, told his nation: “We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have


above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war.” Two days later, on August 9, 1945, American airmen dropped the second atomic bomb in history over Nagasaki, Japan, a device armed with plutonium processed at Hanford, a “great bomb, which harnesses the power of the universe to destroy the enemy by concussion, blast, and fire.” Less than a week later, the Emperor of Japan offered his country’s unconditional surrender, thereby ending World War Two. The once-wild waters of the Columbia River watershed—impounded by numerous hydroelectric dams—powered the smelting of aluminum, the construction of military-grade aircraft and the processing of plutonium that dealt Japan its final blow, and ensured victory for the United States.33

This victory, of course, was not assured in the early years of the war. As massive mobilization and industrial output began in the Pacific Northwest in the early-1940s, predicated on cheap hydroelectric power generation, the Army Corps of Engineers looked for additional dam sites on the Columbia River watershed to fuel the war effort. The Army turned its attention to the Flathead River system in Montana. Initially, they focused on two possible sites capable of providing enough hydroelectric power generation and water storage needed for the war effort, in a relatively short amount of time—the Glacier View Dam site on the western boundary of Glacier National Park and the Kerr Dam on the Flathead Indian Reservation, just south of the outlet of Flathead Lake. The Army wanted to control another victory river.

The Kerr Dam was a privately owned structure, built by the Montana Power Company to meet the electrical needs of the influential Anaconda Mining Company in the 1930s, with little

say from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes who ostensibly controlled the reservation. The 205’-high dam impounded the Flathead River and raised the level of Flathead Lake for an additional 1.1 million-acre feet of water storage. When completed, the Kerr Dam was one of the largest dams in the United States, with 60,000 kilowatts of power generation potential. It was also an opportunity for the Army Corps of Engineers to increase hydroelectric power quickly during World War Two. Hanford Engineer Works required a great deal of hydroelectric power, provided mostly by the generators at Grand Coulee Dam. As importantly, Hanford needed unremitting power to process plutonium safely and efficiently. Assistant Secretary of War Robert Patterson expressed this concern to Julius Krug, then head of the War Productions Board and future Secretary of the Interior, contending: “Even a short interruption of power could have serious results and all practical means should be therefore taken to prevent such interruptions.”

The Corps of Engineers could accomplish this steady stream of electricity in a couple of ways. First, Hanford received top priority in a triage of power needs, and electricity initially destined for other industries would be rerouted to the nuclear site as necessary. Increased power from additional dams on the Columbia River system would help alleviate this concern. Second, augmented water storage in upriver reservoirs would also ensure steady power generation. As needed, water could be released from dams like the Kerr or the Glacier View, to spin generator turbines downstream at Grand Coulee or Bonneville. In Montana, the Army Corps of Engineers sought an additional 3-million-acre feet of water storage. To accomplish their goals at Flathead Lake, the Corps would need to raise the water level up to thirty-seven feet. Although this

proposal would have inundated the towns nearest the lake with water, including rapidly growing Kalispell, Montana. Corps of Engineers officials argued that the project was vital for the American war effort. Brigadier General Warren T. Hannum contended that the Corps’ proposals for increasing the capacity at Kerr Dam provided “the only solution to the problem of supplying power needed by the end of 1944 for war production in the Pacific Northwest.” Flathead residents opposed to this intrusion turned their attention to a dam site on the border of Glacier National Park, and to their federal representatives for support.\(^{35}\)

The Montanan who pushed hardest for the construction of the Glacier View Dam, and against the raising of the Kerr Dam, was Mike Mansfield. Mansfield, a Democratic member of the House of Representatives, saw the Glacier View project favorably through a variety of lenses. The dam promised some measure of flood control on the volatile Columbia River system while providing tranquil recreation opportunities in the little-visited wilderness of western Glacier National Park. Glacier View would also deliver jobs for thousands of his Montanan constituents still struggling with far-reaching impacts of the Great Depression whilst spurring industrial development in the rural expanses of his home state. A dam flooding federal lands in Glacier might also obviate the need for raising the Kerr Dam that threatened private land holdings, especially in and around the Flathead Lake area. Most importantly, the Glacier View Dam project promised electrical power needed to fuel American war efforts, initially during World War Two and later during the Korean War and the Cold War. Zales Ecton, a Republican, one-term Senator from Gallatin County and Senator James Murray, a Democrat from Butte, both supported Mansfield in his efforts to ensure passage of legislation authorizing the construction of

the Glacier View Dam, although Mansfield was clearly the most outspoken proponent of the dam among the three legislators. Mansfield wanted to mobilize the North Fork of the Flathead as a victory river, against both economic stagnation and foreign enemies alike.

Mike Mansfield was born on March 16, 1903 in New York City, the son of Irish immigrants Patrick and Josephine (O’Brien) Mansfield. Mansfield lived in New York for the first three years of his life, until his mother’s premature death in 1906. His father sent him to live in Montana, with an aunt and uncle who ran a small grocery store in Great Falls. Often unhappy with his life in Great Falls, and wanting to see the world, Mansfield ran away on two occasions, later remarking that “I hopped freight cars and got sent home twice, and once I spent the night in jail.” In 1918, Mansfield ran away again, this time into military service. A fourteen-year-old Mansfield lied about his age and joined the United States Navy and served in the Atlantic during the last months of World War One. After the Treaty of Versailles concluded that war, Mansfield served stints in both United States Army and the Marine Corps, before returning to Montana in 1922. Mansfield found work in Montana’s flourishing the copper mining operations, where he earned as much as $4.25 a day. In this dangerous, backbreaking position, Mansfield worked with thousands of other unskilled and often immigrant laborers keeping mining shafts repaired and free of rocky debris, sometimes half-a-mile below the surface of the Earth. Unwilling to commit a lifetime to such a dangerous and unfulfilling career, and encouraged by his future wife Maureen Hayes, Mansfield pursued higher education opportunities in both Butte and Missoula. Despite starting with only an eighth-grade education, he eventually earned a degree in history from the University of Montana in 1933. A year later, Mansfield completed a Master’s degree in
history and political science, with a thesis focusing on United States’ international relationship with Korea. He was thirty-one years old.36

These experiences during the first third of Mansfield’s life are consequential for understanding his role in the Glacier View Dam debates a decade later. Growing up in Montana and during his time in the military, Mansfield discovered the value of hard work and duty, despite sometimes difficult circumstances. In the mine shafts sunk beneath the streets and saloons of Butte, Mansfield learned the transformative effects, both positive and negative, of well-paying industrial jobs for Montanans. At university, Mansfield honed his rhetorical and analytical skills, and debated political strategy with his friends. These traits and lessons would serve him well throughout his more than five-decade long career in politics and public service, as well as during the Glacier View Dam controversy of the 1940s.

Montana residents, led by Congressman Mike Mansfield and Senator Burton K. Wheeler, vocal Kalispell interests and leaders from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes “were up in arms against a proposed plan that has been kept rather under cover,” and they successfully fought off the Army Corps of Engineers’ proposal for Kerr Dam. Their arguments against the plan centered around three ideas: maintaining the scenic beauty of the Flathead Valley, allowing thousands of locals to keep their homes and proposing alternative dam sites in the region, especially the Glacier View site on the western edge of Glacier National Park. In May 1943, concerned residents formed the Flathead Valley Citizen’s Committee, a grassroots organization dedicated to protecting Flathead Lake. Thomas Moore, a vocal member of this group, used the court of public opinion to argue against federal intrusions into Montana with incendiary rhetoric.

Moore called on Montanans to contest “the pollution, the defilement, the destruction of one of the jewels of God’s handiwork,” and not “submit to this indignity the same as a slave to the order of his master.” For Moore, “the only way to stop this is to make so violent a protest that it becomes a matter of national knowledge and interest… most of us would prefer being bombed out by the enemy than have our valley destroyed by Washington, Oregon and the Federal Bureaus.” When the Army Corps of Engineers countered with calls for reasoned understanding for a war-necessitated plan, angry Montanans responded with their own patriotic rhetoric. One resident, referencing the thousands of western Montanans serving in the United States military, wrote: “We feel that while these boys are away fighting, some of them giving their lives, to protect their homes and their country; that for any department of the government to deliberately destroy those homes would be almost inexcusable and shameful act. [They will] feel that they have been most thoroughly double crossed.” This grassroots campaign to protect the Flathead prevailed, and the Army Corps of Engineers dropped their proposal to raise the lake in August 1943. A headline in the Kalispell Daily Inter Lake, announcing the defeat of the Kerr Dam proposal, called the victory “A Good Battle Won.”

With war raging in both the Pacific and European theaters, the Army Corps of Engineers still needed to find alternative dam sites to increase power supply to vital war industries. Dr. Paul J. Raver, head of the Bonneville Power Administration, continued to appeal to the patriotism of Montanans and stressed that “the only way of winning the peace is by production and electricity is the greatest factor in production…This will provide the tools needed for the production of goods, and it is only by the production of goods that we can provide jobs for returning soldiers,

and produce wealth to pay off the war debt.” Likewise, Mansfield urged his constituents to embrace alternative hydroelectric power in the region, otherwise the threat to Flathead Lake might return. Accordingly, Flathead citizens supported alternative dam sites in the region, especially along the lightly populated forks of the upper Flathead River. Kalispell resident and Flathead Valley Citizen’s Committee leader Dan Korn concluded that dams such as Glacier View “would permit the conservation and use of these waters both at the source and for all downstream development, and at the same time and without damage to anyone, accomplish all that was sought to be accomplished by the proposed raising of Flathead Lake.”

The Army Corps of Engineers first formally announced its plans to construct a dam at Glacier View Mountain on the North Fork of the Flathead River in 1943, despite only cursory knowledge of the feasibility of the location. The following year, the Corps began pressuring the National Park Service and Glacier officials to allow testing to determine the viability of Glacier View as a dam site. The requests went up the chain of command, first to Glacier Superintendent Donald S. Libbey, then to A. E. Demaray, Associate Director of the National Park Service and finally to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. In August 1944, the Department of the Interior granted permission for the Army Corps of Engineers to test two sites on the North Fork, the Glacier View and Fool Hen sites, provided that the core drilling tests “would not result in any irreparable damage to the national park landscape or to other park resources, and that your contractor would be required to affect any needed repairs and a cleanup in a manner satisfactory to the National Park Service of this Department.” The Army Corps of Engineers arranged for a

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local engineering firm to take core samples at the Glacier View site, which the Soil Mechanics Laboratory at the University of Washington tested in 1944. Perhaps to the dismay of Glacier Park officials, the civil engineering tests conducted confirmed that viability of the Glacier View Mountain site as a potential location for a major reclamation project.\footnote{C.W. Buchholtz, *Man in Glacier*, (West Glacier, MT: Glacier Natural History Association, Inc., 1976) 71; Memorandum for the Director of the Department of the Interior from A. E. Demaray, Associate Director of the National Park Service, August 2, 1944, Box 228, Folder 1, GNPA; Letter from Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, to the Secretary of the Interior, August 2, 1944, Box 228, Folder 1, GNPA; Letter from Abe Fortas, Acting Secretary of the Interior to Henry L. Stimson, Box 228, Folder 1, GNPA; Letter from Robert G. Hennes to Pacific Testing Laboratories, July 13, 1944, Box 99, Folder 1505-22, SEA-38, USACE; Soil Mechanics Laboratory, University of Washington, “Soil Survey and Test Data, Sample No. GV2 Glacier View Project,” June, 1944, Box 99, Folder 1505-22, SEA-38, USACE. Fool Hen refers to another potential dam site on the North Fork of the Flathead River. Today, the Fool Hen rapids remain a popular locale for whitewater rafting enthusiasts. See Tim Palmer, *The Wild and Scenic Rivers of America*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993): 185.}

Following their positive tests of the Glacier View site, the Army Corps of Engineers released a series of reports announcing their intention to move forward with the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the western boundary of Glacier National Park. In May 1945, the Corps circulated a tentative report calling for the construction of the dam and a two million acre-feet reservoir in the North Fork valley. The following year, Colonel L. H. Hewitt, an engineer with the Seattle office of the Corps, discussed plans for a twelve-dam project in northwestern Montana and northern Idaho, which included Glacier View as its focal point. The long-range plan included reclamation projects on the Flathead, Clark Fork, Kootenai, Blackfoot and Pend Oreille Rivers in the region. Hewitt stressed that the Army Corps of Engineers would not move forward on any venture opposed by resident communities, leaving the impetus for endorsement of the reclamation projects on the local level. This policy put forth by Hewitt set the stage for a series of well-attended meetings and debates on the approval of the Glacier View Dam project.\footnote{Excerpt from Report titled “Columbia River Basin, Development of Water and Other Resources, Present and Potential of the Columbia River Basin, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, and Utah,” May 1945, Box 228, Folder 1, GNPA; “Montana Rivers Included in Army Engineers’ Plan for Columbia Development,” *Daily Inter Lake*, September 18, 1946; and “Notice of Public Hearing,” Colonel L.H. Hewitt, Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, April 27, 1948, Box 228, Folder 6, GNPA.}
At Glacier View, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed the construction of an earth
filled dam 416 feet tall, 2,100 feet long, with a water level of 3,725 feet. According to the Corps:
“The dam site is in a canyon with solid rock sides, partly covered by talus and alluvium, and
having a flat, gravelly bottom about 800 feet wide…This appears to be the best location for a
dam to develop the large potential storage on [the] Flathead River (North Fork).” The reservoir
created by this sizable structure would include 3.16 million acre-feet of usable water storage and
potentially 4.7 million acre feet in total storage, would be twenty-five miles long and four-to-five
miles wide and would flood 30,000 acres of the North Fork River valley, including 20,000 acres
of the western expanses of Glacier National Park. The engineers estimated construction costs at
$95 million, offset by annual benefits approaching $8.5 million, meaning the dam would pay for
itself in less than twelve years. In terms of power capacity, the main rationale for the
construction of the dam, the Army Corps of Engineers suggested the construction of three
hydroelectric units, each rated at 71,500 kilowatts each, making Glacier View about two-thirds
the size of the Grand Coulee Dam, in terms of electrical output. 41  This was a significant
proposal—a dam that promised to help win World War Two, to spur industrial development in
rural Montana, to control devastating floods on the Columbia River system and to facilitate
tourism in a little visited corner of one of America’s most famous national parks.

41 “Significant Facts Concerning Glacier View Dam Proposal,” undated memo, Box 228, Folder 6, GNPA; J.S.
Culbertson, “Clark Fork of the Columbia River, Reconnaissance Report, Kalispell Area,” undated, handwritten, Box
97, Folder “Flathead River,” USACE; and Henry L. Stimson, “Hungry Horse Dam, Flathead River, Mont.,” March
29, 1943, in United States Congress, House Documents, 78th Congress, 2nd Session, (January 10-December 19,
Historians are often loath to predict the future or imagine alternative outcomes to past events. It would be difficult, with any sort of certainty, to know how the construction of the Glacier View Dam would have altered the history of western Montana and the Pacific Northwest. Other federal projects, however, might offer a sense of the transformative abilities of hydroelectric dams. The Grand Coulee Dam and the Fort Peck Dam presented development-hungry Montanans idealized benchmarks for change. Both created thousands of jobs in the region, facilitated industrial and agricultural development and remade the environments of the Columbia and Missouri Rivers. But perhaps the best comparable for the potential of a dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River was a similarly sized dam built on the Little Tennessee River, over 2,000 miles away from the Glacier View site. The Fontana Dam, erected in the 1940s by the Tennessee Valley Authority, is a 480’-high dam that fueled defense industries during World War
Two, helped power the manufacture of the world’s first atomic weaponry, brought industrial jobs and middle-class lifestyles to thousands living in the mountains and hollers of the Appalachians and influenced the creation and management of America’s most popular national park.\(^{42}\)

The Fontana Dam was the first of its kind—a war-necessitated marriage of private industrial development and federal dam building. During the war, Roosevelt’s administration spurred home front production, be it airplane assembly, home construction, or rural electrification, by platting what one historian calls “a middle path between big corporations and big government.” In Tennessee, this meant that the federal government paid for a public good—the construction and management of hydroelectric dams—to stimulate the private production of war materials—in this case, aluminum. Beginning in 1917, the Aluminum Company of America, later known as ALCOA, started building private, hydroelectric dams in the narrow canyons of the Little Tennessee River watershed, in eastern Tennessee. This region of Appalachia is not a producer of bauxite, the ore required to smelt aluminum. It was cheaper for ALCOA to ship bauxite to smelters near electrical power plants than to transmit electricity to locations near in bauxite mines or production facilities. In fact, ALCOA imported most of their bauxite ore from the county of Surinam. In 1937, the company argued: “In these locations, away from industrial centers, where there has been little demand for power, we must build great dams, reservoirs, and powerhouses to make the essential low-cost electricity which produces the virgin metal.”\(^{43}\)


Four years later, ALCOA partnered with the federal government to electrify the Tennessee River Valley and codify their virtual monopoly on the aluminum industry. In 1941, only ten days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, ALCOA transferred control of their private dams and dam sites in the region to the Tennessee Valley Authority, a New Deal bureaucracy designed “to oversee the construction of dams to control flooding, improve navigation, and create cheap electric power in the Tennessee Valley basin.” In return, the TVA would “pay” ALCOA with electric power, facilitating a massive increase in aluminum development needed for the war effort. In January 1942, construction began on the Fontana Dam. At its peak, the TVA project employed 5,000 workers in “the virtual wilderness of the Great Smoky Mountains,” who built the 480’-high dam out of almost 3-million cubic yards concrete. Recognizing the importance of the Fontana Dam project to the overall war effort, TVA authorities erected a sign prompting laborers to “Work! Or Fight!” When completed, the Fontana Dam was the largest dam in the eastern United States. Ultimately, the dam cost the federal government $70 million to construct. And it was built in record time. The Fontana Dam produced its first electricity on January 20, 1945, a little over three years after construction started.44

World War Two compelled such alacrity. When first operational, the Fontana Dam had an electrical generating capacity of 135,000 kilowatts. Most of this electrical power went to the war effort, specifically to the ALCOA plant in nearby Alcoa, Tennessee, and to fuel the development of the world’s first atomic weapons. At their Tennessee plant, ALCOA built new facilities base on this promise of almost-free electricity, with a maximum capacity of 180 million pounds of alloy sheet aluminum. It was the largest aluminum sheet mill anywhere in the world.

ALCOA, overall, saw massive growth during World War Two. Employment and assets both doubled during the war, and production of aluminum increased from 150 million pounds annually in 1940 to 848 million pounds in 1944. All told, ALCOA smelted 5.5 billion pounds of aluminum during the war, and turned profits totaling almost $200 million. Such remarkable output required an extraordinary amount of energy—about 50 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity. This aluminum production helped the United States, and its allies, win World War Two, mostly through dominating air power. Roughly two-thirds of all aluminum produced in the United States during the war went to the production of military aircraft. For example, the Ford Motor Company built B-24 Liberator bombers in its Willow Run, Michigan plant during the war. Ford’s production line system cranked out a complete B-24s in less than an hour, during peak production, utilizing massive amounts of aluminum. The longest aircraft of any kind in the United States, weighing more than eighteen tons, the massive B-24 was 85 percent aluminum.

The Fontana Dam, and other TVA facilities, helped produce this electricity, and win the war. A propaganda poster for the TVA promised that “Out of water power comes air power” and that “These TVA dams are needed for victory,” and ultimately this patriotic rhetoric was proven true. Like the Columbia in the Pacific Northwest, and potentially like the Flathead in western Montana, the Little Tennessee was a victory river that helped the United States win World War Two.\(^{45}\)

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Besides the smelting of aluminum and the construction of military planes, the Fontana Dam and the Tennessee River watershed contributed to the development of the atomic age in modern warfare. Like at Hanford, Washington, a secretive city in the Appalachian Mountains was key to the Manhattan Project. The Tennessee city that helped build the bomb did not exist when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Following America’s entry into World War Two, however, the United States government began clearing residents out of the hills and hollers near Oak Ridge, Tennessee, eighteen miles outside of Knoxville, between the Cumberland and Great Smoky Mountains. Displaced residents—3,750 to be exact—were not told why they had just lost their homes, and some simply found eviction notices stapled to their front doors. One former resident recalled that “one day a man came to our house and said he was from the government. ‘We’re going to buy up your land,’ he said to me. ‘All of it?’ I asked. ‘Yes sir,’ he said, ‘we’re going to buy all the land in this section. Everyone has to go.’” Mysteriously, the federal government started building a city in the emptied region. Within a couple years of construction, Oak Ridge was the fifth largest city in Tennessee, home to 75,000 residents and employing a peak of 82,000 people on a top-secret project.46

Unbeknownst to most residents, who dutifully worked in Oak Ridge as part of a vague “war effort,” Oak Ridge was an epicenter of the Manhattan Project, designed to deliver the first atomic bombs in the world. Many residents figured they were part of project creating a new synthetic rubber compound, and many workers simply pushed buttons on flashy new machines.

of uncertain purpose. One worker later remarked: “I still don’t see how a gadget can take a place of the brain, but leave it to them long-hairs to think things out.” Instead, they participated in the Manhattan Project to build an atomic bomb. Secrecy, of course, was important. A prominent sign at Oak Ridge reminded workers: “What You See here, What You Do Here, What You Hear here, When You Leave Here, Let It Stay Here.” After atomic bombs fell on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, quickly ending the war in the Pacific, Oak Ridge residents finally learned that “they had helped foment one of the great revolutions in human society.” After the first bomb devastated Hiroshima, the Oak Ridge Journal’s headline read succinctly “Oak Ridge Attacks Japan.”

This great social revolution required an enormous amount of electricity. Tennessee Valley Authority dams, including Fontana, powered the atomic city of Oak Ridge and the effort to create “the bomb.” The federal government chose Oak Ridge for this important project for several reasons. Its remote location and inaccessibility to enemy attacks, its noncritical labor force and, most importantly, its access to Tennessee River water. Water served two important purposes necessary to separate U-235 isotopes, needed for atom bombs, from “sluggish” U-238 atoms. Tennessee’s water provided the massive amounts of hydroelectric power needed to process the uranium and it provided water for refrigerating nuclear production systems that released enormous amounts of heat. According to the Atomic Energy Commission, the “electromagnetic process [for separating uranium atoms] used an enormous amount of electric power and this was a compelling reason for its location in the Tennessee Valley.” Oak Ridge needed $400 million worth of silver wiring and a startling amount of electricity to accomplish

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47 “Mystery Town Cradled Bomb,” Life, (August 20, 1945): 94-95; Falstein, “A Visit to the Secret Town in Tennessee That Gave Birth to the Atomic Bomb”; Johnson and Jackson, City Behind a Fence, 168; and VanDeMark, Pandora’s Keepers, 70.

Ernest Lawrence, recipient of the 1939 Nobel Prize in Physics and a key leader of the Manhattan Project’s efforts in uranium isotope separation, was almost overwhelmed by the size and scope of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. He later remarked: “When you see the magnitude of that operation there [at Oak Ridge] it sobers you up and makes you realize that whether we want to or not, we’ve got to make things go…We must do it!” And they did. On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, Japan. The weapon, partially developed in secrecy in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and facilitated by the impounded waters of the Tennessee River, possessed the power of 20,000 tons of TNT. Three days later, a second bomb detonated over Nagasaki, Japan, expediting the end of World War Two and ushering in a new atomic age in world history.\footnote{Luis Alvarez, \textit{Ernest Orlando Lawrence, 1901-1958}, (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1970): 262, 275, Ernest Lawrence, quoted in Herbert Childs, \textit{An American Genius: The Life of Ernest Orlando Lawrence}, (New York: Dutton, 1968): 343-344; and Sidney Shalett, “New Age Ushered,” \textit{New York Times}, August 7, 1945.}

In the scope of American environmental history, the Fontana Dam and the Little Tennessee “Victory River” are most important for their roles in winning World War Two through the development of aluminum-based war planes and their part in the development of the atomic age. Like proposals for the North Fork of the Flathead River of western Montana, the impoundment of the Little Tennessee River also influenced the creation and management of one of the nation’s most popular national parks. Following the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, Director Stephen Mather looked to create new national parks east of the Mississippi.
River, near the major population centers in the United States. Mather first looked to the Indiana Dunes area on the southern shores of Lake Michigan, a short train ride from Chicago, Illinois, as the site for his first national park creation. The onset of World War One quelled any national park plans in the Chicagoland area for more than a century. In 1919, Lafayette (later renamed Acadia) National Park in Maine became the first permanent national park in the east, mostly due to private funding. A decade later, the NPS moved forward with plans to create three new parks in the east, Shenandoah in Virginia, Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and Great Smoky Mountains on the border of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina. Authorized in 1926, these nascent parks needed to be carved out of private and state lands. These were populated areas, and the creation of new national parks threatened the dispossession of entrenched local citizens and the reservation of potentially valuable natural resources.50

At Great Smoky Mountains, the desire to reserve a dam site near Fontana, North Carolina, on the Little Tennessee River, influenced the boundary decisions of the proposed park. The person in charge of recommending borders was Arno Cammerer, Assistant Director of the National Park Service. At first, Cammerer proposed a park totaling 704,000 acres of territory, which included 15,000 residents and their homes and several potential dam sites. For Cammerer, the Little Tennessee and Tuckasegee Rivers seemed like obvious and natural borders for the park. The Southern National Park Commission, which aided the NPS in the creation of Great Smoky Mountains, argued that the new park “should include no towns or industrial plants of magnitude, no valuable mineral holdings, no important water power sites, no railroads or other corporate interests with which difficulties of administration might arise. The land must be

practically uninhabited” wilderness. Evidently, Cammerer and the NPS agreed, because the final park boundaries omitted 46,000 acres of inhabited lands north of these rivers, including the Fontana Dam site.\(^5^1\)

In 1942, when the TVA broke ground on the Fontana Dam, the NPS worried that the massive federal project would scar the southern boundary of the park. Like at Glacier View, both sides couched their arguments around patriotic rhetoric. The dam, the TVA argued, was necessary to win the war. The sanctity of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NPS officials claimed, was an American ideal worth fighting for as well. At times, the NPS acquiesced to TVA desires in the region. At the beginning of the project, in an effort to build passable roads into the remote region, the TVA wanted to quarry gravel out of the park and build a six mile corridor through Great Smoky Mountains for phone and electrical transmission lines. Park Superintendent J. Ross Eakin considered these intrusions “entirely foreign to park policies,” and he considered the dam a “menace to the park,” but he complied with TVA demands. Although the construction of the Fontana Dam blemished sections of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, it also facilitated a sizeable expansion of the park’s southern boundary. On July 30, 1943, the TVA entered into an agreement with the Department of the Interior, the State of North Carolina and local officials to buy 44,000 acres of land upstream from the dam and reservoir, and then transfer this new purchase to the National Park Service.\(^5^2\)

Neither the TVA nor the NPS showed much concern for the residents displaced by this land transaction. According to the TVA, the mountaineers in this region lived on “submarginal” land in “southern rural slums,” “where social and cultural life is at a low ebb.” The displacement


of these marginalized people, essentially, was a public good, according to the federal
government. In the end, the TVA built the biggest dam in the eastern United States and helped
win World War Two. The National Park Service compromised some park policy integrity during
the building of Fontana Dam, but gained an additional 46,000 acres of parklands and a new
southern border on the Fontana Reservoir. And the 1,311 families displaced by the construction
of the dam, the reservoir and the expansion of the park? The TVA spent, on average, $43.82 on
each of these mountain families. Harkening back to the “greatest good” philosophy of Gifford
Pinchot, the TVA contended that “The idea that every person must be satisfied is a fallacy which
results in disaster. Obviously, programs designed for the good of the majority will affect
adversely individuals or minorities.”

This was the potential for the Glacier View Dam—a massive dam more than 400’-high
on the edge of a beloved national park, with the power to win wars, split atoms and the potential
to remake the industrial economy of its region. But first it needed to be built.

* * *

World War Two ended in August 1945, with the dropping of the world’s first two atomic
bombs over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, followed by the unconditional surrender of the
Empire of Japan. The end of the war did not halt the federal government’s desires to control the
volatile Columbia River watershed, nor their cravings for additional hydroelectric development
in the northwestern Montana. Dr. Paul Raver, head of the Bonneville Power Administration,
believed that additional dams on in the Pacific Northwest, including western Montana, would
assure a prosperous industrial future for the region predicated on a shiny, lightweight wonder.

Raver believed: “After the war, we’ll be using aluminum alloys for everything. Not just planes, but automobiles, freight cars, seagoing ships, houses—we’ll even build bridges of the stuff and save two-thirds the weight.” Hydroelectric dams were the key to this burnished future for the region. “Power is the key to unlocking the resources of this region,” Raver posited, “The river is like an oil well that is never pumped dry, a coal mine the is never mined out. It is a power man’s dream.” *Fortune* magazine agreed that the marriage between federally subsidized hydropower and the miracle metal would drive the postwar American economy. Immediately after the war, “local interests, trying to keep war-built industries [prosperous], are piling on the pressure for better power deals from the government—the only source of electricity cheap and abundant enough to make aluminum economically at present prices.” The automobile industry would replace warplanes as the dominant consumer of aluminum in this postwar industrial hub, potentially using 700 million pounds of the metal annually in new car construction.54 This industrial dream, based on hydroelectric power and aluminum, included the construction of the Glacier View Dam, according to Raver and others.

Colonel L. H. Hewitt, District Engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers, publicly announced the first of several public meetings to debate the merits of the Glacier View project, beginning in 1947. At one meeting, held May 25, 1948, at the Kalispell Country Club, the Army Corps of Engineers “emphasized the necessity for greater control and utilization of the water resource. Measures for soil conservation and reclamation are highly beneficial, but additional headwater storage regulation for flood control, navigation, and hydroelectric power production are greatly needed” in both Montana and the Pacific Northwest. Hewitt invited all interested

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54 Taylor, “The White Elephant Comes Into its Own,” 46; and “Aluminum Reborn,” 218, 220.
parties to give oral statements at the meeting, but requested that presenters submit all significant facts, statistics and evidence in writing.\textsuperscript{55}

Aware of the transformative effect the war had on the Pacific Northwest, business-minded proponents of the Glacier View Dam stressed the importance of electric power for industrial development in Montana. For example, Donald C. Treloar, President of the Flathead Valley Citizen’s Committee, emphasized the financial benefits the dam would bring to northwestern Montana in his testimony. Concerned with only the economic calculus of the project, Treloar contended that “seldom does a dam site offer the tremendous benefits and low damages to established economy that are offered at the Glacier View dam site.” He argued that the “low damages” included the loss of only 1,760 acres of private land and the flooding of an area of Glacier National Park that tourists rarely visited. In fact, Treloar believed that a picturesque reservoir on the western side of the park would draw many more visitors to the area and enhance the already breathtaking beauty of Glacier, thereby increasing the number of tourist dollars spent in the state. In combination with the Hungry Horse Dam, which the Bureau of Reclamation began preliminary construction on in 1947 and completed in 1953 on the South Fork of the Flathead River, the Glacier View Dam would produce “over half a million kilowatts of power,” an electrical output needed to ensure industrial investment in northwestern Montana.\textsuperscript{56}

Congressional leaders and Flathead residents envisioned the creation of an industrial center in western Montana, powered by massive dams on the upper forks of the Flathead River,

\textsuperscript{55} “Notice of Public Hearing,” Colonel L.H. Hewitt, Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, April 27, 1948, Box 228, Folder 6, GNPA.
to boost and eventually replace the extractive economy of the state. In the 1940s, agriculture and mining dominated the Montana economy, and many observers referred to Montana as a “colonial” system. In 1947, journalist John Gunter published *Inside USA*, which recounted his visits and exploits throughout the lower forty-eight states of the country. Gunther observed the power of the Anaconda Mining Company and contended that “Montana is the nearest thing to a ‘colony’ of any American state.” A decade later, Montana historian K. Ross Toole made similar claims about his home state. Montana was a “plundered economy” in Toole’s estimation and “the Montana pattern [of development] has been brief, explosive, frenetic, and often tragic. The economic picture has been one of exploitation, overexpansion, boom and bust.” Many Montanans hoped to change this perception in the mid-twentieth century and the development of hydroelectric power was the key to an industrial transformation. According to Mansfield, western Montana contained 10 percent of all hydroelectrical energy potential in the United States and this capacity was the key to replacing copper mining with manufacturing in the region. This transformation, in Mansfield’s estimation, would ensure the health, wealth and prosperity of Montana families. Montana boosters believed the same. After witnessing the manufacturing boom nationwide during World War Two, groups like the Industrial Development Division of the Montana Chamber of Commerce foresaw the relocation of war industries into Montana, including aircraft and heavy machinery assembly plants, synthetic fuel chemical plants, wool millineries, paper pulp mills and food processing factories. One of the things all these industries needed, and one of the things Montana had in abundance, was cheap electrical power potential. Like Mansfield, Senator James Murray linked industrial progress with the construction of federal dams like Glacier View and believed that “the people of Montana do not propose to lag behind
and let Montana be referred to as a backward state. We have vast resources which only need be
developed to bring population growth and real prosperity to this section of the nation.”

Treloar’s belief that the construction of the Glacier View Dam, and the subsequent
flooding of the North Fork Valley, would improve the quality of nature in Glacier National Park
has a long historical precedence. Since the first English colonists landed in North America,
Europeans and later Anglo-Americans focused on humanizing wilderness for their own benefit.
Puritans in Massachusetts Bay believed their “errand in the wilderness” of North America was to
carve a religious utopia out of the sinful nature of North America. Without Puritan intervention,
the wilderness would “lie waste without any improvement.” Thomas Jefferson, and many
Founding Fathers, applied the rationality of the Age of Enlightenment to American nature and
contended that creating property out of wilderness would ensure the future of American
democracy.  

This ingrained impulse to “improve” nature through human intervention continued into
the era of big dams. Controlling wild rivers with concrete dams not only created electricity,
drove development and prevented flooding, it also improved the quality of nature and attracted
tourists. When the City of San Francisco sought to build a dam and reservoir in the Hetch Hetchy
Valley of Yosemite National Park, beginning in 1906, they argued that a man-made lake in the
national park would actually make it more inviting to tourists. According to historian Robert

Bradley, June 26, 1951, Mike Mansfield Papers, Series 3, Box 36, Folder 4, Archives and Special Collections,
Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, hereafter referred to as MMP;
Letter from Mike Mansfield to James Murray, August 4, 1950, MMP, Series 3, Box 38, Folder 2; “State’s Natural
Resources Termed Inducive to Establishment of Industry; Drive Slated,” Great Falls Tribune, September 19, 1948;
“Murray Defends Bureaus against Iowan’s Attack,” Great Falls Tribune, October 8, 1947; and “James E. Murray
Announces Candidacy for Re-Election to U.S. Senate Post,” Great Falls Tribune, April 11, 1948.
Righter, what San Francisco “articulated most brilliantly was the artful suggestion that a reservoir in the Hetch Hetchy Valley, far from damaging the beauty of Yosemite Park, would actually enhance it. It would become a destination place for pleasure-bound tourist.” “In other words,” Righter continued, “not only was the unimproved Hetch Hetchy Valley expensive to visit, but it was not a pleasant place for humans and never would be unless transformed.” Likewise, the completion of Boulder Dam on the Colorado River, and the creation of 115-mile long reservoir behind it, offered the federal government an opportunity to improve tourism, and in doing so led to the creation of a new type of federal property. In October 1936, Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes approved the creation of Boulder Dam Recreation Area, the first national recreation area in American history. This new property was a “cooperative partnership” between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, designed to increase tourism in a little visited area of the arid Southwest, while giving federal dam building agencies an additional justification for the construction of projects throughout the United States. According to Elwood Mead, head of the Bureau of Reclamation and later namesake of the renamed Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Boulder Dam Recreation Area would be “a tourist mecca” that would draw visitors from “every part of the world.”

The belief in the positive aspects of dam-reservoir complexes is part of a broader boom in outdoor recreation during the first half of the twentieth century. According to historian Paul Sutter, the availability of production-line automobiles and an intensification in road building across the United States, brought “remote natural areas into the recreational orbits of modern Americans. This unprecedented access to wild nature resulted in some important landscape

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changes during the interwar period—changes that would preoccupy wilderness advocates.” These “landscape changes” included the damming of wild rivers and the construction of artificial lakes and reservoirs. Increasingly, many middle-class Americans wanted to spend their leisure time on the water. In 1929, President Herbert Hoover commissioned a study of broad social changes in the United States, including trends in American leisure activities. This latter purpose resulted in a report called Americans at Play, which highlighted a boom in water sports across the country and singled out man-made reservoirs as an important factor for the growth of this burgeoning industry. According to this report: “Further extension of water sports is being made possible by the construction of artificial lakes and reservoirs for hydro-electric power plants…these new water resources have great recreational value and efforts are being made to develop public parks along their shores.” In 1935, the National Park Service and the United States was experiencing an “outdoor recreation renaissance,” according to historian Neil Maher, amid the Great Depression. Rising unemployment left Americans with unwanted leisure time, and many sought solace, exercise and fun through inexpensive activities such as hiking, camping, fishing and hunting in nature. Outdoor recreation became so popular that it taxed the infrastructure limits of places like national parks, which often witnessed overcrowded parking lots and busy trails during this period. The NPS recognized this congestion as “the recreation problem” in America and called for intense infrastructure improvements so that “beneficial types of recreation appropriate to the areas should be developed and offered to visitors. Recreation, in its broader sense, is one of the major purposes of the National Park Service.”

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By and large, the Civilian Conservation Corps accomplished this building program in the national parks during the Great Depression. In Glacier, the CCC established thirteen work camps in nine years, some deep in the wilderness of Glacier, for thousands of young workers. While their main job was fire suppression, these young men also built or improved hiking trails, park campgrounds and picnic areas for tourists and constructed the entrance station on the west side of the park, closest to the North Fork. CCC improvements in national parks across the United States led to a tourist boom, as visitation to the improved parks increased 600 percent during the 1930s. According to Arno Cammerer, this was “due to the increasing facilities for recreation afforded tourists by the completion of trails, camp grounds, roads and other projects by the enrollees of the Civilian Conservation Corps.” But not all recreation was “appropriate” in national parks. While the NPS acknowledged that big dams provided popular “recreational features” such as “boating, bathing, fishing, and other forms of recreation associated with a large lake,” they concluded that these “reclamation projects are usually unsuited for national parks or monuments.”

Outdoor recreation gave Glacier View Dam proponents cover to push for the construction of a dam that violated the boundaries of a national park. Not only would the dam provide needed hydroelectric development and facilitate industrial development in Montana—the true purpose of the dam—it would also be a boon to tourism in the region. The implication was simple and puritanical—the National Park Service, and park defenders everywhere, had nothing to complain about with the construction of Glacier View, since the proposed dam would only improve nature in little visited areas of Glacier National Park.

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While he did not offer statistics to support the conclusion that the North Fork region of Glacier National Park was little visited by tourists, Treloar’s assessment was correct. The remote North Fork Valley was, and remains to this day, the least visited area of Glacier. The main reason is access—there is no easy way in and out of the North Fork, especially within the boundaries of the national park. Today, the National Park Service describes the region on its “Plan Your Visit” website—“The North Fork is an area of reduced visitation in the northwest corner of Glacier National Park, reached only by private vehicle on unpaved roads. Those who travel the rough dirt roads are rewarded with a living laboratory of forest…and chances to see and hear rare park wildlife.” Oil interests first built the North Fork Road in 1901, wanting to explore the remote region of Montana for petroleum near Lower Kintla Lake. Within a few years, oil exploration proved fruitless, and in 1910 the rough thoroughfare became part of the nascent national park, making it the oldest road in Glacier. Between 1918 and 1940, Glacier Park superintendents repeatedly complained about the condition of the road, which they described as “in very bad shape. It is practically impossible for automobiles to get over it and it is difficult even for team travel.”

Without safe and easy access, most tourists ignored the remote North Fork Valley. Visitor statistics for the North Fork region, in the 1930s and 1940s, are sparse. During those decades, a little more than 3 million tourists travelled to Glacier National Park, numbers assuredly dampened by World War Two. One government survey of these mid-century tourists hyperbolized that “Glacier National Park beckons to the tourist who longs for a new adventure in

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an area that nature has magnificently fashioned in rugged character. Men and women fatigued by the pace of today’s living, may find in this park a new freedom of spirit, a renewed sanity and a finer philosophy of life.” Few found their freedom, sanity, or a new philosophy of life in the remote North Fork River Valley. Studies in the 1980s and 1990s, when conditions on the North Fork Road had greatly improved, showed that conservatively only 11% of Glacier tourists visited the North Fork Valley, and described the area as “the least visited site” in the national park. Most who did travel into the North Fork appreciated “the area because of its primitive and remote character.” Contemporary reports suggest a much smaller percentage of Glacier visitors braved the axle-busting corduroyed North Fork Road and enjoyed the wilderness of the remote valley.63

Senator Burton K. Wheeler, by his own account, spent thirty summers in the North Fork Valley. He wrote Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug to oppose the construction of the Glacier View Dam and argued that 15,000 people spent at least one day in Glacier’s North Fork Valley in 1947. For Burton this was a significant number—the most North Fork tourists in history and a worthy reason to block the proposed dam. From another perspective, this was only 4.6 percent of all Glacier visitors in 1947. If Wheeler’s percentage held true throughout these debates, then on average 7,100 people explored the North Fork of Glacier annually during the Glacier View Dam debates. The Army Corps of Engineers formally proposed the construction of the dam in 1943, which was the nadir of park visitation to Glacier in the near century between 1922 and 2019. It’s likely that in the year the Glacier View Dam was first proposed, less than 1,100 people explored

the North Fork of the Flathead River in Glacier National Park, an area 550 square miles in size.⁶⁴ For Treloar, Mansfield and many development-minded Montanans, the wilderness demands of a few thousand tourists did not outweigh the considerable economic benefits of the proposed Glacier View Dam for the region. In fact, they claimed, the construction of the dam and the subsequent reservoir would increase tourism in the North Fork Valley of the park.

In addition to recreational gains, Mansfield stressed the need for flood control on the Flathead River system in Montana, as part of a larger plan to end dangerous and costly flooding on the Columbia River watershed. Imagine a pipe bursting in the basement of a house. Without attention, water from this broken pipe will quickly fill the basement, potentially damaging valuable property. Now imagine the homeowner anticipated such an emergency, and stacked buckets near the faulty pipe. With enough buckets, of adequate size, the homeowner could contain the water flooding their basement until someone reached the shutoff valve, thereby mitigating damage to the home. That, essentially, is how dams prevent flooding on major river systems in the United States. In flooding conditions, water collects in dam reservoirs up to maximum fill line, usually measured in acre-feet of water. The proposed Glacier View Dam would have impounded more than 3 million acre-feet of water on the North Fork of the Flathead River. On the South Fork of the Flathead River, the Hungry Horse Dam has a maximum reservoir size of 3.5 million acre-feet and the Kerr Dam impounds 1.2 million acre-feet of water farther downstream. All this water from the Flathead system eventually flows into the Columbia River, which has fourteen dams. All told, the Columbia River watershed has dozens of dams, and the federal government wanted to build many more in the twentieth century. If you build enough

⁶⁴ Letter from Burton K. Wheeler to Julius Krug, May 5, 1948, Box 228, Folder 5, GNPA; and Erdmann, Geology of Dam Sites on the Upper Tributaries of the Columbia River in Idaho and Montana, 125. The North Fork of the Flathead, according to the USGS is approximately 1,650 square miles, a third of which (550 square miles) is in Glacier National Park.
dams, if you provide enough federal concrete buckets in the wilderness, you can end flooding on this volatile watershed.

Several historic floods in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lent weight to the arguments in favor of building the Glacier View Dam. In 1894, the Flathead River system experienced one of its worst floods in history. That year, Flathead Lake rose seven feet above its known flood stage, causing severe inundation in the area and almost $1 million in local damages. During this flood, Flathead Lake extended a mile north of Kalispell, Montana, and caused a flooded area fifty-one square miles in size. Essentially, Flathead Lake increased in size by almost 30 percent during the flood. The Army Corps of Engineers estimated that 3 million-acre feet of storage would be necessary to control a historic flood like the one in 1894, which was the proposed water storage capacity of the Glacier View Dam. In 1933, another significant flood occurred in western Montana. While not as severe as the historic flood four decades early, the 1933 flood inundated an area about thirty-four square miles in size and caused $273,000 in local damages. And in 1948, during debates over the construction of the Glacier View Dam, another historic flood hit the Columbia River system.65

As spring turned to summer in 1948, weather conditions on Columbia River system proved perfect for a major flood. Snowpack in the northern Rockies was unusually high, due to high precipitation numbers during the winter that accumulated on mountain tops and cold temperatures in the early spring that prevented an early thaw. By May 15, temperatures rose rapidly, and stayed well above normal levels for a month, leading to the rapid melting of snow throughout the river basin. According to Elmer R. Nelson, of the United States Weather Bureau,

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65 Stimson, “Hungry Horse Dam, Flathead River, Mont.,” 9-10, 12; and Erdmann, Geology of Dam Sites on the Upper Tributaries of the Columbia River in Idaho and Montana, 203.
who assessed the flood a year later, “the combination of all these factors and the particular order in which they occurred brought about one of the worst floods ever recorded in the Columbia River system.” The Flathead River system survived the flood with minor damage, and capacity at Flathead Lake, increased by the Kerr Dam, helped mitigate damage in western Montana. Downstream, on the lower reaches of the Columbia River, was a different story. By May 25, 1948, the Columbia was already eight feet above flood stage. Five days later, Army Corps of Engineers-built dikes failed at Vanport, Oregon, the largest housing project in the nation. Built on marshland along the Columbia River, outside of Portland, the planned community housed 40,000 people during the war, most of whom worked in the shipbuilding industry. Almost overnight, Vanport became the second largest city in Oregon, and home to one of the state’s largest African American communities. On May 30, the dikes separating the flooding Columbia River from Vanport failed. Within a day, the gouty waters of the Columbia destroyed the second largest city in Oregon and displaced 18,500 people from their homes. All told, at least fifty people died during the 1948 flood on the Columbia River system, and the region suffered more than $100 million in property damages.\(^66\)

Such tragic loss could have been lessened by the construction of federal dams throughout the Columbia River watershed, according to Glacier View Dam proponents. United States Geological Survey, for example, contended that the “storage capacity at Glacier View reservoir is so great that the head of any conceivable flood could be reduced within the reservoir.” Many dam proponents agreed and seized upon this line of reasoning. A month after the destruction at

Vanport, Colonel Thorton Weaver told a Department of Interior meeting on water issues that the Glacier View Dam, in conjunction with two other proposed structures, would have reduced Columbia River flood waters by a full four feet. Later that fall, Weaver was even more optimistic, and argued that the Army Corps of Engineers plan to control the Columbia River system, which required the construction of the Glacier View Dam, would have lowered the Columbia’s flood crest six feet. Donald Treloar argued that the “distressing and damaging floods of 1948” were preventable and “the time has come for the Northwest to protect and preserve human life and property ahead of other considerations, especially when that protection can be secured by such beneficial means as the building of the Glacier View Dam.”

Ironically, the 1948 flood prevented many proponents of the dam from testifying in public hearings. According to National Park Service leaders, the Army Corps of Engineers timed their 1948 Kalispell hearing on the project to coincide with spring runoff in western Montana. As Montanans traveled to the Kalispell Country Club to testify in favor of the dam, the swollen rivers of the Columbia system would provide one last visual reminder of the stakes of the debate. If true, this opportunistic scheduling backfired on the Corps of Engineers. The historic 1948 floods prevented many proponents from making it to Kalispell at all. The Corps later concluded: “Local attendance was not fully representative, as the hearing occurred at a time of severe flood in the Flathead Valley so that transportation was difficult and many of the people who would naturally be interested in the flood control aspects of the project were busy trying to save their homes and property.” The Corps reluctantly reported that the majority those who braved the

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elements on May 25, 1948 and passed over the engorged rivers and streams of the region on the way to Kalispell, opposed the construction of the dam.\textsuperscript{68}

Hydroelectric power and industrial development remained the strongest arguments for proponents of the Glacier View Dam. Representative Mike Mansfield stressed the economic benefits the building of Glacier View Dam would bring to his constituents in Montana. In a letter to Julius A. Krug, Secretary of the Interior, Mansfield stressed that “I want to see Montana developed for the benefit of its people, and, in my opinion, that development depends upon the use of our water for low-cost hydroelectric power, for irrigation and reclamation, and for flood control.” According to Mansfield, when compared with other reclamation proposals within the state of Montana, the Glacier View project offered the least economic upheaval and relocation of private citizens. Like Treloar, Mansfield contended that few tourists would ever see the reservoir created by the dam. He concluded by reiterating his affirmative support for the Glacier View Dam, writing: “This project, in my opinion, is a very laudable one, since a minimum of private property will be damaged…the Glacier View project is economically feasible and because it will benefit the people of Montana and because they approve its construction, I want to go on record as being wholeheartedly in favor of this proposal.” In his effort to spur industrial development in the state, Mansfield was supported by Montana Governor Sam C. Ford. Ford, a Republican who served as governor from 1941 to 1949, believed that the “lack of hydroelectric power is retarding the development of western states” like Montana. He concluded: “There will be little surplus of power for development of new industries until 1954. The demand has been much greater than anybody anticipated. In some western states there is little hope for new industries until more

power becomes available.” Local labor union leaders supported the dam as a catalyst for industrial development and high paying jobs in western Montana as well. In their 1949 testimony, union leaders argued that the “pleas that the habitat of certain wild animals will be destroyed is of small consequence, considering the human factors in the matter.” “Civilization must go forward,” they contended, and “the great watersheds of the Pacific northwest in the United States have already been idle too long in rendering the services they should to mankind.”

Illustration Ten Artist rendition of the proposed Glacier View Dam (1948). Image from Army Corps of Engineers, Columbia River and Tributaries, Northwestern United States.

All of these goals were the purview of the Army Corps of Engineers. Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall praised the transformative abilities of the Corps during a 1948 speech. Royall, a deciding figure in the Glacier View Dam controversy, was a graduate of the University

of North Carolina and Harvard Law School, a leader of artillery troops in the final years of World War One and a Brigadier General during World War Two. President Harry Truman appointed him the last Secretary of War in 1947, and, when that Cabinet position was reorganized, reappointed him Secretary of the Army. “For more than a century Army engineers have served in connection with such improvements,” Royall contended in 1948, and they have “helped bring prosperity to America—prosperity through more and better transportation facilities, through increased electric power, and through reclamation and irrigation of arid lands. And they have conserved and protected farms and homes and cities from the devastating effect of destructive floods.” The wise development of natural resources was the key to American development, and the nation must not “slip backward.” Royall believed that “America’s high destiny is not ready to go into reverse. So every American has a stake in utilizing every natural resource, and—thereby continuing and maintaining a strong and growing national economy.” Hydroelectric dams, like those the Corps built on the Columbia River watershed, helped the United States win World War Two and more Corps dams in places like Montana would help win future wars as well. “It is heartening in this day of uncertainty and concern to know,” Royall concluded, “that the Army Engineers by making these preparations for peace—by providing a better life in time of peace—are at the same time and by the same means preparing [the United States] to resist possible aggressors.” Like many involved in the effort to build the Glacier View Dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River in Montana, Royall believed that utilizing the

victory rivers of the United States would guarantee peace and prosperity throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

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As 1949 approached, proponents of the Glacier View Dam project, including the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bonneville Power Administration, Montana’s Congressional leaders led by Mike Mansfield and development-minded Montanans had to feel confident that a large, federally funded dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River would soon get built. They made a convincing argument. Large hydroelectric dams throughout the United States had proved victorious on numerous fronts in the 1930s and 1940s. During the lean years of the Great Depression, large federal projects like the Fort Peck Dam provided jobs for tens of thousands of desperate Americans, while impounding waters and improving navigation on the mighty Missouri River. Powerhouse dams like the Grand Coulee on the Columbia, and the Fontana on the Little Tennessee River, drove the smelting and extrusion of valuable aluminum, facilitated the construction of hundreds of thousands of military aircraft and powered the nuclear plants that helped build the first atomic bombs in history—all of which assured victory in World War Two. Dams also promised to assuage, if not end, the destructive nature of flooding on the volatile Columbia River system. In the past fifteen years, dam proponents argued, preventable floods had caused more than $100 million in damages in the region and cost dozens of lives. Victory over the destructive power of Mother Nature was achievable, through the building of dams like Glacier View. Finally, through the construction of this dam, the wilderness of western Glacier National Park could be improved for the benefit of tourism and tourist dollars in Montana, turning a rugged, isolated river valley into a vacationer’s dream. For these reasons, the
proponents of the Glacier View Dam wanted to turn the North Fork of the Flathead River into a new victory river for the United States.

Victory seemed assured for another important reason. Until the mid-twentieth century, federal dam builders had rarely been defeated in their quest to conquer and control rivers in the United States. Certainly, federal agencies—specifically the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Tennessee Valley Authority—did not build every dam they conceived. But they built almost every one they truly wanted. Federal dam builders controlled the Tennessee River, the Missouri River, the Columbia River, the Snake River and the Colorado River. There was little reason to doubt their impending domination of the Flathead. The federal government even allowed the construction of the O’Shaughnessy Dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park, setting a dangerous precedent that even national parks were not inviolable to the voracious demands of dam builders.

Yet, as the 1940s neared its end, a disparate group of wilderness activists, national park enthusiasts, powerful legislators, big game hunters and federal officials banded together to defeat the Glacier View Dam project, protecting one of the crown jewels of the national park system. In doing so, these men and women helped define a contemporary conception of wilderness, and usher in the modern environmental movement in the United States.
Chapter Four: “Holler Stop to the Dam Builders”

River Soldiers. Dangerous people in their own way, mucking peacefully around in water, stirring up idle love for minnows, mud, and eternity’s filaments when there’s hard cash to be made. Obeying 78 percent of Christ’s love-thy-neighbor order by loving the fluid 78 percent of everyone, whether they believe in Christ or not. Creekophiles. Stone skippers. Aquatic bug lovers. Idlers. Weirdos. There ought to be a law. There are some, actually. But it’s hard to outlaw River Soldiering completely without outlawing love and life itself.

—David James Duncan, My Story as Told by Water

By and large, residents and leaders from the mountain town of Whitefish, Montana opposed the construction of the Glacier View Dam. Located about twenty-five miles southwest of the dam site, the town of Whitefish was a twentieth century railroad creation. In 1891, the original route of the Great Northern Railway arrived in northwestern Montana, going through the towns of Columbia Falls and Kalispell before heading west through Idaho and Washington. This initial route traversed the Salish Mountains via Haskell Pass, a steep, winding route that caused almost daily operator consternation and delays. In 1904, the Great Northern rerouted their railroad to the north through Eureka, Montana, and they decided to locate their regional headquarters at a planned community on the southern shores of Whitefish Lake. The railroad bought land, platted streets and constructed the new town of Whitefish, which incorporated in 1905. A few years later, the creation of Glacier National Park divided the railroad town.

According to the local paper, the Whitefish Pilot, many embraced Glacier in the hopes that increased tourism would lead to regional economic development, unsurprising given the Great Northern’s support for the park for similar reasons, while others opposed the park for subsistence and recreational motivations. The Pilot reported: “The main opposition comes from those who like to hunt in that country, and who claim that it is the only good hunting grounds in the county, and the idea of having the country enclosed in a national park is strenuously opposed.” This opposition fit the town’s budding reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation. According to
town boosters, Whitefish was a “playground designed by Nature…a veritable sportsman’s paradise, abounding in fishing and big game hunting to suit the most exacting” outdoorsmen.¹

In the 1940s, much of Whitefish opposed the construction of the Glacier View Dam. The Whitefish Chamber of Commerce objected to the dam at multiple meetings on the project in both Kalispell and Spokane, Washington, and they “opposed the construction of any storage dams on the North Fork or Middle Fork of the Flathead river that would flood the lands and highways bordering Glacier National, destroy its scenic beauty, or impair the winter browse of our wild game.” They stressed that “our stand is taken in consideration that there would be an immediate and substantial economic benefit during the construction phase of Glacier View Dam since we are a city in close proximity to the proposed damsite.” The Whitefish Rod and Gun Club, who described themselves as “a sportsman’s organization interested in the conservation, restoration, and protection of our natural resources,” also contested the Glacier View Dam. In a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers, these outdoorsmen posited that the proposed dam would “almost completely eliminate the winter range of the larger wild animals of the west portion of Glacier National Park, including moose, elk, and deer…[and] we cannot overlook the importance of preserving what we in this section of Montana prize so highly—our forests, waters, and wildlife.” R.W. Petty, Associate Editor of the Whitefish Pilot, supported the arguments of local hunters when he wrote, “Someone has got to holler stop to the dam builders proposing Glacier View dam on the North Fork. Say stop because of the loss of the game feeding area of the park.” He urged a “far sighted” approach to the evaluation of the merits of the dam and concluded, “It seems our duty to protect our community and one of the country’s most beautiful and widely

traveled parks. Let us hope that the lust for the almighty dollar is not so strong that it overbalances our reasoning.”

Olaus Murie of Moose, Wyoming also contested the construction of the dam. Murie was born on March 1, 1889 to Norwegian immigrants and grew up exploring the “wilderness” of Red River bottomlands near Moorhead, Minnesota, cementing his fascination with the American nature. After earning a biology degree from Pacific University in 1912 and following a stint with the Army Air Force Balloon Service during World War One, Murie began a long career as wildlife biologist and wilderness activist throughout the American West. He studied Alaskan caribou for the federal government in the 1920s, and elk herds near Jackson Hole, Wyoming in the 1930s, eventually publishing *Elk of North America*. A manual for elk management, Murie commenced that book lamenting “with regret and envy…the disappearance of the great wilderness with its teeming wildlife and its opportunities for exploration and adventurous living.” Although he begins his book with a Romantic ode to lost primordial nature, he concludes with scientific precision concerning healthy elk populations. Although he does not use the word, Murie calls for ecosystem preservation to protect American elk herds. Murie supported the mid-century trend toward “natural wildlife management,” and concluded that “the safest course is to model elk management along natural lines, not only to preserve the elk as a living animal, but also, as far as is reasonably possible, to preserve its distinctive habits as well as habitat.”

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2 Letter from Brad Seely to United States District Engineer, May 5, 1947, Box 2, Folder 800.92, SEA-36, USACE; Letter from Brad Seely to War Department Corps of Engineers, January 28, 1949, Box 228, Folder 3, GNPA; Letter from the President of the Whitefish Rod and Gun Club to United States District Engineer, May 17, 1947, Box 2, Folder 800.92, SEA-36, USACE; and R. W. Petty, “Save Glacier Park,” *Whitefish Pilot*, January 25, 1949.

Concurrent with the Glacier View Dam debates in the 1940s, Murie shifted much of his professional focus to wilderness activism. He helped found The Wildlife Society and was President of that organization in 1944 and 1945. In 1945, he became Director of The Wilderness Society, and later served as President of that influential group between 1950 and 1957. In 1949, his alma mater honored Murie with a Doctor of Science degree, describing him as a “man of the world terrestrial, authority on its animal life, interpreter of nature’s art, student of her design, [and] of the wilderness in terms of the human spirit.” Howard Zahniser, Director of the Wilderness Society, and principal author of the 1964 Wilderness Act, christened Murie as “the one person who best personified wilderness in our culture.” During his nascent wilderness activism, Murie testified on behalf of The Wilderness Society against the construction of the Glacier View Dam. As part of his argument, Murie contended that the proposed dam “would destroy critical winter range the game herds that range in summer in Glacier National Park…Elk and deer and other big game naturally gravitate to bottom lands [like the North Fork Valley] for winter forage.”

The arguments used by the boosters and hunters of Whitefish, Montana, and those of Olaus Murie, in opposition to the construction of the Glacier View Dam, are almost identical in terms of rhetoric. All concern the protection of North Fork Valley bottomland wilderness—prime winter-feeding territory for Glacier Park ungulates like deer, elk and moose—from flooding caused by the construction of a massive federal dam. The ideology behind these similar positions, however, is very different. The Whitefish coalition followed classic Progressive era

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conservation ideals—the management of a valuable natural resource for the benefit of human consumers in both present and future tenses. In doing so, Whitefish sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts continued the nineteenth century tradition of linking the desires of big game hunters with organized conservation efforts. In fact, most historians now recognize that influential hunters and their associations were the first organized groups focused on the protection of the American environment. These efforts led to an elite approach to environmental issues, and a culture of “intense optimism” where the powerful lobbied the federal government for the creation of authoritative bureaucracies like the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service, agencies staffed by respected scientific experts focused on the “gospel of efficiency” for the benefit of humankind. Olaus Murie’s arguments, on the other hand, mark a transition towards a more modern conception of wilderness, one based on consumerism and health, ecology and wildlife biology and a hint of inherent rights for nature beyond utility for human beings. A disparate coalition of grassroots organizations, several led by Murie himself, delivered these wilderness arguments to both the federal government and the American public, and proved the value of bottom-up approach to environmentalism.5

In his book Nature’s New Deal, historian Neil Maher asks the questions: “how did Americans get from Progressive Era Conservation to post-World War II environmentalism…[and] what was the impact of this transformation from conservation to environmentalism on the American political system?” For Maher, the decade-long history of the

Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal jobs program during the Great Depression, provides an “important link” between these eras of environmental history.⁶

The opposition to the construction of the Glacier View Dam in the 1940s provides another such connection. A grassroots confederacy of national park lovers, big game hunters, scientists, wilderness activists and nature-focused legislators melded older concepts of aesthetic-based conservation with modern conceptions of ecology and health. In doing so, they protected the North Fork Valley and the western expanses of Glacier National Park from inundation, provided a proven blueprint for oppositional forces in the famous Echo Park controversy that followed in the 1950s and helped usher in a new era in wilderness protection in the United States. The defeat of the Glacier View Dam was one of the first instances that modern conceptions of wilderness shaped public policy and was an origin point for both the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

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The first thing Glacier National Park guardians needed to do was survive World War Two with the concept of national parks intact. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, on the morning of December 7, 1941, the United States entered the war, and threw the full weight of American industrial development into the effort. Never in human history had one country produced so much, and leaders weaponized American natural resources to fight fascism during the war. Roosevelt called upon his nation to out-produce its enemies and achieve “a crushing superiority of equipment in any theatre of the world war.”⁷ As discussed, the intersection of federal dam building agencies, the aluminum industry and airplane manufacturers proved

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decisive during the war. This triangle of development turned the volatile waterways of the United States, such as the Columbia and Tennessee River systems, into victory rivers necessary to win the war. This massive ramping up of production required equally substantial natural resources to work.

As the war progressed, industrialists and military leaders increasingly looked to the national parks as treasure troves of untouched resources that should be tapped in support of the war effort. Historian Alfred Runte argued that preservationists carved America’s first parks out of seemingly “worthless lands,” and that railroad tourism might offer an economic use for these far-flung places. Increasingly, twentieth century development encroached on these rhetorically “worthless lands,” finding value in the preserved forests and mountains. Famously, John Muir argued that “nothing dollarable is safe, however guarded.” He referred, of course, to the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park. Despite federal protections, San Francisco valued the remote national park valley as a water source for their rebuilding metropolis, and in winning their prize—the O’Shaughnessy Dam—proved Muir’s maxim right. The protections afforded national parks by Congress were ephemeral, and open to reassessment for economic development, or in times of need or strife. In this new reality, the National Park Service, after the onset of World War Two, had to craft an answer to a very difficult question: if the rebuilding of San Francisco following a devastating earthquake in the 1910s justified broaching national park protections, what would happen to the national parks when patriotic Americans sought the same kind of access to natural resources in the parks during the most devastating war in world history?

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The administrator tasked with answering this question was Newton Drury. Newton Drury was the fourth Director of the National Park Service, replacing Arno Cammerer in 1940, who suffered a heart attack the previous year. Harold Ickes offered Drury the same position in 1933 and was pleased that his first choice would replace Cammerer, whom Ickes viewed as a sycophantic and ineffective commissioner. Drury’s environmental reputation leaned towards wilderness preservationist, and he turned down the directorship in 1933 because of the expansionist nature of the park service under Stephen Mather. Historians often refer to Drury as “purist,” who believed national parks should preserve sublime, dramatic wilderness. Before leading the NPS, Drury spent twenty-one years running the Save-the-Redwoods-League, guiding the league in the acquisition of 50,000 acres of redwood forests and convincing the State of California to purchase and protect an additional 500,000 acres of endangered groves. Such efforts solidified Drury’s national reputation as a wilderness activist, and made him an ideal candidate to lead the National Park Service during Ickes’ efforts to reorganize his fiefdom as the Department of Conservation.

America’s entrance into World War Two, less than a year-and-a-half into Drury’s tenure as director, complicated the wilderness goals of Harold Ickes and the National Park Service. As the United States joined the war, the vast natural resources of the national parks seemed open to extraction to aid the war effort. Nine days after the Pearl Harbor attack, Harold Ickes promised Americans the “full mobilization of the Nation’s natural resources for war…upon a basis best

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suited to serve our military and naval forces without waste, and with a view to saving all that we can of such resources for future generations.” Hydroelectric development was a big part of this mobilization. At the beginning of the war, before the fall of France to Nazi invasion, Ickes called federal dams in the American West “our Maginot Line,” with the industrial potential to defeat fascism in Europe and defend America’s international interests. Yet, six weeks after Pearl Harbor, Ickes told national park leaders that they must “resist any unnecessary encroachments on parks in the name of so-called national defense.” Ickes bristled at the entitlement of the United States Army during the early years of the war, especially their annexation of national park properties for the war effort, complaining to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt: “It is utterly discouraging to have a body of men who don’t care about the sort of thing that this Department is charged with fostering and protecting, march in and take possession just as Hitler marched in and took possession of the small democracies of Europe.”

Both Ickes and Drury carefully chose their public comments on the national parks during the war. On the American home front, in the midst of World War Two, there was no greater insult than “unpatriotic”—someone able but unwilling to do their part to win the war. “Shirkers” and “slackers” abounded in American culture and proved an easy target for public ridicule in the American press. Justifiable or not, disparate groups of Americans found their hobbies, beliefs and practices criticized under the banner of unpatriotic activity. At various times during the war, Americans such as women golfers, home soap makers, underachieving students, superstitious

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soldiers, fishermen on strike, comic book publishers, sorority sisters, poor cooks and cosmetic hoarders all saw themselves labeled unpatriotic in prominent papers like the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. Even outdoor lovers faced scrutiny, although they should not have according to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Ira Gabrielson, chief of that agency, argued: “I see no reason why anyone should think he is being unpatriotic by seeking needed relaxation...a week or two in the outdoors can be a real tonic” during the war. The Department of the Interior, and specifically the National Park Service, did not want to face the same kind of accusations, spurious as they might be, as they worked tirelessly to fulfill Ickes’ “mobilization” mandate while attempting to protect the national parks from intrusion and development during the war.

Illustration Eleven Newton Drury (hand raised) is sworn in as Director of the National Park Service, as Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes (far right) looks on (1940). Image from National Park Service Historic Photo Collection.

Newton Drury led the National Park Service in this culture of publicly enforced patriotism. Drury’s position towards resource use in national parks during the war was one of resigned pragmatism. On a case-by-case basis, Drury held firm to his preservationist ideals whenever he could and compromised when absolutely required. He was willing to “sacrifice…park values where clearly necessary and with no alternative, as part of the cost of victory.” Yet, Drury made a “wartime pledge…to protect for this and future generations the outstanding examples of the American scene entrusted to us, and to administer each area so as to maintain integrity” of the national parks from “those who under the cloak of patriotism would reopen old issues as to the exploitation of lands which Congress and the American people have decreed should be held inviolate for the national good.” In the first year of the war, Drury issued 125 permits for military activities in the national park system, such as allowing the training of winter ski troops in the mountains of Mount Rainier National Park, the construction of an airport and rifle range at Boulder Dam National Recreation Area and the mining of salt and magnesium in Death Valley National Monument. He opposed, however, the cutting of Sitka spruce stands in the newly created Olympic National Park. Olympic Sitka spruce, 600-year old wood prized for low weight-to-strength ration, was still used to build airplanes at the beginning of the war, as the nation’s aluminum producers attempted to escalate production to meet wartime needs. Drury recognized the wartime need for “airplane spruce,” but would only allow logging within the boundaries of the new park after the exhaustion of all other sources. According to Drury, the NPS had a “duty to save the park from mutilation if it could, but at the same time it could not lay itself open to the charge of sabotaging the war effort.”

In Glacier National Park, Ickes, Drury and the National Park Service faced similar debates regarding the use of the park for various war efforts. In 1942, the Army briefly considered Glacier as a possible site for Japanese internment camps, and one NPS official admitted that the Japanese “alien matter is a very serious one at this time from the standpoint of the federal authorities, since it pertains directly to the war effort. The Service is not in a particularly strong position to interpose objections” during the war. The Army also looked to Glacier as a potential training site for the 10th Mountain Division, a specialized group of ski and winter soldiers destined to fight Nazi troops in the Italian Alps during the final years of the war.

With aluminum production ramping up in the Pacific Northwest, and airplane manufacturers rolling out thousands of shiny new war planes, the federal government looked to build more dams on the Flathead River system. As Brigadier General Warren T. Hannum put it, the development of Montana dam sites on the Flathead River system provided the Army “the only solution to the problem of supplying power needed by the end of 1944 for war production in the Pacific Northwest.” After failing to raise the Kerr Dam to meet this need, the Army Corps of Engineers turned their attention to previous plans to build the Glacier View Dam in the national park. Ickes and Drury attempted to parry these efforts, while maintaining the patriotic stance of development in the national park system. Dr. Paul J. Raver, head of the Bonneville Power Administration, appealed to the patriotism of Montanans and emphasized that “the only way of winning the peace is by production and electricity is the greatest factor in production…This will provide the tools needed for the production of goods, and it is only by the production of goods that we can provide jobs for returning soldiers, and produce wealth to pay off the war debt.”


In 1944, Ickes reluctantly agreed to allow the testing of dam sites in Glacier National Park, provided that the core drilling assays “would not result in any irreparable damage to the national park landscape or to other park resources, and that your contractor would be required to affect any needed repairs and a cleanup in a manner satisfactory to the National Park Service of this Department.” This allowance protected the NPS from any claims of hindering the war effort, while attempting to preserve the wilderness of the North Fork Valley. Drury, for his part, feared the intrusion of dam builders into Glacier National Park. In 1945, he wrote Ickes: “I have been gravely concerned for some time about the expanding dam construction programs of the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation as I feel that they constitute a serious threat to the preservation of the National Park System.” He had a right to be concerned. Following their positive tests of the Glacier View site, the Army Corps of Engineers released a series of reports announcing their intention to move forward with the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the western boundary of Glacier National Park. In May 1945, the Corps released a tentative report calling for the construction of the dam and a two million acre-feet reservoir in the North Fork Valley. The following year, Colonel L. H. Hewitt, an engineer with the Seattle office of the Corps, discussed plans for a twelve-dam project in northwestern Montana and northern Idaho, which included Glacier View as its focal point. The long-range plan included potential projects on the Flathead, Clark Fork, Kootenai, Blackfoot and Pend d’Oreille Rivers in the region. As soon as the war ended, Ickes attempted to end the Corps of Engineers threat to Glacier National Park, arguing that the “Corps of Engineers is just as regardful of scenery and recreation as a
swarm of locust is for vegetation.” World War Two made dam site testing in Glacier “justified,” according to Ickes, but “that situation no longer exists.”

The end of World War Two did not halt the Army Corps of Engineer’s interest in building the Glacier View Dam, but it did shift the context of the opposition debates. With the exigency of war gone, Drury and the National Park Service could focus on crafting arguments to protect the North Fork Valley based on different conceptions of wilderness. They did so without one of their staunchest allies. On February 13, 1946, Harold Ickes resigned his post as Secretary of the Interior after thirteen years of service, over a dispute with President Harry Truman. Truman, who became president following the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1945, nominated Edwin Pauley to be Under-Secretary of the Navy, over Ickes’ staunch objection. Ickes accused Pauley of improprieties regarding federal oil drilling policies off the coast of California and testified against the appointment in Senate confirmation hearings. After Truman hinted that Ickes should amend his testimony, Ickes, true to his reputation, resigned in an “acid farewell,” declaring “I don’t care to stay in an Administration where I am expected to commit perjury for the sake of the party.” Oscar Chapman succeeded Ickes as Acting Secretary of the Interior, and Truman later appointed Julius A. Krug, former Chief Power Engineer with the Tennessee Valley Authority, and chair of the War Productions Board, to fill the position permanently. With Ickes retired from federal service, and a new Secretary of the Interior known for his hydropower generation and “miraculous” industrial production during the war as his boss, Newton Drury organized the defense of Glacier National Park against the Army Corps of Engineers. He knew

that he needed allies in this burgeoning fight. Regarding the Glacier View Dam matter, Drury admitted: “I am apprehensive that this issue is going to involve ‘the battle of the century’ so far was we are concerned. We shall need all the help we can get.”

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To win the “battle of the century,” Drury organized a disparate coalition of environmental interests in opposition to the Glacier View Dam—including bureaucrats from the National Park Service, big game hunters, influential politicians, farmers, fishermen, national park enthusiasts, but especially wilderness preservationist groups throughout the United States. In May, 1947, Drury began this initial coalescence by sending recruiting material to more than forty national organizations, alerting them to the impending threat of the Glacier View Dam to the park and imploring their leadership to join the National Park Service in opposition of these plans in the North Fork Valley. The preliminary note published the mailing address for the Army Corps of Engineers and asked the membership rolls of these organizations to write letters voicing displeasure at the threat to Glacier. A few days later, the Sierra Club wrote the Army Corps of Engineers in opposition to the dam “that would flood an important portion of one of our wildest and most scenic national parks.” Dozens of other preservationist groups followed suit. Drury also provided detailed information on the proposed dam—a 400’-high structure that would inundate the North Fork Valley with 3-million acre-feet of water, and flood 21,500 acres of Glacier Park wilderness.


16 Oppedahl, “Conflicts between Resource Development and Preservation at Glacier National Park,” 93-94; Letter from Richard M. Leonard to Colonel L.H. Hewitt, May 18, 1948, BANC MSS 71/103 c, Box 72, Folder 26, Sierra
Many conservation groups agreed with Drury’s rhetoric of magnitude. For example, Margaret Cleveland, Chairman of the Conservation Committee of the Prairie Club, saw the battle over Glacier View Dam as a pivotal moment in the protection of America’s national parks. The Prairie Club was a Chicago-based group focused on environmental issues in the Midwest, with a distinct interest in the national parks. In late-1916, they aided Prairie member Stephen Mather in his unsuccessful efforts to create a Sand Dunes National Park on the southern shores of Lake Michigan. Her 1948 arguments about Glacier View echoed the famous containment policy prescribed by George Kennan only a year early, in his *Foreign Affairs* article entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” In this missive, a reworking of reports Kennan filed as an American diplomat living in the Soviet Union, he posited that America should commit to “a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.” Cleveland stressed in 1948 that “should the inviolability of the national park standards once become impinged upon…then a precedent will have been set for requests from numerous commercial interests such as lumbering, mining, grazing, and others who would hope to gain a foothold in parks and eventually whittle them away, piece by piece.”

The perceived weakness of the National Park Service irked some high-level conservationists. In the Department of the Interior, the NPS was distinctly secondary to the Bureau of Reclamation in terms of size, budget and clout and that disparity impacted perceptions of the Glacier View Dam debates. While the Army Corps of Engineers proposed the dam and

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existed in a separate Cabinet department, some believed the NPS would acquiesce to dam builders in Glacier National Park. The National Park Service did not just want help from conservationists in 1948 to defend Glacier National Park, they needed help, especially in the public arena. William Voigt Jr., the head of the influential Izaak Walton League, argued as much to a colleague, writing: “I am a little put out with the National Park Service. When something happens that would interfere with the normal course of events of the Service, they scream for our help.” If conservation groups were going to help defeat the Glacier View Dam, Voigt contended, “then we are going to have to raise a lot of hell!”

Drury appealed to both the primordial and ecological arguments for the protection of modern wilderness. “Construction of the Glacier View Dam,” Drury argued, “would seriously impair the primitive character of the North Fork section of the park by the creation of a fluctuating artificial body of water. This area contains forests of exceptional beauty; its wilderness character is one of the most highly prized features of the park.” The construction of this intrusive dam would also devastate a fragile ecosystem, to the detriment of healthy populations of park animals. Especially endangered were migrating ungulates in the western half of the park, who used the sheltered North Fork valley as a winter-feeding range. According to Drury’s estimated that 70% of the winter range for white-tailed deer, and perhaps as much as 90% of range for moose, would be eradicated with the construction of the dam, and other species like mule deer, elk and beavers would lose vital habitat as well. These initial contacts were the beginning of a multifaceted, grassroots effort to protect the sanctity of Glacier National Park. Within a year, prominent environmental organizations such as the Wilderness Society and Sierra

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18 Letter from William Voigt, Jr., to C.C. Moore, May 6, 1948, Olaus J. Murie Papers, Box 2, Folder 13, Western History and Genealogy, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.
Club staked prominent positions in opposition to Glacier View, and at least seventy national
groups resisted the dam. By mid-1948, the National Park Service claimed that it was “supported
in its stand by virtually every conservation organization in the country.”

In the mid-twentieth century, efforts to preserve American wilderness—the free-flowing
rivers and snowcapped mountains, the endangered species and fragile ecosystems, the canyon
wildflowers and stands of uncut timber—required an enormous amount of paper and gasoline.
To defeat the Glacier View Dam, Drury initiated a letter writing campaign to involve dozens of
national, regional and local environmental groups. In turn, these organizations published journal
articles and mimeographed newsletters to alert their members of the threat to Glacier National
Park and encouraged their rolls to write thousands of letters of their own—to the Corps of
Engineers, to Congressional leaders, to the Secretary of the Interior and sometimes to the
President of the United States. Often, these letters were read, copied and shared with additional
influencers in the federal government. Groups like the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club
coordinated their arguments through back-and-forth letters and telegrams. Local newspapers in
Montana covered the debates extensively. Eventually, the Glacier View Dam controversy
reached national newspapers and popular magazines, and these periodicals were delivered to
millions and millions of Americans, warning about the Corps of Engineers’ plans for national
park wilderness. The purpose of this untold amount of paper and effort was to exert influence
and alter political decisions. In 1949, the population of the United States was about 150 million
people. One thing the overwhelming majority of these Americans had in common was that
almost none of them had ever seen the backcountry wilderness the North Fork of the Flathead

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River in Glacier National Park. By encouraging as many Americans as possible to take up the cause of wilderness and to care about a place very few people visited, the coalition defending Glacier National Park wanted to demonstrate the efficacy of wilderness protection and to influence decision makers to oppose the Glacier View Dam.

This organized opposition to the construction of the Glacier View Dam employed numerous arguments. One common tactic was to support and publicize alternative dam sites on the upper-Columbia River watershed, proving that most of the conservationists and wilderness activists who opposed Glacier View were more pro-national park in their ideology, rather than anti-dam. Dr. A.A. Dodge, a leader in the Glacier Conservation Society, argued against the Glacier View “dirt dam” by proposing smaller alternatives on the South and Middle Forks of the Flathead River, outside of the national park.

The two most common alternatives to Glacier View were the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River, and the proposed Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork of the Columbia. By the pinnacle of the Glacier View debates, Congress had already approved the Bureau of Reclamation’s plans for Hungry Horse, about fifteen miles south of the western entrance to Glacier National Park. In 1944, Congress sanctioned the construction of the dam as “an emergency war project,” although the dam was later built between 1948 and 1953. At Hungry Horse, Reclamation erected one of the largest concrete dams in history. When completed, the dam measured 564-feet high, with a maximum reservoir thirty-four miles long, containing 3.5 million acre-feet of water. The dam-reservoir complex could produce 285,000

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kilowatts of electricity and irrigate up to 60,000 acres of farmland in western Montana, while providing flood control in the upper waters of the Columbia River system. Likewise, Glacier View opponents pushed the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior to approve the Paradise Dam as an alternative. At Paradise, in a narrow canyon of the Clark Fork River west of the Flathead Indian Reservation, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed a 250-foot high dam and a two-tiered reservoir system. In total, the Paradise Dam would impound more than 4-million acre-feet of water and would have flooded 66,130 acres of land, forcing the dislocation of about 2,500 residents.22

For many concerned with preserving the sanctity of Glacier National Park, either of the construction of Hungry Horse or the approval of the Paradise Dam would have made the Glacier View Dam redundant. The Hungry Horse Dam, according to National Park Service engineers, had both greater flood control capacities for the Flathead River system and higher hydroelectric generating capacities, and its construction just south of Glacier National Park negated the need for Glacier View. The Department of the Interior likewise pressured the Corps of Engineers to substitute Paradise Dam for Glacier View in their plans for western Montana, and Acting

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Secretary of the Army William H. Draper Jr. pledged to “give careful consideration to the possibility of alternative projects.”23

In addition to suggesting alternative dam sites in Montana, some Glacier View opponents fought the Pinchot-style conservationist arguments of the pro-dam lobby with utilitarian arguments of their own. Big game hunters and trout fishermen from Montana and around the country opposed the construction of the dam. Newton Drury argued that the “North Fork and its tributaries provide excellent trout fishing, in a wilderness setting of incomparable scenic grandeur…The North Fork is the only [trout] stream of any magnitude in the park.” Many fishing organizations came out against the dam, which would have flooded twenty-five miles of a blue-ribbon trout stream prized for its westslope cutthroat and Dolly Varden trout populations.24

The most famous of these groups was the Izaak Walton League, founded by fifty-four “gentlemen” anglers in 1922. Within five years of its formation, the league had 2,900 local chapters and 200,000 members nationwide. This organization, named after a famous 17th century English fly fisherman, philosopher and author, promised to “go forth and smite the living daylights out of the polluters and the dynamiters and all other miscreants demeaning and diminishing” the wild rivers of America. From their beginning, the Izaak Walton League pledged to end the destruction of wilderness and posited that Progressive Era environmental bureaucracies like the National Park Service, the United States Forest Service and the Biological

Survey ruined wild America. The Izaak Walton League resisted the infection they called “dammitis” that threatened Glacier National Park and generally opposed the “mastodonic plans of federal engineers” on American rivers. Kenneth A. Reid, described by a biographer as “a sportsman in the true sense of the word, a fly fisherman, and a hunter of wide experience…a fighting crusader who believed that the natural resources of the nation should be preserved for the wise use and enjoyment of posterity,” was the Executive Director of the Izaak Walton League between 1938 and 1949, during the Glacier View debates. In the 1940s, Reid fought against the myth of economic value for dams such as Glacier View, arguing that federal dams were “based on the erroneous assumption that a river as God made it is of no value unless harnessed to generate kilowatt-hours, to be diverted over the desert to create more farmland, canalized for boats, or impounded behind ‘flood control’ dams that permanently submerge some of the nation’s richest lands.” He contended that a dam on the North Fork was “an unwarranted invasion of Glacier National Park” by the Army Corps of Engineers, and that the hundreds of thousands of Izaak Walton League members were “Unalterably opposed to Glacier View Dam.” More than two decades before the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which created a federally protected system of free-flowing rivers in the United States, Reid proposed the creation of a new agency dedicated to preserving wild rivers in the country, like the Flathead River near Glacier National Park.25

Big game hunters from around the country also contested the construction of the Glacier View dam. As mentioned, the Whitefish Rod and Gun Club opposed the dam, and stressed “the importance of preserving what we in this section of Montana prize so highly—our forests, waters, and wildlife.” Especially bothersome to hunters was the conclusion that flooding the North Fork Valley would destroy prime winter feeding grounds for park game animals, especially the deer, elk and moose, which would force these animals to “migrate” out of the valley permanently, or “perish” due to the construction of the dam. Montana Game Commissioner A.A. O’Clare opposed the dam for the same reasons. According to Newton Drury, “it would be necessary for the [National Park] Service to undertake to the slaughter of most of these animals now in the park, so as to adapt their numbers to the limit of their food supply.” During World War Two, this kind of waste threatened the American war effort, by destroying valuable protein during periods of rationing and food shortages. Bob Cooney, head of Wildlife Restoration for Montana’s Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks during the war, later recounted: “Wildlife was considered a national asset. If there was an invasion on either coast that would have forced an inland retreat, the thought was there would at least be a supply of meat” available in Montana.  

In addition to protein, animals in the North Fork Valley offered sportsman rare opportunities for trophy hunting, and well-heeled hunters were willing to pay handsomely for the privilege. According to hunting expert Elmer Keith—“a combination of sportsman-guide-ballistician-writer” and authority “on big-game hunting on this continent”—the upper forks of

the Flathead River near Glacier National Park produced some of the largest specimens of elk in the entire country, and provided excellent hunting opportunities for grizzlies and mountain goats. Montanans and out-of-state hunters alike enjoyed these premier hunting conditions, along the Flathead River system and throughout the state, and big game license sales help prove the increasing revenue generated from the sport of hunting. Hunting permit sales more than doubled in the state from 39,328 in 1939 to 80,083 a decade later. 1949 saw record numbers of hunters in the headwaters of the Flathead River system, including along the North Fork. During the opening week, more than 1,600 hunters converged on the rivers surrounding western and southern Glacier National Park, a quarter of whom arrived in areas outside the county. Two years after that, Montana sold an additional 20,000 licenses in the 1951 hunting season. During this period, out-of-state licenses almost quadrupled, despite a cost increase of more than 300 percent per permit. While tourist hunters still only accounted for a little more than 1 percent of all big game hunting licenses sold in 1951, they generated nearly 40 percent of the revenue from these sales. Flathead County, which includes the hunting areas of the North Fork Valley, had the second highest number of big game permit sales in the entire state in 1951.27 This explosion in hunting

27 “Raymond R. Camp, “Wood, Field, and Stream,” New York Times, January 12, 1949; Elmer Keith, Elmer Keith’s Big Game Hunting, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1949): 29, 76, 87, 181-182, 271; Montana Fish and Game Commission, Biennial Report of the Fish and Game Commission 1939-1940, (Helena, MT: Montana State Fish and Game Department, 1940): 14; Montana Fish and Game Commission, Biennial Report of the Fish and Game Commission for May 1, 1948-April 30, 1950, (Helena, MT: Montana Fish and Game Department, 1950): 38; “Record Number of Hunters Hit Flathead for Special Season,” Great Falls Tribune, October 8, 1949; and Montana Fish and Game Commission, Biennial Report of the Fish and Game Commission for May 1, 1950-April 30, 1952, (Helena, MT: Montana Fish and Game Department, 1952): 45, 54. In 1951, out-of-state hunters bought 1,245 big game licenses in Montana, at $100/each, an increase from $30 in 1939. That same year, Montana sold 100,740 resident big game hunting licenses, at $2/each. The total revenue generated from out-of-state licenses was $124,500, which is 38% of the total revenue of $325,980 in 1951. The total economic impact of hunting during this period is difficult to assess. Modern numbers, however, demonstrate the significant impact of hunting on Montana’s economy. According the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the hunting industry contributed $324.3 million to Montana’s economy in 2016, and out-of-state hunters averaged spending $575/day while hunting in the state, including money spent on transportation, lodging, food, and beverages. See Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, “The Economics of Big Game Hunting in Montana,” https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=0fa1de4222074cde7dbf0710ecb2ee0, accessed February 8, 2020.
contributed to the region’s reputation as an outdoorsman’s paradise, and helped fuel a blossoming tourism industry in northwestern Montana. In doing so, it also strengthened the utilitarian argument against the Glacier View Dam by providing an economic counterpoint to the industrial development of wild lands in the northern Rockies of Montana.

Illustration Twelve Map of the proposed Glacier View Dam and reservoir. Image from Julius A. Krug Papers, University of Tennessee.
Likewise, numerous government officials and agencies opposed the destruction of valuable timber stands in the North Fork Valley, in Flathead National Forest primarily, due to the construction of the dam. The old growth forest of the North Fork Valley, especially west of the midline of the Flathead River, was a valuable and virtually untouched resource for the United States Forest Service. All told, the Glacier View District of the Flathead National Forest contained an estimated 1.14 billion board-feet of standing timber, potentially worth $500,000 at wholesale prices, most of which was threatened by the construction of the dam. Winton Weydemeyer, head of the Montana State Grange, testified against the dam, contending that the “best use” of this “healthy forest cover” in the North Fork valley was not directly financial, but rather as a regulator of water flow in the region. These dense forests had the natural ability to mitigate floods and control erosion in the region. The National Parks Association agreed and took this conservation argument a step further. They contended that healthy forests in the Glacier region helped diminish the 1948 flood on the Columbia, and citing the United States Forest Service, argued “that considerable water would have been held back until after the flood peaks passed, if millions of upland acres in the basin had not been previously deprived of their forest cover.”

Most made economic arguments regarding these timber lands. According to the Report of the President’s Water Resources Policy Commission, the construction of the dam would destroy 8,000 acres of old growth ponderosa pine trees on land still controlled by the State of Montana. Based on estimates from the Assistant State Forester of Montana, this North Fork stand of ponderosa pine would yield 35 million board-feet of timber, whose protection and eventual sale

would financially support Montana’s public-school fund. The district also contained valuable larch and Douglas fir trees, as well as significant stands of other species of pine. Additionally, the approval of the Glacier View Dam threatened key spruce stands in Montana, as the North Fork Valley contained 12 percent of all Engelmann spruce trees in the state. According to the Forest Service, this type of spruce was “one of the most important commercial woods in the United States,” and due to its high strength-to-weight ratio, was used along with Sitka spruce to produce airplanes during both World Wars. Its primary industrial uses, included home construction, crating material and pulp production for paper. Ultimately, without the construction of the dam, the Forest Service harvested an enormous amount of spruce timber from the North Fork Valley. In 1949, the Forest Service cut almost 2 million board-feet of wood in the contested valley, and sawed a total of 87.3 million board-feet in 1955 and 1956, as timber interests rushed to profit from wood threatened by bark beetle infestation. In turn, the sustainable harvesting practices deployed by the Forest Service in the North Fork Valley improved big game hunting conditions in the region by creating edge effect areas preferred by most ungulates. In 1948, when the construction of the Glacier View Dam looked probable, the Montana Office of the State Forester made plans to sell all state-owned “merchantable sawtimber” in the proposed reservoir as soon as the “Glacier View Dam receives favorable action.”29 The construction of the Glacier View Dam, of course, would have ended most of these utilitarian uses of the North Fork Valley in Montana.

The erection of the Glacier View Dam would have destroyed winter feeding grounds for Glacier Park game animals and threatened important stands of timber. In similar fashion, the construction of the dam would also require the displacement of several hundred people. Colonel L. H. Hewitt, an engineer with the Seattle office of the Army Corps of Engineers, claimed that the War Department would not move forward on any venture opposed by resident communities, leaving the impetus for endorsement of the dam projects on the local level. However, Montanans did not agree on which federal dam to support or oppose. One of the major arguments against alternatives to Glacier View—whether the raising of the Kerr Dam south of Flathead Lake or the building of the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork River—was the necessity of condemnation of private homes and lands. While the dislocations associated with Glacier View would not be as unsettling as the raising of the Kerr Dam, which threatened the existence of Kalispell, Montana and its almost 10,000 residents, or Paradise, which would flood six Montana towns and significant sections of the Flathead Indian Reservation, the erection of the Glacier dam would have submerged homesteaders in the North Fork Valley and residents of the town of Polebridge. At least forty landowners in the region wrote letters opposing the “tragic” consequences of the construction of the dam, often appealing to Jeffersonian conceptions of yeomanry and land ownership. M.J. Greenshields, a resident of Polebridge, testified on behalf of “north fork dwellers” in opposition of the dam. “If you drown us out,” Greenshields argued, “You will drown out a vanishing portion of America.”

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The most influential landowner in Glacier National Park also opposed the construction of the dam. Burton K. Wheeler, former Senator from Montana, and one-time Vice-Presidential candidate, acquired a cabin and land at the head of Lake McDonald, on the western side of the park, in 1915. For the next three decades, Wheeler spent summers with his family in the park, often conducted Senate business from his cabin, and he loved the remote North Fork Valley. In 1948, after his Senate career ended, Wheeler wrote the Secretary of the Interior to voice his opposition to the construction of the dam. In this letter, Wheeler mixed utilitarian conservation, aesthetic conservation and conceptions of wilderness to make his argument. As hunters in the region noted, the construction of the dam “would practically do away with all the big game on the western side of the divide.” The dam also threatened the aesthetic and recreational enjoyment of the region by Glacier Park tourists, including the 15,000 visitors to the North Fork Valley in the previous year. Congress protected this remote area of Glacier in 1910 for “the enjoyment of the people,” Wheeler wrote, and any hydroelectric project in the valley would ruin the superlative camping, fishing and sightseeing in the region. To facilitate this enjoyment, Wheeler contended that John Emmert, Superintendent of Glacier National Park, planned to improve access to the region “so that visitors may see the elk, deer, and moose in their natural conditions during the snow season.” Wheeler finished with an appeal to protect wilderness. The construction of the Glacier View Dam, he argued, would destroy part of Glacier National Park’s “wilderness character and be detrimental to its cultural and inspirational value. Construction of this dam would seriously impair the primitive character of this highly prized North Fork section
of the park.” The National Park Service and the Department of the Interior must use all options and arguments to protect these complementary values in Glacier, Wheeler concluded.\(^{31}\)

One powerful argument put forth by the National Park Service attacked the proficiency of the Army Corps of Engineers. Progressive Era utilitarian conservation relied on a faith in science, engineering and above all experts making wise and efficient use of America’s natural resources. According to historian Samuel Hays: “The crux of the gospel of efficiency lay in the rational and scientific method of making basic technological decisions through a single, central authority.” The Army Corps of Engineers were one such “central authority.” They controlled all navigable rivers in the United States, built large dams throughout the country and their judgment often went unchallenged in hydrological matters. In the Glacier View debates, dam proponents often accepted Corps of Engineer’s conclusions without question. For example, L.J. Carter represented the town of Plains, Montana at a hearing in Spokane, Washington concerning the Army’s plans for the Columbia watershed. Carter testified in favor of hydroelectric dams in Montana and expressed his faith for the Corps’ calculations. “It is not my idea to go into statistics and a lot of these other figures,” Carter attested, “because I have a great confidence in the Corps of Army Engineers. They are an old institution. They have all this data, so it is superfluous, really, to get into that.” For others, this obsequious faith in the soundness of the Corps became problematic when expressed by the elected officials who funded these river projects. Harold Ickes contended that due to the “subserviency” of the United States Congress, the federal government failed to check the “reckless and wastrel behavior of the Corps of

Engineers.” According to Ickes, “no more lawless or irresponsible federal group than the Corps of Army Engineers has ever attempted to operate in the United States.”

During the Glacier View Dam debates, Park Service experts challenged the technical conclusions of the powerful dam-building bureaucracy. One of the key arguments in favor of the dam, according to the Corps, Mike Mansfield and various local Montana organizations, was the need for flood control. Without question, the historic 1948 flood devastated the Columbia River watershed. All told, at least fifty people died during this flood, and the region endured $100 million in damages. The swollen Columbia River destroyed the city of Vanport, the second largest city in the State of Oregon, and displaced 18,500 residents in the process. In response, President Harry S. Truman wanted the federal government to seize complete control of the volatile Columbia River system. During a visit to Vanport, Truman pronounced: “I hope we can pass a program under which these disastrous floods will never happen again.” Many dam proponents argued that the construction of the Glacier View Dam would achieve the president’s goal and would have greatly mitigated, if not completely prevented, the damage and death on the lower Columbia. The United States Geological Survey, for example, argued that the “storage capacity at Glacier View reservoir is so great that the head of any conceivable flood could be reduced within the reservoir.” The Army Corps of Engineers made similar claims. Colonel Thorton Weaver, a month after the destruction of Vanport, argued that three Corps projects on the upper reaches of the Columbia watershed, including the Glacier View Dam, would have lessened the flood crest at Vanport by a full four feet. Weaver later amplified this estimation, and

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posed that the Corps could have diminished the flood waters on the Columbia by six feet with
greater control of the river’s headwaters.\textsuperscript{33}

The National Park Service challenged these numbers in its opposition to the Glacier View Dam. In August 1948, Allison van V. Dunn, the Chief of the Water Resources Branch of the National Park Service, refuted these high-water assertions. The sensational claims of the Army Corps of Engineers, according to Dunn, failed to pass rigorous scientific scrutiny, and the “proposed Glacier View Dam project is a relatively gigantic plan for remote contingencies on a minor tributary of the Columbia River. The justifiable benefits are not now evident.” Specifically, Dunn concluded that most of the water the North Fork of the Flathead contributed to the 1948 Columbia Flood reached the Portland and Vanport areas a full two weeks after the cresting flood wiped out the latter city. On June 1, 1948, runoff from the North Fork contributed only the top 3.8-inches of water, of an estimated 29.95-feet crest in the Portland area. The zenith of North Fork water reached this area on June 14, certainly contributing to the extended flooding of the Columbia and damage to the area, but well after the levee failures that doomed Vanport. Even the Corps of Engineers, Dunn intimated, could understand that the destruction of Vanport had little to do with floodwaters from the Glacier Park area. He contended that, “It is inconceivable that any levee, whether constructed primarily as a railroad fill or not, should be designed with such a low factor of safety that failure would result from an added pressure of 2.2 ounces or a 4-inch rise in the water level.” With regard to the necessity of the Glacier View Dam,

Dunn concluded: “There is also a serious question as to how a 416-foot dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River can be justified in lieu of 3.8 inches of additional height on portions of the levee at Portland and Vanport.” Drury seized upon these discrepancies to tarnish the proposed project. The Corps argued for the dam unfairly, he contended, and by focusing on the damaging 1948 flood as a selling point the Army played to the emotional responses of the president and the public. Ending flooding on the Columbia, especially deluges with the power to wipe out entire cities downriver, was certainly a worthy goal, but it was not an objective accomplishable by the construction of the Glacier View Dam. The Army Corps of Engineers employed a verbal sleight of hand in presenting their case. They promised complete flood control on the Columbia River watershed, an achievement no one really could argue against in the late-1940s, to gain approval for the true primary goal of the controversial project—hydroelectric power generation.34

In addition to various forms of utilitarian conservation, many opposed the construction of the Glacier View Dam to protect the aesthetics and inviolability of the national parks. National parks were for the enjoyment of all Americans. The sublime, Romantic scenery of places like Glacier, needed to be preserved in perpetuity. This was the focus of Stephen Mather and Horace Albright during the first decades of the National Park Service—aesthetic conservation. Horace Albright, who served as Director of the National Park Service from 1929 to 1933 and remained a national park booster until his death more than fifty years later, was a prominent opponent of the Glacier View Dam. Albright’s position of economic development in the parks while head of the

NPS was a continuation of Mather’s policies. According to Albright, for the benefit of American visitors, “Our ideals contemplate a national park system of primitive lands free from all present and future commercial utilization, but, like all ideals, they cannot be uniformly attained in this day and age.” The Glacier View Dam was an unambiguous challenge to these principles. Albright called the proposed dam the most “dangerous project” of its kind in the United States and “a precedent of monstrous size and fearful portent” for the future of America’s national parks. Once opened to hydroelectric dam construction, Glacier as a distinct place would cease to exist, as industrialists moved to dam all available wild rivers and alpine lakes in the park. Such development would destroy “some of the wildest country left unspoiled in the United States. The Glacier View Dam, if authorized and built, would in my opinion be the beginning of the end of the great Glacier Park wilderness.” This was the worst-case scenario for Albright—the construction of Glacier View would logically lead to dams in other national parks, including his beloved Yellowstone. As such, he unequivocally opposed the dam. “I protest as strongly as I can against the construction of the Glacier View dam,” Albright wrote, “This area is of the utmost importance to Glacier National park.”

In Montana, Glacier National Park Superintendent John Emmert led the fight to conserve the aesthetic beauty of Glacier. Emmert rose to prominence in the National Park Service under the leadership of Mather and Albright, and in the fashion of these mentors, he fought to protect the picturesque landscapes of Glacier to ensure the satisfaction of millions of visitors to the park. Emmert began his career in America’s national parks in 1915, serving as an electrician in

Yosemite National Park, coincidentally during the construction of the O’Shaughnessy Dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. In 1931, he earned the position of Assistant Superintendent of Yosemite before leaving to become Superintendent of Crater Lake National Park in 1933. He came to Glacier in 1944, replacing Donald Libbey as Superintendent, just as the Army Corps of Engineers moved forward with plans for the Glacier View Dam in earnest. In his 1947 statement formally opposing the Glacier View Dam, Emmert argued that “Congress set aside this superlative section of the Rocky Mountains for the use and enjoyment of the people. It is by Congressional mandate that this area along with our other great national parks must be preserved in its natural state.” Furthermore, Emmert opposed any measure that “would change its [Glacier’s] wilderness character and be detrimental to its cultural and inspirational values. Construction of the Glacier View Dam would, for example, seriously impair the primitive character of this highly prized North Fork section of the park.” For Emmert, the aesthetic “wilderness” and “primitive” character of the contested area was vital for the tourist experience in Glacier. His concern is anthropocentric—the best use of the wilderness of the North Fork Valley was to ensure human happiness and visitor satisfaction. The construction of the Glacier View Dam, Emmert later posited, was simply bad business for the National Park Service.36

Under his administration, Emmert oversaw vast increases in tourism at the park. He took over administration of Glacier during World War Two, when national park visitations plummeted. The year before Emmert arrived, Glacier welcomed 23,908 visitors, its lowest tally in more than two decades. By the end of the decade, with a thriving economy and baby boom ushering in the “golden age of family vacations,” Glacier received almost half-a-million visitors

in a single year. During the late 1940s, tourism was second only to agriculture as a driver of Montana’s economy, bringing in $70-million a year according to Emmert, and in one study, three-quarters of Montana tourists listed Glacier as their primary destination in the state. $3 million of that was spent by Glacier visitors in the communities near the western half of the park, closest to the proposed dam. Such gaudy numbers supported Emmert’s contention that Glacier was “the best recreational area in the country.”

According to Emmert, the proposed Glacier View Dam threatened this visitation boom. From a practical sense, Glacier needed as much space as possible to accommodate the yearly multiplying throngs of tourists. The National Park Service later compared the potential land loss caused by the construction of the dam during this visitation boom as the “killing of the goose that laid the golden eggs.” Beyond spatial pragmatism, Emmert insisted that “visitor business is big business but now you must have a superlative attraction to attract people, and we believe that Glacier park is that attraction. We believe it would detract materially to have such a reservoir as Glacier View in the north fork area. The main attraction of Glacier is its wilderness atmosphere.” Despite proponents’ claims that the dam-reservoir complex would enhance recreational opportunities and tourist enjoyment in the North Fork Valley, Emmert and the National Park Service believed that the Glacier View Dam would mar the aesthetic qualities of the region. Specifically, low reservoir water levels during arid Montana summers would cause an unsightly string of mud flats stretching twenty-five miles along the western border of Glacier. During driest conditions, water levels in the proposed reservoir might drop eighty feet, exacerbating

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unsightly conditions. “The proposed North Fork dam would put denuded flats along most of the park’s western border,” Emmert determined, “[and] be a blemish in the shadow of Glacier’s alpine peaks.” Americans had an inherent right to seek solace and pleasure amidst the picturesque beauty of national parks, according to Emmert, and the construction of the Glacier View Dam would be a permanent but preventable violation of these privileges.38

Like nineteenth century Romantics and a certain early-twentieth century borax salesman-turned-NPS Director, Emmert and other park officials used visual arts and national publications to sell tourists on the wilderness experience of the park. The NPS commissioned George Grant to photograph picturesque locales within the North Fork Valley. Grant—the first Chief National Park Service photographer—captured more than 30,000 pictures in his extraordinary career and covered at least 140,000 miles crisscrossing the country to visit parks. According to one biography, “Grant’s photographs exemplify the determination of the newly formed National Park Service to transform its holdings from an eclectic collection of elite retreats to a central component of modern American life.” That was the goal of Grant’s Glacier View photos. In combination with a set of aerial photographs already taken, the Park Service hoped that visual representations of the endangered landscapes in western Glacier would assist the opposition’s arguments. The Sierra Club requested and distributed copies of these photographs to its members in 1948. Additionally, Emmert pushed for and supported the publication of an article about the Glacier View Dam in the pages of National Parks Magazine, a piece designed to elicit support for the park’s position on the dam. Famed geographer and former president of the National Park

Association Wallace Atwood vacationed in Glacier with his family in summer 1948, and Emmert gave Atwood a personal tour of the Glacier View Dam site. In response, a motivated Atwood published an essay that detailed the scenic landscapes in the western areas of Glacier and concluded that if “we permit our national parks to be whittled away piecemeal …we will have lost forever these superlative areas that earlier generations saved. This generation will have broken its pledge to the past and betrayed its trust to the future.” Emmert took to the airwaves as well, presenting the National Park Service position against the construction of the Glacier View Dam on Radio KGVO in Missoula, Montana, on a continuing series of roundtable broadcasts on conservation issues in the region.39

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The most passionate opposition to the Glacier View Dam came from charismatic activists and rising organizations who argued for the principle of modern wilderness preservation in the rugged North Fork Valley. This pro-wilderness conception made many in the ideologically diverse coalition against Glacier View uncomfortable. Utilitarian and aesthetic conservationists were two sides of the same coin and conceived of nature from an anthropocentric point-of-view. In one way or another, these conservationists agreed with Gifford Pinchot’s mantra of “the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time.”40 They might disagree with the best


40 Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 268.
use of nature in Glacier National Park, but they all understood nature protection as a benefit for human beings. Utilitarian-minded conservationists, whether they were pro-dam lobbyists, Jeffersonian homesteaders, big game hunters or fly fishermen, desired the measured and continuous use of the nation’s resources as the greatest good. Aesthetic conservationists saw the defense of sublime landscapes, and outdoor recreation based on this protection, as the best use of monumental nature in the country. The nascent wilderness movement puzzled many conservationists because the greatest benefit of the protection of wild lands was sometimes focused on species other than human beings. Instead, modern wilderness activists often centered their arguments on the science of ecology, without regard to human use of a particular landscape.

Opposing ecological wilderness was an easy and common position of those who favored the construction of the Glacier View Dam. For example, Montana leaders and boosters, who foresaw the industrialization of the region following the construction of hydroelectric dams, believed that wilderness activists cared more about Montana’s wildlife than they did about Montanans. Glacier wilderness was of “small consequence” in comparison to the human needs of the region, and a justifiable sacrifice in order to protect the sanctity of private property and to foster economic prosperity mimicking the industrial growth of the Pacific Northwest in the 1940s.41

This ecological conception of wilderness particularly troubled Horace Albright, who spent most of his career privileging the “enjoyment” principle of the National Park Service paradox. National parks, according to Albright, only existed because they benefitted the American vacationing public, and any ideology that ignored human needs was a denunciation of

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the national park ideal. In 1945, for example, as the Glacier View debates began in earnest, Albright rejected ecologically based wilderness as a management principle for the parks. He argued that the “special group of naturalists who apparently have gained a position of leadership in [national park] policy making are mainly ecologists at heart if not by training.” These wilderness activists “are chiefly interested in the relationships of animals to their environment and the maintenance of what they regard as purely natural conditions, regardless of what interests the national park visitor.”

Modern wilderness activists presented their vision of idealized nature at a series of government-sponsored hearings and calls for testimony. Olaus Murie, wildlife biologist and Director of the Wilderness Society, testified against the Glacier View Dam at the first Army Corps of Engineers’ hearing on Columbia River development on May 25, 1948. The Wilderness Society was by the mid-1940s an organization with 500 members and only one fulltime employee. Under the leadership of Murie and newly hired Executive Secretary Howard Zahniser, the Wilderness Society doubled its employee base and quickly increased its membership 600 percent by 1948. Murie wanted as many dues payers as possible. He argued that “unless there are enough people who want wilderness we cannot have wilderness. One little select group cannot hold wilderness or the wilderness idea.” As they restructured their organization and modernized their tactics, Murie and Zahniser sought to increase their society’s influence on national environmental issues. A victory at Glacier View offered such a chance—a high profile opportunity to “safeguard our national parks and wilderness areas from unwise exploitation.” On the eve of the first Corps of Engineers’ hearing, Zahniser contacted Drury to confirm the support.

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of the Wilderness Society. “We offer you our hearty support,” Zahniser wrote, “and join with you in opposing a project that for power in this area would sacrifice a heritage that belongs to the entire nation and should be safeguarded.”43

Illustration Thirteen Howard Zahniser (left), Mardy Murie and Olaus Murie. Image from Wilderness.net.

In his presentation to Corps officials in Kalispell, Murie blended traditional anthropocentric conceptions of wilderness as a place to benefit humans with his training in ecology and wildlife biology. National park wilderness provided a respite from modern living—a restorative experience for the American lover of nature in an increasingly unhealthy world. In short, wilderness had “become a part of our standard of living.” Increased industrialization and

43 Olaus Murie, “TESTIMONY of Olaus J. Murie on behalf of THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY at the Hearing at Kalispell, Montana, May 25, 1948, to consider the advisability of the GLACIER VIEW project of the CORPS OF ARMY ENGINEERS,” Box 228, Folder 5, GNPA; “A Summons to Save the Wilderness,” 1; Harvey, Wilderness Forever, xi, 52-55, including Murie quote on the importance of increased membership; and Letter from Howard Zahniser to Newton Drury, May 24, 1948. The Wilderness Society Records, Series 3, Box 26, Folder 28, Western History and Genealogy, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado, hereafter referred to as WSR.
road building, the economic needs of a quickly increasing population and the overcrowding of national parks, all put compounding pressure on the “primeval” areas of the nation’s parks and threatened this improved American lifestyle. “The wild lands of our Nation are dwindling,” Murie testified, “And as we are losing these areas through slow attrition, by mechanized projects, the remaining wild areas are taking on increasing scarcity value. The [American] public now realizing this value…This change in sentiment is Nation-wide.” Wilderness was no longer a want of the privileged few—it was a “social need” of the country as a whole. The Glacier View area of the North Fork of the Flathead River was the pinnacle of American wilderness, according to Murie, the best “back country of our national parks, the scenic canyons, the natural streams, the bits of wild country just off the beaten path…that fill the growing needs of modern man, who more and more is seeking the opposite of highly mechanized cities…we can hardly afford to destroy it.” Ecologically, the Glacier View Dam would destroy important winter-feeding grounds for park ungulates. There was a human element to this, of course. Big game hunters, in the areas surrounding the national park, wanted to conserve these natural resources for their own benefit. City-weary tourists wanted to glimpse these charismatic animals as well during their visits to Glacier National Park. Murie went farther than these traditional conservation arguments, however, when analyzing the ecological consequences of the Glacier View Dam. Murie wanted to preserve the wilds of western Glacier for human beings, but he also wanted to protect this wilderness despite human beings. Murie saw the preservation of the Glacier View area as step toward undoing the vast damage caused by Manifest Destiny-minded Americans, and he wanted to “restore” the nonhuman wilderness “so wastefully destroyed” during the previous century. Overall, Murie was pleased with his testimony in Kalispell but feared the construction of the
Glacier View Dam was still a likely proposition. He wrote Howard Zahniser the next day and admitted that “the Army engineers are a wise outfit and power hungry groups are strong.”

H. Frank Evans represented the Wilderness Society at the second Army Corps of Engineers’ hearing, on January 31, 1949 in Spokane, Washington. Even more than Olaus Murie, Evans was distinctively qualified to assess the wilderness qualities and ecology of the remote North Fork of the Flathead River. A former Glacier National Park ranger, Evans spent school years as a biology professor at Northern Idaho College in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, teaching classes on social ecology and conservation, and he ran an ecotourism ranch in the North Fork Valley during the summers. In advertising guided trips in the western expanses of Glacier National Park, Evans described the North Fork area as an enormous wilderness “untrammeled by civilization…the most superlative reservoir of wild beauty to be found in the United States—perhaps even the world.” Evans sold these mid-century vacations with Muiresque rhetoric: “To live here for a few days in the sanctity of primeval splendor and be on speaking terms with the mountains, the waterfalls, and the very wilderness itself, is one of the most inspiring experiences you can know. This vacation offers you a respite from the ulcerating pace of [the] vicious routine of present day living.” One of the biggest attractions for wilderness tourists was the opportunity to see big game species in their native habitat. The North Fork boasted large game such as moose, elk, deer and grizzlies, according to Evans, and a few times a decade there would be confirmed sighting of a mountain caribou in the area. The construction of Glacier View imperiled this wildlife and his wilderness business and threatened to turn the edges of the remote North Fork Valley into “the stinking, lifeless shores of a fluctuating artificial lake.” Echoing

44 Olaus Murie, “TESTIMONY of Olaus J. Murie on behalf of THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY at the Hearing at Kalispell, Montana, May 25, 1948, to consider the advisability of the GLACIER VIEW project of the CORPS OF ARMY ENGINEERS,” Box 228, Folder 5, GNPA, and Letter from Olaus Murie to Howard Zahniser, Series 3, Box 26, Folder 28, WSR.
Pinchot’s famous philosophy, however, Evans admitted that he would “concede…and go along with” the contentious dam “if it can be shown to me that the greatest gain is to be had by the inundation of this valley.”

The “greatest profit” to be gained from the North Fork of the Flathead River, Evans concluded, was not from the construction of a hydroelectric dam but the preservation of a modern conception of wilderness. Modern wilderness was a unique and forward-thinking “philosophy,” according to Evans, different from the utilitarian or solely aesthetic arguments for or against the dam. In his testimony to the Army Corps of Engineers, Evans balanced his flowery wilderness rhetoric with hydrology and the science of wildlife ecology and called for the permanent protection of the North Fork Valley. There was an anthropocentric value to the valley, of course, but the ultimate benefit of the “overwhelmingly magnificent wilderness country within the drainage of the Northfork” was not commodifiable but rather the “physical, mental, and spiritual stimuli” the wilderness offered modern Americans. “To these people the wilderness is as great music,” Evans argued, “it refreshes them to an extent that life actually has new meaning for them. I have actually seen the tear-stained faces of great men who have come there and are overwhelmed…Glacier National Park belongs to these people.” Evans had scientific reasons to oppose the expensive dam as well. Like A. van V. Dunn, the Chief of the Water Resources Branch of the National Park Service, Evans attacked the hydrology of the Army Corps of

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Engineers and argued against the “grandiose” idea that the Glacier View Dam would significantly mitigate flooding downstream on the Columbia River system. Less than two percent of the Columbia’s water originated from the North Fork of the Flathead River, he contended, and controlling that miniscule amount would provide very little flood control for the watershed. Certainly not enough to justify the destruction of the fragile wilderness ecology in Glacier.⁴⁶

In 1935, British botanist and influential ecologist Arthur Tansley coined the term “ecosystem,” which he defined as a “whole system” of living organisms integrated “with the whole complex of physical factors forming what we call the environment of the biome—the habitat factors in the widest sense.” Ecosystems serve as the “fundamental conception” of nature within the science of ecology, according to Tansley. Evans agreed with this modern environmental model and contended that the preservation of wilderness should be about more than sublime aesthetics or the conservation of prized game animals—wilderness needed to protect complete ecosystems. The Glacier View wilderness was a “biological whole—a unit where commonly despised animals such as “wolves, wolverine[s], and the slinking mountain lions and other predators are on par with the horned and antler clans” and are “as integral to the wilderness as is the terrifyingly beautiful scenery that sweeps the horizon of the valley.” Fragile wilderness areas, according to Evans and the Wilderness Society, were inspiring and revitalizing to modern Americans, but they needed to protect all aspects of an ecosystem, regardless of value to human beings. “I represent millions of organized and unorganized wilderness lovers and conservationists,” Evans told Corps of Engineers officials, and “we will not compromise short of the complete abandonment of the Glacier View Project. We will fight with unrelenting

vigor…[against] continued plans to dam the Northfork. Sorry, the Northfork is already taken; you’ll have to find something else.”

Like the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club saw the Glacier View Dam debates as a prime opportunity to expand its national influence on environmental issues. There was one problem with this plan—because of their California membership base, the Sierra Club struggled to find appropriate representatives to send to the Army Corps of Engineers hearings in the Pacific Northwest. In the 1920s and 1930s, the club served mostly as a social center for a few thousand middle-age mountaineers and west coast Republican hikers. Like the Wilderness Society, youthful leadership—especially Bestor Robinson, Richard Leonard, Ansel Adams and David Brower—pushed the Sierra Club to expand its political affiliations, membership rolls and its national reputation. “The Sierra Club is primarily a California organization and, where local matters are concerned, are naturally centered on this state,” Secretary Richard Leonard wrote the Army Corps of Engineers in 1948 in opposition to Glacier View. “However we regard the national parks as national rather than local assets, and therefore very much the concern of us all.” Right after the war, the organization had 4,000 “Sierrans.” By late-1948, the Sierra Club had more than 6,700 members, mostly in California and on the Pacific Coast, and all affiliated chapters were in the State of California.

Ostensibly, Olaus Murie and H. Frank Evans represented the Sierra Club at the first two hearings, at least according to later sources. As stated in their own institutional history, published

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four decades later, Olaus Murie represented both the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club during his testimony against the Glacier View Dam in 1948. Perhaps that is true—Murie, Leonard and members of both groups had “constant commerce” with each other and coordinated efforts on many wilderness issues in the West—but that is certainly not clear from Murie’s public statement, in which he stressed his directorship of the Wilderness Society and failed to mention the Sierra Club. Afterwards, the National Park Service sent the Sierra Club two copies of Murie’s statement and remarked that “Mr. Olaus Murie, representing the Wilderness Society, presented a splendid statement in opposition to the dam.” Likewise, Evans’ testimony mentioned his private business, his local conservation group and the Wilderness Society, but did not list the Sierra Club in his affiliations. These first two meetings helped galvanize opposition forces against the dam, but did nothing to advance the national standing or wilderness agenda of the Sierra Club. 49

To rectify their public absence, the Sierra Club hastily recruited members to represent the organization at the next two hearings in Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon. With their first Seattle choice out of town on business, the Sierra Club asked a conservationist and mattress manufacturer named Leo Gallagher to represent the club at the Seattle hearing held in early February. “We naturally cannot send anyone from here [San Francisco] to represent the Sierra Club,” the Assistant Secretary Charlotte Mauk wrote Gallagher a week before the hearing, but the club hoped he could rally friends and fellow conservationists to appear at the event on short notice. Gallagher was an active member of the Mountaineers, a hiking and conservation club

based in Seattle affiliated with the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, and an occasional witness before federal hearings on a variety of environmental issues. He was not, however, a member of the Sierra Club. Gallagher agreed to join as “a member in an emergency” so he could represent the Sierra Club in Seattle, but he asked for more information on the Glacier View Dam because he was “not too well informed” on the issue. Gallagher appeared before the Army Corps of Engineers in Seattle on February 1, 1949 with a small bevy of conservationists, then submitted his application and $12 membership fee to the Sierra Club the next day.50

Likewise, the Sierra Club struggled to find a suitable representative for the Portland hearing February 2, 1949. Mauk contacted A.F. McGarr, a club member from Portland. “It would be splendid if you could arrange to be present at the hearing, or if you could round up some other Sierrans in Portland, even on this short notice,” Mauk wrote to McGarr, “the important thing is to have the Sierra Club represented and heard.” McGarr was an enthusiastic participant and joked that he might operate “adroit like the Russians and lure them [the Army Corps of Engineers] into a trap and…beat them to death with well-placed blows to the back of the neck.” His actual testimony was much more subdued when he appeared at the Portland hearing and he advanced the modern wilderness ideal of his organization. The Sierra Club opposed the “useless destruction of our natural wilderness by the construction of dams, power projects, and reservoirs,” McGarr argued, especially federal projects that “would create lasting scars on the landscape and destroy the present ecological balance” in Glacier National Park.51

50 Letter from Charlotte E. Mauk to Leo Gallagher, January 24, 1949, Box 72, Folder 26, SCR; United States House of Representatives, Public Land Committee Hearings Glasgow, Mont., and Billings, Mont., Eightieth Congress, First Session, Committee Hearing No. 21, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1948): 247; Letter from Leo Gallagher to Charlotte E. Mauk, January 26, 1949, Box 72, Folder 26, SCR; and Letter from Leo Gallagher to Charlotte E. Mauk, February 2, 1949, Box 72, Folder 26, SCR.
51 Letter from Charlotte E. Mauk to A.F. McGarr, January 24, 1949, Box 72, Folder 26, SCR; Letter from A.F. McGarr to Charlotte Mauk, January 31, 1949, Box 72, Folder 26, SCR; and Testimony of A.F. McGarr to the Board of Engineers and Harbors, February 1, 1949, Box 72, Folder 26, SCR.
With the quick help of two unlikely representatives, the Sierra Club publicly contested the Glacier View Dam during key Army Corps of Engineers’ hearings in early-1949—but just barely. This modest start launched the Sierra Club into other fights against intrusive dams that threatened National Park Service properties outside of their California base and thrust the ambitious organization onto a national wilderness stage.

The strongest connection between the Glacier View Dam controversy and the emergence of the modern wilderness movement came from Howard Zahniser, the eventual architect of the 1964 Wilderness Act. In 1949, Zahniser responded to a Legislative Reference Service (LRS) questionnaire concerning modern conceptions of wilderness. Now known as the Congressional Research Service, the LRS was a Progressive Era addition to the Library of Congress that established a special research unit within the library. Legislators wishing to make informed decisions on pending legislation could request information on a given subject and research librarians would write reports and book-length briefings on the requested topics. In 1949, an LRS researcher named C. Frank Keyser wrote a report titled *The Preservation of Wilderness Areas: An Analysis of Opinion on the Problem* and solicited the Wilderness Society for expert testimony on the contentious subject. Zahniser, as Executive Secretary of the Wilderness Society, answered the questionnaire as the report “A Statement on Wilderness Preservation in Reply to a Questionnaire,” which he later submitted to Congress as evidence during Wilderness Act debates.52

More than just a set of answers, this report was an early call from Zahniser for the establishment of a federal wilderness system. Modern wilderness was a characteristic of land—

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“human values” layered onto the American environment—not a specific type of landscape itself. Referencing the Wilderness Society’s bylaws, Zahniser defined modern wilderness as large, remote tracts of land, roadless and devoid of almost any evidence of industrialized American development, but also integrating an understanding of the ecological benefits of conservation in a protected region—“an intimation of the interdependence of all life…[including] the natural world of living creatures unmodified by man.” Alpine peaks, arctic tundra, old growth forests, verdant prairies, desiccated deserts and fecund bayous could all meet this “epitome” standard for preservation, moving the modern conception of wilderness away from privileged aesthetic qualities that dominated the early national park movement and towards a scientific classification of ecosystems. Wilderness was prized by many modern day Americans, but it was also a concept that could not be commodified the same way a timber company might evaluate a copse of redwood trees or a dam builder might justify a hydroelectric project in a glacier-carved canyon. “No dollar signs are for wilderness,” Zahniser argued, “Great and precious as the wilderness is its values are not to be estimated in the market. Its price is above rubies.” These inestimable areas needed proactive and enduring federal protection. “It should be national policy—that is the policy of the dominant governmental unit—to see that the maximum area of wilderness…is maintained in its wildness,” Zahniser argued, “and that no type of the primeval still in existence is permitted to be ‘exterminated.’”

Existing federal protections were inadequate for that lofty task—national forests, national monuments and even national parks all lacked the legislative strength to preserve this ideal. Instead, a new type of federal preservation was necessary, and Congress needed to craft and pass legislation designating a wilderness system on the still untrammeled federal lands in existence.

53 Zahniser, “A Statement on Wilderness Preservation in Reply to a Questionnaire,” 166-169, 182, 184, 191.
The Wilderness Society stood ready to evaluate and recommend proper wilderness areas for preservation. According to Zahniser, “the Wilderness Society advocates that as promptly as possible a national zoning program should be adopted, wherein areas of wilderness…should be designated for preservation in perpetuity and removed from consideration for other purposes that would threaten their existence as wilderness.”

The Glacier View Dam, the Army Corps of Engineers proposal on the North Fork of the Flathead River bordering western Glacier National Park, imperiled American wilderness, according to Howard Zahniser, and he used the dam debates in northwestern Montana as fundamental evidence for a new Congressional system of wilderness designation. Forcing the National Park Service, the Department of Interior and dozens of conservation societies and wilderness groups to defend the sanctity of a national park like Glacier reactively proved the need for this new type of proactive “zoning” in the United States. The Glacier View Dam was an important case study of the necessity of preserving the wilderness of national parks. Zahniser reiterated and quoted the strongest arguments against what he considered an illegal dam. The proposed dam would flood the winter feeding grounds of numerous park animals and inundate valuable Ponderosa pine stands, would violate the sanctity of the national park ideal while inviting industrial development incongruent with Glacier’s legislated purpose, and ultimately ruin a physical example of American distinction.

The most telling reason to oppose the dam, according to Zahniser, was its impact on Congressional wilderness designation. “As national parks are created and other areas of wilderness are firmly established, the sanctity of such dedications becomes a prominent

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54 Zahniser, “A Statement on Wilderness Preservation in Reply to a Questionnaire,” 166, 195.
55 Zahniser, “A Statement on Wilderness Preservation in Reply to a Questionnaire,” 177-178, 196.
determining factor in their preservation,” Zahniser contended, “Eventually, when wilderness
designations have been critically reviewed over a period of years and confirmed by time, when
national policy has been definitely formed, it is to be expected that a system of areas will be
zoned for preservation in perpetuity.” The federal government created national parks and other
federal landscapes to protect American wilderness, but this shelter was incomplete—the United
States needed a federal wilderness classification to protect wild America. To achieve this
wilderness goal, priceless places like Glacier View needed safeguarding immediately. Without
preserving areas like Glacier View, Congress would never pass a national wilderness act—one
needed the other. Zahniser concluded that the “Glacier View case is an outstanding current
illustration of the sanctity of the designation as a determining factor” and the “Wilderness
Society maintains that the national park system should now be accorded this [wilderness]
sanctity, and it believes that certain of the long established parks—Yellowstone, Yosemite,
Glacier, for examples—do now in fact have such a sanctity in the minds of the national public.”

The next step was federal legislation protecting this fact, which Zahniser helped
introduce in the mid-1950s. While there are numerous origins for the federal protection of the
modern wilderness ideal, one of these starting points was the Glacier View Dam debates of the
late-1940s. There is a direct line between the narrow canyon between Glacier View Mountain
and Huckleberry Mountain, on the North Fork of the Flathead River in western Montana, and the
passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964.

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56 Zahniser, “A Statement on Wilderness Preservation in Reply to a Questionnaire,” 177-178, 196.
As mid-century approached, the ideologically diverse coalition opposed to the Glacier View Dam finalized their arguments and awaited a federal decision on the controversial project. In the 1940s, this confederation melded utilitarian conservation ideas, best seen through the sport-focused arguments of big game hunters and fly fisherman, the aesthetic conservation emphasis of many in the National Park Service concerned with increasing tourist visitation numbers in Glacier and the modern initiative of wilderness pushed by Olaus Murie, Howard Zahniser and many others. In doing so, this union linked Progressive Era ideas of nature with the emergence of a powerful wilderness lobby in the United States. While the underlying ideology of these allies differed, their rhetoric was often very similar, desiring to protect the winter feeding grounds of charismatic park animals, attacking the scientific reasoning of the Army Corps of Engineers and defending the sanctity and primordial character of Glacier National Park wilderness. This was the best organized and most vociferous opposition to a major federal dam project to date in the history of the United States, but it did not lead to much optimism. They feared they would lose what Newton Drury saw as the “battle of the century” because, quite simply, federal dam builders historically won these campaigns.

As previously argued, one unifying defensive strategy against this tide of pessimism was to push the approval of alternative dam sites in Montana. Sierra Club leader August Frugé asked: “Before we retreat into panic or hasty action, all the facts should be brought out for public view. Are other sites equally good?” Local conservation leader Dr. A. A. Dodge thought so and suggested dam sites on the Middle and South Forks of the Flathead River, just south of the national park. Numerous Glacier defenders pointed to the already approved Hungry Horse Dam as a federal project that made Glacier View redundant. Many vaguely requested federal investigations of replacement sites. Zahniser, in his first call for the development of a legislated
wilderness system, highlighted this point in his conclusion on Glacier View, arguing that a dam “should not be permitted within a national park or other wilderness area if an alternative site is available. And it must be emphasized that the cost in money of the alternative site should not be a consideration prevailing against the preservation of the wilderness, which cannot be replaced at any cost.” This “broader strategy” became a dominant tactic of wilderness groups moving forward—protecting the wilderness of National Park Service properties by suggesting or even approving alternative dam sites on river systems throughout the American West. According to Richard Leonard, a key leader in the mid-century emergence of the Sierra Club, Glacier View marked “the first time we supported dams in other places in order to block a dam in a national park.”57 While there were other suggestions, the main alternative to the Glacier View project was the Paradise Dam, a large Corps proposal on the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, about sixty-five miles northwest of Missoula, Montana. This alternative muddled the debates over dam construction in the region and complicated a century’s worth of indigenous history in the region.

The Paradise Dam would have created a two-tier reservoir system impounding more than 4-million acre-feet of water in the headwaters of the Columbia, submerging numerous towns and railroad lines in the process. Most controversially, the Paradise Dam would have flooded 20,000 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation, the sovereign lands of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes of Montana. The construction of this dam required the federal government to circumvent the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, which guaranteed Native autonomy concerning the

disposition of lands on the reservation. After a century of dispossession, resulting in the loss of 98 percent of their traditional homelands, the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai peoples wanted no part of a dam that wiped out significant sections of the Flathead. In response, CSK leaders crafted a unique strategy. They supported the construction of the Glacier View Dam, not for the promise of cheap hydroelectric power, economic development, or flood control, but because the construction of a dam that ruined the remote wilderness of Glacier National Park would preempt the destruction of their treaty-protected homeland.
Chapter Five: The Third Road

You say
old days fold into one another
and new days seem the same.
Yet each moment shifts with the sun,
nothing will be the same as this:
when wind breathes the Flathead alive,
you are the center this instant
for all, you are the creation
of the universe one more time.
—Victor Charlo, “Flathead River Creations”

In late January 1949, Steve DeMers travelled by car over 200 miles from his home in western Montana to attend a meeting in Spokane, Washington, an assembly called by the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss the merits of numerous reclamation projects on the Columbia River watershed. An electrician by trade, DeMers was born on the Flathead Reservation and developed into a key political leader for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in the middle of the twentieth-century. He served on several key committees for those tribes, including the Tribal Council and the Executive Management Board. Nationally, along with fellow Salish Kootenai member D’Arcy McNickle, DeMers was a key constituent of the eight-person executive council of the National Congress of American Indians, a group founded in 1944. He braved the snowy passes of the northern Rocky Mountains in early 1949 to testify, on his tribe’s behalf, in favor of the construction of a dam at Glacier View Mountain on the North Fork of the Flathead River and against an alternative site on the Clark Fork River near Paradise, Montana. While opposed to any unnecessary reclamation projects along western Montana’s vast river systems, and especially against any dams that threatened the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation, DeMers testified that the Salish and Kootenai people “are not obstructionists to progress. Rather, we are quite willing to and are in a position to do everything we possibly can to
aid in the reasonable development of Western Montana as a whole, whether it be directly affecting the Indians or otherwise.”

Among the many competing interests that debated the Glacier View Dam proposal, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes represent a unique historical position. While they supported, and ultimately pushed for, the construction of the dam that threatened Glacier National Park, they did so for their own reasons. In the nineteenth century, as American imperial desires, and a belief in Manifest Destiny, pushed settlers, miners and railroaders into the Northern Rockies, the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai lost almost all their traditional homelands. Following this period of dispossession, the federal government concentrated these Native groups onto the Flathead Reservation in western Montana. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai faced a series of federal policies designed to encourage some measure of assimilation into mainstream American society, from the federal policy of allotment in the first decades of the century, through the Indian New Deal in the 1930s, to the potential for termination beginning in the mid-1940s. The Glacier View Dam controversy occurred during this half-century of pressured assimilation, almost concurrent with beginnings of the termination movement in 1946, and the Salish and Kootenai response to the proposed dam must be understood in the context of this tumultuous period.

Seemingly, the Glacier View debates featured two entrenched, dichotomous positions. Development interests composed one side of the debate, led by Montana Representative Mike Mansfield, and supported by dozens of area business interests and local Chambers of Commerce,

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who argued in favor of the economic benefits that the Glacier View Dam would bring to both northwestern Montana and the Pacific Northwest. In opposition was the aforementioned nationwide coalition consisting of conservation groups, the National Park Service and a diverse group of local citizens. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes had empathy for both the development and preservationist sides of the debate, recognizing the need for new streams of economic revenue in Montana, while remembering the loss of their sacred Flathead Falls to the construction of the Kerr Dam, completed in 1938. Ultimately, with termination an impending threat to tribal sovereignty and resources, the Salish and Kootenai used their influence to support a distinctive position on the dam, one that would gladly sacrifice the North Fork Valley to protect their best interests.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes chose a third road regarding the construction of the Glacier View Dam. They favored this road not for the promise of vast economic benefits a new dam might bring to the region, but because the alternative Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork River and the prospect of federal termination threatened the integrity of the Flathead Reservation, as guaranteed by the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. After losing almost 97 percent of their homelands in the century before these dam proposals, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai were unwilling to surrender any of their remaining territory to American encroachments.

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While “confederated,” the Native Americans of the Flathead Reservation are distinct peoples, specifically the Bitterroot Salish, Upper Pend d’Oreille and the Kootenai. These unique cultural groups have a long history in western Montana, and once occupied a combined territory
stretching from present-day Wyoming into British Columbia. The ancestors of the present-day Salish and Kootenai probably arrived in the northern Rockies more than 10,000 years ago. The Salish, who prefer the name Sélíš, and the Pend d’Oreille, properly known as Ql’ispé, are unique peoples united by language. The Salish language family contains twenty-three distinct languages and fifty-three additional dialects, and is spoken from Montana to the Pacific Ocean, with the Salish and Pend d’Oreille being the easternmost speakers in this complex language group.

According to oral traditions, the Salish and Pend d’Oreille have occupied parts of the Northern Rockies for 12,600 years, with some stories recounting the retreating glaciers and harsh weather of the end of the Pleistocene ice age.²

Farther north, Native peoples have occupied the Kootenai River region, which stretches from Columbia Lakes, British Columbia, into parts of northeastern Idaho and northwestern Montana, for almost 12,000 years. The most obvious difference between the Kootenai and other Native groups, including their affiliated Salish and Pend d’Oreille neighbors, is language. According to anthropologists, the Kootenai language is an “isolate,” and unlike any other language in the world. The Kootenai living on the Flathead refer to themselves as Ksanka which translates as “standing Arrow,” a reference to a traditional martial technique. All three groups practiced mixed and seasonal economies, focusing on gathering of foodstuffs such as gooseberries and camas in the Northern Rockies and hunting herds of bison on the Northern Great Plains. In the mid-nineteenth century, under pressure from imperial policies of the United States government and the impending arrival of transcontinental railroad lines, these distinct

² Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, “Honoring the Past to Ensure the Future,” http://www.csktribes.org/history-and-culture, accessed August 6, 2019; and Kim Briggeman, “Genesis of a Dam's Name: Tribe Fights for their Identity,” Billings Gazette, November 2, 2015. For clarity, I refer to these three distinct groups by their anglicized names—Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d’Oreille, and references to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai denote all three groups. The Bitterroot Salish are sometimes referred to as Flathead in historic sources, and the Pend d’Oreille are sometimes called Kalispell.
peoples formed a “loose political union” to protect as much of their traditional homeland as possible.\(^3\) Distinct cultures that had lasted millennia turned down new roads toward an uncertain future.

The Hellgate Treaty of 1855, between the federal government of the United States of America and leaders of the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai Indians, altered political power in western Montana and fractured Native homelands. In 1853, the federal government created Washington Territory out of the northern part of Oregon Territory. The United States appointed Isaac Stevens, a talented and ambitious military leader, as governor of this nascent territory. Stevens linked the future prosperity of his new home to the arrival of transcontinental railroads, and believed there was an “urgent necessity” to sign treaties with Native groups from the eastern foothills of the Cascade Mountains to the northern Great Plains in Montana. In 1854, Congress appropriated $125,000 for the negotiation of these treaties. According to historian Francis Paul Prucha, these diplomatic conferences were farcical, where Governor Stevens dictated predetermined outcomes to Native groups in paternalistic terms. For example, Stevens told Natives at Point No Point, Washington that their federal treaty “is such as a man would give his children…This paper gives you a home. Does not a father give his children a home?”\(^4\)

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In Montana, Stevens’ efforts to “give” the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai a “home” resulted in the dispossession of indigenous peoples from millions of acres of their homeland. In July 1855, Governor Stevens met with leaders of the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai near Hellgate Canyon, near present-day Missoula, Montana. The two sides had very different expectations for these negotiations. The assembled Native Americans sought a peace treaty, negotiated by the United States, with the Blackfeet Indians of northern Montana. They wanted to protect their territories from Blackfeet encroachment while maintaining hunting access to the bison herds of the northern Great Plains. Stevens, of course, had other plans, centered on a desire to concentrate these three disparate groups onto a single reservation, and to open up territory for American development and railroad expansion. Besides paternalism, language barriers plagued this Hellgate meeting. Stevens used translators who filtered his language through Chinook jargon, and finally into some version of Salish and Kootenai. One of the principle translators was Benjamin Kizer, a half-blood Shawnee, whom Stevens described as “exceedingly reliable” as an interpreter who spoke English “quite well.” Fr. Adrian Hoecken, an observer and Jesuit missionary in western Montana, disagreed, calling the treaty conference “a ridiculous tragi-comedy.” He later remarked that “not a tenth of it [what was said] was actually understood by either party, for Ben Kyser speaks Flathead very badly and is no better at translating into English. A treaty was made—or so they will say.”

The final result created the Flathead Reservation, a 1.25-million-acre territory in Montana’s fertile western valleys, south of Kalispell and north of Missoula, which reduced the traditional homelands of these three powerful groups by almost 95 percent. This displacement-

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by-treaty was the first in a series of federal policies designed to remove the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai from their valuable homelands. By the mid-twentieth century, and during the Glacier View Dam debates in western Montana, the federal government once again tried to strip an additional 20,000 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation from Native control to build the Paradise Dam. In this sense, debates over hydroelectric dam development in Montana were not isolated disagreements about river development, they were part of a century long effort to dispossess Native Americans from their homelands.

During the 1855 treaty negotiations, each group pushed for the recognition and protection of their own homelands through the creation of multiple reservations. Victor, a key Salish leader, pushed for the protection of the Bitterroot Valley, a significant location in Salish culture south of Missoula. The resulting treaty created a singular reservation for these now confederated groups. Red Wolf, another Salish leader at the council, described the splintering nature of the negotiations, arguing: “Here are three nations that spoke…Here is the ground I was talking about yesterday. I think myself there are three tribes here they have each their own place, they think they own my ground. I thought these three nations were going to talk about their own lands. Now I hear the governor. My ground is all cut up in pieces.” Fr. Hoecken also lamented the contentious construction of the new Indian reservation, asking: “When, oh when, shall the oppressed Indian find a poor corner of the earth on which he may lead a peaceful life, serving and living his God in tranquility, and preserving the ashes of his ancestors without fear of beholding them profaned and trampled beneath the feet of an unjust usurper?” The Hellgate Treaty was signed on July 16, 1855 and ratified by the United States Senate four years later. The treaty also offered the possibility of a provisional reservation in the Bitterroot Valley, preferred by the Salish people, at the discretion of the President of the United States. The federal
government promised to survey these lands and create a second reservation, if the President
deemed the Bitterroot “to be better adapted to the wants of the Flathead tribe than the general
reservation provided in this treaty.” Despite the clear wishes of the Salish, this land survey never
happened. In 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant ordered the removal of Native Americans from
the valuable Bitterroot Valley and the Salish who remained were removed to the Flathead
Reservation two decades later.6

A nearly 95 percent reduction in Confederated Salish and Kootenai homelands was not
enough to satiate the land desires of encroaching Americans. As Governor Isaac Stevens
predicted, the completion of transcontinental railroads into the Pacific Northwest fueled
expansive population growth in the region. Miners in search of precious ores, timbermen
searching for stands of uncut trees and homesteaders committed to the Jeffersonian ideal of
yeoman farming flocked to Montana’s Big Sky country. Aided by federal policies towards
Native Americans, these new arrivals contributed to another wave of Native American
dispossessions. Congressman William Springer, a Democrat from Illinois, championed
expansionism without delay. The American march westward, Springer contended, was as
“irresistible as that of Sherman’s to the sea,” and “no Indian treaties, no Interior Department
regulations, no Indian Bureau contrivances [should] stop the onward flow of white emigration.”7

The most infamous of these federal policies was codified in the General Allotment Act of
1887, often referred to as the Dawes Act. The Dawes Act, named for its principal architect

6 Lonny Hill, “Blast from the Past: Treaty of Hellgate 164 Years Old Today,” Char-Koosta News, July 18, 2019,
http://www.charkoosta.com/news/blast-from-the-past-treaty-of-hellgate-years-old-today/article_9a93da4-a9a9-
11e9-bb18-7b71d639c06d.html, accessed August 6, 2019, includes Red Wolf quote and Hoecken quote and
“TREATY WITH THE FLATHEADS, ETC., 1855,” July 16, 1855, Charles J. Kappler, Indian Affairs: Laws and
7 Frederick Hoxie, A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920, (Lincoln; University of
Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, was a land seizure strategy couched as a benefit to Native Americans—the “Indians’ Magna Carta” according to its proponents. The act set federal Indian policy and enabled Congress to pass focused legislation that would parcel communal reservation lands into private holdings. Under the Dawes Act, each Native head of a family would receive a 160-acre section of reservation land, and single persons and children would receive 80-acres of land. The purpose of allotment was not malevolent, at least in the minds of its supporters. According to Henry Dawes, the purpose of this policy was assimilation into an American way of life, a policy “born out of sheer necessity.” Dawes later argued that “inasmuch as the Indian refused to fade out… there was but one alternative: either he must be endured as a lawless savage, a constant menace to civilized life, or he must be fitted to become a part of that life and be absorbed into it. To permit him to be a roving savage was unendurable, and therefore the task of fitting him for civilized life was undertaken.” This would not be an easy, or rapid, transformation, however. “Energetic” Native Americans, according to Indian Affairs Commissioner and former Confederate officer John Atkins, might eventually bridge the long “distance between barbarism and civility” by embracing American-style agriculture on allotted lands. Eventually, he argued, “Idleness, improvidence, ignorance, and superstition… [might] be transformed into industry, thrift, intelligence, and Christianity.”

In reality, the Dawes Act continued the long-held American policies geared toward dispossessing Native Americans from their homelands. Colorado Congressman James Belford summarized the majority opinion in the United States when he posited that “an idle and thriftless

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race of savages cannot be permitted to guard the treasure vaults of the nation.” After designating private land to tribal members, the federal government opened unallocated lands to non-Indian settlers, with disastrous results. In forty-seven years, until its replacement with the Indian New Deal in 1934, the Dawes Act diminished Native American reservation lands by an additional 65 percent, from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934. Of that 48 million remaining acres, almost half was arid or semiarid desert, inhospitable to agriculture.⁹

In 1904, Congress passed the Flathead Allotment Act, under the direction of Montana Congressman Joseph Dixon, and the bill was signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt. The Flathead Allotment act applied the provisions of the Dawes Act directly to the Flathead Indian Reservation. Like the Dawes Act, the Flathead Allotment Act was a land grab cloaked as a social benefit for Native Americans. The act called for the survey and allotment of lands on the Flathead Reservation. Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai members would receive allotments based on the tenets of the Dawes Act, and other Native groups living on the reservation might be eligible as well. Following the rhetoric justifying the Dawes Act, Flathead allotment would allow tribal assimilation into a superior American way of life and protect the allotted from “vanishing” off the face of the earth. In truth, encroaching Americans had long coveted landscapes they saw as wasted in Native American hands.¹⁰

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Illustration Fourteen Official Map of the Flathead Indian Reservation (1909), showing the reservation divided into potential homesteads following Flathead Allotment Act. Image from Mapping Montana and the West, Montana Memory Project.

In Missoula, just south of the Flathead Reservation, newspaper editors and leaders saw the Flathead as a ripe cherry ready for picking and used unsupportable hyperbole to make their case. In late-1903, the Missoulian, a newspaper owned by Congressman Dixon, argued: “The opening of this reservation…will come; the sooner the better. The Indian must take his place with the white man. He must sink or swim, survive or perish with the paleface. The natural
owners of the soil may object to the advancement of civilization, but they cannot stop it.” By displacing the “natural owners” of this landscape, Missoula boosters sought to open millions of acres of the Flathead to thousands of white homesteaders and ranchers and spur the extraction of valuable timber and mineral ores. A week later, the same paper put it bluntly: “the time has come when thinking people believe that there must be a change in the method of dealing with the Indian…the policy of keeping the Indian permanently on reservations, and thus preventing the settlement of vast areas of fertile land by white settlers is a mistake, for the Indian and white man alike.” C.H. McLeod, a Republican leader, Dixon ally and Vice-President of the Missoula Mercantile Company argued that the “opening of Flathead Indian Reservation will do more to stimulate business in Western Montana than anything else possible can.”

Allowing non-Native settlers onto the Flathead Reservation also clearly violated the terms of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, an argument tribal leaders made repeatedly to Montana’s congressional leaders. The treaty designated the Flathead reservation “for the exclusive use and benefit of said confederated tribes as an Indian reservation. Nor shall any white man, excepting those in the employment of the Indian department, be permitted to reside upon the said reservation without permission of the confederated tribes.” The Supreme Court, however, in the 1903 case *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*, had recently ruled that Congress had the power to “abrogate the provisions of an Indian treaty” in order to allow settlement of reservation lands by non-Indians. That is exactly what the Flathead Allotment Act did in western Montana. Section thirteen of that act allowed the sale of agricultural and grazing land to non-Natives, following a period of five years from the enactment of the law, “to the highest bidder for cash.” Between in

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1910 and 1929, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai lost an additional 540,000 acres of their homeland in sales to non-Natives, or about 42 percent of the reservation. White settlers leased hundreds of thousands of additional acres from cash-strapped Salish and Kootenai, who had little interest in an Anglo-American farming lifestyle. In terms of population numbers, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai became a minority population on their own reservation. In less than eighty-five years, through the Hellgate Treaty’s creation of the Flathead Indian Reservation, the misguided assimilation efforts of the Dawes Act and the Flathead Allotment Act, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai of western Montana lost almost 97 percent of their traditional homelands. Dam builders threatened another culturally significant piece.

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In addition to agricultural and grazing lands, and stands of uncut timber, the Flathead Reservation had another valuable and extractable resource—water. Much of the Flathead River watershed moves through the reservation. The three forks of the Flathead River, which flow on and around the borders of Glacier National Park, meet and help form Flathead Lake, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the United States. Most of this lake is on the Flathead Reservation. At the southern terminus of the lake, near the town of Polson, Montana, the lake again becomes the Flathead River, flowing south past the town of St. Ignatius to its confluence with the Clark Fork River. Eventually, the water that flows through the Flathead Indian Reservation will enter the vast Columbia River via the Clark Fork, and empty into the Pacific Ocean. This geologic reality

became an economic opportunity for one of Montana’s most powerful entities—the Anaconda Mining Company.

To provide valuable electricity to mining and smelting facilities in Butte and Anaconda, Montana, Anaconda Mining’ subsidiary Montana Power looked south of the outlet of Flathead Lake as a viable spot to build a hydroelectric dam. In 1926, the federal government, eager to pay off debt accrued due to ill-conceived irrigation projects on the Flathead Reservation that almost exclusively benefitted white farmers, entered into negotiations with Montana Power, who wanted to build a dam at “a series of intense drops” in the river near a steep bend, called Flathead Falls. For many Indians, these falls were an ideal spot to fish for native trout like cutthroats. This location was also a site of great spiritual significance for the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai. Known as the “Place of the Falling Waters,” Flathead Falls was sacred to local Native Americans because, as one modern tribal leader put it, “that’s where the spirits were.” Despite the obvious spiritual connection between the Salish and Kootenai and the falls, the federal government failed to include tribal leaders in the negotiations with the Montana Power Company. As John Collier, then of the American Indian Defense Association, emphatically wrote: “The Flatheads were not invited to the conferences. They were not admitted to them. They were not informed of them. They were not parties to the bargain, the agreement, the undertaking, which were, in simplest English: that with their guardian’s consent their property should be confiscated.”¹³

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the “Place of the Falling Waters” was another act of dispossession facilitated by the United States federal government, in congress with Montana’s extractive industries.

After four years of contentious debates and negotiations with the federal government, the Montana Power Company, on May 23, 1930, agreed to pay the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes an average of $140,000 in rent annually for the Kerr Dam site, with a maximum yearly payment of $175,000, until 1950. While an influx of hundreds of thousands of dollars would certainly improve the economic conditions of Indians living on the reservation, especially considering the effects of the Great Depression in northwestern Montana beginning in 1929, tribal leaders proved as concerned with the loss of the sacred falls as the income such a loss would generate. Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council President Caville Dupuis admitted that he did not trust either the Bureau of Indian Affairs nor the Montana Power Company to treat his people fairly in regards to the dam, and he stated emphatically that “we are not so much concerned with the loss of money to the Tribe through the proposed blackmailing and bribery as we are concerned with the fact that this action is defended on the grounds that the Flathead Tribe does not in fact own its power site. The whole scheme is dishonest and illegal.”

Against the desires of many of the Salish and Kootenai Indians, construction on the 204’ high dam, named after Montana Power Company President Frank Kerr, began in 1930. However, the work stalled a year later due to the failure of the Mission State Bank, the primary lender on the project. Montana Power stopped payments to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai and defaulted on their lease agreement with the federal government. In 1934, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes considered restarting the project under the auspices of the Public Works

Administration. Ultimately, Montana Power negotiated a new lease agreement and resumed construction in 1936. The dam employed thousands of workers during a time of great economic hardship for both Montana and the Flathead Reservation. At its busiest period, the construction efforts on the Kerr dam employed 1,231 people, including hundreds of Salish and Kootenai Tribe members. When completed in 1938, the dam raised the water level of Flathead Lake, now twenty-eight miles long and sixteen miles across at its widest point, by ten feet, and produced 56,000 kilowatts of electricity annually. The dam proved a boon to the Montana Power Company. When finished, the Kerr Dam was one of the most powerful dams in the United States, and it increased the generating capacity of Montana Power by 20-percent.¹⁵

Results were mixed for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai. Many on the reservation hailed the economic growth facilitated by the dam, especially in the midst of the Great Depression, and the Kootenai Indians adopted Frank Kerr as a member of their tribe as part of the celebration. Yet, the Kerr Dam, and the loss of the “Place of the Falling Waters,” was a significant cultural blow for the Salish and Kootenai. D’Arcy McNickle, novelist and enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes lamented the loss of this sacred site in his novel *Wind from an Enemy Sky*. In the novel, Bull and his grandson Antoine visit a version of the “Place of the Falling Waters,” now lost to the construction of a dam. McNickle wrote: “There should have been a great roar of tumbling water and mist plumes rising from the chasm, but only the quieter sound of needled trees straining the wind rode the ascending air. Man and boy stood listening, as if they might yet hear the greater sound. It was truly lost, and they turned away.”

The loss of the sacred “Place of the Falling Waters,” a “black eye for Montana” according to

John Collier, piled on top of the vast dispossession of their lands in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, helped shape and influence the Salish and Kootenai third road response to the Glacier View Dam project in the subsequent years.16

As the Kerr Dam was conceptualized and built on the Flathead Reservation, the United States government overhauled its Indian policy, and paused federal efforts at obvious assimilation. As a result, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes of Montana reasserted their own sovereignty through the formation of a powerful new tribal government. The impetus for this drastic change in federal Indian policy was an incendiary, 872-page report. In 1926, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work authorized a comprehensive study of the social and economic conditions of Native Americans. Published in 1928 as The Problem of Indian Administration, it is commonly known as the Meriam Report after its principle author, Lewis Meriam. The Meriam Report “shocked” the Coolidge administration, and led to “radical revisions in almost every phase of Indian affairs.” According to John Collier and the American Indian Defense Association, the Meriam Report was “the most important single document since Helen Hunt Jackson’s ‘The Century of Dishonor,’” written almost half-a-century earlier. The Meriam Report concluded that, in general, Native Americans suffered economic hardship, were in poor health compared to the general American population, had vitamin deficient diets and lived in impoverished conditions. Conditions on Montana’s Indian reservations supported these conclusions. According to some historical reports, by 1920 “Indians on the Fort Peck and Flathead reservations survived largely on prairie gophers and horsemeat, and were close to starvation.” Salish and Kootenai elder Sam Sop Heil testified to a Senate Committee that he and

his wife did not receive adequate rations from the government and sometimes picked through garbage cans in Missoula to survive. The Meriam Report blamed federal Indian policy for these conditions, arguing that “Several past policies adopted by the government in dealing with the Indians have been a type which, if long continued, would tend to pauperize any race.”[^17]

Specifically, Meriam placed blame on the failed policy of assimilation through allotment. According to Meriam, when the United States adopted the policy of allotment, “the expectation was that the Indians would become farmers…It almost seems as if the government assumed that some magic in individual ownership of property would in itself prove an educational civilizing factor, but unfortunately this policy for the most part operated in the opposite direction.” Again, conditions on the Flathead corroborated this assessment of failure. Historian Donald Pisani contends that allotment was a colossal failure on the Flathead and exacerbated the depressed economic conditions for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai. By 1920, Natives farmed little more than 1 percent of the irrigated land on the Flathead, and the fracturing of communal lands through allotment prevented land use that might have alleviated some hardships—specifically ranching. Anthropologist and Associate Supervisor for Indian Education Gordon Macgregor reported that prior to allotment, cattle ranching thrived on the Flathead Reservation. In the 1890s, Flathead Indians kept upwards of 20,000 heads of cattle, and that “cowboy life, its work on horseback, its periods of intensive labor followed by time when other activities could be pursued, have fitted the interest and temperament of all Plains Indians well. The Flathead were making an excellent economic adjustment to reservation life through their cattle.” He concluded, however,

that “like most every other thing of value in their lives the new [ranching] economy was broken down by the establishment of allotments and opening surplus lands to settlement.”\(^\text{18}\)

The Meriam Report also criticized federal machinations with regard to the Kerr Dam project, arguing that the federal government “should take all possible steps to safeguard the rights of the [Salish and Kootenai] Indians in the irrigation and power projects on the Flathead Reservation” and that “if a decision adverse to the Indians be rendered, it should come from the court of last resort and not through any administrative action by officers of the executive branch of the government.” While its recommendations could not save the “Place of the Falling Waters” from the construction of the Kerr Dam, the Meriam Report resulted in a paradigmatic shift in federal Indian policy. Over the next several decades, the United States government implemented almost all the Meriam Report’s significant suggestions.\(^\text{19}\)

While the administrations of Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover did little with the radical conclusions of the Meriam Report, their successor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt reversed the decades-long federal policy of forced assimilation through a well-meaning if flawed policy known as the Indian New Deal. The Indian New Deal, codified in the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, was primarily the work of John Collier, named by Roosevelt to be Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933. John Collier was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1884, and was the valedictorian of his high school class despite claiming he “learned nothing” as a student.


\(^{19}\) Meriam, et al, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, 514
At Columbia University, Collier read widely, and was influenced by diverse philosophies and intellectual movements, from “superman” theories of Frederick Nietzsche to the Romantic poetry of William Wordsmith and Walt Whitman. From this education, according to historian Kenneth Philp, Collier became “a reform Darwinist and self-made sociologist who argued that man must mold society’s future through deliberate innovation and individual creativity.” In 1920, Collier spent time with the Taos Pueblo community of New Mexico—a life altering experience. Collier had discovered a “red Atlantis,” a southwestern utopia with flourishing people. Despite the best efforts of white civilization, the Taos “pueblo is not dying; on the contrary, it is alive, pregnant and potentially plastic; potentially an inheritor of the future and a giver to the future of gifts without price.” Collier appreciated the artistic and communal aspects of Taos life, and that these Indians practiced both “severe individualism” and communal “living in beauty.” Collier’s conception of “ethnic democracy” encapsulated this duality.20

Along with Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Collier pushed for a federal policy based on cultural plurality. Native cultures could be unique, and still American. This new philosophy recognized the failures of assimilation. Collier contended that “For nearly 300 years white Americans, in our zeal to carve out a nation made to order, have dealt with the Indians on the erroneous, yet tragic, assumption that the Indians were a dying race—to be liquidated. We took away their best lands; broke treaties, promises; tossed them the most nearly worthless scraps of a continent that had once been wholly theirs.” Essentially, assimilation was

unnecessary since Native Americans did not need to be Anglo-Saxon yeoman farmers to be good Americans. Instead, Native Americans, not the federal government, should retain “status, responsibility, and power” on reservations, and achieve “self-governing self-determination without any limit” as soon as possible. In doing so, Native Americans could preserve their cultures, language and religions, while embracing the benefits of twentieth-century American life as well. The key to this new focus in federal policy was land. After centuries of dispossession, of broken treaties and of allotment, Collier wanted the federal government to start the process of restoring Native American homelands. According to Collier, the federal government should help “Indians to keep and consolidate what lands they now have and to provide more and better lands upon which they may effectively carry on their lives. Just as important is the task of helping the Indian make such use of his land as will conserve the land, ensure Indian self-support, and safeguard or build up the Indian’s social life.”

The mechanism for the return to self-determination and indigenous land tenure was the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA). Written by John Collier and introduced by Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana and Congressman Edgar Howard of Nebraska in February 1934, this bill marked a paradigmatic shift in federal Indian policy. In its original draft, the IRA was forty-eight pages long, and “designed to replace almost all existing federal Indian law.” After months of Congressional debate and compromise, legislators whittled this massive bill down to five pages, which passed Congress June 18, 1934. Sometimes referred to as the “Indian New Deal,” given its inclusion in the massive restructuring of the federal government during the early years of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s administration, the IRA attempted to reverse the negative

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impacts of assimilation and allotment. Collier contended that the bill “strikes a double blow at
the two fatal weaknesses of Indian administration across a whole century: first, the dissipation of
the Indian estate and the progressive pauperization of the Indians, and, second, the suppression
of Indian tribal and social and religious institutions.” In no uncertain terms, the bill ended the
policy of allotment, and returned any unsold surplus lands to Indian control. The bill authorized
the Secretary of the Interior to reacquire lands lost due to the Dawes Act, to increase the land
base of American Indians. The IRA also stated that “Any Indian tribe, or tribes, residing on the
same reservation, shall have the right to organize for its common welfare, and may adopt an
appropriate constitution and bylaws, which shall become effective when ratified by a majority
vote of the adult members of the tribe.”

Land ownership and tribal sovereignty were the beginnings of Native American
independence from federal control, according to Wheeler. Wheeler argued that despite some
criticisms, the IRA “is for the benefit of the Indians; it gave to the Indians more power in the
management of their affairs than they have ever had in the history of this country, and far more
than a great many white people wanted them to have.” Yet, for Wheeler, the overall goal of the
Indian New Deal was self-sufficiency, leading to the ultimate termination of the relationship
between the federal government and Native American groups. When sovereignty failed to
achieve this goal in a timely fashion, Wheeler began opposing his own Indian Reorganization
Act. President Roosevelt praised this realignment of federal Indian policy. For Roosevelt, the

22 Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 64, 66, 80-100; “A New Deal for the American Indian,” *Literary Digest*, (April 7, 1938): 21, [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5059/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5059/), accessed August 12, 2019; United States Congress, *An Act To conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form business and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes*, 73rd Congress, Session II, CHS. 575, 576, (June 18, 1934): 984-988; and Puisto, “‘This is My Reservation, I Belong Here,’” 27.
Indian New Deal “is, in the main, a measure of justice that is long overdue. We can and should without delay extend to the Indian the fundamental rights of political liberty and local self-government and the opportunities of education and economic assistance that they require in order to attain a wholesome American life.”

In 1935, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai of the Flathead Reservation became the first Native American group in the United States to organize a new government under the auspices of the Indian Reorganization Act. By a vote of 549 for and 123 against, the Salish and Kootenai approved a new constitution and government structure. In the Preamble, the authors establish that the new government will “promote our general welfare, conserve and develop our lands and resources, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the power to exercise certain rights of self–government not inconsistent with Federal, State, and local laws.” The Constitution established a new government for the Salish and Kootenai, led by a ten-member tribal council, which initially included two additional, non-voting “chiefs.” The council itself would be led by an elected Chairman, assisted by a Vice-Chairman and additional officers. This new government replaced a less-regimented tribal organization, which met about once a year to discuss tribal affairs, and which held infrequent elections of officers. The most important function of the tribal council was the protection of Salish and Kootenai lands, after years of dispossession. “The Tribal Council shall have the power,” according to the Constitution, “To regulate the uses and disposition of tribal property, to protect and preserve the tribal property, [and] wildlife and natural resources of the Confederated Tribes.” Regarding allotted lands, the Constitution

protected the property rights of existing owners, but strictly forbid the sale or mortgage of any communally held tribal lands.°

The federal government’s desire to control and dam the Columbia River watershed threatened this newly codified authority. As the Confederated Salish and Kootenai organized a new government and focused on protecting tribal landscapes, the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation proposed a series of dam projects in the Pacific Northwest and inland into Montana. Such dams included the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State and the Bonneville Dam in Oregon, both projects built on sections of the Columbia River, as well as the Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River in Montana. Beginning in the 1930s, and proposed officially in 1943, the Army looked to build a 416’-high dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River, threatening Glacier National Park. The Corps of Engineers’ first choice, however, was to enlarge the existing Kerr Dam on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

As the need for wartime electricity to power key industries in the Pacific Northwest grew throughout the war, military officials and engineers looked upstream toward Montana for potential dam sites. In a plan designed to augment the water supply available to the Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams on the Columbia River, the Army Corps of Engineers first proposed the raising of the Kerr Dam at the southern end of Flathead Lake near Polson, Montana. Although this proposal would have inundated the towns nearest the lake with water, including rapidly

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growing Kalispell, Montana, Corps of Engineers officials argued that the project was vital for the American war effort. Brigadier General Warren T. Hannum contended that the Corps’ proposals for increasing the capacity at Kerr Dam provided “the only solution to the problem of supplying power needed by the end of 1944 for war production in the Pacific Northwest.” Specifically, the Army Corps of Engineers looked to Montana for power sites to provide steady electricity for the burgeoning atomic weapons program at Hanford, Washington. As discussed, however, Montana’s Congressional leaders, especially Mike Mansfield, leaders of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and local business leaders in western Montana organized to defeat the Kerr Proposal, despite its value to the American war effort. Instead, Mansfield and others pushed the Army Corps of Engineers to investigate alternative dam sites in western Montana. And the sites that looked most promising were the Glacier View site on the North Fork of the Flathead River, the Paradise dam site on the Clark Fork and the Knowles site on the southern stretches of the Flathead River, just south of the Flathead Reservation.26

Confederated Salish and Kootenai leaders ultimately supported the construction of a massive federal dam on the border of Glacier National Park because the next two most likely sites threatened the sovereignty of the Flathead Reservation, in violation of the both the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 and the tribe’s own constitution. If they could not raise the Kerr Dam, nor build at Glacier View, the Army Corps of Engineer favored the Paradise site on the Clark Fork River as their tertiary choice for a new hydroelectric dam. Located in a narrow canyon of the that river, near the small town of Paradise, this potential dam offered a great deal of water storage options for the Corps as well as immense electrical potential. In the 1940s, the town of Paradise, located

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just west of the Flathead Reservation, was home to around forty residents and one excellent dam site near the confluence of the Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers. Beginning in the early-1940s, and continuing into the 1960s, the Army Corps of Engineers wanted to build a 250-foot high dam and a two-tiered reservoir system. In total, the Paradise Dam would impound more than 4-million acre-feet of water. On the Clark Fork, the reservoir would stretch southeast from the dam almost fifty miles to the town of Superior. On the Flathead, the new reservoir would extend seventy-two miles east, and reach as far north as the Kerr Dam. Meaning that the entire course of the Flathead River on the Flathead Reservation would be part of dam-reservoir complexes. On both rivers, the Paradise Dam would have inundated 66,130 acres of land with impounded water and created a reservoir six miles wide at its broadest point. The dam would have forced the dislocation of about 2,500 residents and flooded reservation towns such as Dixon and Ravalli, as well as destroyed some of the National Bison Range. Non-Native locals hoped that the Confederated Salish and Kootenai would ally other Montanans, who the CSK styled their “white brothers,” in opposition to Paradise—with good reason. All told, the construction of the Paradise Dam would have inundated and destroyed 20,000 acres of Indian land on the Flathead Reservation.27

For the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, a decision between preserving the wild expanses of western Glacier National Park—traditional territory of the Kootenai for centuries—and protecting the sanctity of the Flathead Indian Reservation was a choice between the past and the present. The federal policy of assimilation assumed Native Americans clung to the past at the expense of the present and tried to coerce indigenous cultures to adopt progressive American culture with invasive policy. The United States government forced the Kerr Dam on the residents of the Flathead because modern Montana needed hydroelectric power to grow economically and the Salish, Pend D’Oreille and Kootenai stood in the way of development. When it came to hydroelectric dam development in western Montana, however, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai expressed little interest in preserving their past territory. Instead, they wanted to protect
their present territory and assure their future. To do so, they needed a unique strategy, one that served not the needs of economic interests in western Montana nor the desires of wilderness activists in the United States but one that preserved the sovereignty of the Flathead Indian Reservation. They needed a third road.

D’Arcy McNickle described the increased tensions on the Flathead Reservation, due to the escalating pressures toward modernity and assimilation, in his debut novel *The Surrounded* (1936). Throughout the book, key white characters, including Catholic missionaries and federal Indian agents, pushed Native Americans toward assimilation into mainstream American culture as a remedy for a life filled with destitution and confusion. For example, Father Grepilloux, speaking to the father of the book’s protagonist Archilde Leon, contended that “It was inevitable that a new age would come. It is beginning now. And your boy [Archilde] is standing there where the road divides. He belongs to a new time. He may not stay in this valley, and it makes no difference whether he does or not; it’s what he makes of himself that will count.”

Debates concerning hydroelectric development in western Montana seem dichotomous at first glance, what McNickle referred to as diverging roads. On one side, economic interests saw the construction of large, hydroelectric dams in western Montana as the key to an industrial, utopian future. On the other, wilderness activists wanted to preserve primordial landscapes—vestiges of wild America. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai were most concerned about the immediate present and the looming federal threat to 20,000 acres of their reservation. Their leaders paved a third road response to protect their imperiled homeland from the Army Corps of Engineers.

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The prospect of a hydroelectric dam on the Clark Fork River near Paradise, Montana, in part, forced Salish and Kootenai leaders to adopt their third road strategy in response to the Glacier View project. Under different circumstances, the Salish and Kootenai might have joined Montana’s Blackfeet Nation, their traditional rivals for centuries, in opposition to the Glacier View Dam, especially considering that the Kootenai Indians held the western expanses of Glacier National Park and the North Fork Valley as part of their ancestral homelands for at least hundreds of years. All sides of these debates assumed that the federal government would build at least one dam in western Montana—there was little historical reason to hope all these dams could be defeated—forcing sides to choose the dam they found most palatable. The prospect of an enormous reclamation project on the Clark Fork, which would have created a reservoir flooding nearly 20,000 acres of the southern end of the Flathead Reservation as well as numerous historic Upper Pend d’Oreille cultural sites on tributaries of that river, contributed to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes’ decision to support the construction of the Glacier View Dam. After meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers, tribal leaders feared that the Paradise Dam “could be constructed whether the [Salish and Kootenai] people like it or not.” Facing this disturbing reality, the Salish and Kootenai realized they needed to develop an effective strategy to prevent the further dispossession of their homelands. Other locals recognized this as well. Some Western Montanans held the “opinion that the [Confederated Salish and Kootenai] tribal council may be the most effective agency in the effort to halt the construction of Paradise dam because the council holds a treaty with the government of the United States which prohibits the seizure of Indian lands granted under its terms without the consent of the council.”

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alliance ignored the recent history of Native Americans in the American West, a reality that CSK leaders understood all too well.

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There was contemporary precedent for the dispossession of Native Americans due to the building of federal dams in the American West. The Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River may have been a victory river that drove aluminum production, powered the creation of the atom bomb and helped win World War Two, but the Grand Coulee also caused the dispossession of indigenous lands in Washington and disrupted Native American life throughout the Columbia Basin. Lake Roosevelt, the 151-mile reservoir created by the construction of the dam, displaced thousands of Native Americans living on the Colville and Spokane Indian Reservations. Created in 1872 by executive order, the Colville Reservation is home to twelve affiliated but distinct Native American groups, collectively known as the Colville Confederated Tribes. Native Americans had little opportunity to fight this dispossession of their homelands. Since the Colville Reservation was an “executive order reservation,” as opposed to a reservation created by treaty, federal officials contended that these lands were still part of the public domain, and therefore open to development, or in this case inundation, when deemed necessary by the United States government. As the dam neared completion in the early 1940s, the inundation of Lake Roosevelt forced more than 2,000 Colville Indians from their homes along the Columbia, accounting for half of all Native Americans living on the Colville Reservation. All told, the Colville Reservation lost 18,000 acres of land due to the Grand Coulee Dam, valuable acreage in an arid region sometimes called “channeled scablands.” Further upstream, the federal government displaced

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Group 75 Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files 1940-1956 Flathead, National Archives, Washington, DC, hereafter referred to as BIA—Flathead; and “Paradise Dam Protests Being Made Wednesday at Hot Springs,” Missoulian, May 23, 1948.
almost 250 Spokane Indians from their homes on the Spokane Reservation. Following centuries of westward imperialism and a faith in the idea of Manifest Destiny, the United States continued to dispossess Native Americans from their homelands into the twentieth century. Dam projects on the Columbia River watershed were another example of this history.

In addition to the loss of valuable lands and the displacement of thousands from their homes, the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam also disrupted sustainable fishing practices in the region. For upwards of 14,000 years, Native Americans fished for salmon and other spawning fish in the Columbia River watershed. Grand Coulee Dam blocked the spawning of numerous species of salmon, and Lake Roosevelt flooded one of the key fishing grounds from Colville Indians. Kettle Falls, known to Salish speakers as Shonitkwu, meaning roaring or noisy waters, was a fifty-foot cascade created by flood-tossed quartzite slabs, located roughly 100 miles upstream of Grand Coulee. For thousands of years, Kettle Falls was a key fishing ground for numerous Upper Plateau groups, and the location served as a key Pacific Northwest trading site based on salmon protein. In the nineteenth century, according to some observers, Native Americans might catch 3,000 salmon a day at Kettle Falls during the spawning season, and almost 650,000 a year throughout the Columbia River system upstream from the Grand Coulee site. Salmon protein accounted for upwards of 50 percent of all calories consumed by Colville Indians, more than a pound of fish per day on average, before the completion of the dam.

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construction of the dam ended these subsistence practices, since the dam had no provisions to allow migrating salmon to pass through the massive concrete structure.  

Culminating with Grand Coulee, the building of dams destroyed 70 percent of salmon spawning territory on the Columbia River. Michael Marchand, a Council Member for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, lamented: “One day we were fishermen, the next day there were no fish.” In June 1940, Colville residents mourned the loss of Kettle Falls, in a three day “Ceremony of Tears.” Almost 10,000 Native Americans travelled to the falls to participate, including a delegation from the Flathead Indian Reservation. Three weeks later, Kettle Falls disappeared under the rising waters of Lake Roosevelt.

On all sides of the Grand Coulee debates, people asked a similar question—was the dam worth the trouble? Former United States Senator C.C. Dill, addressing Native Americans during the Ceremony of Tears in his home state of Washington hoped so. Dill recognized the military applications of the Grand Coulee Dam, arguing: “We can build more airplanes and tanks and can train more pilots for national defense than any other nation or combination of nations, and the quicker we do it the better. We now know that the only thing in this world that Hitler will respect is more force than he controls.” But that military capacity came at considerable cost, according to Dill, and Colville Indians shouldered much of this burden. Dill pledged that “the electricity which the great dam at Grand Coulee produces shall be delivered to all people without profit, so

that the Indians of future generations, as well as the white men, will find the change made here a great benefit to the people.”

Vern Seward, a registered member of the Confederated Colville Tribes, ultimately concluded that his people paid too high a price for the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam. Seward fished at Kettle Falls before the dam and remembered his astonishment that sixty-pound salmon could spawn over the falls. Later, Seward worked as a laborer during the construction of Grand Coulee, taking home $9.80 a week in pay, before joining the Navy during World War Two. In 1994, like other registered Colville Indians, Seward received some federal compensation for the dispossession caused by Grand Coulee. Seward, however, reflected on the impact of the Grand Coulee Dam on the Colville Reservation, and concluded: “If a person wanted money and what-not, he would say it is a fair price. It is the best we are likely to get. But it does not bring back the river or the salmon. It is not a fair price for the torture we went through. No, it is not a fair price.”

In the mid-1940s, the federal government also displaced thousands of Great Plains Indians, in an effort to control the Missouri River after several “100 Year Floods.” In 1944, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation created the Pick-Sloan Plan, an amalgamation of multi-goal water development proposals for the Missouri River watershed. The Pick-Sloan Plan was inclusive in its discrimination, as the proposal wreaked havoc on the economic and social well-being of numerous Native American groups in the West, including the Crows, Crees, Blackfeet and Assiniboines of Montana, and almost every Native American nation with homelands in the Missouri River watershed suffered due to the construction of the federal

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33 “Farewell is Bid to Kettle Falls,” Spokesman-Review, June 17, 1940.
34 Harden, A River Lost, 108-115.
Following historic floods on the Missouri River in 1943, Colonel Lewis Pick of the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation engineer William Glenn Sloan developed separate plans to control the unpredictable river. According to historian Paul VanDevelder, “As the floodwaters rose in the streets outside his offices, Pick jumped up on a desk and bellowed at his subordinates: ‘I want to control the Missouri!’” Facing political pressure, the two adversarial agencies merged these two proposals into one eponymous plan. One observer described the merger of rival schemes as “a shameless, loveless shotgun wedding.” The Pick-Sloan Plan originally called for the creation of 107 separate reservoirs, disturbed twenty-three different Indian reservations and resulted in the displacement of more than 900 Indian families, most of which belonged to various Sioux groups in the Dakotas.35

At the Mandan Bluffs outside of Garrison, North Dakota, the federal government built its first dam, the Garrison Dam, which wiped out 155,000 acres of fertile farmland on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. Created in 1870, Fort Berthold was home to the Three Affiliated Tribes—the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations. These tribes fought desperately against the construction of the Garrison Dam. At a 1946 hearing on the project, Thomas Spotted Wolf shouted at Pick: “You have come to destroy us! If you look around in our town, we build schools, churches…We're becoming civilized! We're becoming acculturated! Isn't that what you white people wanted us to do? So we're doing that! And now you'll flood our homeland?” According to Marc Reisner, another Three Tribes leader, “probably Crow Flies High, went up to Colonel Pick and made an obscene gesture. Pick turned the color of uncooked liver. It was an insult, he said lividly, that he would remember as long as he lived.” Eventually, however, the Affiliated Tribes accepted $12.6 million as payment for the loss of 155,000 acres of tribal lands.

35 Lawson, Dammed Indians, 9-19; and VanDevelder, Coyote Warrior, 26.
due to the construction of the Garrison Dam, a decision one tribal leader admitted “brings us closer to our exile.” Three of the largest projects constructed as part of the Pick-Sloan Plan—the Fort Randall Dam, the Oahe Dam and the Big Bend Dam—flooded over 200,000 acres of Sioux land across five reservations. Combined, these three dams reduced Sioux land holdings by 6 percent and resulted in the relocation of hundreds of Sioux families, from fertile river bottomlands in the Missouri watershed to marginal prairies nearby. Vine DeLoria Jr., assessing the long-term consequences of Missouri River reclamation, posited that the “Pick-Sloan Plan was, without a doubt, the single most destructive act ever perpetuated on any tribe in the United States.”

The threat of termination also influenced the arguments and positions of Salish and Kootenai leaders. Termination, which began in the mid-1940s and became official federal policy in 1953, sought to end both the sovereignty of individual Indian nations and their treaty-guaranteed relationships with the United States federal government, and encourage Native Americans to choose a road toward assimilation into mainstream American society. For many conformists, Cold War-era politicians, tribal communal land ownership and social structures skewed too close to the dreaded philosophy of Communism. Senator George Malone, a Republican from Nevada, argued: “While we are spending billions of dollars fighting Communism…we are at the same time…perpetuating the systems of Indian reservations and tribal governments, which are natural Socialist environments.” According to this argument, the American Indian needed to be pushed into modern American life, for the benefit of Native individuals and communities, for the fiscal health of the country and perhaps for the future of

democracy. The process of termination began with the release of the United States Senate’s *Survey of Conditions of the Indians of the United States* in 1943, which was the Congressional confirmation of the findings of the Meriam Report, fifteen years in the making. The report criticized the Indian Reorganization Act and its principle architect John Collier and argued that the Office of Indian Affairs was costly and inefficient. Ultimately, the survey concluded, the IRA stunted Native American progress toward assimilation into mainstream American culture. Collier resigned his post as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1945, having held that position since 1933.37

In 1946, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent D’Arcy McNickle, an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai of Cree descent, and others, to the Flathead Reservation to discuss termination with the tribal council. McNickle urged the Salish and Kootenai to develop a plan for self-withdrawal from their relationship with the federal government, instead of waiting for Congress to force separation. He received a taciturn reception from tribal leaders. After studying the issue, in 1947, leaders of the Salish and Kootenai determined that maintaining the status quo was in their best interests and urged the federal government to honor the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. Pulitzer Prize winning novelist and activist Oliver LaFarge dismissed the value of benevolent, but forced, emancipation. LaFarge argued that “the cry ‘set the Indians free’ by abolishing wardship and reservations is the standard device by which the plunderers lead well-intentioned citizens to acquiesce in new raids upon the Indian estate.” Termination, LaFarge

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contended, “would, in a short span of years…open the door to the final ruination of all Indian hopes” for the future.\(^{38}\)

William Zimmerman, Acting Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1947, divided American tribes into three groups based on his evaluation on how well each group could handle termination. One of the key criteria for early termination was the economic stability of tribes. He placed the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes at the top of the termination list, in part because of their ability to sustain economic growth. According to historian Jaako Puisto, tribal revenue, including the annual fees earned from renting the Kerr Dam site to Montana Power, allowed tribes to pay for “90 percent of the reservation’s administrative expenses, all law enforcement costs, and half of [their] welfare expenses.” Additional revenue, raised from the sale of tribal lands due to a dam near Paradise on the Clark Fork River, would only increase the financial solvency of the reservation and therefore make the Salish and Kootenai an even more attractive prospect for termination. For example, in 1947 the federal government paid Sioux tribes about $33 for each acre lost due to Pick-Sloan Plan dams. A similar payment due to the construction of the Paradise Dam, and the resulting loss of 20,000 acres of Flathead land, would result in an influx of $600,000 or more to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai. Such funds might improve conditions and way of life for residents of the reservation, but they would also make the penumbral threat of termination more likely.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{39}\) Puisto, “‘We Didn’t Care for It,’” 53-55; Wilkinson and Riggs, “The Evolution of the Termination Policy,” 145-146; and Lawson, *Damned Indians*, 60.
The concurrent threats of a dam near Paradise, Montana, and federal termination policy, led Salish and Kootenai leaders to develop their unique position regarding the Glacier View Dam. They supported the project less in the hopes of some great economic windfall but rather to protect the sanctity of the Flathead Indian Reservation. Economic development, however, was on the minds of most Montanans in the late-1940s, and the Salish Kootenai used pecuniary arguments to make a strong case for the construction of Glacier View. The alternative Paradise Dam threatened traditional trades and production in Montana, both on and off the Flathead Indian Reservation. 40

Mike Mansfield supported the Salish Kootenai position. The construction of the Glacier View Dam “would not disturb the economy of the region in which it would be located but would, as a matter of fact, add to it,” Mansfield argued. The erection of the Paradise Dam, however, “would create a problem adjudicating losses which would be entailed by the Flathead tribe[s] on their reservation.” The approval of Glacier View, Mansfield concluded, would ensure “that the interests of all the [Salish and Kootenai] people in that area would be protected to the greatest possible extent.” 41

Tribal Council member Steve DeMers, in his testimony at the Spokane Army Corps of Engineers hearing in early 1949, testified that the Confederated Salish and Kootenai were “absolutely opposed to any philosophy, to any regional planning, that slows up the economy” of western Montana. By mid-1950, the CSK planned to invest half-a-million dollars in development of lands on the southern stretches of the reservation, an outlay threatened by the construction of the Paradise Dam. Furthermore, the reservoir created by the Paradise Dam would destroy

40 “Paradise Dam Would Change Western Montana Topography, Assert Army Engineers in Public Meeting on Multi-Purpose River Project,” Great Falls Tribune, May 27, 1948.
valuable timber lands on the reservation, and cost the tribes several hundred million board-feet of
merchantable timber—a financial loss DeMers estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.
The Paradise Dam would also flood prime agricultural and ranching lands in the region, both on
and off the reservation. Linking local development issues with national and international policies
and initiatives, DeMers hinted that these lands were vital for food production needed for the
1948 Marshall Plan—“to furnish food and billions of dollars to foreign nations to prevent them
from starving to death.” The Salish Kootenai opposed any “idea or philosophy of attempting to
inundate thousands of acres of productive property, productive soil in preference to a relatively
small area that may be affected in the so-called Glacier View project.”

As many western Montanans hoped, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai sided with
their “white brothers” in opposition to the Paradise Dam. DeMers concluded that the Flathead
“Indians are in a poorer position, and God knows the white people are in a bad enough position
in that particular area [of Montana], that they cannot afford anything of this type that will tend to
wreck their plans, both socially and economically.” In turn, the majority of western Montana
supported the Confederated Salish and Kootenai by opposing the Paradise Dam. On May 26,
1948, upwards of a thousand Montanans attended a packed Army Corps of Engineers hearing on
the proposed Paradise Dam. According to observers, only three organizations and five
individuals at the public conference testified in favor of the project. Most opposed the project for
economic reasons and fought the displacement of citizens from private lands. Given the last
century of ignoble history in western Montana, the prospect of further dispossession infuriated

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Confederated Salish and Kootenai leaders in attendance, and they vowed not to compromise on the issue of tribal sovereignty. According to one tribal leader: “We came to trade no horses.”

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai stressed the issue of tribal sovereignty to Corps of Engineers officials, and argued that the “solemn and sacred” Hellgate Treaty of 1855, which created the Flathead Reservation in Montana, protected the Salish and Kootenai homeland from the loss of land required to build the Paradise Dam. Steve DeMers maintained that if a new hydroelectric dam proved necessary, the Army Corps of Engineers should choose a site “in the extreme up river reaches of the [Columbia River] Basin, and we concur with our white neighbors that the most feasible spot in respect to Montana, Western Montana at least, is the Glacier View Dam. Little damage will be done to civilization or human life for agriculture or industry.”

One Native resident of the Flathead Reservation, old enough to remember the signing of the Hellgate Treaty in 1855, provided testimony against the Paradise Dam and implored the federal government to listen to the tribes and Mansfield, and honor its agreement. Therese Seelow Lumpry Ashley was 102 years old when she argued against the construction of the Paradise Dam in 1948. A full blood Salish Indian, and wife to one of the signers of the contentious treaty, she was born near present-day Dixon, Montana and had lived most of her life in the place she called “The Place Where Two Rivers Meet.” The Hellgate “Treaty promised us that we could live here forever, as long as the water flows,” she contended. Now that the Army

44 “Statement of S.C. DeMers, Esquire,” *Testimony and Statements*, 156; “Minutes of the Meeting of Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation,” March 5, 1948, Box 9, Folder 18458-1946, BIA—Flathead; “Minutes of the Meeting of Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation,” August 23, 1948, Box 9, Folder 18458-1946, BIA—Flathead;
Corps of Engineers proposed the breaking of the treaty, with “plans to stop the ‘Big River’ and cover my land,” Ashley became defiant. She concluded her testimony: “I am telling you men that I will not move from my home even though you promise to pay me. You should keep your word made in that treaty.”45

The Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, both in internal meetings and public statements, supported many of the same arguments of council member DeMers. The Council supported reclamation development on the Columbia River watershed “only to the extent that such projects would not be detrimental to the tribe or economy of Western Montana.” Their statement also invoked the tribe’s land rights as guaranteed by both the 1855 Hellgate Treaty and 1934 Constitution, both of which guaranteed tribal rights in regard to the sale of property and water rights within the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation. As an alternative, to possibly forestall the dam at Paradise, DeMers and other tribal leaders wanted to consider the development a new power site on the reservation in conjunction with Montana Power, below the Kerr Dam on the Flathead River. Such a dam would be much smaller in size than the proposals for Paradise and would allow a much greater economic benefit for the Salish and Kootenai. And most importantly, after years of dispossession and loss, such a dam would be controlled by the Salish and Kootenai.46

Tribal Council President Walter W. McDonald, Secretary Phil Hamel and Council Member Steve DeMers, signatories on the tribes’ official declaration, worried that Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug would support the sanctity of Glacier National Park over the treaty-

46 “Statement in Behalf of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, in Montana,” Testimony and Statements, 159-160; and “Minutes of the Meeting of Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation,” March 2, 1949, Box 9, Folder 18458-1946, BIA—Flathead.
guaranteed rights of the Salish and Kootenai Indians, and authorize the construction of the Paradise Dam. The Flathead Indians supported a dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River because the “majority of lands to be inundated from the Glacier view project would be public domain, whereas the Paradise project consists of lands owned by individuals and corporations which…would cost the Government several million dollars.” Krug, they feared, would “give more consideration to the wildlife at Glacier View than the human life in the Paradise area.” The Confederated Salish and Kootenai were prepared to fight “with all our power and might,” in favor of the Glacier View Dam and in opposition to Paradise. Their official statement, presented at the Army Corps of Engineers hearing in Spokane, Washington, concluded: “The [Salish and Kootenai] Indians are usually classified as a dumb and backward nation but they certainly started to sharpen their bow and arrows when they first learned of the ill effects which they would suffer from the Paradise Dam proposal and the Tribal Council has been unalterably opposed this fantastic and un-American proposal.”

The testimony and statements of the Confederate Salish and Kootenai leaders—especially the positions of Steve DeMers—privileged the economic development of Montana over the preservation of wilderness and reveal the complexity of their third road approach. The preservation of constructed wilderness in Glacier National Park carried no clear benefit to the residents of the Flathead Reservation in the 1940s, especially when juxtaposed with devastation that the Paradise Dam would bring to their homeland. In fact, since the construction of at least one federal dam in the headwaters of the Columbia River seemed unavoidable, the Confederated

47 “Statement in Behalf of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, in Montana,” Testimony and Statements, 159-160; and “Minutes of the Meeting of Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation,” March 2, 1949, Box 9, Folder 18458-1946, BIA—Flathead.
Salish and Kootenai appeared perfectly content to inundate their former territory in the North Fork of the Flathead to protect their reservation. They were not apathetic about the Glacier View Dam; they were proactive supporters of the Army Engineers’ project. Still, it would be inaccurate to label the Confederated Salish and Kootenai as anti-wilderness or unfriendly to the environment. They did, after all, try to create their own protected, 100,000-acre wilderness area in the Mission Mountains within the bounds of the reservation. Their position was also not an embrace of the pro-development plans of Mike Mansfield, Donald Treloar and the numerous Montana groups interested in the industrial development of the Flathead Valley either, although they were useful allies. Rhetorically, DeMers, McDonald and other tribal leaders used economic development for all of Montana as a defense of the Flathead Reservation. They spoke in general terms about improving or protecting the “economy of Western Montana.” They argued very specifically for the preservation of commercial opportunities on their reservation—their timber interests, cattle ranching and valuable dam sites downriver from the Kerr Dam. Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai were interested in developing smaller dam sites on the Flathead River, as long as tribal leaders and not the federal government controlled these industrial efforts. The third road of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai did not reject wilderness nor hydroelectric development. They wanted both on the Flathead Indian Reservation, but after a century of coerced removal and land loss, they wanted these things on their own terms.

As 1950 approached, the three roads of the Glacier View Dam controversy reached a historic intersection. Dam proponents, led by Congressman Mike Mansfield, the powerful Army Corps of Engineers bureaucracy and development-minded Montanans pushed the federal government to build the dam at Glacier. They wanted economic development, cheap hydroelectric power, to control flooding on the mercurial Columbia River watershed, to build more powerful atomic weapons, to defeat international Communism and to ensure the future of the American way of life during tumultuous times. They argued that this dam would contribute significantly to those goals in the American West. Dam opponents also framed their arguments in terms of American preeminence. National parks—perhaps America’s best idea ever—should be inviolable to shortsighted development and dam construction. The wilderness of the North Fork Valley, the aesthetic beauty of Glacier, the clean air of the Rocky Mountains and the

*Illustration Sixteen* Montana Native American leaders, including Walter McDonald (kneeling, far right) and Steve DeMers (standing, sixth from left), attending Institute on Indian Affairs. Image from *Missoulian*, April 11, 1959.
bracing waters of the Flathead River were just as important to the American experience as cheap power and military might. Moreover, the Glacier View Dam was not the only option for hydroelectric development and could easily be swapped for other dam sites on the Columbia system, like the one at Paradise on the Clark Fork River. The wilderness of Glacier National Park, however, was irreplaceable.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai paved a third road in this argument concerning river development in western Montana. After a century of displacement, dispossession, broken treaties and forgotten promises, the Salish and Kootenai navigated the Glacier View Dam debates with the most rational goal of the three sides—they wanted to protect the sovereignty and best-interests of the Native residents of the Flathead Reservation. They favored this third road not for any illusion of vast economic benefits a new hydroelectric dam might bring to their corner of Montana. Salish and Kootenai leaders expressed no faith that a new federal project would benefit their people, because quite simply, none had in the past. Instead, they favored the construction of the Glacier View Dam because the alternative Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork River, and the looming prospect of federal termination, threatened the dominion of the Salish and Kootenai people and the physical integrity of the Flathead Reservation.

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The man directing traffic at that critical juncture was Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug. At first glance, Krug appeared to be the perfect Interior leader for dam proponents—a power engineer who led major industrial development and hydroelectric dam building projects during World War Two. During that conflict, one biographer called Krug the “war machine’s new spark plug” who oversaw “the greatest industrial production setup in history…and essential
war services to the tune of $175,000,000 a day.” This historic production required an enormous amount of electrical power. The *New York Times* once wrote of Krug: “By training he is an engineer, by temperament he has a passion for accuracy, and no one has ever called him dreamy or fuzzy-minded. He has believed in and practiced the development of public power in river valleys, and this has made him enemies.” Ostensibly, the anti-dam defenders of Glacier National Park might have expected to be counted in this listing of “enemies.” From the perspective of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Krug seemed like another anti-Indian federal bureaucrat, a development-focused leader who had already approved parts of the Pick-Sloan Plan on the Missouri River, which devastated Native communities on the northern Great Plains.

Julius A. Krug, known to confidants and colleagues as “Cap,” was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1907. He attended the University of Wisconsin in his hometown, where he was a center on the Badgers football team before earning his Bachelor of Arts in 1929, and a Master’s in utilities management and economics in 1930. Following his graduation and a brief tenure as a research statistician for the Wisconsin Telephone Company, Krug began a two-decade long career in public service, working his way up from a position with Wisconsin Public Service Commission to replacing one of the most powerful Secretaries of the Interior of all time. Krug joined the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1938 as the chief power engineer, and two years later became manager of power for that New Deal program. During World War Two, Krug handled industrial production and power development issues for the War Production Board, becoming known as the country’s “Power ‘Czar’” as Director of the Office of War Utilities. After a brief

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stint as a lieutenant commander in the United States Navy, Krug returned to Washington as chairman of the War Production Board in 1944. Krug’s efforts in federal service earned him the sobriquet “Boy Wonder” and President Harry Truman described Krug’s “epic” efforts at industrial development and power production during the war as “little short of miraculous.” Krug resigned from government service in 1945 in favor of much more lucrative private sector work and wrote Truman that it was “a great privilege to have served in your Administration, which will mark a great and prosperous era in the history of our country.”


Krug’s stint as a private engineering consultant was short-lived, however, as Truman tapped Krug to be Secretary of the Interior following the resignation of Harold Ickes in 1946. Krug was a “last-minute choice” after Truman’s first candidate, Supreme Court Associate Justice William O. Douglas, declined the position. Krug took his oath of office on March 18, 1946, and a day later the Senate confirmed his appointment by unanimous consent. In his introductory remarks as Secretary, Krug promised to be “guided scrupulously by the will of the people as expressed through Congress” in his efforts to protect “a heritage of natural resources of priceless value and limitless potentialities upon which the destiny of this nation must depend.” The thirty-eight year old Secretary of the Interior seemed a classic, Pinchot-styled conservationist at the nascence of his term, contending that the “development and conservation of this great natural wealth for the benefit of the people presents many problems and at the same time golden opportunities” for the Department of the Interior and the country at large. For proponents of hydroelectric dam projects in Montana, especially those pushing for contentious plans in the headwaters of the Columbia River system, the ascendance of the nation’s “Power ‘Czar’” to the position of Secretary of the Interior must have seemed like a “golden opportunity” for hydro-powered industrial development. For dam opponents, bent on protecting the borders of the Flathead Indian Reservation or preserving the wilds of Glacier National Park, Krug’s confirmation was another “problem” to overcome.51

In 1947, Krug assessed the United States’ ability to harness its natural resources to meet the needs of the Marshall Plan, a $12-billion federal investment in the rebuilding of Western

Europe following World War Two. In helping design this historic reconstruction project, Krug reaffirmed his commitment to the development of hydroelectric power on American rivers. According to Krug, the wise use of vast natural resources was a panacea for the world’s problems, and the environmental component of the Marshall Plan could help achieve worldwide peace and prosperity through the prevention of malnutrition, poverty and global insecurity. One key to unlocking this vast potential for human good was the development of reliable energy sources, including the construction of hydroelectric dams throughout the United States. “Another source of energy that should be utilized,” Krug argued, “is the vast power potential in the river systems of our country. Present programs for the sound multi-purpose development of the water resources will provide large additional amounts of power for our growing needs.” These increasing energy requirements were immense. To meet its responsibilities, both foreign and domestic, the United States needed to increase its electrical power generation by 37 percent, from the 275 billion kilowatt-hours of electrical power produced in 1946 to the 376 billion needed by 1952. Krug concluded that this “adequate energy supply will depend on having enough coal or stored waterpower” in the United States.  

The Bureau of Reclamation, under the auspices of the Department of the Interior, continued to propose and build massive dams impacting national parks and Indian reservations during Krug’s tenure, to help meet the growing demand for inexpensive power in the United States. In 1948, for example, Krug approved of Bureau of Reclamation plans to build the Bridge Canyon Dam on the Colorado River, against the strident objections of National Park Service Director Newton Drury. This 740-feet high dam’s reservoir would have breached the boundaries

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of Grand Canyon National Park, and Drury argued that “repercussions…will be long and loud when the general public learns that one of its best known and most spectacular national parks might someday be partially sacrificed to permit an alien use.” Krug sometimes had difficulty working with his pro-wilderness National Park Service director, believing Drury was “nearly impossible to talk with because he has no business sense.” Ultimately, the controversial dam was never built.\footnote{Letter from Newton Drury to Secretary of the Interior, March 22, 1948, quoted in Byron E. Pearson, Saving Grand Canyon; Dams, Deals, and a Noble Myth, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2019): 48; Julius Krug quoted in Clayton R. Koppes, “Environmental Policy and American Liberalism: The Department of the Interior, 1933-1953,” Environmental Review, Vol. 7, No. 1, Special Issue: Papers from the First International Conference on Environmental History, (Spring, 1983): 26; and W.S Gookin, “Central Arizona Project, Part Two,” The Reclamation Era, Vol. 35, No. 2, (February 1949): 28.}

That same year, Reclamation ramped up construction of the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River, a few miles south of Glacier National Park. When finished, the Hungry Horse Dam was the fourth largest concrete dam in the world, with a crest height of 564-feet and an overall length of 2,115-feet. The dam plugged a rugged section of the Flathead River system and created a reservoir with a maximum capacity of 3.5-million acre-feet of water. This dam-reservoir complex turned power plant turbines capable of producing 285,000 kilowatts of hydroelectricity. These robust numbers approximated the goals and projections for the proposed Glacier View and Paradise Dams—and the dam received the widespread and vocal support of Secretary Krug. In fact, he pushed the Bureau of Reclamation to finish the Hungry Horse project ahead of the five-and-a-half-year schedule, to spur economic development in the region.\footnote{Bureau of Reclamation, Hungry Horse Dam and Power Plant: Technical Record of Design and Construction, (Denver, United States Department of the Interior, 1958): 36-37; Mike McHenry, “Krug Advocates Speeding Hungry Horse,” Missoulian, September 25, 1948; and “Krug Inspects Hungry Horse,” The Spokesman-Review, September 25, 1948.}

For observers on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Krug’s involvement in the Garrison Dam project offered insight into his potential opinions on the Paradise Dam project on the Clark
Fork River. The aforementioned project, part of the contentious Pick-Sloan Plan to control the volatile Missouri River, inundated 155,000 acres of the best agricultural and ranching lands on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. This North Dakota reservation was home to the Three Affiliated Tribes—the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations. According to Martin Cross, Chairman of the Three Affiliated Tribes’ business council, the federal imposition of this dam broke the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. In his testimony to Congress in opposition to the dam, Cross was clear in his purpose: “I am not here to sell land. I am here to keep the land…There is no possibility for us other than destructive. There are no benefits to be derived from this dam.”

The federal government disagreed, of course, and condemned the lands necessary for the Garrison Dam, and forced the dispossession of 325 families from their homes, farms and ranches. As payment, the Affiliated Tribes initially accepted $5.1 million in 1947 for the loss of 155,000 acres of tribal lands due to the construction of the Garrison Dam, and eventually the tribes received a total remuneration of $12.6 million from the federal government for their territory.55

From the perspective of many Native Americans, Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug was complicit in the removal of indigenous peoples from their homelands due to the construction of the Garrison Dam and other parts of the Pick-Sloan Plan. As administrator of both the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Reclamation, Krug played a vital role in the implementation of the Pick-Sloan Plan, and ultimately supported the construction of the Garrison Dam. Initially, Krug pushed for fair recompense for the Three Affiliated Tribes due to the loss of their lands and announced that the Interior Department would approve almost all Native requirements for the

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sale. But Krug eventually acquiesced to the strident demands of the Army Corps of Engineers, and the personal grudge of Lewis Pick towards the Fort Berthold Indians. Pick, and his allies in Congress, gutted Krug’s compensation bill, and denied tribal rights to fish in the dam’s reservoir, graze their cattle along its banks, receive hydroelectricity at cost from the dam, or even use compensatory funds to hire attorneys to appeal their case. Krug, despite his responsibilities as overseer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and his obligations to the Three Affiliated Tribes, submitted rather than fight Pick on these issues.56

The visual evidence of Krug’s connivance was even more striking. In a widely circulated photo, Krug signed the agreement during a ceremony in his Washington office, on May 20, 1948. As the stolid Krug put pen-to-paper, and a triumphant Lewis Pick looked on, Three Affiliated Tribes Chairman George Gillette sobbed into his hand. Gillette commented: “The members of the tribal council sign this contract with heavy hearts…Right now the future does not look too good for us.” According to Raymond Cross, the youngest son of Martin Cross and a Yale-trained lawyer who eventually won a historic victory for the Three Affiliated Tribes regarding the construction of the Garrison Dam, this “picture leads the story of the modern large wrongs done to the Indian people by the federal government. It (stands for) an accumulated history of injuries.” The photo ran on the front page of several western Montana newspapers. Butte’s Montana Standard connected this photo directly to the looming fight over federal dams and Native American sovereignty on the Flathead Indian Reservation, running the now infamous picture above its front-page story “Proposed Paradise Dam will be Vigorously Opposed.”

According to this article, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai were among the future “displaced peoples” of Montana fighting against the Paradise project. Unironically, the paper

56 Reisner, Cadillac Desert, 178, 189-190.
argued that the Flathead Indians might offer the best defense against the dam threatening the Clark Fork River because of their treaty-guaranteed rights to control all lands on their reservation. Confederated Salish and Kootenai could hardly have missed the telling photograph, and they testified during the Paradise Dam debates that they did not trust Secretary Krug to defend the sovereign rights of Montana Indians. He certainly failed to stand with the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations of North Dakota on similar issues.⁵⁷

Illustration Eighteen Garrison Dam Agreement Signing, May 20, 1948. Secretary of the Interior Julius A Krug (seated) signs as George Gillette (fourth from left) sobs into his hand. Image from Recovering Democracy Archives, University of Maryland.

The *New York Times* editorial board, following Julius Krug’s unanimous confirmation as Secretary of the Interior in the Senate, dubbed Krug the “New Curmudgeon,” an obvious reference to his predecessor the “Old Curmudgeon” Harold Ickes. This had nothing to do with personality, however, since Krug was much more stoic in demeanor than the bellicose Ickes. Instead, the *Times* was making a prediction—in time, the thirty-eight-year-old administrator who was “young in years…[but] old in experience” would prove to be a worthy successor to Ickes and earn the title “curmudgeon.” That hope never materialized. Ickes was a giant—a cogent administrator who combatted the Great Depression, helped win World War Two and fought racial and ethnic discrimination in the Washington corridors of power. Krug, in his nearly four-years as Secretary of the Interior, showed little acumen for Native American issues and ran his department without the vigorous convictions of his predecessor.58

Yet, like with Ickes, there was a disconnect between the public perception of Krug and his policies, and the nuanced reality of Krug’s tenure as Secretary of the Interior, at least regarding hydro-dam projects in Montana. Despite preconceived notions of the former “Power ‘Czar’” as an unfailing hydropower proponent, for example, Krug proved to be a defender of national park sanctity during numerous dam debates. And at the very least, while lacking Ickes’ commitment to civil rights advancement, Krug sympathized with Native Americans on sovereignty issues during his tenure in the late-1940s and worked to mitigate the physical and cultural dispossession caused by federal dam projects in the American West. In this way, Krug was intermittently a worthy successor to Ickes, a Secretary who welcomed the economic benefits of major dam construction throughout the country when necessary, while advancing the causes of wilderness preservation in the national parks and considering Native rights within the

Department of the Interior. In hindsight, perhaps a better nickname would have been the Occasional Curmudgeon.

During the Garrison Dam debates, for example, Krug’s public support for the devastating plan belied his personal opinions on Native American rights and sovereignty. When he took office, Krug pledged that “the will of the people as expressed through Congress” would guide his decision making and “that sometimes my own personal views will differ and I shall not hesitate to state and urge them. But where they are not supported in the Congress, they will not affect the activities of the [Interior] Department.” That is what happened at Garrison. Krug did not attempt to stop the in-process construction project, which was the hope of the Three Affiliated Tribes, but he did compose a plan that met the stated requirements of tribal leaders for the sale of the disputed land. When Congress intervened, however, Krug put aside his own conclusions, and supported the approved federal plan without public objection. Honoring his pledge to the American people to follow Congress, while ignoring his own public responsibility to Native Americans, was not a noble act, and Krug was regretful about his role in the dispossession. In 1948, the Three Affiliated Tribes accepted an unfavorable deal, according to Krug, “because they felt that they were helpless to do otherwise.”

A year later, Krug urged Congress to rectify the situation he helped facilitate. Krug wrote that the seizure of 155,000 acres of tribal land was unjust and that the “Indians have suffered great emotional stress because of the imminent upheaval of their economic, social, and

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community activities. This is readily understandable, considering that their feeling of security under their treaty with the United States is gone.” Since Congress had abrogated this treaty a year earlier, Congress “must acquit itself of the charge that it is proceeding with this public work in violation of solemn treaties and other promises, and without due regard for the welfare of its Indian citizens.” The federal government needed “to see that the injuries sustained by the Indians are mitigated to the fullest possible extent, and that they are given the means for making a good life in their new locations.” Ultimately, Congress paid the Three Affiliated Tribes $12.6 million for the seizure of their territory due to the construction of the Garrison Dam. Krug thought they deserved more for their loss. He pushed Congress to appropriate a total of $17 million for the tribes, and argued that if Congress did so, “I believe the Indians will accept this settlement as complete and final, although they will do so reluctantly and with heavy hearts. To give up forever the heart of the homeland which has been theirs for generations commands profound sympathy.”

While this professed sympathy was not enough to stop the dispossession of 155,000 acres of the Fort Berthold Reservation for a major dam project, nor sufficient to ensure full compensation for that loss, it hinted at Krug’s willingness to consider Salish and Kootenai efforts to protect the sanctity of the Flathead Reservation in Montana from a similar fate.

Despite his well-earned reputation as a “Boy Wonder” for facilitating the production and use of hydroelectric power, Krug was more than just a utilitarian conservationist. As head of Interior, Krug protected old growth forests in and around Olympic National Park from timber interests and opposed the construction of what he deemed “unsightly, unnecessary” dams in the

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United States. Krug promised National Park Service officials and national park superintendents that he was “opposed to projects which would make such use of park or monument lands unless there can be a clear showing of absolute need.” “This need,” Krug said in 1948, “must be measured by weighing the value of the proposed reservoir in integrated development of the particular river system against the value of the area as now constituted in the great national-park system.” He believed that national parks needed to preserve more land, not less, for future generations, and that hydroelectric dam projects like the one at Glacier View were only justifiable if proven absolutely necessary for the country’s health, prosperity and stability. Krug kept the same tone in a letter to Senator Burton K. Wheeler. Krug stated that he opposed the dam in Glacier National Park, as did the former Senator and part-time Glacier resident, but he recognized the growing power needs of the nation required hydroelectric dam construction. These energy “demands are great, but so are the opportunities for meeting them. In my view, that time has not yet come when the national need is so pressing that we must sacrifice to industrial or economic uses the natural resources of our national parks and monuments.”

Krug was a shrewd enough bureaucrat to leave himself an out. He opposed the Army Corps of Engineers’ dam in Glacier National Park—an unsurprising position given his department’s control over both the national parks and their own dam building agency—but he refused to do so unequivocally, especially in open forums. Publicly, Krug remained undecided on the Glacier View Dam.

The Mining City Dam, an Army Corps of Engineers proposal on the Green River in Kentucky, tested these convictions. This $37-million dam would have been eighty-six feet high

and almost two miles long and been located 104 miles up from the confluence of the Green and Ohio Rivers, near the town of Rochester. The main justifications for the dam included flood control, improved recreation and the production of about 27,000 kilowatts of continuous hydroelectrical power, which could be linked to the Tennessee Valley Authority power grid. This power offered both the region and the country security, during the early years of the atomic age. According to Colonel B.B. Talley, district engineer for the Corps of Engineers, the region’s hydropower would help the nation win a nuclear war, but if the Cold War remained stalemated then the Mining City Dam would provide “almost limitless possibilities in the development of industry, transportation, and contentment from the great things of peace.” This proposed dam threatened the “underground wilderness” of Mammoth Cave National Park. The Mining City Dam reservoir would impound up to 5-million acre-feet of water, raising river levels by almost thirty feet, and lead to periodic flooding in an underground tributary called the Echo River that flowed through Mammoth Cave.  

According to the Izaak Walton League, this flooding would cause “irreparable damage” to the fragile geologic features of the park and lead to the loss of millions of tourist dollars in the surrounding areas. Krug agreed, and combined science, economics and morality into his

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opposition of the dam, mimicking the broad arguments against Glacier View. As Secretary of the Interior, he believed he had an ethical responsibility to protect the sanctity of national parks. Furthermore, the negative consequences of the dam outweighed the proposed benefits. Krug argued that “it is essential that the unique scientific features of the cave not be subjected to extended, sporadic inundation, which would not only be damaging natural formation, would also cause…serious financial loss to Kentucky and a grave scientific and cultural loss to the Nation as a whole.” Due to the opposition of Interior figures like Krug, National Park Service officials, conservation groups like the Izaak Walton League and local Kentuckians, the Army Corps of Engineers abandoned their plans to build the Mining City Dam in the mid-1950s, thereby protecting Mammoth Cave National Park from inundation.63

As Julius Krug reached the crossroads of the Glacier View Dam debates in late-1948, he essentially faced three affirmative options—pro-dam, pro-park, or pro-Indian. At this historic intersection, Krug could realistically pick two of the three possibilities and justify his position. Logically, Krug needed to endorse one position, and then decide between the remaining two. As Secretary of the Interior, he wielded a great deal of power in the decisions on hydroelectric dam construction in western Montana, and while not binding to Congress nor the President, his opinions carried significant weight.

Given his background as a TVA engineer and his stated positions on natural resource use and hydropower development in his Marshall Plan report, Krug unsurprisingly affirmed his first position as in favor of federal dam construction on the rivers and watersheds of western Montana.

when he toured the region in September 1948. He visited the Hungry Horse construction site on September 24th, with an entourage that included Senator James Murray. When he praised the transformative abilities of the Reclamation dam for both northwestern Montana, and the country as a whole, his words must have sounded familiar to the proponents of Glacier View and Paradise projects. The timely completion Hungry Horse Dam was “vital” to the nation, according to Krug, and would help prevent electrical “brown out” conditions in the industrial areas of the Pacific Coast, would spur flagging aluminum fabrication in the region and atomic energy production at Hanford, Washington and would aid the United States’ ability to win future wars throughout the world. Combined with several existing projects on the Missouri River watershed, east of the Continental Divide, major dams on the Columbia system would ensure the agricultural and industrial future of Montana. Krug concluded that the “earliest possible date of completion of our reclamation program will not be soon enough.” Senator Murray agreed, arguing that federal projects like Hungry Horse were vital to the region, the state and the nation, and he called Krug an expert on public power generation and one of the greatest Secretaries of the Interior in the history of the United States.\footnote{A.E. Demaray, “Memorandum for the Superintendent, Glacier,” September 8, 1948, RG 79, Central Classified Files 1907-1949, Second Subseries 1933-1949, Box 109, Folder “Krug Julius (Trip);” Mike McHenry, “Krug Advocates Speeding Hungry Horse,” \textit{Missoulian}, September 25, 1948; “Krug Inspects Hungry Horse,” \textit{Spokesman-Review}, September 25, 1948; “Krug Inspects State Projects,” \textit{Billings Gazette}, September 24, 1948; and “Secretary Krug Says Hungry Horse ‘Vital’ While Viewing Site,” \textit{Daily Inter Lake}, September 25, 1948.} Having staked a public position on hydroelectric dams in Montana, Krug still had a crucial decision to make—would he support the construction of the Glacier View Dam that threatened the sanctity of Glacier National Park or the Paradise Dam that jeopardized the sovereignty of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai and the lands of the Flathead Reservation?
Krug’s visit to Glacier National Park and his site inspection on the North Fork of the Flathead River helped finalize his anti-Glacier View Dam position. Publicly, Krug maintained an undecided stance on the two contentious dams as he visited western Montana and contended that he still wanted to read all Army Corps of Engineer reports before making a definitive statement on either Glacier View or Paradise. He offered Montanans glimpses at his conflicting opinions, however. Krug admonished those impatient to profit from the natural resources of Glacier and argued that those “people should keep in mind that we should not do anything to break down the barriers in our national parks, but should keep them inviolate. They are the beauty spots of America, and compromise only a small part of the total area” of the nation. Yet, Krug also reiterated his department’s commitment to the protection of indigenous people and their homelands from outside exploiters, during his trip to Montana. On September 25th, Krug toured the Glacier View site—a narrow canyon between Glacier View and Huckleberry Mountains—and went fishing in the alpine waters of Bowman Lake on the west side of the park.65

The waters and wilderness of the North Fork Valley and the surrounding snow-packed mountain peaks convinced Krug to oppose the Glacier View Dam. He contended that his trip to the Glacier View site “convinced me that the area involved is an essential part of the park. The losses in wildlife resources, in forested wilderness, in scenic beauty and in recreational value to our whole Nation, in my opinion, are far greater than pictured by the dam’s proponents.” A few days after his visit, Krug told National Park Service officials that he would oppose the dam unless the Army could prove the “positive necessity” of the project. After considering the Corps

of Engineers’ proposals for Glacier, Krug remained unconvinced that the dam was essential. In December, Krug gave the National Park Service, national wilderness advocates, big game hunters, park tourists and other members of the disparate coalition opposed to the intrusive project the Christmas present they wanted most—he publicly opposed construction of the Glacier View Dam. Krug wrote to Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall and asked that the Army Corps of Engineers eliminate the Glacier View Dam from their plans to control the Columbia River system and released his decision to the press. While his December letter did not end the Glacier View debates entirely, Krug’s opposition to the dam was a significant blow to the proponents of the dam. As one Montana newspaper concluded: “with both the Interior Department and the National Park Service [now] opposed, there is little likelihood that the Glacier View dam will ever be built.”

With his decisions made, and his pro-dam and pro-park position stated clearly for public dissemination, Krug moved forward with dam projects that negatively impacted Native American reservations in Montana. For example, Krug called the Yellowtail Dam site on the Bighorn River, part of the Pick-Sloan Plan to control the Missouri watershed, “one of the great damsites in the country” and he pushed for “the earliest possible completion date for the project.” Krug seemed unconcerned that the Yellowtail Dam required the condemnation of thousands of acres of Crow Reservation land, against the wishes of many Crow leaders including Robert Yellowtail, the namesake of the project.


As Confederated Salish and Kootenai leaders feared, Krug chose the wilds of Glacier National Park over the protection of the Flathead Indian Reservation. In his letter to Royall, Krug suggested that the Army consider replacements for Glacier View, which the Corps promised to do in their response a couple weeks later. With that opening, Krug pushed the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork of the Columbia River as the best alternative to Glacier View. Krug argued for the “superiority of the Paradise site” as a multipurpose dam location on the Columbia system and that the Clark Fork dam would accomplish more in terms of flood control and hydroelectric power generation than Glacier View. Unsaid in his argument, of course, was that the Paradise Dam would drastically reshape the geology of populated areas of western Montana and inundate significant sections of the Flathead Reservation.68

CSK leaders reacted quickly to Krug’s betrayal of their interests. Steve DeMers reiterated that the tribes were “unalterably opposed” to the Paradise Dam. Tribal Council President Walter W. McDonald went even further, arguing that Secretary Krug had failed in his responsibility as “guardian of the Indians.” Because of the dereliction of his sworn duty as head of Interior, “he should be removed” from his Cabinet position immediately. Krug dismissed these as provincial concerns. “While we believe that local viewpoints should be given full consideration,” Krug contended, “the national viewpoint is certainly paramount when any such valuable property of the nation as Glacier national park is threatened.”69

Mike Mansfield, still in favor of the Glacier View project, supported the Confederated Salish and Kootenai in their opposition to the Paradise project. He wrote that Paradise “would be more expensive, take longer to build, [and] disrupt the economy of the area through the flooding

68 “Paradise Dam Issue Revived,” Missoulian, January 12, 1949; and Letter from Julius Krug to Mike Mansfield, April 6, 1949, Box 228, Folder 3, GNPA.
of towns and by the raising of Kerr Dam [on the Flathead Reservation] and thence the level of Flathead Lake.” Furthermore, the Paradise Dam reservoir “would create a problem of adjudicating losses which would be entailed by the Flathead Tribe[s] on their reservation” in western Montana.70

By Spring 1949, the construction of specific dams on the upper reaches of Columbia River watershed, and the future of both Glacier National Park and the Flathead Indian Reservation remained undecided. The Army Corps of Engineers, Mike Mansfield and Montana’s national leaders, pro-business boosters, flood control advocates, aluminum producers, Cold War prognosticators and many others wanted hydroelectric development in western Montana, and they clearly favored the Glacier View Dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River. The National Park Service helped organize a disparate coalition of wilderness activists, river runners, big game hunters, ecotourists and others to oppose this intrusion into Glacier National Park, and they convinced the “Power ‘Czar’”—turned-Secretary of the Interior to join their position. The Hetch Hetchy controversy had demonstrated that parks were not inviolable, however, and Glacier’s own origins and history proved that dam construction was possible in the national park. As an alternative to Glacier View, Secretary Krug pushed for the approval and construction of the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork, continuing his support for major dam projects that negatively impacted Native Americans in the American West.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai of Montana were angry—betrayed by the man they considered (at least publicly) the “guardian of the Indians”—and pessimistic about the impending decisions of the federal government. A century of dishonorable history justified their

70 Letter from Mike Mansfield to Julius A. Krug, February 25, 1949, Box 228, Folder 6, GNPA.
cynicism. In 1855, Isaac Stevens, accompanied by the United States Army, negotiated a disputed treaty with the Bitterroot Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai peoples, pushing them onto a reservation 95 percent smaller than their traditional homelands. In 1891, the Army forced holdout Salish from their homes in the Bitterroot Valley and oversaw their relocation north to the southern boundary of the Flathead Reservation. In 1904, Congress passed the Flathead Allotment Act, in attempt to compel the assimilation of Native Americans into a Jeffersonian, agricultural existence, against the wishes of Flathead leaders. The Bureau of Indian Affairs negotiated the construction of the Kerr Dam in 1930, without significant input from tribal leaders. And as of 1947, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai were at the top of the federal termination list, which would dissolve the official relationship between the CSK and the United States government.

Unable to convince Julius Krug to aid their efforts to protect their remaining homelands, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai seemed resigned to the looming “ill effects which they would suffer from the Paradise Dam”—a “fantastic and un-American proposal” in their estimation.71

In a situation laced with historical irony, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai leaders failed to persuade Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug, overseer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to uphold the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 and assist their sovereign efforts against the Paradise Dam proposed by the United States Army, and instead convinced the Army itself. On April 11, 1949, Krug and Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall released their joint plan to control the Columbia River watershed. In a letter to President Harry Truman, cosigned by Michael Strauss, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation and Lewis Pick, Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, the authors stressed that this “fully coordinated” amalgamation of Reclamation and

Corps of Engineers plans for the Columbia, similar in that respect to Pick-Sloan Plan for the Missouri River, included all necessary compromises on “numerous important and interrelated matters,” such as competing dam proposals on tributaries in western Montana. Unlike the reality of the Pick-Sloan Plan, however, this unified vision contained plans for “meeting [the] needs and rights of Indians” in the Pacific Northwest. Krug and Royall reached compromises based on a simple governing principle—no dam on the Columbia system would move forward without the approval of both secretaries.\footnote{Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, \textit{Columbia River Basin—Agreement on the Principles and Responsibilities for the Comprehensive Plan of Development}, April 11, 1949, reprinted in United States Senate, \textit{The Columbia Basin: Hearings before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Eighty-First Congress, First and Second Sessions, on H.R. 5472}, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1950): 40-44; and Donald Robinson, \textit{Through the Years in Glacier National Park: An Administrative History}, (Kalispell, MT: Glacier Natural History Association Inc, 1960): 69.}

The total report outlined decisions and updates on more than sixty dams and reclamation projects in the region. Yet only two specific dams are mentioned in the presidential digest that began this report—Glacier View and Paradise. Regarding these contentious dams, Krug and Royall agreed—“neither project [is] to be recommended at this time.” Instead, the two departments would work on identifying alternatives to accomplish the flood control, hydroelectric power generation and recreational goals of the now-defeated dams. This signifies, of course, that Krug held firm and protected the wilderness of the western expanses of Glacier National Park. But it also means that Royall, as head of the Department of the Army, rejected the construction of the Paradise Dam that threatened the Flathead Indian Reservation. A week later President Truman praised the plan that excised both Glacier View and Paradise. “I believe the report indicates real progress” towards flood control in the Pacific Northwest, Truman wrote...
Krug, and after implementation, would provide “an inventory of projects and a most useful basis” for commanding the Columbia River system.”\textsuperscript{73}

Three years earlier, Colonel L. H. Hewitt, a Corps district engineer working on the Columbia River plan, promised that the Army would not build dams unsupported by local communities. Western Montanans, especially those in the vicinity of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, overwhelmingly opposed the construction of the Paradise Dam, as reflected in several conferences on the issue in Montana. More so, Montanans recognized (and perhaps exploited) the unique legal position of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Indians in the fight against Paradise. The sovereign rights of these Native Americans, as guaranteed by the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, was the strongest argument opponents had against the dam. Thousands of Montanans—the “white brothers” of the Flathead Indians—voiced their resistance to the destructive potential of the project, but only the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai had a century-old legal claim to protection from the flooding waters of the Paradise Dam. Opposition groups made sure to coordinate their arguments with tribal leaders, particularly Steve DeMers and President Walter McDonald, to project a unified public alliance.\textsuperscript{74} And in the end, these arguments won the day.

The Army Corps favored the Glacier View site for political more than engineering reasons. Corps engineers believed Paradise was a better dam site overall, and initially included

\textsuperscript{73} Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, \textit{Columbia River Basin}, 40-44; and Letter from Harry S. Truman to Julius A. Krug, April 18, 1949, Record Group 48, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Office Files of Oscar Chapman, Box 4, Folder “Columbia Valley,” Records of the National Park Service, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, hereafter referred to as RG48.

the Clark Fork dam in their plans to control the Columbia River. They reversed their position, however, since “local opposition to Paradise was more extensive and concerted because of the developed lands and Indian interests involved.” When Krug publicly opposed Glacier View in late-1948, the Corps had the opportunity to switch course again, and revive their support for the “superior” dam. But according to the joint report to the President on the Columbia River, the Paradise Dam was rejected for the same reasons—the opposition of Montana and “local interests,” like the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Indians, to the project. Flathead leaders and residents had reason to celebrate. Against the run of their century-long history with the United States government, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Indians had turned aside federal plans to build the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork of the Flathead River and protected their reservation from further forced dispossession.

National park enthusiasts and wilderness activists also had cause to cheer. The contentious effort to defeat the proposed Glacier View Dam in the 1940s marks a significant triumph for wilderness preservation in the United States—a victory in the national park “battle of the Century.” In this endeavor, a nationwide coalition of local Montanans, National Park Service officials led by Director Newton Drury and Glacier Superintendent John Emmert, and national wilderness groups like the Wilderness Society, the Isaak Walton League, and the Sierra Club convinced Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug, a noted hydropower enthusiast, to support their efforts to preserve the wildest areas of Glacier National Park. Krug, the zealous new convert to wilderness protection, then excised the Glacier View Dam from the unified plan for the

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Columbia in April 1949. Despite the fact that Glacier View “[was] one of the most economically favorable projects considered for the plan and…[was] approved by the State of Montana and local interests generally, …[it was] strongly opposed by many because it would encroach upon Glacier National Park,” according to the report. Therefore, Krug and Royall both agreed to reject the Glacier View Dam.76

Although northwestern Montana did get an authorized hydroelectric project in the agreement, the 422-feet high Libby Dam on the Kootenai River, Representative Mike Mansfield asked Krug to reconsider his position on Glacier View, since Mansfield intended to propose a bill funding the construction of the dam in August 1949. Krug refused. In a two-page letter to Mansfield, Krug reiterated his multiple reasons for opposing the dam and concluded: “I therefore hope that you will understand my position and why I cannot alter my opposition to the Glacier View Project. I do not deny the need for water control on the Clark Fork, but we must find some way to do it without sacrificing Glacier National Park.” Dr. A. A. Dodge, a staunch opponent of a “dirt dam” on the North Fork of the Flathead River and a personal friend of Glacier Superintendent John Emmert, was much more succinct in his one-line congratulatory note, writing, “Glacier View Dam go bust!”77

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76 Oppedahl, “Conflicts between Resource Development and Preservation at Glacier National Park,” 71; and Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Columbia River Basin, 41-43.
There was an imbalance of power following debates over major federal dam building projects in the twentieth century. When dam proponents won the day—and they almost always did—their victories were a permanent end to the discussion. As biologist H. Frank Evans argued: “Wilderness once removed is forever lost.” The construction of concrete monoliths by the Army Corps of Engineers or the Bureau of Reclamation completely changed the geology and hydrology of American rivers, provided physical benefits like flood control and hydropower generation and created “organic machines” like the Columbia River system. These technologically sublime “pyramids” served a symbolic purpose as well—reminding observers of the domination of a landscape by ingenious American engineers and the progressive efforts of the federal government to solve societal ills. Large dams also displaced people from their homelands and inundated picturesque canyons in previously protected landscapes, eternally quenching the strongest original arguments against the dam.\(^7\)

The defeat of a federal dam in the United States was literally less concrete. No dam was built, of course, but no guarantees were made, either. Congress passed appropriation bills that omitted dams from river control plans, but rarely crafted legislation preserving wilderness areas or undammed rivers. The defeat of a dam was like extinguishing a forest fire—a grimy, exhausting effort that ended with the protection of the natural landscape. Like these conflagrations, dam debates could flare up and occasionally reignite, even after the hardest work to stop them was done. For better or worse, that reality is a feature of American republican democracy. Presidential elections happen every four years, and new executive branches bring different Cabinet members with neoteric ideas about the environment and goals for the

conservation of the natural world. The agreement between Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug and Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall—both of whom resigned their Cabinet positions by the end of 1949—might be revisited by any one of their successors. And it was.79

This reveals both the promise and pitfalls of grassroots action in the mid-twentieth century, especially regarding issues involving the national parks. The defense of Glacier National Park, which involved a nationwide coalition of National Park Service officials, wilderness activists and outdoor recreation enthusiasts, put in years of effort to convince Julius Krug to oppose the Glacier View Dam. They wrote and posted thousands of angry letters, sent postcards and telegrams from all across the country, they recruited and cajoled allies, shot and distributed photographs of the North Fork Valley, made countless long-distance phone calls and collectively travelled thousands of miles to testify against the intrusive dam. Their grassroots campaign was unified by effort. Their hard work paid off and Krug came out in opposition to the dam. Likewise, the efforts of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai to preserve the sanctity of the Flathead Indian Reservation was a decidedly bottom-up approach, using the same tactics as Glacier’s defenders on smaller scale. They allied with other Montanans to oppose the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork, they wrote letters, gave newspaper interviews, they solicited support from their Congressmen, and most importantly, they reminded anyone who would listen about their treaty-guaranteed rights to sovereignty. They helped convince Secretary Kenneth Royall that local Montanans did not want the Paradise Dam and he agreed to omit from the Corps of Engineers’ plans to control the Columbia. Yet, the decision to include or exclude a dam from the Columbia River development plan still rested with two powerful, political appointees, a

harrowing reality of American politics for any social movement. The final judgment was top-
down. Krug and Royall might listen to the voices of thousands of grassroots activists or they
might keep their own council. In the end they listened, and they confirmed historic victories for
wilderness activism and Native American rights in western Montana and set historic precedent
for the sanctity of both national parks and Native American reservations.

In the 1950s and 1960s, pro-dam interests and industrial boosters, led by Mike Mansfield
and other Montana legislators, attempted to revive interest in both the Glacier View and Paradise
Dams, and the three roads of these debates intersected once again. The Krug-Royall agreement,
while not absolute, established an almost insurmountable precedent for the protection of rivers in
America’s national parks, including Glacier. Prior to Glacier View, the model for conversations
about dams in national parks focused on the Hetch Hetchy controversy in Yosemite. San
Francisco dam proponents lobbied and convinced the federal government, especially Secretary of
the Interior Franklin Lane, that a dam-reservoir complex was a better use for a remote section of
the Tuolumne River in that national park, opening the door for other dam proposals in protected
lands.80

Glacier View helped slam that door shut. National parks, especially the remote
wilderness areas and wild, free-flowing rivers of Glacier National Park, were now sacrosanct
nature in the minds of most Americans, not potential sites of utilitarian development. In future
flare ups, dam proponents had an additional, powerful argument to overcome—historic
precedent. For most observers, the debates in the 1930s and 1940s, culminating in the joint

80 “Mansfield in Favor of Glacier View Dam,” Daily Inter Lake, September 25, 1955; Mary E. Reed, A History of
the North Pacific Division, (Seattle: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1991): 121; and United States Senate, A Bill To
provide for the construction of the Glacier View Dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River in the State of
Montana, and for other purposes, H.R. 6153, August 26, 1949, copy in Box 228, Folder 6, GNPA.
decision of the Interior and Army Departments, decided the Glacier dam issue in April 1949. When Mike Mansfield introduced his $94 million Glacier View Dam bill in the United States House of Representatives, on August 26, 1949, for example, the House referred Mansfield’s bill to the Committee on Public Works, where it never emerged. The House neither debated nor voted on the matter—the subject was closed, according to the Eighty-First Congress.81

This was a historic victory for wilderness and wild rivers in the United States, and its importance amplified in the 1950s. As the twentieth century ticked past its halfway point, the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior, national wilderness organizations, park enthusiasts and wildlife conservationists, repeatedly upheld this precedent on the wilderness rivers of national parks and prevented the construction of the intrusive Glacier View Dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River in Montana, and in doing so, they moved the country forward toward the permanent preservation of wild America.

81 Letter from Oscar L. Chapman to Mike Mansfield, May 29, 1951, Box 229, Folder 2, GNPA; Letter from Oscar Chapman to Frank Pace, undated, Box 229, Folder 2, GNPA; and “Glacier View Dam Bill Presented,” Missoulian, August 26, 1949.
Chapter Six: The Wild Hour

This is the violet hour, the hour of hush and wonder, when the affections glow and valor is reborn, when the shadows deepen along the edge of the forest and we believe that, if we watch carefully, at any moment we may see the unicorn.
—Bernard DeVoto, *The Hour*

In July 1956, University of Montana professor and prominent wildlife biologist John Craighead organized a five-day rafting expedition down the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. The Middle Fork originates in the snow packed peaks of the Bob Marshall Wilderness and drains more than 400 miles of remote territory. The river then runs northwest, eventually forming the southern border of Glacier National Park before joining the North Fork just above Coram, Montana. The Middle Fork cuts through granite canyons and prime grizzly habitat, and the turquoise torrents of the upper reaches rate as Class IV whitewater during spring runoff. Craighead was well-qualified to lead such a trip. Along with his twin brother and fellow biologist Frank, he grew up exploring in the rapids and wildlife of the Potomac River headwaters, developed a training program and wrote a manual that taught physical endurance and wilderness survival skills to Navy pilots during World War Two and pioneered the use of rubber rafts on whitewater float trips down the wild Salmon River in Idaho. This 1956 expedition would turn out to be one of the most significant rafting trips in American history.¹

Accompanying Craighead on this excursion were his friends Clifton Merritt, a noted wilderness activist, and Dr. J. Frederick Bell, a researcher with the United States Public Health Department, as well as a collection of local outdoor enthusiasts and representatives of the Montana Fish and Game Department. This assortment of river runners enjoyed the trip immensely, alternating between challenging the frothy rapids of the untamed river and pulling “leg-sized” trout out of the seldom fished waters. Craighead described the Middle Fork as “one of the most scenic ‘wild’ rivers in the Northwest” and argued that “the country is ideal for pack trips and the river offers a ‘white water’ float trip of unsurpassed beauty. The scenery is superb, fish and wildlife are abundant, and in every direction the outdoorsman meets the challenge of primeval country.”

Illustration Nineteen John Craighead lands a westslope cutthroat trout during a trip on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. Image from Clifton Merritt Papers, Mansfield Library, University of Montana

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Two decades later, John Schroeder made a similar trip into the headwaters of the Flathead River. Schroeder, a reporter and outdoor writer from Waukesha, Wisconsin, took a family trip to the wild areas south and west of Glacier National Park in 1977, and used this exhilarating experience as the basis for a column on northwestern Montana. He explored the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead and fished the cold waters of the North Fork upriver from the Glacier View Dam site. While the fish on the North Fork proved elusive, he nevertheless recommended a float trip down the river he called “still a wild stream” to his readers, to access the riffles and pools filled with aggressive Dolly Varden trout. A full creel, however, was not the point of such a journey. “But for a flatland tourist,” Schroeder insisted, “just standing on the water’s edge and looking off to the still snow spotted Rocky Mountains was enough. Catching a fish was a bonus to the scenery.” He was worried, though. Montana, like many other states in the country, was succumbing to the sprawl of “urban ugliness” and a “frontier attitude” threatened the wildness of the region. “But it is also an attitude, I think is changing,” Schroeder concluded, “I read a couple Montana magazines and one newspaper and I think they are starting to learn, as other states have, that it’s time to consider the land as an important part of the quality of life and they ain’t making anymore of it.”

While difficult to confirm, John Schroeder quite possibly read about the preservation of wilderness and wild rivers in those Montana periodicals. In 1976, Congress designated the upper three forks of the Flathead River—including the North Fork that so mesmerized Schroeder on his trip—as wild and scenic rivers and debates continued in the press a year later as to the $6.7 million appropriations and management plan for these protected waterways. In 1977, when

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Schroeder visited the Glacier area, Montana newspapers covered debates over the proposed Great Bear Wilderness extensively. One account called the headwaters of the Flathead “one of this nation’s premier officially undesignated wilderness areas” and reported that “only the most diehard anti-wilderness factions oppose its classification,” which certainly fit the changing Montanan attitudes Schroeder encountered. Congress approved this new wilderness area, which preserved the Middle Fork of the Flathead River and linked the Bob Marshall wilderness with Glacier National Park, in 1978. Schroeder’s visit to the rugged regions surrounding Glacier National Park coincided with the culmination of organized efforts to protect the wilds of the upper Flathead River system. A major component of that preservation started with John Craighead’s float trip down the Middle Fork twenty years earlier. One river trip begot the other.4

John Craighead’s float down the Middle Fork in 1956 was part of a crucial phase in the environmental history of the United States. It was an era when efforts to protect wilderness and wild rivers from hydroelectric dam development moved from reactive to proactive in philosophy. Howard Zahniser’s crusade to create a national wilderness designation began in 1949, reached national audiences in the mid-1950s, and culminated with the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. Almost concurrently, John and Frank Craighead led national efforts to establish a federal classification for free-flowing rivers in the United States, which led directly to the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968. A commonality in both these two seminal campaigns was the Glacier View Dam. Zahniser called for the creation of a new federal wilderness system in 1949, inspired in part by the threat posed by the dam. In turn, the defeat of the Glacier View Dam furnished the blueprint for the successful defense of Echo Park in Dinosaur National

Monument in the mid-1950s. Glacier View and the alternative Spruce Park Dam both angered and inspired the Craigheads to protect a system of wild rivers and led to the final defeat of all possible hydroelectric dam projects on the upper forks of the Flathead River. Between 1949 and 1968, systematic efforts to preserve wild America reached their crucial hour in the United States and the defeat of the Glacier View Dam was a vital reason why.

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The Glacier View Dam project, omitted from the Columbia River storage plan due to the concerted effort of the National Park Service, wilderness activists and outdoor enthusiasts, flared back to life sporadically in the 1950s. The consensus used to defeat the dam, and the precedent this victory set, allowed Glacier Park enthusiasts to extinguish all revivals, but it took a decade of constant vigilance. Numerous times in the 1950s, Montana boosters and legislators, Army Corps of Engineers officials and industrial interests attempted to restart the Glacier View conversation to the dismay of wilderness proponents. For example, the National Parks Association worried that the Glacier View Dam had “not been cancelled but only ‘postponed.’” In Montana, hunters and fishermen fretted that a restart of the Glacier View Dam would imperil the unadulterated waters of the upper Flathead River and the winter feeding grounds of charismatic game animals. These outdoor enthusiasts had helped defeat the dam “designed to turn a fine trout stream into a placid pool stretching from near the mouth of the river to the Canadian boundary” and forced the Army Engineers “to back away,” and in doing so, secured victory in what Newton Drury called the “battle of the century.” In the 1950s, according to outdoor journalist John Willard, “Sportsmen thought Glacier View was dead and buried, and they enjoyed the wake, but barely a year later the corpse had risen from the ground as great a threat as ever.” These efforts never amounted to much, but were a constant worry for the protectors of wild America. “Glacier View
proved that people will be heard and heeded in these matters,” Montana Wildlife Federation leaders argued, “but it also proved there can be no relaxation, even after the battle is won.”

The 1949 defeat of the Glacier View Dam also prepared wilderness and wild river activists for new dam fights in the 1950s, especially the controversial Echo Park Dam. Proposed by the Bureau of Reclamation as part of a multi-dam project to control the volatile Colorado River, this project was located near the confluence of the Green and Yampa Rivers in northwestern Colorado and northeastern Utah. And like Glacier View, this dam threatened the sanctity of the National Park Service since Echo Park was to be built in Whirlpool Canyon on the Green River, near the center of Dinosaur National Monument and flood picturesque canyons like Echo Park in that protected landscape.

Using powers granted to the president under the auspices of the Antiquities Act of 1906, President Woodrow Wilson created Dinosaur National Monument in 1915. The Antiquities Act allows the creation of small monuments designed to protect areas of significant scientific or historic value to the country. At Dinosaur, Wilson protected eighty acres of Jurassic fossils, just east of Vernal, Utah. In 1909, funded by industrialist Andrew Carnegie, paleontologist Earl Douglass discovered a trove of 400 dinosaur skeletons in northeastern Utah, which Douglass named the Carnegie Quarry after his benefactor. Douglass argued that this find was

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6 There were two dams that threatened Dinosaur National Monument as part of Bureau of Reclamation efforts to command the Colorado River in the 1950s. In conjunction with the larger Echo Park Dam, Reclamation wanted to build a smaller dam downriver called the Split Mountain Dam with an “inactive” reservoir. The purpose of this dam was to regulate water releases from the larger Echo Park project. Like most historians, I refer to the Dinosaur proposals as the Echo Park Dam, with the understanding that this smaller reclamation project was also part of the plan. See United States House of Representatives, *Colorado River Storage Project: A Letter Assistant Secretary of the Interior transmitting A Report on the Colorado River Storage Project and Participating Projects, Providing for the Development and Utilization of the Water and Related Resources of the Upper Colorado River Basin, Pursuant to the Federal Reclamation Laws*, House Document No. 364, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1954): 123.
groundbreaking and “so far as I know no dinosaur quarry like this has ever been found before.”
Six years later, Wilson agreed, and proclaimed the monument to preserve “an extraordinary
deposit of Dinosaurian and other gigantic reptilian remains of the Juratrias period, which are of
great scientific interest and value” to the United States. Clearly, the creation of Dinosaur was not
about the preservation of wilderness, at least not initially. Wilson simply wanted to protect a
significant scientific discovery from potential damage due to the “activities of curiosity seekers.”
In 1938, however, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt vastly expanded Dinosaur, adding
210,000 acres of public land to the monument. These new lands did not contain dinosaur fossils,
which would confuse future visitors and wilderness activists alike, but did include mountainous
wilderness areas, picturesque sandstone canyons and the future Echo Park dam site. John Wesley
Powell, the first Anglo-American to float much of the Colorado River, described the region in
Romantic tones and wrote that Echo Park’s waters “rushing with great velocity,…edifying and
spinning in whirlpools by projecting rocks and short curves,…waltz their way through the
canyon, making their own rippling, rushing, roaring music.”

A little more than a decade later, the Bureau of Reclamation proposed the silencing of
Echo Park’s wild harmonies. As with the Tennessee River in Appalachia, the Missouri River in
the upper Great Plains and the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest, post-World War Two
federal dam builders wanted to harness the awesome hydropower, tap the irrigation potential and
limit the flood damage of the Colorado River for the betterment of the rapidly growing American
West. In 1946, the Bureau described the Colorado as a “natural menace” and contended that
“Unharnessed it tore through deserts, flooded fields, and ravaged villages. It drained the water

7 Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, 7; “Uncle Sam Protects Prehistoric Relics,” Salt Lake Telegram, November 12,
1915; Thomas G. Smith, Green Republican: John Saylor and the Preservation of America’s Wilderness, (Pittsburgh:
University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006): 57; and J. W. Powell, The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons,
from the mountains and plains, raced it through sun-baked thirsty lands, and dumped it in the Pacific Ocean—a treasure lost forever.” Without the miracle of modern dam building, “Man was on the defensive. He sat helplessly by to watch the Colorado River waste itself, or attempted in vain to halt its destruction.” To curb such loss, Reclamation wanted to build a series of ten dams along the Colorado River watershed, including the Echo Park Dam, the Flaming Gorge Dam in Utah and the Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona, as part of the overarching Colorado River Storage Project. In Dinosaur National Monument, Bureau engineers wanted to build a 525-foot-high concrete dam in Whirlpool Canyon, just downriver from the sublime Echo Park gorge, which would have created a reservoir with a max capacity of 6.5 million acre-feet of water, provided irrigation for 500,000 acres of nearby land, and generated 120,000 kilowatts of hydroelectric power for the region.8

For both advocates and opponents, the Echo Park Dam was very similar to the Glacier View Dam proposal for the North Fork of the Flathead River. Proponents argued that Echo Park, like a dam in Glacier National Park, would transform the region economically by providing low cost hydroelectric power to industrial interests, would control dangerous floods in the mercurial watershed and would provide modern recreational opportunities in little visited areas of the National Park Service. For national park leaders and wilderness activists, the proposed dam was yet another assault on the inviolability of America’s protected lands. Much like Glacier View, the proposed Echo Park Dam threatened “one of the most interesting (and one of the least known) of all the country’s treasure houses of scenic wilderness.”9

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While initially alarming, these similarities offered hope and optimism to the defenders of wilderness. The Glacier View Dam defense proved the viability of a national wilderness argument for the protection of national park properties, and the Echo Park Dam presented another opportunity to reinforce this point in the minds of Americans. At Echo Park, the same activists and organizations often replicated arguments and strategies that had been successful at Glacier View only a few years earlier. According to historian Mark Harvey, the alliance protecting Echo Park “had to find a strategy for winning” in the early 1950s and they created a persuasive argument “by questioning the need for the dam and proposing alternative sites, mounting an advertising campaign for the remote and isolated Dinosaur National Monument, and establishing ties with political forces in Congress that sought to quell such large water and power projects.”

These wilderness activists did not generate a new strategy for Echo Park as much as they repeated the one developed in the fight over the Glacier View Dam. Newton Drury and the National Park Service, Olaus Murie and Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society and David Brower and the emerging Sierra Club duplicated many of the same techniques and arguments in opposing Echo Park as they had at Glacier View, with similar results. Bernice Marshall, President of the National Life Conservation Society and long-time influencer of Congressional conservation efforts was one who recognized these similarities. “I fear Glacier is a test case,” she wrote the National Park Service, “If we conservationists have to yield to local interests there we will fail all along the line.” The victory at Glacier View provided momentum for environmental interests to continue to defend the sanctity of the national parks. In a letter opposing the Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument, Marshall remarked that “we had just got through

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10 Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*, xxii.
with a hard campaign to keep Glacier View Dam out of Glacier National Park” before moving on to the fight in Dinosaur. Marshall opposed Echo Park in the little-known Dinosaur National Monument, but she was much more concerned with the preservation of the renowned Glacier National Park. A defeat of dam building efforts at Dinosaur would affirm the inviolability of Glacier; the construction of Bureau of Reclamation dam on the Green River would make a revived Army Corps of Engineers project on the North Fork of the Flathead River likely. Referencing Horatio R. Palmer’s song “Yield Not to Temptation,” she proclaimed: “Each Victory will help you, Some other to win.”  

The tested techniques of Glacier View helped wilderness activists defend Dinosaur National Monument, and in turn, a triumph at Echo Park reinforced the precedent that national park properties were sacrosanct to federal dam building agencies.

From the onset, the pro-dam side in the Echo Park controversy linked the precedent and arguments of Glacier View with the defense of Dinosaur National Monument. For some pro-development interests in the American West, the defeat of the Glacier View dam in 1949 made approval of Echo Park difficult because the goals and strategies of wilderness activists were indistinguishable for both dams. For example, Dr. Ernest Untermann, a geologist and natural history museum director, and engineer Harry Ratliff filmed their float trip down the Green River in 1950 and tried to use this movie to gain support for the construction of the Echo Park Dam. Both men lived in Vernal, Utah near the proposed dam site and hoped the reclamation project would spur economic development in the region. The 1949 precedent made the Echo Park Dam

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less likely, according to these boosters in a Washington, DC press conference, because the same “argument against flooding part of a national park was used successfully last year to block authorization for Glacier View dam in Montana, which would have inundated some Glacier Park land.” The Associated Press observed this connection between Glacier View and Echo Park as well, in an article assessing public opinion on the Dinosaur National Monument project. According to their report, “proponents of the [Echo Park] project know that their opponents are the same well-organized groups that blocked construction of…the proposed Glacier View Dam on the north fork of the Flathead River in Montana…a key project in the Army Engineer’s master control plan for the Columbia River.” Because of the persuasive and coordinated opposition to the Glacier View Dam, “Plans for its construction have been abandoned.”

Olaus Murie also linked the 1949 defeat of the Glacier View Dam, and the burgeoning wilderness movement, with the Echo Park controversy in Dinosaur National Monument. In 1950, Murie wrote Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman to express his opposition to the Echo Park Dam. To Murie, Dinosaur was a superlative example of national wilderness—part of “a nationwide pattern whose purpose is to save for the American people samples of original America” while providing “scientific” and “educational values” for a nature-hungry public. Murie argued that the Glacier View precedent must apply to Dinosaur. “When we all rushed to the defense of Glacier Park, threatened by the Army,” Murie wrote, “we had strongly in mind that beside trying to save a valuable part of the park, we were defending the integrity of the whole park system.” In Murie’s mind, the victory at Glacier View and the successful defense of the national park system should therefore protect Echo Park. The Glacier View Dam triumph and the onset of the Echo

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Park debates occurred at the onset of a great wilderness “awakening” in the United States. As the economy boomed, as the population skyrocketed, as technology and “gadget comforts” dominated American life, there would be an even greater “social need” for wilderness. Murie asked Chapman, “can we not at this time visualize the coming scarcity value of untouched canyons, original desert areas, uncarved mountains, and patches of original tree growth. Can we not visualize the scientific and educational value of spots…which preserve the flora and fauna in original ecological relationship?” The rejection of the Glacier View Dam was a safeguarding of this “social need” for wilderness. At Glacier View just a year earlier, the Wilderness Society and numerous others were “defending the principle that the social need expressed by the park that was in danger is fully as important as the material needs that threatened it.” This collective requirement for wilderness was also “typified in this instance by Dinosaur National Monument.” Americans needed wilderness, the Glacier View Dam defeat set the precedent for protecting national park wilderness and this need and pattern must be protected in Dinosaur. After Glacier View, “it would be disastrous if warring interstate jealousies over water could, through the agency of…[the] bureau [of Reclamation], so easily set aside a dedicated area against the wishes of the National Park Service, and without even consulting the interested public.”

While the timing and defensive strategies of Glacier View and Echo Park were similar, there were some key differences in the two controversies that made a dam in Dinosaur a more contentious and national issue. The first was status. Dinosaur, as a recently enlarged national monument, did not capture the same attention from the public as a national park. During World War Two, less than 2,000 tourists visited Dinosaur National Monument annually, although that

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number jumped to more than 12,000 by the end of the 1940s. Congress was also less invested in national monuments, since presidents created monuments by proclamation, and therefore was less likely to oppose resource use within these protected areas. The second major difference was the recommending federal agency. The Army Corps of Engineers proposed the construction of Glacier View while the Bureau of Reclamation wanted to build the dam at Echo Park. This is a vital distinction given the power of the Secretary of the Interior in adjudicating federal dam controversies in the national parks. The Secretary of the Interior controls both the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, while the Army Corps of Engineers reports to the Secretary of Defense. At Glacier View, Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug sided with Newton Drury and the National Park Service in his own department, although it took some convincing. At Echo Park, Interior had to decide between competing interests within the same overall agency. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a new Secretary of the Interior was in charge during the fight to protect Dinosaur National Monument.\(^\text{14}\)

Longtime bureaucrat Oscar Chapman succeeded Julius Krug as Secretary of the Interior. Chapman served as Assistant Secretary to both Harold Ickes and Julius Krug and was a well-respected political operative in the Democratic Party—“one of the shrewdest politicians of the century” according to the New York Times. President Harry S. Truman appointed Chapman to head Interior in late-1949 and Chapman served in that position until the Eisenhower administration took over in 1953. Truman once referred to Chapman as the most knowledgeable person to ever serve in the Interior and wrote Chapman that the “conservation and wise development of our natural resources, which are entrusted to your Department, have been in

\(^{14}\) National Park Service, “Dinosaur NM [Visitation Statistics].” 
[https://irma.nps.gov/STATS/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitati](https://irma.nps.gov/STATS/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitatio)
good hands. Under your administration, great forward steps have been taken in reclamation programs and the expansion of public power in the West.” Chapman was a conservationist in the mold of Gifford Pinchot and he contended that “Conservation does not mean, as so many of our people are prone to think, the locking up of some resource in order to keep people from touching or using it. It means to develop the resource in a wise way.” Federal hydroelectric expansion — even in lands protected by the National Park Service—was a cornerstone of Chapman’s administration. He later remarked that “I was very strong for power, public power…[and] interested in dams and building of dams for the purposes of power and reclamation and things of that kind…I’m for building every one we can.”

On April 3, 1950, Chapman convened a public hearing to discuss the merits of the Echo Park Dam and he opened the meeting with an ode to Pinchot. “It is my purpose in holding these hearings to try and determine from you people which [side] you think is more important to the country, Chapman contended, and he declared that his decision rested on “the largest number of people who can be served and the greatest good that can be served.” The question, then, was simple: how best could the Echo Park Canyon serve the United States of America? For national park officials and preservationists, the highest use of these canyons on the Green and Yampa Rivers was as superlative wilderness protected in a national park property. Famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., one of the only people present at the hearing who had actually floated through the Echo Park canyon, testified that the “scenic and inspirational values

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obtainable by the public from this National Monument if preserved in its natural condition…would not be wholly destroyed by the construction…[of the Echo Park Dam] now proposed; but they would be greatly damaged and reduced.” Newton Drury appeared on behalf of the National Park Service and proposed alternatives like the Glen Canyon site be built before violating a national monument. Since they had never seen the canyons in question, Drury, Howard Zahniser, and many others present focused on the threat this dam posed not just to Dinosaur National Monument, but to the entire national park system. Likening the proposal to past efforts like Hetch Hetchy or Glacier View, conservationist and historian Irving Brant told Chapman that the Echo Park proposal was “one more move in the incessant drive to break down the national park system by subordinating all values not measurable by dollars.”

Proponents of Echo Park certainly used economic arguments to their advantage. The Echo Park reservoir would provide irrigation to the desiccated landscape while accruing the lowest evaporation rates of any storage site on the Colorado watershed. The same reservoir would create a recreational utopia and draw visitors to a seldom-seen area of the country. The strongest argument to the Secretary of the Interior was the promise of cheap hydropower for the emerging region. For example, Ralph Goodrich, part of the Upper Colorado River Commission and a former professor and dean of engineering at the University of Wyoming, implored Chapman to approve the controversial dam and promised that “if Echo Park was started at once and completed in five years, its [power] output would be entirely absorbed by the rapidly expanding power market of what is coming to be an industrial empire in the west.”

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16 Ise, Our National Park Policy, 478; Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, 84-85, including Olmstead, Jr. quotation; and Letter from Irving Brant to Oscar Chapman, April 3, 1950, quoted in Fox, The American Conservation Movement, 281.

17 Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, 89.
Montanans got a glimpse of the economic development envisioned by Echo Park Dam boosters in the early 1950s. Drawn by the power potential of the Hungry Horse Dam, the Harvey Machine Company of Los Angeles purchased power options necessary for an aluminum plant in the Flathead Valley in 1949. In 1951, the Anaconda Mining Company purchased the Harvey interests, renamed the company Anaconda Aluminum and built a $65 million reduction plant outside of Columbia Falls near Teakettle Mountain. This industrial campus included a 130-foot tall paste plant, which was the tallest building in the Flathead Valley, and a main production facility that covered more than forty acres, making it the largest building anywhere in Montana. Anaconda was understandably proud of its creation. Chairman Cornelius Kelley called the aluminum plant “the finest example of what the genius of man has made possible in this field or production and metallurgy,” and President Robert Dwyer labeled the facility “the most modern aluminum plant in the world.” At its height, Anaconda Aluminum employed more than 1,200 workers—almost half of the nearby town of Columbia Falls—and they produced an enormous amount of metal. When Anaconda opened in 1955, it had an initial manufacturing capacity of 67,500 tons a year, which would reach 180,000 tons in the late-1960s.18

This type of development would assure the future prosperity of Montana, according to Mike Mansfield, and turn an economy dependent on extractive resources into a modern industrial hub. In 1951, Mansfield argued that “the answer to Montana’s future does not lie in its copper, lead, and zinc, in its forests or in its agriculture so much as it does in the development of its hydro-electric potential.” Western Montana contained 10 percent of all potential hydroelectric...

power generation available in the country and with harnessing of “our water power, will come the real development of our state, the utilization of our resources, and the bringing of security to our people and our children for decades to come.” This idealized future required the construction of the Glacier View Dam. Combining Glacier View with the approved Libby Dam and the soon-to-be-completed Hungry Horse Dam would provide more than 1 million kilowatts of economy-driving power to the State of Montana “with no hurt attached.” With the promise of cheap hydropower as an incentive, Mansfield worked on recruiting other major industries to western Montana, including the possibility of Kaiser Aluminum and Monsanto Chemicals locating plants near Missoula.19

In its earliest years, available electricity, and not company desires, dictated the pace of production at Anaconda Aluminum. With 1950s technology, it took about ten kilowatt-hours of electricity to produce one pound of aluminum and Anaconda Aluminum contracted with the Bonneville Power Administration to supply this vital electricity. Power production at the nearby Hungry Horse Dam fluctuated throughout the year—with highest levels in the snowy months of winter spring runoff and lowest at the end of summer. Throughout the year, Anaconda used 33-to-87 percent of all power produced at Hungry Horse, and often went over its contracted maximum power use to maintain production. With the onset of the Cold War era, and the Korean War prompting a 70 percent increase in national aluminum manufacturing, local business interests supported expansion plans for Anaconda and argued that the revival of the defeated Glacier View Dam provided the most expedient means to ensure electric power needs for the company. Editors of the Kalispell Daily Inter Lake, a consistent supporter of economic

19 Letter from Mike Mansfield to Charles C. Bradley, June 26, 1951, MMP, Series 3, Box 36, Folder 4; and Letter from Mike Mansfield to James Murray, August 4, 1950, MMP, Series 3, Box 38, Folder 2.
development and natural resource use in the region, argued that “in view of the international situation and the critical need for power in the Northwest there appears to be no other course but to build this dam.”  

The “industrial empire” promised by the construction of the Echo Park Dam, and seen with the eventual rise of the Anaconda Aluminum Company in Montana, fit the “greatest good” concept promoted by Oscar Chapman better than the wilderness desires of a few national park enthusiasts. Two months after his 1950 hearing, Chapman approved the Bureau of Reclamation plans to dam Dinosaur National Monument. In the Glacier View debates, the opponents of the dam convinced Julius Krug—a hydropower engineer by trade—to oppose the construction of the project. Having failed to convince Krug’s successor, pro-dam Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman, the wilderness activists dedicated to protecting the national parks and proactively preserving wild areas in the United States now faced the daunting task of convincing the United States Congress.

With this effort, the activists continued the same positions—they simply delivered their arguments on a more public stage. As with Glacier View, opponents of the Echo Park Dam organized a multilevel argument against the project, focusing on identifying and promoting alternative dam sites elsewhere on the Colorado River watershed, attacking the scientific expertise of Bureau of Reclamation engineers and publicizing the need to preserve American

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21 Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, 89.
wilderness to a national audience. One way to look at these momentous events is to look at dam
fights in the national parks in the 1940s and 1950s as one long campaign. Glacier View
influenced the wilderness efforts at Echo Park, and in turn, the successful defense at Echo Park
made a revival of an Army Corps of Engineers dam in Glacier National Park even more unlikely.
Dam proposals for the Grand Canyon, near Mammoth Cave, downriver from Kings Canyon, all
helped keep the wilderness movement at the forefront of environmental politics in the 1950s and
into the 1960s.

In their efforts to advocate alternative dam sites on the Colorado River watershed, and in
a continuation of the proven tactics learned at Glacier View, wilderness activists turned to an
unlikely ally. General U.S. Grant III was the grandson of the Civil War hero and eighteenth
President of the United States Ulysses S. Grant. He was also a forty-year veteran of water wars
in the American West. Previously an official for the Army Corps of Engineers and a consulting
engineer on numerous dam projects, Grant possessed the technical knowledge that most
wilderness proponents lacked when evaluating and criticizing technical reports and reclamation
project blueprints. After evaluating the Bureau of Reclamations plans for the Colorado, Grant
concluded that the Echo Park Dam was not necessary to achieve the stated goals of the Colorado
River Storage Project. In 1950, Howard Zahniser published Grant’s article “The Dinosaur Dam
Sites Are Not Needed” in The Living Wilderness, the official journal of the Wilderness Society.
Grant concluded that two nearby dam sites, Gray Canyon further south on the Green River and
Cross Mountain on the Yampa River east of Dinosaur, would offer 800,000 more acre-feet of
storage and more than 150 kilowatt-hours of electricity annually than the Echo Park Dam. Not
only would these dams spare Dinosaur National Monument from inundation, Grant posited, but
they would ultimately save the Bureau of Reclamation almost $60 million in construction costs.
Grant later testified before Congress and concluded: “I am not at all against the development of the upper Colorado Basin, and I believe a sound and economic project can be worked out. I am against the Echo Park Dam, and I do not think it is necessary.”

By the mid-1950s, Echo Park opponents focused on the Glen Canyon Dam in northern Arizona as an alternative to a dam in Dinosaur National Monument. Glen Canyon was always a major component of the Colorado River Storage Project, but the Bureau of Reclamation preferred to build a “low” dam at Glen Canyon in conjunction with the Echo Park Dam on the Green River. This 580-feet tall “low” dam was “vital” to the overall Colorado project and would reserve four times as much water as Echo Park. Conservationists, particularly David Brower of the Sierra Club, argued that a “high” dam at Glen Canyon would eliminate the need for any dams that threatened the national park system. This was only partially true, since a taller dam at Glen Canyon threatened Rainbow Bridge National Monument in southern Utah, site of the largest natural bridge formation in the world. In 1954, many of the environmental groups opposed to the Echo Park Dam, including the National Parks Association, the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society, issued a joint statement, which stated: “We are mindful of the extreme importance of water in the West. And we are sincerely interested in any sound Upper Colorado water development that can effectively utilize the water without threatening the National Park System.”

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The Sierra Club, a few weeks later, passed a resolution that revealed its pro-national park perspective: “The Sierra Club does not oppose the construction of dam or reservoir projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin outside of National Parks and Monuments and established Wilderness Areas.” Although it helped protect Dinosaur, and ultimately it was the decision of the Bureau of Reclamation to build the controversial Glen Canyon Dam, Brower later regretted his tacit approval of the latter project. “Glen Canyon died, and I was partly responsible for its needless death,” Brower lamented in 1963, and “Neither you nor I, nor anyone else, knew it well enough to insist that at all costs it should endure. When we began to find out it was too late.”

In addition to publicizing alternative dam sites on the Colorado River watershed, another tactical similarity between the Glacier View and Echo Park wilderness debates was an attack on the prestige and presumed scientific superiority of federal dam building agencies. In 1948, Allison van V. Dunn, the Chief of the Water Resources Branch of the National Park Service, refuted Army Corps of Engineers’ conclusions that the Glacier View Dam would have significantly reduced the devastation caused by historic Columbia River floods in 1948. At Echo Park, anti-dam activists focused on Bureau of Reclamation claims about evaporation. In the parched desert climes of eastern Utah and western Colorado, evaporation of valuable water was a critical consideration for dam builders and development-minded politicians alike. According to Clifford Stone, director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the construction of dams in Dinosaur would save 350,000 acre-feet of water a year, as water pooled in the tall, narrow Whirlpool Canyon. That amount of water had enormous potential. N.B. Bennett, chief engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation in Utah, asserted that this reclaimed water could irrigate 360-

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square-miles of landscape, turning arid desert into arable lands, or provide water for a city of about 1.5 million residents. To put these figures in some perspective, this amount of water was almost enough to run the city of Los Angeles in 1950.25

In 1954, Douglas McKay, Chapman’s replacement as Secretary in the Eisenhower administration, approved the construction of the Echo Park Dam. McKay, the recently retired governor of Oregon, was similar philosophical to his two immediate predecessors. Like Chapman, McKay believed in a Progressive-style of conservation, contending that the United States “cannot continue to grow as a nation and as a prosperous people if we adopt the narrow view of conservation as requiring the locking up of our resources.” Yet, like Krug, McKay believed that the resources of the national parks should be untouchable except when “proven unmistakably that it will produce for the nation’s values that outweigh greatly those which are changed or destroyed.” At Echo Park, this rhetorical calculus allowed McKay to support the dam in Dinosaur, which he justified, in part, based on the low evaporation predictions. Alternative downriver dams might produce enough hydroelectrical power or flood control as Echo Park, but they would suffer from significantly higher evaporation rates. By 1954, Reclamation engineers had revised their numbers and predicted that the Echo Park Dam would save the system 100,000 to 200,000 acre-feet of water compared to replacement sites. Under Secretary of the Interior Ralph Tudor, in his testimony to Congress, set the exact evaporation savings number at 165,000 acre-feet of water. Secretary Douglas “Giveaway” McKay approved the dam in Dinosaur

25 Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, 88-89; and State of California, Los Angeles County Land and Water Use Survey, 1955, Bulletin No. 24, (Sacramento: State Water Resources Board, 1956): 14, 22. According to this report, the population of Los Angeles in 1950 was 1.97 million people and Los Angeles “imported” 360,100 acre-feet of water from the Owens River and Colorado River in the year between September 1949 and September 1950, for these residents.
National Monument based on these values, just as the park service and wilderness activists feared, but in doing so he provided a pivotal opening for rebuttal.\textsuperscript{26}

General U.S. Grant III and David Brower both used evaporation rates as a way of discrediting the Bureau of Reclamation. Grant contended that the Bureau of Reclamation “was doing little more than guessing” when it arrived at these evaporation numbers and he believed that such “loss of water is very much in the imagination of the reclamation board whose figures on losses also seem to be evaporating.” Brower took Grant’s conclusions, and with the help of an Ivy League physics professor, embarrassed the Bureau of Reclamation during public Congressional hearings on the Echo Park Dam. Brower pointed out calculation errors in Reclamation’s figures and told Congress it “would be making a great mistake to rely upon the [evaporation] figures presented by the Bureau of Reclamation when they cannot add, subtract, multiply, or divide.” Soon after, Dr. Richard Bradley, a physics professor at Cornell University, investigated Reclamations’ claims on water loss and concluded that the figures presented by dam builders were riddled with errors. Bradley urged the rejection of reclamation in Dinosaur: “The bureau’s estimate for the lifetime of Echo Park is 120 years. Our children’s children will find themselves with neither storage facilities nor a national park at a time when the need for both will probably be infinitely greater than the present.”\textsuperscript{27}


In the span of four years, Reclamation leaders were forced to revise their evaporation figures for Echo Park several times, from a net savings of 350,000 acre-feet of water to just 25,000 acre-feet and admit that basic arithmetic errors contributed to the confusion. In public, Howard Zahniser and the Wilderness Society used these mistakes to excoriate the Bureau of Reclamation. He contended: “It is no wonder that conservationists have found the bureau’s statements contradictory and have surmised that this evaporation argument is being used as plausible pretext rather than a sound reason.” In private, Zahniser likened David Brower to his Biblical namesake who slew Goliath. “Salute him well,” Zahniser telegraphed the Sierra Club, “He certainly hit the giant between the eyes with his five smooth stones.”

More than anything, the Echo Park Dam controversy pushed the concept of modern wilderness into the American lexicon. To publicize this idea, Newton Drury, Howard Zahniser, David Brower and others recruited well-known writers and artists to join the fight to preserve Dinosaur National Monument. One of the most influential of these writers was Bernard DeVoto, a Pulitzer Prize winning historian, influential columnist and national parks activist. Wallace Stegner, DeVoto’s friend and biographer, described DeVoto as “flawed, brilliant, provocative, outrageous, running scared all his life, often wrong, often spectacularly right, always stimulating, sometimes infuriating, and never, never dull. He was a force in his times.” In 1948, Drury tried to get DeVoto involved in the fight against Glacier View, understanding his influence on the American public, and in 1950 DeVoto contacted the National Park Service for an update on the Glacier View Dam. He then wrote one of the most influential anti-dam screeds in history.

In his essay “Shall We Let Them Ruin Our National Parks?,” published first by the *Saturday Evening Post* and later reprinted in *Reader’s Digest*, DeVoto brought the threats of Glacier View and Echo Park to millions and millions of Americans. The national parks were a small part of the American landscape—less than ¾ of 1 percent of the United States—but they were important “sites that are universally acknowledged to be supreme beauty, grandeur, and spectacle…places where Americans could have the inestimable experience of untouched wilderness.” Americans who loved the national parks, who appreciated a modern conception of wilderness, needed to “watch out for the Army Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation—because right where the scenery is, that’s where they want to build dams.” For DeVoto, these individual dam fights were interconnected—a victory at Glacier View would aid the defense of Echo Park, but a dam in the Grand Canyon would set precedence that imperiled the entire national park system. Dams in any national parks and monuments violated both the letter and spirit of the Organic Act of 1916, according to DeVoto, but “There are, however, various ways of skinning a cat if you are good with a skinning knife.”

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For DeVoto, the fight against dams in national parks was akin to class conflict—a story of bureaucratic haves versus have-nots. In order to gain approval, the well-funded Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation needed to convince the Secretary of the Interior and Congress, who controlled and financed these agencies, that dams in national parks were vital to American interests. The inadequately financed National Park Service, still working on depressed World War Two budgets, was virtually powerless to stop these advances without significant public support. This necessitated grassroots efforts to publicize the threat to the national parks, which DeVoto furthered in his own popular column. If the American people failed to support their national parks and monuments, “the Green River, the tempestuous, pulse-stirring river of John Wesley Powell would become a mere millpond” and the “Glacier View Dam would destroy
wilderness scenery of great beauty [and] obliterate mountain streams and lakes” in Glacier National Park. More than just aesthetics, these dams threatened the modern conception of wilderness protected by the National Park Service. Glacier View, for example, would devastate wildlife populations in the park and eliminate all white tail deer and half the moose population in Glacier. The dam would also inundate a fragile ecosystem and this “disturbance of the balance of nature would be felt nearly everywhere in the park. The relationships of species with one another and the environment would be changed, the flora of the park and the interrelationships of its species would be changed, and even the topography would be changed.”

DeVoto was even more acerbic in a letter to Mike Mansfield. Mansfield wrote a response to the editor of the Saturday Evening Post in reaction to DeVoto’s characterization of the Glacier View Dam, although the periodical declined to print the letter. Instead, DeVoto answered the Montana Congressman directly to defend his essay and his staunch opposition to the dam. He accused Mansfield of subterfuge in denying the precedent set by the Krug-Royall decision in 1949, arguing “it is enough that the Department of the Interior found against the dam, that the Engineers formally agreed not to build it, that conservationists and the general public rested on that agreement, and that your Bill is an effort to both break established precedent and to undermine a position officially agreed to by all parties.” DeVoto asked Mansfield: “Is not your bill precisely what I called it, an attempt to make an end run around an established position?” DeVoto alleged that Mansfield ignored the importance of modern conceptions of wilderness to Glacier National Park and to the nation. “What you say [in your letter] is not only contrary to the facts but exceedingly disingenuous,” DeVoto wrote. “You also ignore the extremely important point made in my article about the balance of nature. This point is made by specific reports on

Glacier National Park and by many scientific studies which in my opinion, you are not entitled as a public servant to disregard.” In his own letter, Mansfield claimed that the construction of the Glacier View Dam would actually benefit Glacier Park flora and fauna, to which DeVoto responded: “Your final statement…is simple nonsense, unworthy of you.”

Bernard DeVoto brought the Glacier View and Echo Parks to the attention of the American public and wilderness activists worked hard to make sure Congress stayed aware of the issues. David Brower and the Sierra Club organized float trips through Dinosaur National Monument, in an effort to build awareness of the wilderness canyons imperiled by the dam and produced short films of these excursions for dissemination. Howard Zahniser screened another film—Brower’s *The Two Yosemites*—in the halls of Congress, hoping to influence passing legislators “to remember Hetch Hetchy.” By one estimate, anti-dam letter writing campaigns, organized by national conservation groups, outpaced pro-dam mail by a margin of 80-to-1 in Congressional offices. Brower wanted to publish a book of glossy photographs on Dinosaur, with essays explaining the conservationist perspective on the dam fight. Originally, Brower envisioned DeVoto as the editor of the book. After DeVoto’s passing in 1955, Brower approached Wallace Stegner, a novelist and historian perhaps best known as John Wesley Powell’s biographer, to organize the project. Stegner’s book—*This is Dinosaur*—was an opportunity to teach the American public about the wondrous wilderness of Echo Park and its “magic rivers,” in a less confrontational tone. The pro-wilderness message was clear, however. Stegner argued: “We are the most dangerous species of life on the planet, and every other species, even the earth itself, has cause to fear our power to exterminate. But we are also the only species which, when it chooses to do so, will go to great effort to save what it might destroy.”

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32 Letter from Bernard DeVoto to Mike Mansfield, August 1, 1950; MMP, Series 17, Box 233, Folder 1.
Alfred A Knopf, who contributed a pro-national park essay to the volume, published the book in 1955, just as the fight to protect Dinosaur National Monument reached its climax. The first printing of this book was only 5,000 copies, but Zahniser and Brower made sure all 531 members of Congress received one.33

The national campaign to protect Dinosaur National Monument from inundation was successful. Public pressure swayed many legislators to support the preservation of national park wilderness and the quiet lobbying of Howard Zahniser helped make this victory permanent in Congress. With Glacier View, the National Park Service and wilderness activists petitioned effectively to remove the controversial dam from the overall Columbia River project. There was no guarantee, however, that this omission was permanent. In 1956, Congress not only deleted Echo Park from their legislation to control the Colorado, at the insistence of Zahniser, Brower and many others, they inserted language protecting National Park Service properties from dams. “It is the intention of Congress,” the final bill stated, “that no dam or reservoir constructed under the authorization of this act shall be within any national park or monument.” On April 11, 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the $760-billion authorization of the Colorado River plan into law. This was the end of the Echo Park controversy and a paradigm shifting victory for the American wilderness movement. It was a triumph that gave legislated backing to the precedent set at Glacier View—that the federal government would no longer build hydroelectric dams in national park wilderness.34

34 Harvey, A Symbol of Wilderness, 278-285; Howard Zahniser, “Will You DAM the Scenic Wild Canyons of Our National Park System?,” brochure, (1951), Series 4, Box 15, Folder 34, WSR; United States Congress, Colorado
This achievement had long-reaching effects on wild America. Howard Zahniser, frustrated with the limited scope reactionary defenses of national parks, used this victory to launch a proactive effort to create a national wilderness system. Zahniser drafted the first version of the Wilderness Act in early 1956 and the proposed legislation went through dozens of drafts before finally becoming law in 1964. In early February, Zahniser wrote a bill to create a “National Wilderness Preservation System,” which he admitted was “a very, very rough draft,” but he was “eager” to move the process along. This version defined wilderness as federal lands “retaining their primeval environment or influence and remaining free from mechanized transportation” and echoing the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916, promised that designated wilderness “areas shall be reserved and maintained for their recreational, scientific, educational and historical use and enjoyment of the people in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future enjoyment.” This proposal would allow Congress to preserve landscapes under different designations, including wilderness, wild, and national forest roadless areas. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, a Democrat from Minnesota, and Representative John Saylor, a Republican from Pennsylvania, introduced the first official version of the Wilderness Act to Congress on June 7, 1956. This was the beginning of the final push for legislated wilderness and a momentous occasion in the environmental history of the United States.35

1956 also marked the official shift of the National Park Service away from the modern concept of wilderness as a management principle. Instead, under the leadership of Director Conrad Wirth, the national parks returned once again to the ideology of aesthetic conservation. In 1951, Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman forced the resignation of Newton Drury, over the latter’s public opposition to the construction of the Echo Park Dam. With this resignation, the national parks lost a staunch supporter of wilderness. Arthur Demaray replaced Drury but served less than a year as director. Wirth assumed leadership of the national parks in late-1951 and held that position until 1964. Wirth, who President Lyndon Johnson later called “one of the greatest, finest, best public servants anywhere in the world,” sought to revitalize his agency after years of budgetary neglect during the Great Depression and World War Two led to crumbling infrastructure in the national parks. At the same time, in the years immediately following the war, visitation to the national parks almost quintupled, from 10.9 million in 1945 to 53.9 million in 1956. Bernard DeVoto, angered at this overcrowding and mistreatment, sardonically demanded the closure of the national parks in 1953 if the federal government refused to fund them. DeVoto called for a minimum Congressional earmark of $250 million to return the parks to 1940 conditions but predicted “No such sums will be appropriated.”

Congress and Conrad Wirth proved him wrong.

In 1956, Congress implemented Mission 66, a ten-year, $1 billion investment in park improvements, conceived by Conrad Wirth and designed to conclude at the fiftieth anniversary of the National Park Service. According to the NPS: “The objective is to give the American people on this golden anniversary a park system adequate in all ways necessary for their

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enjoyment and inspiration—a park system so developed, managed and used that our children and our children’s children will enjoy the values of this, their estate.” Mission 66 aimed to improve park infrastructure, including the building of new roads, bridges and modern highways, revamp trail building in the parks, fund the purchase of new park lands and, perhaps most famously, facilitate the construction of new modernist-style facilities designed to be the “the most useful for helping the visitor see the park and enjoy his visit…[and] the center of the entire information and public service program for a park.” In doing so, the park service coined the term “visitor center.”

There was little room for a controversial wilderness conception in a park system so “developed” and “managed.” In March 1956, Wirth wrote Zahniser and staked his position against the Wilderness Act. According to Wirth, the National Park Service believed there was “nothing [to] be gained from placing such areas in the National Wilderness Preservation system as provided in the bill.” Wirth concluded: “I feel that the national parks and some of the national monuments are the supreme wilderness regions of the Nation. What we have now can hardly be improved upon.” Faced with overcrowded conditions, underfunded facilities and increasing public displeasure at both, the National Park Service returned to its aesthetic conservation roots and focused on the “enjoyment” part of the national park paradox. Between the onset of Mission 66 in 1956 and the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, two-thirds of a billion people visited the national parks and Wirth made every effort to make sure they enjoyed their experience.

That does not mean, however, that National Park Service abandoned the protection of the North Fork of the Flathead River.

In fact, the National Park Service funded a small piece of the Mission 66 project as insurance against any revitalization of the Glacier View Dam. In doing so, park leaders revealed the split between a tourist focused NPS and the blossoming wilderness movement in the United States. Brower, Zahniser and their respective coalition wanted to preserve the North Fork as part of a national roadless wilderness system. The National Park Service decided to build a highway right through the very same landscape.

In 1957, national park leaders in both Canada and the United States, and now-Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, proposed a 130-mile blacktop highway connecting the remote areas of Glacier National Park and its neighbor to the north, Waterton Lakes National Park. Sometimes called the Kishinena-Akamina Loop Road, but more commonly referred to as the International Loop Road, this proposed thoroughfare would run through the North Fork of the Flathead Valley and cross the border into Canada. There, it would connect to the Akamina Parkway, completed just southwest of Waterton Lakes in 1952, and eventually head east. All told, the proposed system would link new construction with existing roads, particularly the Going-to-the-Sun Highway in Glacier and Chief Mountain International Highway, to complete a loop around the two famous parks. Built between 1960 and 1967, at a cost of $2.5 million, Camas Road starts at Apgar, Montana and runs along the eastern side of the North Fork, before crossing a Mission 66-funded bridge over the river, and connects to the North Fork Road to the west of Glacier in Flathead National Forest. Ultimately, this 11.7-mile road was the only new part of the proposed highway built in the United States. Its main purpose was to protect against any resurgence of the Glacier View Dam, by opening the rugged region to millions of auto-tourists. If necessary, these
sightseers would be powerful allies in harnessing community pressure against the Army Corps of Engineers, who already proved amenable to public opinion regarding the dam. As one Glacier official later put it: “If you can get the public to a place [like the North Fork], there’s less potential that it’s going to be damaged by development.”

In hindsight, the construction of Camas Road as a dam deterrent was probably unnecessary. In the first half of the 1950s, there was hope in pro-dam circles that Glacier View might still be built, and many efforts were made. Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman opposed the construction of the dam in official correspondence, and wrote Frank Pace, the new Secretary of the Army, “I am opposed to bringing these controversial issues again into the public spotlight at this time when no useful purpose can be served by doing so…I would welcome your assurance that the spirit of the agreement of April 1949 will be observed by the Corps of Engineers.” In 1950, however, Chapman told the Flathead Valley Citizens Committee, a longtime proponent of the project, that while he was officially neutral on the issue but that “I wouldn’t be surprised if I saw the [Glacier View Dam] bill on my desk sometime in the near future.”

Montana’s Congressional leaders wanted the same thing. Mike Mansfield still hoped for “more power from the north fork of the Flathead river” to fuel industrial development in Montana—particularly the expansion of the Anaconda smelting plant not far from Glacier

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40 Letter from Oscar L. Chapman to Mike Mansfield, May 29, 1951, Box 229, Folder 2, GNPA; Letter from Oscar Chapman to Frank Pace, undated, Box 229, Folder 2, GNPA; and “Glacier View Dam in Future said Possible,” *Daily Inter Lake*, May 10, 1950.
National Park. In 1952, Lee Metcalf, a Progressive Democrat from the Bitterroot Valley, won election to the U.S. House of Representatives to fill Mansfield’s seat and one of his campaign promises was to revive the Glacier View Project. A year later, Metcalf introduced a bill to authorize construction. Two years after that, Mansfield and fellow Senator James Murray, a pro-labor Democrat, prepped their own Glacier View Dam bill for introduction into Congress. For Murray, the “development of our God-given natural resources” was a “moral issue.” “This is an age when energy—and today this means electric energy—is increasingly the major controlling factor in the economic development and welfare of the Nation,” Murray told the United States Senate, and “under these conditions, I will never support or condone the underdevelopment of any of the hydroelectric resources which constitute our only truly inexhaustible source of energy.” None of these bills in the 1950s went anywhere because support outside of Montana for the dam disappeared. Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay rejected revival plans for Glacier View in 1955, for example, because the dam “would unjustifiably intrude upon the natural beauty of park areas.” Despite the best efforts of Metcalf, Mansfield and Murray to initiate Glacier View Dam legislation, no public hearings were called, no debates were scheduled, no votes were cast. Their publicized efforts appeased powerful constituents in the State of Montana. Publicly supporting the dam, despite the precedent set with rejection in 1949, was politically wise for Montana’s elected officials.41

The defeat of the Echo Park Dam finished off the efforts to rejuvenate the Glacier View project and Montana’s Congressional leaders reluctantly admitted defeat. Lee Metcalf saw the

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multi-dam plans to control the Columbia and the Colorado as “analogous,” especially the Glacier View and Echo Park Dams. Both projects offered vast economic benefits for burgeoning areas of the American West, involved powerful federal agencies like the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation and found bipartisan support in experienced legislators across the country. There was another important commonality—modern wilderness interests vehemently opposed both projects. This opposition protected the North Fork of the Flathead River in 1949 and defeated the Echo Park Dam in the mid-1950s. Metcalf concluded that this wilderness juggernaut would again defeat any Glacier View proposal introduced to Congress and might endanger the entire Columbia River project in the process.42

According to Metcalf, anyone publicly pushing for a Congressional hearing or vote on Glacier View by late-1955 misread the will of the American public and committed a “disservice” to the citizens of Montana. He admitted that “I don’t want to have the whole development of the Upper Columbia identified with an attempted invasion of Glacier National Park as the Upper Colorado is identified with the invasion of Dinosaur. The temper of Congress is such that I believe it would be impossible to get Glacier View authorized at this time.” According to Metcalf, “giving the impression of a possibility of early passage of a Glacier View authorization just creates false hopes…[and] insofar as the projects in northwestern Montana are concerned, I would say that Glacier View is the least likely to be approved” by Congress. Metcalf explained his position to newspaper editor Mel Ruder and contended “we should unite and get behind a

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project that has a chance at passage instead of wasting our efforts on Glacier View that at this time, at least, is hopeless.”

Mel Ruder grudgingly agreed. Ruder, the influential owner and editor of the local *Hungry Horse News* and eventual recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for journalism, was a staunch supporter of hydroelectric dam development on the rivers of western Montana. He had championed the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River and wrote about the transformative effect hydropower could have on the industrial development of the region. He wanted the Glacier View Dam built on the North Fork and he was willing to sacrifice part of Glacier National Park in the process. As did 2,000 signatories on a local petition for the dam, he reported. By the late 1950s, however, he reached the same conclusions as Lee Metcalf. National park and wilderness interests defeated the dam in 1949. In the succeeding decade, the wilderness movement had grown immensely, and opposition to Glacier View in the late-1950s was stronger than a decade earlier. Glacier View would not be built. Ruder, as Metcalf suggested, began championing alternative sites, projects that would offer the river control and power benefits of the defeated dam without violating the boundaries of the national park, but there was a problem. The best alternate location on the Flathead River was opposed by grizzly bear aficionados.

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John and Frank Craighead, twin wildlife biologists who became national celebrities due to their study of grizzly bears, opposed the construction of dams on remote stretches of the Flathead River, including Glacier View. They led the fight to stop the Spruce Park Dam, a Glacier View alternative proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers for a wild canyon up the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, south of Glacier National Park. Their efforts changed the environmental history of the United States. Through their opposition to dams on the Flathead River, they created a parallel effort to the wilderness movement designed to protect the wild rivers of America, which led directly to the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

After the defeat of the Glacier View Dam in 1949, the Army Corps of Engineers searched for alternative sites in western Montana that would accomplish the goals of the vanquished dam while not engendering enough opposition to cause a second embarrassing setback. One option was the Smoky Range Dam, downriver from Glacier View on the North Fork of the Flathead River. In a glacier-carved canyon along Demers Ridge, the Corps proposed the construction of a 370-foot-high embankment dam, with a power capacity of 165,000 kilowatts and a reservoir storage volume of 1.5 million acre-feet of water. While not as intrusive as Glacier View, this dam-reservoir complex would still have flooded almost 9,000 acres of Glacier National Park. In the mid-1950s, this made the dam a nonstarter. As the pro-dam editors of the Kalispell Daily Inter Lake put it: “The substitute Smoky Range proposal seems to have little merit. It would arouse the same intense opposition…[as] Glacier View, since the smaller dam would flood parts of the Park. While having the demerits of Glacier View, however, it promises much smaller benefits,” including less power generation and half the storage capacity.45

On the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, south of Glacier National Park and about twenty miles outside the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Army Corps of Engineers tried again with an even smaller project. At Spruce Park Canyon, the Army first advocated the construction of 405-foot-high earth and rock dam, with a reservoir capacity of 410,000 acre-feet of water, or about one-eighth the proposed maximum volume of Glacier View. Later, they reduced the proposed dimensions to a 350-foot-high dam with a 300,000 acre-feet reservoir. Unlike other proposals, the Spruce Park Dam would divert reserved water through a seven-mile-long tunnel, cut through the rugged Rocky Mountains in Flathead National Forest. The tunnel would end at the Hungry Horse Dam reservoir, where an almost mile long steel penstock—a pressurized metal pipe connecting a water supply to a turbine—would funnel the water into the powerhouse, generating a maximum of 78,000 kilowatts of power. This Spruce Park Dam would not have flooded any parts of Glacier National Park and its reservoir would have stopped ten miles short of the Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary, meaning it was less likely to be opposed by the wilderness movement. Instead, this Glacier View alternative inspired the creation of a modern classification system for rivers and a new way of preserving wild America.46

While the Spruce Park proposal avoided direct impact to either Glacier National Park or the Bob Marshall Wilderness, it did threaten to turn the tempestuous Middle Fork into a flaccid stream. In doing so, it raised the ire of John Craighead, a wildlife biology professor at the University of Montana. He organized his 1956 rafting trip down the Middle Fork with friends, not just to enjoy the scenic views and good fishing, but to “make a personal evaluation of its recreational potential.” His five-day trip not only confirmed the need to preserve the remote

sections of the Flathead River from dams like Glacier View and Spruce Park, but that the federal
government needed a new classification system designed to identify, designate and protect the
endangered wild rivers of the United States.\(^47\)

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A year later, Craighead published his plan to safeguard the rivers of wild America. He argued that federal dam building programs were “unsound” and concerning to conservationists concerned with the headwaters of the Columbia River. “I have been particularly concerned with the effects that dams may have on these remaining wild regions of Idaho and Montana,” Craighead posited, and he emphasized that “rivers and their watersheds are inseparable and to maintain wild areas we must preserve the rivers that drain them. The Spruce Park Dam has been of special interest as this…proposed dam will have widespread effect on the area between Glacier Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area.” Such a dam would end most recreational opportunities on the river and destroy a fragile ecosystem that nourished spawning trout, foraging elk herds and the increasingly rare grizzly bear.48

Like Zahniser, Craighead believed that wild river activists needed to be proactive rather than reactive in their efforts, to avoid the label of “obstructionist” to American progress and to embrace their position as “defenders of the public interest.” American rivers were more fragile than even wilderness and beginning with the Middle Fork, needed conservancy. “It is essential to preserve intact a few of the ‘wild’ rivers of this region,” Craighead contended, and “any outdoor pursuit which brings a man into intimate contact with natural scenery, natural forces and the unaltered web of life is highly educational. The right to experience this should be as inalienable as freedom of worship.” To protect this natural right, Craighead proposed a classification system for American rivers with four categories: wild, semi-wilderness, semi-exploited and exploited. Once categorized, these rivers could be protected or enjoyed based on their designation, in federal river storage plans. In doing so, the federal government will “have preserved a fragile thing of beauty, giving other generations an opportunity to know the wilderness, and make

possible an educational and spiritual experience for future Americans that no man-made institution can synthesize.”

John Craighead needed help. The modern wilderness movement, focused on the roadless lands of wild America, seemed uninterested in the protection of rivers. “I had worked on the wilderness legislation with Olaus Murie, Howard Zahniser, Stewart Brandborg, and others in the Wilderness Society,” Craighead later recollected, “but they were not interested in rivers…The more I became involved, the clearer it became that we needed a national river preservation system based on the wilderness system but separate from it.” While not exactly true—Wallace Schwass of the Wilderness Society called for federal legislation to create a “Wild Waters” system in 1949, at the end of the Glacier View debates, and Howard Zahniser helped convince his friend Representative John Saylor to support wild river protection—Craighead turned to a wildlife biologist he knew would support the cause. Frank Craighead, by then a biologist with the United States Forest Service, published an article in Naturalist magazine in 1957, calling for the same system of federal rivers as his brother. Combined, the Craighead brothers helped forestall the Spruce Park Dam during the 1950s and 1960s and helped write the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that ultimately preserved the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.

Unable to get approval for a dam near Glacier National Park, the Army Corps of Engineers renewed interest in projects that threatened the Flathead Indian Reservation. On multiple occasions, the Corps revived the Paradise Dam project on the Clark Fork of the Flathead River. Eventually, they also proposed the Knowles Dam just upriver from Paradise. Either dams’

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reservoir would inundate much of the Flathead Reservation and reach the base of the Kerr Dam. In the late-1950s, Senator James Murray championed both projects, supported by Mike Mansfield, and Representative Lee Metcalf wanted to name whichever dam was built the James E. Murray Dam.\(^{51}\)

![Illustration Twenty-Two Montana Congressional leaders meeting with Confederated Salish and Kootenai leader Jerome Hewankorn in Washington, DC, 1957. From left: Representative Lee Metcalf, Senator James Murray, Hewankorn, Senator Mike Mansfield and Representative LeRoy Anderson. Image from Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana.](image)

As with the original Paradise Dam, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai vehemently opposed these dams as a violation of their sovereign rights as guaranteed by the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. Walter McDonald, Chairman of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council,

argued that his nation “is emphatic in its opposition to anything which will endanger our valuable resources of land and waters guaranteed us by treaty with the United States government. We are not going to give up these resources just because someone else wants them.” The reservoir created by either of these dams would flood valuable cattle ranching land on the reservation and a profitable Christmas tree farm, and inundate two smaller dam sites the CSK hoped to “develop…for the best long-range advantage of the Flathead Indians.”

Two of the most important opponents of damming wild rivers in the United States publicly supported the dams that threatened the Flathead Indian Reservation. David Brower, Sierra Club leader and champion of national park wilderness, testified in favor of the project. At a hearing held in Missoula, Brower and the Sierra Club argued in favor of the Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork, and specifically against the Glacier View and Spruce Park Dams, and contended: “If the government takes the initiative, rather than wait…Paradise can be built…and the flood control necessity and economic feasibility of major upstream storage can be eliminated; and all this probably at less cost to the Government. Glacier National Park would be safe from this threat.” Brower later told Floyd Dominy, head of the Bureau of Reclamation, and writer John McPhee that a Clark Fork dam was the only one he ever supported.

Likewise, John Craighead led a small group of prominent Montana conservationists in favor of the Paradise Dam, since it seemed “inescapable that more large-scale impoundments are necessary on the Columbia River system.” Craighead, however, opposed “any further dam building which will encroach upon the unique values of our wild rivers and their watersheds,”

53 United States Senate, Knowles-Paradise Dam Project, 235-243; and John McPhee, Encounters with the Archdruid, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1971): 223. In McPhee’s book, Brower references the Knowles Dam, but his testimony was in favor of the Paradise project.
and concluded that “after Paradise Dam is built, we see no need for dams like Spruce Park, Nine Mile Prairie, and Glacier View in the upper reaches of our streams. We are determinedly opposed to these dams because they would irreparably destroy many of the wildlife and recreational values of vast areas of Montana land.” In a repetition of a great deal of American and national park history, Brower and Craighead were willing to deprive Native Americans of their homelands, to protect constructed visions of wild America. As was the case in the 1940s, both the Confederated Salish and Kootenai and wilderness activists got their wish, and although the Senate passed a Knowles Dam authorization bill in 1963, ultimately the Corps of Engineers and Montana boosters abandoned these Clark Fork dams.\(^{54}\)

* * *

In 1964, historic flooding on the Flathead River in Montana helped revive support for dams on the wild rivers surrounding Glacier National Park. Similar to 1948, a succession of weather events led to this flood. During the winter of 1963-1964, northwestern Montana received an enormous amount of snowfall and cold winter and spring temperatures meant most of the snowpack remained into the summer. In Glacier, workers tried to clear the Going-to-the-Sun Road at the end of May, and sometimes pushed ninety feet of snow in the process. As warming June temperatures accelerated the melting process, heavy rains fell on the region. Precipitation almost doubled normal levels in May, and on June 7 and June 8, ten inches of rain fell on Glacier National Park, flooding the North and Middle Forks of the Flathead River. At its record-setting peak, the Flathead River reached a flow of 170,000 cubic-feet per second and the river crested at 25.58-feet, at least twelve feet above flood stage. All told, the historic flood impacted nearly

30,000 square miles of Montana—buckling bridges, destroying homes, killing at least thirty Montanans and hitting the Blackfeet Reservation east of Glacier the hardest. Jack Archibald, who took press photos of the flood from his airplane, was asked to assess the condition of the Flathead River. According to Archibald: “There is no river, it's a mass of water from one end of the [Flathead] Valley to the other.” The flood turned the Flathead River into a four-mile wide lake and the gouty North Fork was more than one mile wide at peak flooding. One Flathead Valley resident described the flood as if “all hell came down from the mountains.”


One of the worst natural disasters in Montana history led to renewed calls for the Army Corps of Engineers to control the Flathead River system near Glacier National Park. The Corps estimated that the 1964 flood caused more than $28 million in damages in the Flathead basin and that federal dam projects would have almost eliminated the flood entirely. If they had been authorized and built, the Spruce Park Dam on the Middle Fork and the Smoky Range Dam on the North Fork would have prevented $20 million of these damages, and the fully functioning Hungry Horse Dam averted an additional $10 million in flood-caused losses. Combined, these dams “would effectively control the Flathead River,” according to the Corps. Two months after the flood, Floyd Dominy, head of the Bureau of Reclamation, tried to revive federal interest in the Glacier View Dam as a flood control measure, but admitted that the contentious project “was looked at very briefly…a number years ago” before being rejected because it “would flood out a considerable area that is highly valuable” to Glacier National Park. Arnold Olsen, a Butte Democrat elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1960, discussed flood control projects in the Flathead system, including a potential revival of the Glacier View Dam but promised “there will be no high dams [near Glacier] unless the people want them.”

At the same time, another kind of flood began cresting in the United States, which prevented the construction of these dams. President Lyndon Johnson made environmentalism and wilderness preservation a major plank of his domestic programs. In 1964, President Johnson delivered his “Great Society” speech, which outlined his plan to perfect American society in an age of abundance and included his commitment to protecting the environment. “We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the

beautiful,” Johnson said, “Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing.” Environmental degradation threatened the American experience and the wilderness movement had entered mainstream politics. Johnson believed that “once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.” During his presidency, Johnson supported a torrent of legislation designed to protect America the beautiful and America the wild. Between 1963 and 1968, Johnson signed nearly 300 environmental bills into law, more than all presidents combined in the history of United States. This flood of bills promised the American public clean air and water, revised public land policies, an expanding national park system, the protection of endangered species and the preservation of wilderness and wild rivers.57

The National Park Service was out of sync with much of this legislation, as they adjusted their aesthetic conservation ideology in the 1960s, to create a romanticized form of constructed wilderness. In the half century since the NPS instituted its predator control programs and winter-feeding initiatives in Yellowstone, the results of this mismanagement created ecological imbalance in America’s first park. With wolves gone and ungulates fed, the park’s population of elk exploded. In 1961, in an effort to control this bursting population, park officials hired professional hunters to cull up to 5,000 elk from northern Yellowstone, which were then sold to

Native Americans for $41 after being quartered and frozen. While numerous wildlife biologists agreed with the need to reduce elk numbers in the park—including John Craighead—many western sportsmen and American schoolchildren were appalled at the destruction of these animals.58

In response to public outcry, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall organized a committee of scientists led by ecologist A. Starker Leopold to study national park management policies and make recommendations. Their 1963 report titled *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, more commonly referred to as the Leopold Report, called for a rejection of tourist desires as a governing principle of wildlife management, in favor of ecological concepts. This meant the ending of programs like predator control in the national parks. However, this did not mean that the park service should adopt the hands-off approach of the conception of modern wilderness. Instead, the principal recommendation of the Leopold Report called for the artificial creation of primeval America. “As a primary goal,” the Leopold Report stated, “we would recommend that the biotic associations within each park be maintained, or where necessary recreated, as nearly in possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man.” Through the removal of invasive species, the replanting of harvested trees, the reintroduction of absent animals and the bulldozing of unnecessary roads, “a reasonable illusion of primitive America could be recreated, using the utmost skill, judgment, and ecological sensitivity. This in our opinion should be the objective of every national park and monument.”

These machinations should be accomplished “invisibly” so that Americans could not see the plow marks or surveyor stakes that created primeval wilderness in the national parks.59

Although the Leopold Report made scientific principles rather than tourist desires the central tenet of national park management, thereby rejecting many of the aesthetic conservation policies of the early park service, the call to construct a facsimile of untouched America angered many in the modern wilderness movement. Adolph Murie bristled at the intrusion of human hands into the ecological processes of wilderness. According to Murie, the Leopold Report was “contrary to generally accepted wilderness philosophy.” He wondered: “Is a scene natural when you chop down or plant trees! Is this an honest presentation! Do we want to make Disney Lands out of our roadsides!” Likewise, Howard Zahniser viewed the Leopold Report as hostile to the modern wilderness movement. The “report poses a serious threat to the wilderness within the National Park System and indeed to the wilderness concept itself,” Zahniser contended in 1963, and “it is certainly in contrast with the wilderness philosophy of protecting areas at their boundaries and trying to natural forces operate within the wilderness untrammeled by man.” He concluded with a call to refrain from wilderness interference— “with regard to areas of wilderness we should be guardians not gardeners.”60

In 1964, Howard Zahniser’s campaign to create a federal designation of wilderness came to fruition, amidst this flurry of environmental legislation. The guardians had surpassed the gardeners. In 1949, Zahniser had advocated “that as promptly as possible a national zoning

program should be adopted, wherein areas of wilderness...should be designated for preservation in perpetuity and removed from consideration for other purposes that would threaten their existence of wilderness.” To prove this necessity, Zahniser used the Glacier View Dam controversy as evidence. He argued that the “Glacier View case is an outstanding current illustration of the sanctity of the designation as a determining factor” and that “Wilderness Society maintains the national park system should now be accorded this [wilderness] sanctity, and it believes that certain of the long established parks—Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, for examples—do now in fact have such a sanctity in the minds of the national public.”

When Zahniser wrote those hopeful words in 1949 and began his campaign for a federal wilderness system, only small groups of fervent activists venerated the modern conception of wilderness. Fifteen years later, on July 30, 1964, the House of Representatives passed the Wilderness Act by a vote of 374-to-1, making law a bill that the Senate approved a year earlier. Zahniser’s final version of the Wilderness Act began with a promise. “In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States,” the act stated, “it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” Congress defined wilderness “as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” and immediately designated 9.1 million acres of wilderness areas.

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61 Howard Zahniser, “A Statement on Wilderness Preservation in Reply to a Questionnaire,” 166, 177-178, 196.  
The Wilderness Act was the crowning achievement of Howard Zahniser’s career, but he unfortunately did not live to see it become law. After suffering from increasingly degenerative heart issues in the 1960s, Zahniser died in his sleep on May 5, 1964 at the age of fifty-eight, just months before the final approval of his beloved bill. Following his death, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall called Zahniser the “most dedicated and faithful advocate of the country’s leading conservationists” and “a loveable person with the character of the wilderness.” Senator Hubert Humphrey, the longtime champion of the Wilderness Act in Congress, said that “Howard Zahniser has left for all time to come a legacy to future generations which neither time nor man will ever erase. He has dramatized for all Americans the beauty that is nature’s…[and] the natural glory that has been ours.”

A year later, John Craighead pushed forward with his campaign to protect free-flowing rivers in the United States. Writing in Naturalist magazine, Craighead lamented the fragility of wild rivers. “Today it is still possible to challenge and enjoy a wild river, but already they are a rarity,” Craighead posited, “only a few such rivers exist and these are threatened by an expanding, groping civilization, public indifference and bureaucratic sluggishness.” Despite a veneer of permanence, wild rivers needed robust protection from the federal government. According to Craighead, “in spite of the durability of rock-walled canyons and the surging power of cataracting water, the wild river is a fragile thing—the most fragile portion of wilderness country. A dam can still its turbulent flow, a road eternally change the river bank, and a logging operation completely alter the watershed.” Dams and pollution could also destroy fragile river ecosystems, leaving “aquatic and terrestrial wildlife communities…shattered.” The “inadequate”

Wild and Scenic Rivers bill before Congress offered the possibility of preservation, even for rivers already protected in national parks, national forests and federal wilderness areas. “Unless we get a strong, well-conceived Wild Rivers Bill,” Craighead concluded, “we can be certain the soul-satisfying joy and inspiration that is the unique quality of clean, sparkling water flowing through a wild, unspoiled landscape with its natural complement of flora and fauna, will not be retained for future generations. They are entitled to this heritage; we are obligated to try to see they get it.”

Three years later, Craighead got his wish.

In 1968, the drive to preserve the remaining wild rivers of America, which began in the headwaters of the Flathead River bordering Glacier National Park, ended with Congressional authorization. Senator Frank Church, a Democrat from Boise, Idaho, and the legislator who guided the final version of the Wilderness Act through the Congress four years earlier, championed the sixteenth version of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in the Senate. John Saylor—the “green Republican”—was a key ally in the House of Representatives. The final version of the act passed the House 265-to-7 on September 12, 1968, and the Senate three weeks later. President Lyndon Johnson signed the bill into law on October 2. Conceived and written by John and Frank Craighead as a proactive defense of wild rivers against dams, especially the Glacier View and Spruce Park projects proposed for the upper forks of the Flathead, the egalitarian Wild and Scenic Rivers Act appealed to river runners, wilderness groups and kayak clubs throughout the country. The act protected three classes of rivers: wild, scenic and recreational. There was something in the bill for almost everyone interested in rivers in the United States.

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Since its origins on the Flathead the focus of the bill was the prevention of undesirable dam construction. Stanford Young, an Interior official and later Chief of the Division of River, Trails, and Water Project Studies for the National Park Service, contended that in the “dramatic” fight to preserve endangered rivers, “mostly the motivation was against dams.” Opponents used Progressive conservation and economic arguments against the bill. Representative Sam Steiger, a freshman Republican from Arizona, posited: “Under the guise of protecting scenic values, this legislation will stifle progress, inhibit economic development, and incur a staggering expenditure, an expenditure that has been impossible to accurately estimate.” Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall supported the construction of many dams in the American West, including the controversial Knowles Dam on the Clark Fork River in Montana, and he used this pro-development stance to help justify the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. “We had the momentum, and the dam people who didn’t like it just weren’t in the frame of mind to fight it [anymore],” Udall said, “I had been pretty good to them, giving them some of the things they wanted, including dams. So I looked them in the eye and said, ‘We’re going to balance things off.’” President Johnson agreed. In his remarks during the signing ceremony, at the same time he finalized the authorization of Redwoods National Park in California, Johnson said: “An unspoiled river is a very rare thing in this Nation today. Their flow and vitality have been harnessed by dams and too often they have been turned into open sewers by communities and by industries. It makes us all very fearful that all rivers will go this way unless somebody acts now to try to balance our river development” The Wild and Scenic River Act was an unequal attempt to bring equilibrium to this equation.66

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act created a new type of federal designation, where “selected rivers of the Nation…shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.” Rivers designated by Congress should “possess outstanding remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values.” With this act, Congress protected three types of rivers. A Wild River is a free-flowing “vestige of primitive America” that is inaccessible by roads, a Scenic River meets all the standards of a Wild River except that it is reachable by roads and a Recreational River is both accessible and shows concrete evidence of human occupation and development. Furthermore, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act explicitly stated its anti-dam origins. As written by John and Frank Craighead: “Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition.”

The 1968 act immediately protected parts of twelve rivers, including 108 miles of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River beloved by the Craighead brothers, but ironically failed to preserve the river that started it all. John Craighead’s float trip down the Middle Fork of the Flathead River and his staunch opposition to the Glacier View and Spruce Park Dams, began the campaign that culminated with the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968.


Craighead helped write the bill but he, of course, did not have final say on the wording of the legislation. Montana’s two powerful senators did.

There was a clear evolution in the environmental positions of Montana’s senatorial delegation, especially in the changing ideology of Lee Metcalf. This progression demonstrates the impact of modern wilderness movement on American politics in the post-World War Two years. In the 1940s and 1950s, Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf both staked positions aligned with classic, Progressive Era utilitarian conservation, at least in Montana. They were for the wise use of Montana’s vast mineral wealth, the harvesting of timber reserves and the damming of western rivers for hydroelectric power generation and flood control. Both Mansfield and Metcalf repeatedly tried to revive the Glacier View Dam in the 1950s and they both proved willing to sacrifice Glacier Park wilderness for economic development in western Montana. Outside of Montana, Mansfield was much more interested in preserving nature in national parks. In 1951, Representative Leroy Johnson, a Republican from Stockton, California, introduced a bill banning all dam construction in national parks and monuments. While the bill went nowhere, Mansfield did offer his conditional support for the measure as long as the proposed legislation did not impact his efforts to resuscitate the Glacier View Dam. By the mid-1960s, as the wilderness movement moved into the political mainstream, both legislators supported the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. Metcalf’s transition from utilitarian conservationist to wilderness activist was not unequivocal, at least not yet. Mimicking Mansfield’s earlier position, Metcalf supported the preservation of national wilderness and wild
rivers but still hoped for the construction of local hydroelectric dams and industrial development in the Montana wildlands near Glacier National Park.\(^{68}\)

Illustration Twenty-Four Senator Lee Metcalf (left) and Howard Zahniser pose in front of a map of the newly created federal wilderness system. Image from Wilderness Society Papers, Denver Public Library.

Still desiring authorization for an Army Corps of Engineers dam in the headwaters of the Flathead River, Metcalf altered the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to exclude the very river that inspired the momentous legislation in the first place. Initially, it seems that Metcalf attempted to delete any reference to the Flathead. When that failed, Metcalf insisted Congress list the upper three forks of the Flathead River only as “designated for potential addition to the national wild

and scenic rivers system.” Metcalf still held hopes of constructing the Spruce Park Dam on Middle Fork, to solve the industrial expansion and flood control issues he saw as crucial to western Montana. The Wild and Scenic River required that the Departments of Interior and Agriculture study the twenty-seven possible rivers listed, including the Flathead, and make recommendations for new designations within ten years.69

Two years later, the United States Forest Service began to study the Flathead River near Glacier National Park. The USFS first published recommendations in 1972, which they continued to update in the mid-1970s. In the process, they convinced Senator Lee Metcalf of the necessity of Wild and Scenic River designation for the embattled forks of the Flathead River. The Forest Service recognized the centrality of hydroelectric power generation to the economic well-being of the Pacific Northwest, but concluded that all the various dams proposed near Glacier lacked substantial “economic feasibility.” According to this study, the upper Flathead was a remarkably clean river with enormous recreational potential, full of cutthroat trout, Dolly Vardens, whitefish and spawning kokanee salmon, which cut through remote wilderness habitat that supported big game ungulates, two species of bear and the occasional woodland caribou. The Forest Service concluded that all 219 miles of river studied should be designated under the Wild and Scenic system, with 97.9 miles deemed wild, 40.7 scenic and 80.4 recreational. This included the entirety of the North and Middle Forks, and the South Fork from its headwaters to the man-made Hungry Horse Reservoir. Additionally, a management zone of more than 57,000

acres of wild lands should be established surrounding these rivers, and managed cooperatively by the United States Forest Service, the National Park Service and the State of Montana.\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Illustration Twenty-Five Map of the Wild & Scenic River Classifications for the upper forks of the Flathead River system. Image from United States Forest Service, “3 Forks of the Flathead Wild & Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan.”}
\end{figure}

1972 was an important year in the career of Senator Lee Metcalf and for the preservation of wild stretches of Montana. Metcalf won reelection to a third term as senator and unlike his campaigns in the 1950s, environmentalism was a major part of his platform. The onetime utilitarian conservationist was now a full-fledged wilderness supporter. Influenced by the changing attitudes of Montanans on wilderness issues, he introduced legislation to create Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area near Bozeman. A few months before the election, Metcalf oversaw the passage of his legislation creating the Scapegoat Wilderness Area out of Forest Service land, adjacent to the southeast sections of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The day that legislation passed, wilderness activist and former Missoulian writer Dale Burk asked Metcalf to introduce a wilderness bill to protect the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, which would become the Great Bear Wilderness in 1977. And in late-1972, Metcalf read the recommendations of the Forest Service, which persuaded him to support Wild and Scenic River designations for the upper forks of the Flathead River.\^71

Two years later, the National Park Service formalized their recommendations for the preservation of Glacier National Park wilderness. As with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, there was a study requirement embedded into the 1964 Wilderness Act. By 1974, the Secretary of the Interior needed to “review every roadless area of five thousand contiguous acres or more in the national parks, monuments, and other units of the national park system” and then “report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability or nonsuitability of each such area or island for preservation as wilderness.” The National Park Service, an opponent of the Wilderness Act,

dragged this process out to the limit, and released its recommendations for Glacier National Park in March 1974, only six months before the ten-year deadline.\footnote{United States Congress, \textit{An Act To Establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the Permanent Good of the Whole People, and for Other Purposes}, 892; and Theodore Catton, Diane Krahe, and Deidre Shaw, \textit{Protecting the Crown: A Century of Resource Management in Glacier National Park}, PDF, Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, (June 2011): 111.}

Almost the entirety of Glacier National Park is backcountry wilderness, and since 1974 the federal government has recognized and protected the park based on that fact. After significant study, the National Park Service recommended in 1974 that Congress designate 927,550 acres of Glacier as federal wilderness area, or almost 92 percent of the park’s 1.01 million acres of protected landscape. Given the road construction in Glacier, especially the Going-to-the-Sun Road that bifurcates the park and the Camas Road that parallels the North Fork of the Flathead River, the study recommended the establishment of three wilderness units in Glacier. Unit One was the northern portions of Glacier, encompassing more than 500,000 acres from the international border to the Going-to-the-Sun Road and Unit Two was the southern 400,000 acres, from the trans-park highway to the southern boundaries of the park. Unit Three was composed of 24,000 acres of wilderness in the North Fork Valley, from the east bank of the river to the Camas Road. This third section of “primitive land…possesses all of the essential wilderness qualities” necessary for designation, according to the study.\footnote{National Park Service, \textit{Glacier National Park, Proposed Wilderness Plan: Environmental Impact Statement}, (Denver: Department of the Interior, 1974): 1, 13-15, 20.}

The third wilderness area was much smaller and, in many ways, more symbolic. The Unit Three wilderness recommendation was in the North Fork Valley, south and west of Camas Road. This included Huckleberry Mountain—the eastern half of the Glacier View Dam site—on the edge of the North Fork of the Flathead River. Twenty-five years earlier, the defeat of the Glacier
View Dam was a seminal moment in the environmental history of the United States and a starting point for the modern wilderness movement, contributing to the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Ten years later that same act offered the possibility for the permanent preservation of the Glacier View Dam site within a designated wilderness area.

Illustration Twenty-Six Map of Glacier area wilderness, including the three proposed units for Glacier National Park (pink), the proposed Great Bear Wilderness (blue) and the Bob Marshall Wilderness (green). Image United States Forest Service, Flathead River: Wild and Scenic River Study Report (1975).
While legislated wilderness preservation has yet to come, most of Glacier National Park, including the Glacier View Dam site on the North Fork of the Flathead River, has been de facto wilderness since 1974. In June 1974, President Richard Nixon asked Congress to add 6 million acres to the national wilderness system, including all the endorsed Glacier territory, and said “we must be diligent in protecting and preserving our national heritage of unspoiled wilderness areas and the ecosystems which they support.” Although Congress did not execute Nixon’s wilderness wishes in the mid-1970s, these recommendations remain vital for the management of Glacier National Park. Nixon advocated the Glacier wilderness designations and every president since has reaffirmed this policy.74

For almost four decades, the National Park Service has managed Glacier National Park as a wilderness area since the recommendations for wilderness designation remain active. According to their management policy, “The National Park Service will take no action that would diminish the wilderness sustainability of an area possessing wilderness characteristics until the legislative process of wilderness designation has been completed.” Occasionally, the NPS updated the wilderness management plan for Glacier and adjustments in 1984 and 1994 increased the proposed Glacier wildernesses to a total of 963,115 acres, which is 95 percent of the total park. In 2008, Glacier Park Superintendent Chas Cartwright pushed once again for the “deserved recognition” of wilderness authorization, hoping to coincide Congressional legislation with the centennial of the park in 2010. Cartwright stressed that since Glacier has been de facto wilderness since 1974, the “designation would have no impact whatsoever on current visitor use.” While Congress declined to designate Glacier’s wilderness areas, in 2013 Director of the

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74 “Nixon Asks Wilderness,” Billings Gazette, June 14, 1974; and National Park Service, Foundation Document: Glacier National Park, Montana, PDF, (October 2016): 77
National Park Service Jon Jarvis reaffirmed his agency’s policy that national park lands “suitable for designation as wilderness will be managed as if they were wilderness.”75

As the federal government codified plans to preserve the wilderness of Glacier National Park, Montana’s Congressional leaders finalized proposals to protect the wild rivers that surrounded the western expanses of the park from industrial and extractive development. In 1975, Senators Lee Metcalf and Mike Mansfield, and freshman Representative Max Baucus, sponsored bills to preserve most of the upper forks of the Flathead River as wild, scenic and recreational rivers. At the same time, Canadian mining interests released plans for a coal mining operation in the northern expanses of the North Fork Valley near Cabin Creek, which included the possibility of the construction of a company town for 3,000-to-7,000 new residents, a power plant, a coal processing plant, a new highway into the valley with an accompanying railroad spur, and the leveling of two mountains. This looming threat necessitated action to preserve the Flathead River. Metcalf, who previously insisted on leaving the Flathead River out of the initial designations of the Wild and Scenic River Act in the hope of building another hydroelectric dam in the region, described the endangered river to Congress as “Pure, cold and sparkling waters [that] cascade through some of the most beautiful and unspoiled territory in the nation.” Metcalf stressed the urgency of preservation: “We should not wait any longer. I therefore urge this…necessary protection for the Flathead River.” Baucus concurred that the Flathead needed protection from intrusive and destructive development. “A mechanism is needed to ensure that human growth does not destroy priceless assets such as the Flathead River,” Baucus posited, and the “Wild and Scenic River designation is one such mechanism.” More so, the safeguarding of

these remote river forks would aid the blossoming industry of eco-tourism in Montana, replacing any need for mining, damming, or timber culling in the wilderness around Glacier National Park. Congress agreed. On October 12, 1976, President Gerald Ford signed legislation preserving 219 miles of the “free flowing” forks of the Flathead River as wild, scenic and recreational rivers.76

This was a warning shot to Canadian mining interests not to pollute American waters and the definitive end to the Glacier View Dam. The 1976 amendment of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act protected all 58.3 miles of the North Fork of the Flathead River, from the Canadian border to the river’s confluence with the Middle Fork. Congress designated the northernmost 40.7 miles as a scenic river since the corduroyed North Fork Road facilitates some mechanized travel into the national forest side of the valley. Just north of the Glacier View Dam site, the Blankenship Bridge connects the park service’s Camas Road with the North Fork Road, and this bridge required that the final 17.6 miles of river be labeled recreational. Regardless of categorization, this legislation promised that the North Fork of the Flathead River “shall be preserved in free-flowing condition,” and that the river’s “immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”77 In the 1930s, the Army Corps of Engineers introduced plans to dam the North Fork, a scheme defeated by a coalition of National Park Service officials, enthusiastic tourists, hunters and fishermen and rising wilderness groups in 1949. It took almost three decades, but in 1976, Congress ended any unlikely hope for the

77 Flathead National Forest, Flathead River Wild and Scenic River Study Report, 120; United States Senate, To Amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and to Designate Certain Lands as Wilderness (Part 3), 9-10; and United States Congress, An Act to Provide for a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for Other Purposes, 235.
construction of the Glacier View Dam and finalized this seminal victory for the preservation of the wildest areas of the United States.

The defeat of the Glacier View Dam and all proposed alternatives on the Flathead not only led to the protection of the water and lands that beguiled both John Craighead the 1950s and John Schroeder in the mid-1970s, it helped create a system that preserves wilderness and wild rivers throughout the United States. Since 1964, Congress has created 803 wilderness areas, totaling almost 112 million acres of federal lands in America. If combined, this wild landscape would be the third largest state in the union. Likewise, the Wild and Scenic Rivers system now protects more 13,000 miles of 226 rivers in 41 states in a “free flowing” condition in perpetuity. In terms of mileage that is the equivalent of preserving the Mississippi River almost six times.  

These complementary systems owe much to the defeat of the Glacier View Dam. In 1949, the victory at Glacier View protected the wild expanses of the North Fork Valley and helped start Howard Zahniser’s fifteen-year campaign to create a modern wilderness system. This triumph forced the Army Corps of Engineers—unaccustomed to the rejection of their plans—to seek replacement dam sites in the headwaters of the Columbia River. Combined, the Glacier View project and alternatives like the Spruce Park Dam on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, inspired John and Frank Craighead’s national call for the classification and protection of America’s wild rivers. Certainly, there are other origin points and significant events in the history of wilderness and wild river conservation in the history of the United States. But

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without question, the story of the Glacier View Dam is a pivotal narrative in the preservation of wild America.
Well the sheaves have all been brought, but the fields have washed away,
And the palaces now stand where the coffins all were laid.
And the times we see ahead, we must glaze with rosy hues,
For we don't wish to admit what it is we have to lose.
—Bad Religion, “Change of Ideas”

Ambassador Max Baucus hung up his pickaxe and served at the American embassy in Beijing, China between 2014 and 2017, leaving his beloved North Fork Valley in the hands of other Montana legislators. During this time, the influence of the Glacier View Dam debates continued to impact the history of the American West. In the 1930s and 1940s, Montana boosters and economic developmental interests pushed for the construction of a 416-foot-high dam at a narrow canyon on the North Fork of the Flathead River. National park officials, wilderness activists and wild river enthusiasts opposed this project since the Glacier View reservoir would have inundated 20,000 acres of Glacier National Park with billions of gallons of water. The Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai peoples of the Flathead Indian Reservation negotiated a middle road between these two dichotomous positions, willing to sacrifice the wilds of Glacier to protect the sovereignty of their treaty-guaranteed homelands in western Montana. More than seventy years later, the intertwined issues of economic development, Native American rights and the preservation of wild America remain vital to the recent history of Montana specifically and the United States as a whole.

In the mid-twentieth century, Montanans led by Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf envisioned the development of an industrial empire in the Northern Rockies of the American West—an economic juggernaut fueled by inexpensive and sustainable hydroelectric power generated by dams in the remote headwaters of the Columbia River system. Most of these dams were never built and much of this industrial development never materialized. For every Hungry
Horse Dam and Anaconda Aluminum Company, which reshaped the South Fork of the Flathead River and the city of Columbia Falls respectively, there were at least half a dozen defeated dam projects and untold ephemeral hopes for an industrial corridor in western Montana. These events impacted the twentieth century economic history of the state. As historian Dan Flores points out, “while most of the other Western states…were transformed by the New Deal and the Second World War from pure extraction colonies to more diverse and modern economies, Montana never experienced such a transition. It has gone from extraction to ecotourism with no intervening step.”¹ The failure to build the Glacier View Dam in the 1940s was one of the reasons why.

Ironically, wilderness and wild river activists forced the abandonment of the Glacier View Dam and this vision of a modern industrial economy in Montana during the middle of the twentieth century, and in doing so, assured a long-term commercial sector for the state. The aluminum production plant in Columbia Falls declined for decades before ceasing operations in 2009 and it became an EPA Superfund site in 2016. Writer Wendell Berry believes that the abandoned industrial wastelands of America are defined by a “monstrous ugliness.” Certainly, the scavenged aluminum plant at the base of Teakettle Mountain fits this conception. According to Berry, “what we can see in these vandalized and perhaps irreparable landscapes we are obliged to understand as symbolic of what we cannot see: the steady seeping of poison into our world and our bodies.”² Yet, less twenty miles north, we can see the antithesis of septic wasteland—the still wild North Fork Valley and the de facto wilderness of western Glacier

¹ Dan Flores, “The Rocky Mountain West: Fragile Space, Diverse Place, in Flores, The Natural West, 161.
National Park. The undammed waters of the upper Flathead River and the untrammeled landscapes of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem stand in sharp repose to the failed smelting plant a few mountains away.

This section of wild America is now a significant contributor to Montana’s economy. According to State of Montana research, outdoor recreation contributes $7.1 billion in consumer spending in the state, leading to “71,000 direct jobs, which is 10% of all jobs in Montana and more jobs than in manufacturing and construction combined,” $286 million in state and local taxes, and $2.2 billion in wages for Montana workers. In Glacier National Park, 3 million visitors spent $344 million in communities near the park, supporting more than 5,000 jobs and contributing a cumulative benefit to the local economy of $484 million. “Glacier National Park welcomes visitors from across the country and around the world,” Glacier Superintendent Jeff Mow contended in 2019, and “national park tourism is a significant driver in the national economy, returning $10 for every $1 invested in the National Park Service, and it’s a big factor in our local economy as well. We appreciate the partnership and support of our neighbors and are glad to be able to give back by helping to sustain local communities.” Certainly, not all jobs are the same, and a skilled manufacturing position might be worth more to an individual than a service industry job in the Glacier region. But in a major shift from mid-twentieth century beliefs, 96 percent of Montanans now conclude that public lands and outdoor recreation are “important to the economic future of the state.”

In addition to affecting the economic history of Montana, the Glacier View Dam debates also tested the sovereignty of the Confederate Salish and Kootenai on the Flathead Indian

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Reservation. To deflect from Glacier View, National Park Service officials, Secretaries of the Interior, wilderness activists and wild river proponents often pushed for alternative dams on the Columbia River watershed. These substitute sites—Paradise and Knowles on the Clark Fork River—threatened to flood 20,000 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation, in violation of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. By mid-twentieth century, the United States government had dispossessed the Confederated Salish and Kootenai from 97 percent of their traditional homelands and federal dam construction seemed likely to take another chunk. But in 1949, CSK leaders convinced the United States Army to abandon plans to build the Paradise Dam, thereby protecting the Flathead Reservation, and they continued to push for their sovereign rights in the 1950s and 1960s as new dam threats emerged.

In the 2010s, the intersection of CSK sovereignty and hydroelectric dams moved in a new and historic direction. On September 3, 2015, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai purchased the Kerr Dam for $18.3 million, making them the first Native American nation to own a major hydroelectric dam. Completed in 1938, against the wishes of Native leaders, the Kerr Dam was another example in a long succession of dispossessions in the region. In 1985, tribal leaders negotiated an option to buy the dam and almost eighty years after its inundation, the CSK repossessed the “Place of the Falling Waters.” At the ceremony commemorating the transition, CSKT Chairman Vernon Finley said that “even though the day is cause for celebration, it's cause for sorrow and mourning of what was lost as well.” To run the dam profitably and to ensure environmental responsibility, the CSK incorporated Energy Keepers, Inc. to manage tribal hydroelectric interests. These efforts are substantial. The dam generates 1 million megawatt-hours of electricity a year—enough to power 120,000 homes—which is worth at least $30 million in gross annual revenue. Energy Keepers compliance manager Dustin Shelby called the
acquisition of the Kerr Dam “the most prominent exercise of the tribes’ sovereignty” in recent history and “an effort to regain what we lost in the process. This is where the struggle starts to transform into hope.”

The pretense of place naming is a form of colonization. According to geographer J.B. Harley, “naming a place anew is a widely documented act of political possession in settlement history. Equally the taking away of a name is an act of dispossession.” When the Montana Power Company and the United States government colluded to build a dam on the Flathead Indian Reservation, they named it Kerr after Frank Kerr, the President of Montana Power. After purchasing the Kerr Dam, CSK leaders moved to decolonize the name. Chairman Finley told reporters that “we decided to name it after the new owners,” and initially, they designated their dam Salish-Kootenai. Pend d’Oreille residents of the Flathead objected to the new name, since the dam built on their homeland neglected to mention their tribal identity. On October 2, 2015, the CSK Tribal Council voted unanimously to change the name once more and rebranded the facility the Séliš, Ksanka and Qlíspé Dam. According to Brian Lipscomb, CEO of Energy Keepers Inc., “this is a significant place on our landscape within the reservation, and of course it gets national attention. So we saw the naming of it as an opportunity to get our tribal names out there in a traditional way.”

In addition to altering Montana’s contemporary economy and impacting the sovereignty of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, the Glacier View Dam debates helped establish the

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modern movement to preserve wild America. In turn, this movement helped protect the North Fork as de facto wilderness and as a scenic, free-flowing river. Despite all these safeguards, resource extraction and other economic realities still occasionally threatened the North Fork Valley. In the mid-1970s, the threat of Canadian mining interests helped push Montana legislators to add the North Fork of the Flathead River to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In 2009, these threats north of the international border resurfaced once again, leading the conservation group American Rivers to label the North Fork of the Flathead River one of “America’s Most Endangered Rivers,” despite its existing defenses. Which is why Max Baucus wanted to conclude his senatorial career with another level of protection for this remote and wild area of Montana.

In a return to the bipartisan environmental politics of the 1960s and to fulfill Baucus’ dream of a protected North Fork of the Flathead River, Congress passed the North Fork Watershed Protection Act (NFWPA). Representative Steve Daines, a Republican from Bozeman, Montana, introduced the bill into the House of Representatives, where it passed without opposition on May 4, 2014. The NFWPA faced a tougher road in the United States Senate, where pro-energy development Republicans like Senator Ted Cruz repeatedly blocked the measure with procedural maneuvers. Ultimately, Senators Jon Tester and John Walsh rolled a revised version of the law into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), an omnibus defense policy and spending bill that contained sixty-nine other public land proposals. The NDAA of 2014 passed both the House of Representatives and Senate, and President Barack Obama signed the bill into law on December 19, 2014. The law created a North Fork Federal

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Lands Withdrawal Area, which prevents any future gas, oil and mineral extraction on more than 383,000 acres of the North Fork Valley. Montana legislators on both sides of the political aisle praised the effort. “I think if more people in Washington worked together like we are going to do in Montana, we would get a lot more done,” Daines said. “Efforts to protect the North Fork watershed like the North Fork Watershed Protection Act are a good example of how we can work together to put the interests of Montana first and rise above the partisan politics in Washington.” Tester agreed. He called the legislation “an incredible bipartisan agreement” and contended that “This is a historic day for Montana's treasured lands…and by responsibly ensuring future generations can enjoy the Rocky Mountain Front and the North Fork, we preserve our outdoor heritage and traditions while strengthening our outdoor economy.”

The imperfect protections afforded the North Fork of the Flathead River, from 1910 to the present, helps shield Glacier National Park and its westernmost valley from intrusion and exploitation, but each layer might also be breached with enough conviction and political strength. The United States Forest Service has controlled the west side of the valley since the late 1800s and the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910 and the National Park Service in 1916 helped conserve the eastern expanses as well. None of these defenses, however, precluded the construction of an enormous hydroelectric dam on the North Fork of the Flathead River. When the nationwide coalition of National Park Serve administrators, outdoor recreationalists, ascending wilderness activists and wild river devotees coalesced to defeat the Glacier View Dam in 1949, they not only fended off a threat to the North Fork, they influenced the rise of the

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wilderness movement. Their crusade culminated with the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968. In turn, these laws helped layer protections on the upper forks of the Flathead River. Although not officially designated, 95 percent of Glacier National Park is now managed as de facto wilderness in respect of the Wilderness Act, including the Glacier View site, and the creation of Great Bear Wilderness now preserves the Middle Fork. Likewise, all undammed stretches of the upper forks of the Flathead received protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1976, including the entirety of the North Fork. Four decades later, the North Fork Watershed Protection Act eliminated the threat of resource and energy extraction from 383,000 acres of the valley. On their own, each of these measures provide an incomplete protection for the North Fork. While limited and almost assuredly impermanent, these layered laws combine today to offer some of the strongest safeguards of any area in wild America.

*Illustration Twenty-Seven* View of the undammed North Fork of the Flathead River Valley, from the ascent of Glacier View Mountain, 2018. Photo by Gavin Pirrie. Used with permission.
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