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Oral History Number: 459-005

Interviewee: Stewart Brandborg

Interviewer: Bill LaCroix

Date of Interview: December 2, 2013

Project: Bill LaCroix Interviews with Stewart Brandborg Oral History Project

Stewart Brandborg: We are opening the files of the Wilderness Society. I have just picked up one of about an inch and half thickness, covering memoranda of 1966 that bring the notification to our local cooperators and our national cooperators the announcements of hearings on areas to be reviewed [at the] administrative level for inclusion in the wilderness system. I am looking at a May 20, 1966 memorandum to the members of cooperators which calls for participation in the Smoky Park wilderness hearings, June 13 and 15 of '66.

[LaCroix vacuums; Brandborg begins again at about 5:40]

SB: I have a file in my hand that carries a lot of the 1966 documentation as the Society brought together the areas of the 3 public land jurisdictions that were to be reviewed under the Wilderness Act for inclusion in the National Wilderness system. These are several lists, some compiled by the agency, mostly by the Wilderness Society, along with some of the memoranda from the Society for the announcement of the public hearings on the various wilderness proposals that were being advanced in '66. The task of the Society in this period was that of taking the old process of the public hearings to circles of cooperators at state level who could then take the initiative of involving the conservation-minded public in the hearings, preparing for them, of course, in advance of that the needed studies to determine boundaries, the acreages to be included in the proposed wilderness units, the special provisions that we would recommend to the agencies for its proposals that were to be advanced through the respective departments of Agriculture and Interior; then, of course, to the White House for clearance and recommendations for designation of the wilderness units to be included in the wilderness system as they advanced to the Congress.

This is a collection of documents that covered this process: everything from Interior Department releases to the statements that we made and, as I've indicated, the memoranda that we've prepared for our members and cooperators within the respective states where these different units were being considered for inclusion in the wilderness system.

[Pause]

SB: This file that I have in hand, as I said, if I squeeze it some 2 or 3 inches in width, is labeled "Wilderness Reviews." Having done preliminary sorting on it, I will put it back in the file so we can give it later scrutiny.

[Brandborg and LaCroix continue looking through materials]

Look at these, you guys. The map of the western states in which we show on each map the areas that are subject to review.

[Continuing to sort through boxes – questions begin again at 12:20]

Unknown speaker: So when one reads through this record, one would then have a road map to how to work at least on the national and state levels to get something done.

SB: Yes, to get people gathered at the state level to develop their proposals for the wilderness designation. This one of November 21, 1966 is the special memorandum to members and cooperators for the administrative hearings on High Uintas wilderness proposals, in which we give the dimension of our proposal as compared to that of the administering agency, in this case the United States Forest Service.

Okay, we got through one file. That's a critically important file.

Unknown speaker: So that's what you're doing, noting what these boxes contain?

Bill LaCroix: Any significant things, like Anna Vee's handwriting, stuff that you wouldn't get any other way. Stuff that gets lost, like unidentified photographs.

SB: You guys are invaluable. Finally I might make order out of the chaos in these boxes.

Here is "Social Carrying Capacity of Wilderness," a document by Bob Lucas and George Stankey.

Unknown speaker: They worked at the experiment station there on campus.

SB: Right, you knew them. I don't know what to do with that. That could be in a file separate from the life blood of the Wilderness Society. Should we start at the very front?

Here is a letter from old Bill Worf. Of course it doesn't have a year on it. It has April 2...it's signed by Bill Worf, salutation "Stu; I read your letter with much interest and have made a few marginal notes."

Wilderness regulations of the Department of the Interior in this file. Additional material from the Interior Department, February 17, '66. An order, 2893, "Reviews of Roadless Areas." Article, "Senators Probe Udall Order." Here is the very important document, the conference report of August, 1964, of Aspinall. Report number 18-29. This is a report on the rulemaking of the

Wilderness Act of the Department of the Interior. November 4, 1965, "Rules and Regulations of the Interior Department: Wilderness Preservation."

A letter to Edward Cliff, chief of the Forest Service. It's a July, 1965 invitation to comment on the proposed regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture governing the administration of National Forest wilderness. No place would a lot of this stuff ever be found.

Various notices of rulemaking from the rules and regulation document of the federal government. I am not able to get the name out of my head. It's the notice of rules.

The Aspinall conference report covers the wilderness bill as it was finally approved by the conferees and signed by the president. This is a very important document. We should put it in the file.

BL: I've got the important documents file over there.

Unknown speaker: So you're taking the file out and we are putting the folder back in the same box? Is that what we're doing Bill?

BL: Well, I'm going to flag them as 12/2/13 for the recording. And as we go through them I'll put what sticky notes are pertinent and stick them back in after we are done with today. No sense jamming them back in there yet. There's still some dirt in there, which is a little concerning.

SB: Here we have the Wilderness Society handbook, the copies that were furnished to our circles of cooperators at the state level for their guidance. This includes the act and the regulations relating to the fulfillment of the wilderness system. These are a series of red folders.

BL: Special stuff I'm putting in this box right here.

Unknown speaker: That's your cherry-picking box?

BL: Yeah, look at this for instance.

SB: A document, I think from Dick Olson, a green notebook from November 11, '74. Various proposals from Dick regarding our publication program. I think these can go someplace.

Here is a December 4, '74 White House fact sheet release transmitting proposals for 37 new additions to the wilderness system, some 9 million acres.

Here is a file labeled "Wilderness Law Implementation: Agency Wilderness Review Schedule." It is mainly a listing of areas in '66 and '67 with some congressional correspondence. Here is a letter from the famous Benton J. Stong, legislative assistant to Senator McGovern.

BL: That's an actual letter there?

SB: This is November 22, '67, raising the question about the Pelican Islands wilderness proposal, which wonders if citation of only sections of the Wilderness Act excludes application of the others. That's all wilderness law implementation. What have you got there?

Unknown speaker: This looks like a play that somebody wrote. Bert Hanson?

SB: Oh, yeah, it's the Montana Study. It shouldn't be there. It's the old Montana Study.

BL: Oh, we'll leave that out. That's cool – we are looking for cool things.

Unknown speaker: Here is one on bears. A bunch of Charles Jonkel stuff. The border grizzly project, 1975.

BL: There's a bunch of these things, but as I look through them...I'm going to put that in the cool box too, that's an original document with his stamp on it.

SB: What is that? That's our great ally.

BL: Saylor. He was a Republican.

SB: Banker from Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

This is White House stuff. This is just a file of National Park Service literature on grizzlies and bears in general. That can go over there, out of the wilderness flow.

BL: Chuck Jonkel. I'll be darned.

SB: It's too bad to have a declaration of wilderness management principles and policies; a memo to the council of the Society from Michael Nadel; "Statement of Wilderness Management Policy."

This is a November 25, '75 memo from Michael Nadel to members of the council with a statement of wilderness management policy and principles. Several pages.

Here is a wilderness management policy statement of considerable...62 pages, obviously from one of the agencies. I would propose...it's marked "Confidential" for in house use, dated August 19, 1974.

Unknown speaker: Here is another one – similar sort of stuff I think.

SB: Yes. "White House Statements of September 21, 1972"; "The President's Wilderness Message Fact Sheet"; includes the "8th Joint Annual Report of the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior," containing the status of the wilderness system, dated September 3, '64.

Blue folder, September 21, '72: "The White House Fact Sheet: The President's Wilderness Message," with listings of wilderness units' status reports.

Well, I don't know what to do with this, boys. It says the Trinity Alps Wilderness. Should I pull those all out and have a separate file of those?

BL: I think this box that we're going through now is your box recording the implementation of the wilderness bill. So I think they should all just stay together. They go a million different directions of course but as a whole they document just how much went into making 200 million acres of wilderness out of 9 million. From '65 to '78, basically. I'm not seeing any from '78, but it goes up to '75 I see.

SB: It should go into '76.

BL: This is like a decade's worth of creating a national movement to preserve these areas. There was no template, you were just doing it. These are the original documents.

Unknown speaker: Here is an original document [asking], "How do you get protection forest lands that do not fully qualify at this time for instant wilderness designation under the '64 act?" I mean, they are just positing these problems and then working through ideas. Pretty impressive.

BL: Well Brandy had inherited the leadership of the Wilderness Society, which was the standard-bearer of the wilderness movement.

Unknown speaker [reading from document]: "A bill to further the purposes of the Wilderness Act."

BL: What year?

Unknown speaker: This is May, '74.

BL: Okay, so they were kind of hammering away at it.

Unknown speaker: This is something they're calling the Eastern Wilderness Bill. I've never heard of it.

BL: At the time it was probably a hot deal.

SB: Here's a message from my dad. This was in the '50s land grab because he directs me to read it.

Can we give these [boxes] to the librarian in Missoula?

BL: Yeah, I think we can give them to the University as a box and say we have gone through these, they look like the process after the wilderness bill was an Act, the Wilderness Society creating this process to add more acreage to the wilderness. It was huge, and here's the huge box.

I think it will be categorized enough in that respect. They might have a whole different system and set of priorities and that's fine. But I want to go through this stuff and get Brandy's take.

SB: So that would be the next transmittal after you're finished with them.

Well, I'm no end of grateful for your help today. I appreciate so much this thoughtful process.

Unknown speaker: Well, it's worth doing. We have to capture some of this experience and understanding, otherwise we'll have to invent it again.

[Pause until about 56:00]

BL: Okay, we are still going through this box of '65 – '75/'78, creating a wilderness movement documentation of Brandy's.

SB: I have a blue file and in the first document, a letter from Harry Crandall to Frank Barry dated February 22, '74, regarding the transfer of the Nevada Wildlife Refuges [and] the Charley Russell Wildlife Range in Montana from BLM. This is the file covering that controversy with the legal submissions of the Wilderness Society, the Oregon Environmental Council, and another half dozen parties as plaintiffs. This includes a temporary restraining order, Wilderness Society plaintiff. I don't see a date. This stands pretty much on its own. I see my notes, dates of July '75, so it gives a period.

I have here a file on the wilderness regulations that were drafted in the Forest Service. I have a date on a letter to Cliff in which I think I offered...it's in response to the July 19, '65 invitation to interested organizations to comment on the proposed regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture governing the administration of National Forest wilderness. I think this is the comment of the Wilderness Society on those regulations. Also there is in this a July, 1965 proposed rulemaking under the Wilderness Act of '64 reprinted from the federal register. Wednesday, July 28, '65. In this I find a handwritten note, April 2, in the corner of the first page. It's a comment of Bill Worf, who headed the wilderness program for implementing the '64 law. This was a 2 page handwritten letter, undoubtedly written in this period when the Forest Service regulations were up, I would say 1965. And a voluminous letter signed, I believe by me, offering the Society observations on and suggestions for changes in the Forest Service regulations. The documents from the federal register covering those regulations are also in this file.

[pause]

A very interesting piece in the *Washington Daily News* of Monday, April 11, 1966 regarding the challenge and the lead, "Senators Probe Udall Ardor," in which Senator Clinton Anderson, the chairman of the Senate Interior Committee, challenges the Udall ardor to do mineral studies in several wildlife ranges – Charley Russell, the Basa Parada (?), Charles Sheldon, and National Parks – Mount McKinley, Death Valley, and others. This is a question, in my mind, what became of that challenge. Did Udall go ahead and complete those mineralogical studies of these key wilderness candidate areas? Are those studies now available? Or did they somehow get derailed?

I have made the point that this file contains our response to the rulemaking for the management of the National Forest wilderness areas.

There's an old saying in the Brandborg family: There is nothing that can be done that a Brandborg can't overdo.

BL: What's worth doing once is worth doing several times.

SB: Here is a lovely document. The December 9, 1974 congressional record covering the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act. And a copy of HR 13455, which is the Eastern Wilderness Area bill. This is called the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act, it is the bill that on this copy of the legislation carries the date of March 13, 1974. The culmination of that important fight, getting the eastern areas of the National Forests included in the wilderness system. A major effort of the Society and a great accomplishment.

Here's a red file – first letter of June 29, '71, to me from initials D.W.S. – Doug Scott – regarding the executive order, which I think covered the protection of areas to be reviewed under the wilderness law but providing interim protection of their wilderness. I may need to have verification on that interpretation.

This contains voluminous hand scribbled notes of me, along with a listing of wilderness areas presently included in the wilderness system, August 12, '71. Here is a phone call, May 6, '71, with Whitaker. Here is an editorial, "Forever Slow." I wonder if this was written by our friend John Oakes. This article is a statement urging speedup in the review process – that the review process has proceeded with discernible slowness.

Many rough notes. Here is a White House statement of April 28, 1971.

This is a statement of the president urging compliance with the wilderness law and listing areas – including Sequoia and King's National Parks, the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge, California,

North Cascades Park and several others – urging the Congress to proceed in including them in the national wilderness system.

Commentary on – without the designation of an author – the wilderness program’s small progress, problem areas, [and] criticism. Underlined statement, bottom of the first page: Conservationists are under no illusion, this is pitifully small progress.

[Break in audio]

SB: What he did was send the IRS after me.

BL: Colson did? Chuck Colson?

SB: Yeah, Colson sent the IRS and I spent better than 2 years defending ourselves and throwing stuff out of the files in which we had asked members of Congress to do the right things by the Lord. Oh, I took him apart on something, was it the Alaska pipeline? What was it? Anyway, yeah, Colson was...

You see, remember I stopped the pipeline. Stopped it cold. Nobody would go in the case with me. Finally, the Environmental Defense Fund did. But I got an injunction.

BL: What did you get out of it in the end?

SB: Oh, a great improvement in the documentation of the wildlife resource and certainly some strengthening of the wildlife protection measures.

[End of Interview]