"MISSION 66":
Modernism and the National Park Dilemma
in the United States, 1945-1972

by Ethan Carr

This thesis is submitted to the School of Landscape Architecture
at the Edinburgh College of Art
in fulfilment of the requirements for the

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME II OF II

May 2006

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that the copyright rests with the author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author or the University (as may be appropriate).
# Table of Contents

## Volume I

**Chapter 1: Introduction**  
1.1 "MISSION 66"  
1.2 Gaps in Knowledge  
1.3 Findings in Context of Work in the Field

**Chapter 2: Overview of the Literature**  
2.1 National Park Narratives: The "National Park Idea"  
2.2 National Park Service History  
2.3 Academic Studies and Administrative Histories  
2.4 Landscape Architecture and Perceptions of Modernism  
2.5 Postwar Geography  
2.6 Environmentalism

**Chapter 3: Methodology**  
3.1 Sources of Data  
3.2 Narrative Theory  
3.3 Other Approaches to Writing History  
3.4 Issues Regarding Research of the Recent Past  
3.5 Site Visits  
3.6 Research Methods

**Chapter 4: Research Questions**  
4.1 Origins of Mission 66 Controversy  
4.2 Contemporary Influences on Conrad Wirth and Mission 66 Policy  
4.3 Perceptions of Mission 66 and Attitudes Towards Modernism
4.4 The Significance of the Mission 66 Prospectus
4.5 Mission 66 Design and Contemporary Context
4.6 Changing Perceptions of Nature and History
4.7 Continued Significance of Mission 66

Chapter 5: The National Park “Dilemma” and the Origins of Controversy 31-60
5.1 Early Origins
5.2 Early Scenic Preservation and Automotive Tourism
5.3 Automotive Tourism and National Parks
5.4 The National Park “Dilemma”
5.5 Hetch Hetchy

Chapter 6: Conrad Wirth and Postwar “Recreational Planning” 61-78
6.1 Conrad Wirth
6.2 Recreational Planning
6.3 Landscape Change in the Mid-Twentieth Century
6.4 Postwar Federal Highways

Chapter 7: Initial Responses to the Dilemma and to Modernism 79-99
7.1 Media Responses to Postwar Conditions
7.2 Responses to Modernism: Jackson Lake Lodge
7.3 Park Service Adoption of Modernism

Chapter 8: Initial Management Priorities and Pilot Studies 100-135
8.1 Shifting Political Context
8.2 Administrative Reorganization
8.3 Mission 66 Gets Underway
8.4 Initial Guiding Concepts
8.5 Vint's Influence on Early Policy
8.6 Pilot Prospectus for Mount Rainier
8.7 Other Pilot Prospectuses

9.1 Mission 66 “Precepts”
9.2 “Our Heritage”
9.3 Appropriations

Chapter 10: Case Studies 160-189
10.1 Yosemite
10.2 Yellowstone
10.3 Everglades

Chapter 11: Mission 66 Architecture 190-222
11.1 The “Visitor Center”
11.2 Administration Buildings
11.3 Park Housing
11.4 Concessioner Lodges

Chapter 12: Preservation and Interpretation 223-246
12.1 Park Making as Historic Preservation
12.2 Other Aspects of Historic Preservation
12.3 Mission 66 Interpretation
12.4 Training for Interpreters
12.5 Precedents for a National Register
Volume II

Chapter 13: Mission 66 Landscape Architecture  247-273

13.1 National Park Service Landscape Architecture
13.2 Postwar Landscape Architecture
13.3 Mission 66 as Landscape Architecture
13.4 The Mission 66 Modernist Park

Chapter 14: Roads and Controversies  274-314

14.1 National Park Roads
14.2 Tioga Road, Part One
14.3 Park Roads and Postwar Wilderness
14.4 The “National Park Wilderness”
14.5 Tioga Road, Part Two
14.6 Denali Road
14.7 Other Mission 66 Roads

Chapter 15: “Parks for America”  315-362

15.1 The ORRRC
15.2 “PARKS FOR AMERICA”
15.3 Mission 66 “Frontiers”
15.4 The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
15.5 Park Science and the Leopold Report
15.6 Wirth Steps Down
15.7 “The Road to the Future”

Conclusion  363-371

Bibliography  372-387

Figures
Chapter 13: Mission 66 Landscape Architecture

13.1 National Park Service Landscape Architecture

Mission 66 interpretive programming, like the visitor centres themselves, resulted from multidisciplinary collaborations at the Park Service during the mid-1950s. Ronald Lee's historians and interpreters, WODC and EODC architects and landscape architects, and many park superintendents and other staff supported most of the Mission 66 policies and priorities emanating from Washington. Mission 66 was above all an interdisciplinary endeavour, not unlike many other large scale planning and development programs of the era.

This collaboration was necessary and productive, but it also marked a change from an earlier era of national park planning when Thomas Vint's landscape architects oversaw park “master planning” with more unilateral control. In the production of Mission 66 prospectuses, the emphasis on the visitor centre and the fact that many parks were entering what Lee called an “interpretive stage” demanded greater participation by architects and historians. New urban historical park initiatives in Philadelphia and elsewhere also expanded roles for architects, interpretive planners, and historical architects more than for landscape architects. The agency's need for landscape architecture was changing. In the design implementation of Mission 66, landscape architecture was now only one element of a more multidisciplinary process. A more thorough understanding of Park Service landscape architecture and its changing relationship to the larger profession in the United States is essential context for every research question addressed in this thesis.

National Park Service landscape architects traditionally had planned and designed at three scales. Master plans documents determined basic policies for the development of an entire park, whatever its size. The master plans included maps, in which one inch could equal a mile or more, with colour coded land use zones covering the whole park. More detailed site planning for individual developed areas (park villages) were also prepared, typically drawn at scales of one to four hundred feet to the inch. Finally the landscape architects also drew more detailed designs for individual parking lots and campgrounds, wayside interpretive areas and kiosks, building façades, guard rails, signs, and other landscape features. Construction documents were prepared as needed to
convey to contractors the exact dimensions and character of construction and to provide the basis for detailed cost estimates.

Under Mission 66, landscape architects continued to create and revise master plans under Vint's supervision. This work now entailed siting new visitor centres and other facilities and integrating them into the new interpretive program for the park. While tension could develop between the provisions of earlier master plans and sometimes different ideas presented in Mission 66 prospectuses, more often the two planning processes converged. In some cases the same landscape architects were producing both documents. In others (particularly several of the "pilot prospectuses"), different participants met and attempted to reconcile their plans. Landscape architects in the WODC and EODC, in Washington, and in individual parks revised and developed both master plans and prospectuses, eventually producing consistent development strategies for virtually every park. The experience of rapidly preparing so many prospectuses eventually affected the master planning process. By the early 1960s some master plans were called "conceptual master plans," and more closely resembled the shorter, smaller format prospectuses, with more text and fewer drawings.

Landscape architects also continued to provide smaller scaled designs for individual campgrounds, parking lots, waysides, and other site development. In addition to siting a visitor centre, in other words, the designers laid out the parking lots and paths and determined the general orientation of the building complex in the surrounding landscape. In another example, once the decision to relocate a campground was made, landscape architects would locate and design the new campground, typically with the greater capacity and more generous dimensions demanded by the larger size and number of trailers and other recreational vehicles pouring into the parks.

But to a significant degree, the middle scale of landscape architecture—the scale of the park village—was replaced by visitor centre planning and design. The visitor centre complex centralized and replaced many of the public and administrative functions of the prewar rustic village. There were obvious reasons why architects and interpreters were more essential than landscape architects in the design of visitor centre buildings. There were a few new concessioner areas (with new overnight accommodations) that were described as "villages" under Mission 66, but the rustic village idea had really been replaced by the new day use facilities—above all the visitor centre—which embodied the new strategy and priorities of Mission 66.
This change implied that on the one hand, landscape architects no longer controlled to the same degree how parks were planned and developed. On the other hand, landscape architects had become more influential than ever within the Park Service. Wirth, Vint, EODC chief Edward Zimmer, chief of the Mission 66 working staff Bill Carnes, and many other agency designers and managers were all trained as landscape architects. As they reached senior administrative positions, they now ran the agency many had joined over twenty years earlier. As a massive park modernization program, Mission 66 was essentially a landscape architectural project. Park Service landscape architects (with other agency officials) were responsible for Vint’s “Plan B,” the “guiding principles” of the Mission 66 program, and other basic revisions of park planning procedures. In the broadest sense, Wirth’s national recreational planning efforts, and the overall concept and implementation of the Mission 66 program itself were the most important products of Mission 66 landscape architecture. The significance of landscape architecture under Mission 66 was clearly not limited to individual design projects, such as the lay out of campgrounds and day use areas. But the role of the landscape architect in national park planning also changed, and even decreased, under Mission 66. This shift reflected parallel developments in the profession of landscape architecture as a whole, and in the long relationship between landscape architects and American park making.

Landscape architecture had always been the profession of park planning and design in the United States. Frederick Law Olmsted coined the term to describe his work with Calvert Vaux designing municipal parks and park systems in the 1860s. By the end of the century, scores of municipalities, counties, and states had hired landscape architects to plan and design systems of parks and “scenic reservations” all over the country. The Department of the Interior began using landscape architects to plan the development of national parks in 1914. When it was created in 1916, the mandate of the National Park Service, as it was understood by the framers of its legislation and its first directors, was to expand and modernize a system of federal scenic reservations for the enjoyment of an increasingly automotive public, and to do so in a manner that would allow future generations to enjoy the same privilege.

Vint described this mandate and its relationship to the profession of landscape architecture in the late 1920s, while he was convincing Albright of the importance of park master planning. Vint argued that landscape architecture was a profession that attempted to offer “a practical solution to the problem at hand,” but which also considered “the element of beauty.” The element of beauty could only be attained in park development,
he observed, when the “congruity of parts gives harmonious form to the whole.” The “first work” of the agency, therefore, was “the protection and preservation of these landscapes.” Its “second work” was to make the same areas “accessible to the people” so that they could be enjoyed. Vint ended his uncharacteristically effusive essay with expressions of his most deeply held convictions: “What is the work of the Park Service but landscape work? What organization was ever given a nobler landscape problem?”

Albright subsequently authorized Vint and his staff to assure that “comprehensive development plans” anticipated and controlled where and how public facilities would be provided in every park. Haphazard development by individual concessioners and park superintendents had proven to be destructive; by designing a park as a whole, with each developed area coordinated in an overall plan, the Park Service could hope to achieve a successful balance of scenic preservation and public use for the early automotive age. By the end of the 1920s national park master plans included drawings that defined overall land use zones for a park, site plans for individual developed areas (villages), and schematic designs for buildings and even landscape construction details. In 1933 the public professional practice that Vint and his staff of landscape architects instituted positioned the Park Service to lead vastly expanded state and national park programs under the New Deal. The result was a zenith in the history of American park making, and an experience that shaped the careers and sensibilities of Wirth and most of the professional colleagues he relied on during Mission 66.

But by the 1950s, Wirth, Vint, and other Park Service officials understood that the basic nature of the “landscape problem” had changed. Mission 66 therefore offered a revised approach. As already suggested, visitor capacity was increased, usually through road widenings, expansions of existing campgrounds and parking lots, often relocated to what were perceived as less sensitive sites, and the concentration of people and facilities into visitor centre and overnight lodge complexes. In this sense Mission 66 was a redevelopment, not a development, campaign. Landscape architects now needed to collaborate more extensively with other professionals, especially architects and interpretive planners, to design the visitor centres and parkwide interpretive programs that were critical components of such redevelopment. The very appearance of the Mission 66 prospectuses indicated this shift in the relative importance of professional services. Prewar master plans had been sets of large format drawings done by Vint’s landscape
architects, featuring site plans at different scales and occasional perspective and sectional views, often rendered in coloured pencil and pastels. The Mission 66 prospectuses were small format, written building programs that typically included few plans or illustrations of any kind. Park villages and other developed areas of the rustic era would remain in many cases, but they would be redeveloped with new visitor centres, comfort stations, interpretive kiosks, and larger parking lots. This amounted to a list of mostly architectural and interpretive design features to be superimposed on an existing footprint of landscape development.

13.2 Postwar Landscape Architecture
The relationship of the profession of landscape architecture to park commissions at the state and local levels experienced analogous changes during the postwar period. The new geographical context of regional, low density urbanization and Interstate Highways affected the functions of municipal and regional parks as much as it did national parks. Since the turn of the century, large municipal parks had already begun to be appreciated more for their potential to serve growing demands for active, organized recreation than as scenic reservations. As the middle class abandoned older urban cores after World War II, many nineteenth-century parks seemed increasingly unused and therefore available for new uses. By the 1950s many urban park commissions were constructing ball fields, swimming pools, and other heavily engineered recreational facilities in their parks. Because they were already publicly owned, municipal planners targeted parks as potential locations for expressways, public housing, or new hospitals and schools, some of which perhaps seemed justified as means to serve the disadvantaged communities that now surrounded the poorly maintained parks. Regional scenic reservations in areas just outside older cities often suffered similar fates. Low density urbanization meant that many people now had yards, often with enough room for small swimming pools, picnic tables, and play areas for children. These were some of the amenities that might have once drawn the public to regional parks. Parks were less needed or desired as areas for such public congregations once postwar residential development provided private landscapes for middle class family activities. By the 1950s, regional scenic reservations such as those around Boston were being redeveloped with recreational complexes including ball fields, tennis courts, golf courses, ice rinks,

National Archives).
indoor swimming pools, and parking lots. Interstate Highways in many cases bisected or ran along the edges of parks that had once been bucolic enclaves. Regional park commissions, faced with the demands of larger, more urban populations in formerly rural counties, began managing their parks less as scenic reservations and more as infrastructure to deliver recreational facilities and services to the residents of vast metropolitan areas. Such redevelopment of existing park systems consisted largely of individual engineering and architectural projects, not the design of new parks or park systems.

Landscape architects were simply less essential as consultants for various park agencies in the 1940s and 1950s than they had been in the 1920s and 1930s. The basic premises of how and why systems of public landscapes served the public were shifting. At the same time, landscape architects also dramatically adapted their profession to new social and economic conditions. During the Depression, up to 90% of the membership of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) had gone to work for public park commissions and other planning and development agencies at various levels of government. But the New Deal ended resoundingly in 1942, and when the private market for design services reemerged after the war, it did so under new circumstances. The opportunities for “country place” commissions would never again be as significant as they were before 1929, for example, but shopping centre developers, residential builders, expanding universities, and relocating corporations all were potential new clients. While many professionals remained at agencies such as the Park Service (public agencies employed about one third of the ASLA members in 1953), many more were anxious to resume or start private consulting firms.425 To do so they needed to offer design services for the types of development then occurring, and they needed to create design strategies consistent with their clients’ needs and tastes. And by the 1950s, many of those clients wanted modernist design.

The debate over whether landscape architecture should “go modern” had been underway since at least the early 1930s, and many members of the ASLA had resisted the trend.426 As both residential and commercial clients patronized modernist architects after


the war, however, contention about the meaning or desirability of modernist landscape design quickly faded. If they were to thrive in the new private market, landscape architects needed to provide designs that were perceived as appropriate complements to the modernist architecture and planning that now often preceded their own involvement in projects. By the 1940s, articles in Landscape Architecture magazine, as well as more popular home and garden journals, indicated that “modern” had become a desirable characterization of new landscape design. Published projects, such as Robert L. Zion’s Roosevelt Field shopping centre on Long Island, or Sidney N. Shurcliff’s work for Shoppers’ World in Massachusetts, indicated that mainstream professional practice had moved into a modernist design idiom.427

Postwar American landscape architects reinvented their profession in the context of an emerging private market for their services, and they reinvigorated and expanded their activities by doing so. The move back to the private sector often meant an adoption of modernist theory and techniques. In this regard they followed the leads of certain landscape designers who since the 1930s had been advocating modernist principles. The fate of the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture, which had begun under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., in 1900, indicated this professional trend. In 1936 the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) was created under the overall direction of architect Joseph F. Hudnut, who in 1937 made Walter Gropius head of the new school’s architecture department. What had been separate schools of planning and landscape architecture now also became departments of the GSD. The reorganization implied many changes for design education, generally, and for landscape architecture, in particular. Hudnut and Gropius championed modernism and fostered a collaborative spirit in which “design” was considered to include “all those processes by which the visual arts are created.” Their curriculum stressed unified training, interdisciplinary spirit, and preparation in new techniques of architectural design and construction. Hudnut eliminated most art history and other liberal arts courses, expecting his students to have acquired such foundations, to the degree they were needed, as undergraduates.

Landscape architecture barely survived as a separate discipline at the new GSD. Hudnut

reduced its faculty and gave the department a low priority. Academic education in landscape architecture, even more than in architecture, had depended on a knowledge of historical styles and precedent. The entire discipline as it had developed during the "country place" era was made irrelevant by the new educational model of the GSD. The few landscape faculty who remained, such as Bremer Pond, put up ineffectual resistance to the reformation taking place, but they were hopelessly out of step with what was soon a national trend in design education.  

As Hudnut and Gropius reorganized the future of American design education in Cambridge, the San Francisco Museum of Art mounted an exhibition of "modern landscape architecture" in 1937 that gave specific indications of a modernist profession of landscape architecture. A counterpoint to the 1932 International Style exhibition in New York, the 1937 show was again co-curated by the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock. The basic premise, expressed by museum director Grace L. McCann Morely in the exhibition catalogue, was that "landscape architecture, which is so closely connected with architecture, should also have evolved a distinctly modern phase." Morely invited Hitchcock, architect Richard Neutra, and landscape architect Fletcher Steele (among others) to contribute their ideas on what the "principles of a contemporary style in landscape architecture should be." The exhibit featured models of recent California gardens (provided by the designers) by Thomas D. Church, Annette Hoyt Flanders, Lockwood De Forest, Margaret Keeley Brown, Steele, and Neutra. The show also included the work of other landscape designers, photographs of European modernist gardens, garden ornament displays, and plans and renderings of historical gardens. The Pacific chapter of the ASLA put up a concurrent exhibition of their recent work.  

In his catalogue essay, Hitchcock offered persuasive instructions for how landscape architecture could reform itself along the lines of modernist architecture. Whether the "modern garden" was "a mere roof terrace [or] a national park," one principle could cover all of its manifestations: "The preservation of all possible values previously in existence in the landscape setting with the addition of only the simplest and most practical provision for specific human needs." For gardens and terraces adjacent to


254
buildings, the landscape architect was simply to create “a sort of outdoor architecture” consistent with the materials, floor plan organization, and aesthetic of modernist buildings. Garden features such as screens, lattice walls, hedges, and trellises all served to extend the flowing, overlapping, and functional spaces of modernist domestic architecture, as well as the general integration of indoors and outdoors. On a larger scale, however, such “terraces should not be extended indefinitely into the natural setting.” Buildings and garden should be one unit, ordered by the same “geometrical principles of design,” and “set down on a well chosen site” that otherwise should be “almost completely untouched.” The landscape architect should do as little as possible that might “interfere…with the natural virtue of the [larger] site” by concealing drives, swimming pools, and other “artificial features.” Noting that “such a theory of modern gardening…may seem to limit the possibilities of the art,” he nevertheless reiterated that “modern gardening should preserve all the values of the existing natural environment, adding only necessary features,” adding that the same theory at “the other end of the scale” could guide “regional and even national planning.”

Hitchcock’s ideas reflected his understanding of ideas suggested and illustrated by Le Corbusier and other European modernists during the previous decade. Le Corbusier, for example, described the landscape around his high-rise building proposals of the 1920s as a “Virgilian dream”: an uncorrupted pastoral vision that served as the visual and emotional setting of his architectural compositions. These undeveloped landscape designs were little more than abbreviated imitations of eighteenth-century English landscape parks, standing in for an idealized “nature.” Architectural historian Marc Treib suggests that modernists such as Le Corbusier regarded the landscape as “generic scenery…serving as the vegetal buffer between buildings.” Once the “natural” background for a work of art (the building) had been conceptualized along these lines, the best approach for the management of the landscape, apparently, was to do as little as possible to it. Any overt indication of design or manipulation would destroy the pastoral

idyll and prevent the landscape from functioning as a neutral frame for appreciation of the building as a sculptural object.

If aspects of modernist architectural theory seemed problematic as a basis for a landscape design profession, the postwar adoption of modernism by institutional and corporate clients (and design schools) nevertheless made it necessary or at least desirable for some landscape architects to develop modernist conceptual frameworks for their work. In 1937, while the San Francisco exhibition was being mounted, British landscape architect Christopher Tunnard published a series of articles also suggesting how modernist architecture should reform the practice of landscape design. In his 1938 book, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, Tunnard established a manifesto of modernist landscape architecture, and bewailed the fact that “gardens had remained aloof” from trends in architecture.\(^{433}\) In 1939 Joseph Hudnut brought Tunnard to the GSD, where he and his publications provided theory and practical examples for landscape design sympathetic to the new spirit. Tunnard soon insisted that “modern landscape design [was] inseparable from the spirit, technique, and development of modern architecture,” and denounced the bifurcated model of “formal” and “naturalistic” styles, which he associated with “conventional methods of axial composition or of naturalistic arrangement of plant material.” These were “design clichés...fatal to the uninhibited garden maker” and “the dying breath of the romantic age, long since broken down and already discarded by the sister art of architecture.”\(^{434}\) Photographs and plans of Tunnard’s built work in England between 1936 and 1939 perfectly illustrated Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s contemporary suggestions. Working with the architect Serge Chermayeff on the architect’s own residence in Halland, for example, Tunnard designed an architectonic terrace garden that created a defined, limited extension of the modernist, functional spaces of the house. The garden provided a viewing terrace for the surrounding parklike landscape, in which he made almost no interventions.\(^{435}\) In this project and others like it, the strategy of inserting of a unified building and terrace complex into a larger, “untouched” landscape was aided immeasurably by the fact that the “natural” setting was the product of eighteenth-century landscape gardening—a landscape

---


park—that served admirably as the visual essence of a “Virgilian dream,” with few modifications needed.

By the time Tunnard arrived at Harvard, at least some of the landscape students at the GSD already chafed under the remnants of traditional design education being offered there. Garrett Eckbo, for example, openly criticized how Bremer Pond still taught “Beaux-Arts” principles of composition and required the study of historical precedents. Impressed by the newer faculty at Harvard, including Gropius, Tunnard, and the architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, Eckbo well understood the strength and potential of the new direction in design.436 Eckbo and fellow students Dan Kiley and James C. Rose wrote three articles for Architectural Record in 1939 and 1940 that attempted to revise the theoretical foundations of their profession. Landscape design, they suggested, occurred in one of three “environments”: urban, rural, or primeval. In their essay on landscapes in the “urban environment,” they stressed the need for a “flexible [park] system distributing all types of recreation,” citing Robert Moses’s recent work in the New York region as the most advanced example. They then offered a typology of landscape types (from “play lot” to “parkways and freeways”) that corresponded to the metropolitan park planning Moses had engineered since the 1920s with landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke, among other consultants and planners. Such a basic outline for a park system also agreed with the suggestions of the Regional Plan Association’s Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, compiled in the 1920s by planner Thomas Adams. The young Harvard modernists also emphasized that urban parks should be functional parts of a “recreational environment” that would “integrate building and landscape,” serve multiple uses, “exploit mechanization,” and recognize the “decisive importance of ‘the machine,’” by which of course they meant automobiles. Systems of automotive parkways and recreational complexes would “meet the new needs of urban society,” and amount to an advance in landscape architecture comparable to that of modernism in architecture.437

Their essay on design in the “rural environment” similarly combined borrowed ideas with a flourish of modernist bravado. Reflecting on the dramatic changes in agriculture and rural life during the 1930s, they noted that recreation would need to suit

436 Alofsin, The Struggle for Modernism, 159-170; Simo, A Coalescing of Different Forces and Ideas, 21-36.
437 Probably the most direct influence on this vision of a modernist urban park system was the architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, who gave an influential series of lectures at Harvard in 1938 and 1939, later expanded into his book, Space, Time and Architecture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), which became a standard textbook at the GSD and elsewhere.
the new needs of rural populations. Drawing especially on the ideas of the planner Benton MacKaye, they suggested new rural recreational centres should include outdoor theatres, ballfields, picnic grounds, community buildings and other facilities that would consolidate rural populations in their recreational activities and therefore promote "social integration." Merely "rustic" or scenic parks were dismissed as of interest only to "urbanites," not "those who live on the land." In this case the examples cited were not parks, but the new towns planned by the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Farm Security Administration (for which Eckbo worked), and the Resettlement Administration. In their article on the "primeval environment," the three essayists described the need for "establishing and then controlling an environmental equilibrium" with urban and rural landscapes by assuring the continued existence of primeval areas "not inhabited by man." The justification for such a system of designated wilderness had been well elaborated by the Wilderness Society and many other advocates by 1940; but the authors were forceful in their observation that preserving the "natural scenery" would not suffice. Ecological science would need to guide management decisions in such areas, and providing "access" would only destroy them. "Wholesale invasion of the wilderness" was deplorable, and could not be "camouflaged out of existence by 'styles' of architecture...or by 'rustification' which is supposed to 'blend' with nature, and simulate the honest craftsmanship of the pioneers." Harmony, they noted, was "the result of contrast," and therefore was no justification for park development in the primeval environment, where "the biological conception of environmental design" should be applied.438 As derivative as these articles by Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose may have been, they were significant within the profession of landscape architecture for piecing together a set of fundamental ideas that could be the basis of a modernist practice. They were far more useful than vague references to a "Virgilian dream," and in 1950 many of these ideas were codified when Garrett Eckbo published Landscapes for Living, which became a standard textbook in professional education for years afterwards.

The most representative category of American modernist landscape design, however, had little to do with these ruminations on urban, rural, or primeval public landscapes. It was private garden design, particularly the design of the smaller gardens proliferating with the postwar housing boom. James Rose, in particular, wrote other articles in the late 1930s that explained how gardens could indeed become a modernist art

438 The referenced articles are all reprinted in Treib, ed., Modern Landscape Architecture, 68-91.
form, situated “between architecture and sculpture,” through the use of asymmetric compositions, new materials, and design motifs that evoked contemporary fine arts and architecture. Above all new residential landscapes should be “functional” outdoor living spaces rather than displays of horticultural and formal composition, and they should exhibit seamless integration of interior and exterior space. The fine arts also influenced garden design by the 1940s. The sculptor Isamu Noguchi’s playground projects consisted of abstract earthform compositions, for example, and the landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx created striking garden plans inspired by abstract paintings. By the end of the decade, a number of American landscape architects developed new and successful approaches to residential landscape design based on modernist principles, often in close association with architects building new residences in a related design idiom.

Much of the new spirit in residential design could be traced to California and the phenomenal, low density urban growth occurring there. The location of the 1937 San Francisco exhibition, and the fact that it was dominated by West Coast landscape architects, reflected the degree to which the postwar modernist garden to some degree was synonymous with the California garden. Thomas Church, in particular, defined the California garden as a mainstay of modernist landscape design, characterized by its relatively small size (usually attached to new single-family houses), asymmetric plan organization, use of wood decking and other hard surfaces, individual plants used for sculptural effect, and swimming pools (or other features) laid out in irregular, “biomorphic” shapes. Window walls and sliding doors integrated indoor and outdoor space, and sculptures (or sculptural outdoor furniture) served as centrepieces. Church produced some 2,000 gardens during his career, and influenced younger California landscape architects, including Garrett Eckbo and Lawrence Halprin, in their designs of both gardens and larger projects. The sheer number of modernist gardens—Eckbo designed 1,000 himself in his lifetime—indicates the degree to which they were adapted to the mass production of housing taking place especially in California. Although the phenomenon of “outdoor living” was particularly suited to the mild climate of the West

Coast, its appeal was nearly universal. Popularized in *California Sunset* and other design and consumer magazines, the modernist garden, as articulated by Church and others, embodied postwar material well being as much as did the ranch house itself. The redwood deck and “kidney shaped” pool proliferated into ubiquitous backyard clichés. In masterful examples of larger garden designs, such as Church’s Donnell Residence (1949) or Dan Kiley’s Miller House (with Eero Saarinen, 1955), the adept integration of house and garden confirmed the successful adaptation of modernist principles of spatial organization to garden design.

By the early 1950s landscape architecture was, as historian Melanie Simo describes it, “a profession in transition.”442 Most of the second generation of American landscape architects, who had established the ASLA and dozens of academic programs in landscape architecture in the first half of the century, no longer practiced. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., for example, retired from active practice in 1950 and died in 1957. By that time many other leading lights of the “country place” era were also gone.443 Gilmore Clarke, who had overseen the development of Westchester parks and parkways in the 1920s and the entire New York City park system in the 1930s, perhaps spoke for many of the remaining old guard when in 1947 he wrote that he saw “no Frank Lloyd Wrights or Le Corbusiers of landscape architecture” among the “thinning ranks” of students entering the field; what was more he was at a loss to know whether this was “a liability or an asset.”444 The early 1950s were a nadir for many academic landscape architecture programs, which suffered from low enrolments, reduced budgets, and some doubt about what the future of the profession should be. Bremer Pond lingered on in charge of landscape architecture at the GSD until 1950, indicating not so much tolerance towards a venerable figure as much as indifference for what Hudnut and Gropius felt was an obsolete field. Older academics at other schools, such as Gilmore Clarke at Cornell, struggled to adapt to the dramatic developments in their professional world.

If academia had yet to adjust, a postwar practice of landscape architecture was nevertheless taking shape in the United States, and it was a modernist design discipline.

---


260
Designers such as Dan Kiley were increasingly successful because they were preferred as subconsultants by leading modernist architects, such as Eero Saarinen. The postwar practice of landscape architecture also grew because it responded to contemporary trends in land development and construction. By the mid-1950s, Garrett Eckbo, Lawrence Halprin, and other leading landscape architects moved beyond garden design to take on larger and more complex projects, including the design of shopping centres, campuses, corporate parks, civic plazas, and large subdivisions described as “new communities.” This typology of larger landscape commissions expressed the dominant themes of postwar urbanization, such as low density residential development, the relocation of corporate headquarters, and downtown “revitalizations.” These kinds of large, complex projects, in turn, demanded larger offices with more employees trained to undertake a variety of design, engineering, and management tasks. Gropius himself created the model for large, integrated firms with The Architects Collaborative (TAC), the Cambridge office he established while at Harvard. Other successful architectural firms of the 1950s, such as Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), also featured corporate business structures and large numbers of employees trained in various disciplines. Landscape architecture offices soon followed suit. In 1945, Eckbo formed a partnership with Robert Royston and Edward A. Williams in San Francisco, and Halprin founded his influential practice in the same city four years later. Another Californian, Hideo Sasaki, opened his first office in Boston in 1953. Sasaki soon “did for middle- and large-scale projects,” according to Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, “what Thomas Church did for the West Coast house and garden.” He did so by building a large, multidisciplinary design office. In 1957 he and Walker formed Sasaki, Walker and Associates, a firm soon known for its urban renewal, campus planning, and large subdivisions. Major architectural firms on the East Coast sought out Sasaki and Walker as capable collaborators working along lines sympathetic to their own. Sasaki, Walker and Associates soon grew along the lines of SOM (where Sasaki had worked) and took on a corporate business structure that allowed the firm’s principals to delegate management and design development tasks while reserving their own time to oversee major decisions and work directly with clients. The firm was one of many multidisciplinary design firms that proliferated over the next two decades. As these

---

444 Quoted in Simo, *100 Years of Landscape Architecture*, 131.
design offices grew, many developed corporate structures, regionalized, and eventually split into new or renamed offices.446

New growth and change in the profession of landscape architecture soon affected educational programs, since new university instructors inevitably drew on their own experience to structure courses and curriculum. Sasaki, in particular, salvaged the landscape architecture program at the GSD. Beginning in 1953 when he became chair of the department, Sasaki reorganized training in landscape architecture to make it more closely resemble his own successful practice. He assembled graduate students and instructors into teams that solved design problems through an organized approach to “research, analysis and synthesis.” Architects and planners were invited to join in collaborative design studios that simulated the structure of contemporary professional offices, and with landscape architects they often undertook the kind of large scale planning and urban redevelopment scenarios typical of the era. Some students went to work for Sasaki (Walker was one of his former students), while some employees came to teach in the collaborative design studios. Sasaki brought in an array of active planners and designers to participate in studios and other courses, and also invited government officials who were implementing urban renewal and other programs. Other academic landscape architecture departments went through similar transitions.447

Over the ten years following the establishment of Sasaki, Walker and Associates in 1957 (in other words the period contemporary to Mission 66), dozens of new development projects all over the country demonstrated what the reinvented profession of landscape architecture could accomplish. Sasaki and his project teams designed “new communities” such as Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island, and “comprehensive downtown renewals,” such as Constitution Plaza in Hartford. At new corporate parks, such as the John Deere Headquarters in Illinois and the Upjohn Headquarters in Michigan, the firm designed pastoral landscapes to serve as the neutral settings for striking modernist architecture by Saarinen Associates and SOM. In Los Altos Hills, California, the firm planned the new Foothill College; in Boulder they designed the massive expansion of the University of Colorado. In San Francisco, Alcoa Plaza and Crocker Plaza were two of dozens of examples of “civic plazas” that featured extensive paving, modernist sculpture, and architectonic landscape elements, such as geometricized concrete retaining walls and stairs (often used for seating), raised planting boxes, and

446 See Walker and Simo, Invisible Gardens, 224-257.
elaborate fountains. These few examples, from just one firm’s extensive portfolio, begin to indicate the range and scale of landscape planning and design projects that characterized the period. As the American landscape underwent the greatest changes in its history, there was much planning and design work to be done. Soon an abundance of landscape architecture firms were working within a similar typology of project types, and often in the same context of large, multidisciplinary project teams.

13.3 Mission 66 as Landscape Architecture

Public parks were not a particularly important a category of work for postwar landscape architecture firms. The public landscapes designed in the late 1950s and early 1960s often were “semipublic” urban spaces, owned or sponsored by private corporations or institutions. Many civic plazas fell into this category, as did the “bonus plazas” built by developers in New York after 1961, and the iconic Paley Park in Manhattan, designed by Robert Zion and Harold Breen in the early 1960s. M. Paul Friedberg and others reinvigorated small park design with fanciful, abstract “adventure” playgrounds later in the decade, but this remained a discrete and limited type of public landscape, usually attached to schools or housing projects. Walker and Simo observe that, at least in California, “by 1960, the design of neighbourhood parks and gardens was no longer a mainstay” of leading landscape firms, which were taking advantage of the rapid urbanization occurring in the state by moving on to the design of “schools, college campuses, civic centres, and mixed-use projects with parking garages and roof gardens.”

Certainly public landscapes continued as an important dimension of what landscape architects were expected to be able to design in the 1950s and 1960s. Large scale urban renewal projects in St. Louis, Pittsburgh, and other cities called for new waterfront parks on what had been the sites of commercial or industrial development. But in fundamental ways, the older practice and ideology of park making was no longer a foundation of the postwar profession. Olmstedian theory—of the type that continued to inform Park Service landscape architecture during Mission 66—did not continue to have the same influence in a design profession that had adapted to modernist theory, a multidisciplinary context, and a new typology of commissions linked to postwar patterns of urbanization.

448 Walker and Simo, Invisible Gardens, 230-257.
449 Walker and Simo, Invisible Gardens, 141.
The extraordinary opportunities for park and parkway development made possible by the New Deal no longer existed. The Interstate Highway Act assured that most new highway development would be engineered for combined commercial and noncommercial traffic. Unlike the prewar, noncommercial parkways that had been designed by landscape architects for park commissions, the Interstate Highways were planned by engineers for highway departments. Federal and state highway authorities never considered that systems of public landscapes should complement the new roads, as was the case with prewar park and parkway systems. Neither did Congress empower the Park Service to embark on extensive “cooperation” with state and local governments to plan and design their park systems, as it had during the New Deal. In general, as new and enlarged patterns of land development and urbanization gathered momentum in the 1950s, most municipal and state governments did not implement commensurate programs of park and parkway expansions. The new, low density American city—the “metropolitan region”—offered the amenities of private residential landscapes, such as the California-type garden, as well as some new recreational parks, including ballfields complexes, playgrounds, or other facilities. But postwar urbanization was not typically conceived around systems of public landscapes and noncommercial parkways, in the way much late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban expansion had been.

Mission 66 can be seen at least as a limited attempt to mitigate this historic shift in urban and regional planning priorities. As the country grew and urbanized at an unprecedented pace, the Park Service did attempt to expand and modernize the national park system (if not state and regional systems) at a scale comparable to the geographic and demographic trends of the day. At least in this sense, Mission 66 must be considered the most ambitious landscape architectural project of the postwar era. And at least in some ways, the same influences that shaped private landscape architecture firms helped determine Mission 66 design ideas and practice. The WODC and EODC established in 1954, for example, could be described as regional offices of a multidisciplinary, corporate design firm headed by Wirth and Vint in Washington. Park Service landscape architects, like their in-house architectural colleagues, responded to the new artistic and technical context of the postwar period. The same geographic and social trends—Interstate Highways, low density urbanization, new construction technology, and the popularity of modernist design—affected Park Service landscape architects as much as they had the agency’s in-house architects.
But in other ways, Mission 66 landscape architects proceeded in isolation from a larger professional context, at least to a greater degree than Mission 66 architects did. Insulated from both the vicissitudes and the refreshing opportunities of the private sector, the Park Service remained a haven for park planning and design informed by Olmstedian ideology. While Wirth and Cabot made a point of recruiting some of the most progressive architects of the day, private landscape firms did not participate in Mission 66, even in advisory capacities (Dan Kiley's participation in the Gateway Arch design being a notable, but unique, exception). Since the 1920s, in fact, the Park Service had relied almost exclusively on its own, in-house force of landscape architects. Early Park Service administrators used architectural consultants, such as Gilbert Stanley Underwood, to design buildings. But they felt that private landscape architects, many of whom at the time were experienced mainly in "country place" design, lacked the training and sensibility needed to work in national park settings. Vint therefore trained a cohort of landscape architects who were long time employees, and who continued to adapt their public practice around the agency's specific needs. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, Vint and Wirth had also maintained a healthy interaction with a broader (private) professional context, mainly through Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., who collaborated with them as a mentor and as a friend. The large number of private (and unemployed) landscape architects hired through the New Deal also assured an infusion of creative thinking within the agency. But by the mid-1950s, the growing private sector of the profession of landscape architecture had less interest in the Park Service, and less useful advice to offer in any case. Private practitioners had moved away from traditional public park planning and were busy with other opportunities.

Considering the enormous scope of the program, and the fact that a landscape architect served as the director of the Park Service, it is striking that the ASLA and the rest of the profession did not take greater notice or become more directly involved in Mission 66. In the 1940s, leading figures such as Henry Hubbard and Olmsted, Jr., continued to publish articles on national parks in *Landscape Architecture* magazine. The issues they addressed, such as "preservation and enhancement of natural scenery" and "the progressive encroachment of trees in certain meadows" of Yosemite Valley, reiterated traditional concerns and convictions regarding the role of the landscape.
architect in national park management. At that time, the ASLA “committee on national and state parks and forests” included Olmsted, Jr., Vint, Wirth, Bill Carnes, as well as leading academics such as Philip H. Elwood and Ralph E. Griswold. First formed during the New Deal, the committee published regular reports in *Landscape Architecture* that covered public land management issues in detail. In 1955 Conrad Wirth made an important address to the ASLA on “the landscape architect in national park work,” and the committee on national and state parks and forests reported extensively on the initiation of Mission 66 through the next year. But little else appeared on Mission 66 (or national parks generally) in *Landscape Architecture* over the next decade. In 1957 the magazine received a new, more contemporary graphic design, and in 1958 an energetic associate editor, Grady Clay, joined the staff. By 1960, when Clay took over as executive editor, he was bringing new authors to the magazine, such as the geographer J. B. Jackson, and publishing articles on a range of new issues from the “ecology of cites” and “urban sprawl,” to “earth sculpture” and “cluster development.” The profession was now prospering, with ASLA membership almost doubling between 1956 and 1966. The few articles that appeared in *Landscape Architecture* on national parks, however, stressed only that parks were facing “ruin” from large crowds of automotive tourists, hardly an original or useful observation at that point.

Even as Mission 66 construction began attracting attention in the popular press and architectural journals, no articles on the program appeared in the ASLA’s official magazine. The renewed private sector of the profession understandably diverted the attention of a new generation of landscape architects. Clay represented the most innovative, dynamic segments of the profession that he covered, and the content of his magazine reflected their interests and concerns at the time. For whatever reasons, Wirth, Vint, and their colleagues did not benefit from constructive advice, involvement, or even

---


452 The ASLA estimated that there were 2,500 active landscape architects in 1957 (1,462 were ASLA members). In 1966 the organization estimated there were more than 4,000 active professionals, 2,900 of whom were members. See “Selected 1957 ASLA Committee Reports,” *Landscape Architecture* 48, no. 3 (April 1958): 169-176; “Universities: Bracing for the New Student Tide,” *Landscape Architecture*, 57, no. 1 (October 1966): 8.

criticism from leading landscape architects or the ASLA at a time when they greatly needed such support. Mission 66 went unheralded—almost unnoticed—by a profession “in transition,” rapidly growing and moving on to new challenges. If Mission 66 landscape architecture proceeded without involvement from leading private sector practitioners, the program nevertheless made its own significant contribution to postwar American landscape design. The revised national park master planning procedures, the “guiding principles” of the program, and the Mission 66 prospectuses together described a new ideal for the development of a national park system composed of parks of all types: large wilderness parks, historical parks, recreational parks, seashores (and lakeshores), and parkways, for example. The new ideal, or model, of park planning both revised and extended traditional goals for national parks. The fundamental principles of Mission 66 could be found in the Progressive Era policies and documents that Wirth venerated, but Park Service landscape architects had profoundly altered basic premises of how those principles should be implemented. New ideas and tools were used to reestablish the viability of long established ideology. The Mission 66 national park reaffirmed these priorities, while devising new strategies for implementing them. These new planning strategies, together with modernist architectural design, created an overall ideal of national park development that differed from the prewar model for park master planning. The result can be described as a modernist national park.454

Mission 66 modernist national park planning went back to Vint’s concerns, already expressed in the late 1930s, that park villages and master plans (as he himself had devised them) in some cases could not sustain any further expansion of visitor capacity without causing unacceptable damage and encroachment on park landscapes. This led to his “Plan B” (also called the “Vint Plan”) for Yosemite Valley, which called for the heavily visited area to become a day use destination, with overnight accommodations and administrative facilities moved elsewhere. The same concerns shaped the first “pilot prospectus,” for Mount Rainier, and several of the other Mission 66 pilot projects. In the course of implementing Mission 66, this ideal was frequently compromised through the

454 The use of the term “modernist” may be problematic for those who reserve this term to refer specifically to landscape design directly inspired by modernist architecture. The term is used here, however, in the belief that different groups of planners and designers varied in their responses to postwar social and aesthetic trends, resulting in multiple “modernisms” in landscape architecture. Mission 66—a unique blend of Olmstedian park planning, Progressive Era ideology, and modernist landscape theory and architectural (cont.)
sometimes difficult negotiations that surrounded any dramatic change. But the essence of the new model remained: parks could be redeveloped to allow increased levels of use without causing unacceptable levels of damage or encroachments on park scenery, as long as new policies were implemented. Park roads required widening and straightening, for example, to increase their efficiency for moving larger numbers of day use visitors in and out of parks. Many overnight accommodations would be phased out and a new kind of day use facility, the visitor centre, would centralize services and assure a minimum level of interpretation in every park. Where possible, the new locations of visitor centres (or overnight lodge complexes) would be chosen for the efficient interception of “visitor flow,” but preferably they would not be placed near “sensitive” areas (although sometimes visitor centres were, in order to enhance interpretive programs). The overall planning model of the modernist park was one of centralization of services in a large “one-stop” building, rather than the decentralization of development in numerous park villages, which themselves were decentralized complexes of smaller, rustic buildings, such as museums, administration buildings, and comfort stations.

13.4 The Mission 66 Modernist Park

The visitor centre model of modernist park planning, codified in Mission 66 prospectuses by the end of 1955, was the basis of scores of construction projects underway by 1957. Together they determined new priorities for national park landscape architects. Rustic era park construction, for example, reflected an aesthetic conception of the national park in which associative architectural imagery that evoked “pioneer construction” helped “harmonize” development with its setting. Rustic buildings and villages were sited to be perceived as elements of larger landscape compositions that often included nearby scenic features. But in the modernist park, such associative imagery was useless, and siting larger visitor centre buildings near “sensitive” areas was potentially destructive. Landscape architects more often placed visitor centres near park entrances and road intersections, where they could efficiently intercept the enormous “flow” of day use visitors in cars. In the modernist national park, landscape architects conceived of the visitor centre as a viewing pavilion, not as a picturesque element of a landscape scene. It was a building to see from, more than to be seen; a composition of volumes and views, not of evocative façades and architectural mass.

---

design—constitutes one form of postwar modernist landscape architecture, distinct from the work of (cont.)
The visitor centre was a modernist building type that also exhibited a modernist relationship between building and site, and between visitor and landscape. As Hitchcock and Tunnard had suggested in the 1930s, the building and its terraces formed a discrete unit, set in an “untouched” larger landscape. This left the surrounding park in a somewhat new position, conceptually. The visitor centre formed a discrete, limited, intrusion in a landscape that was now seen less as a picturesque composition, in which architecture and figures composed visual elements, and more as an abstraction: a pure, untouched “dream” that would only be degraded by the presence of any figure, structure, or other evidence of human activity.

The parks that were built, or rebuilt, over the next ten years through the Mission 66 program manifested what a modernist national park could be in the context of postwar American society. No contemporary examples of state, regional, or municipal park systems were redeveloped or expanded at a scale commensurate with the great geographic and social transformations taking place in the United States. Perhaps the closest comparisons were two municipal park systems (both favourite examples of Sigfried Giedion), in New York under Robert Moses, and in Amsterdam, where the Dutch modernist Cornelis Van Eesteren oversaw major park improvements. But these were primarily prewar, urban park projects. At the time Wirth and his colleagues conceived their modernist national park model, there were few coherent examples of what a modernist park or park system might be, and the question of what modernist theory implied for the design of national parks remained open.

One powerful suggestion was that large national parks should be managed more as “primeval parks” or wilderness areas, as the “purists” had argued since the 1920s. In 1940, landscape architects Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose effectively identified the modernist abstraction of the “Virgilian dream,” in which the designer intervened as little as possible, with the need for primeval areas “not inhabited by man,” in which “the biological conception of environmental design” should be applied and “rusticification” should be avoided. The Mission 66 modernist park at least initiated this conceptual transformation of the larger park landscape from picturesque scene into scientific wilderness. The new relationship between the visitor centre building and its site, for example, implied a new basis for the relationship between the visitor and the park landscape. The visitor centre was conceived as a limited intrusion, separate and distinguishable from the “untouched

contemporary professionals more famously known as “modernists,” such as Garrett Eckbo or Dan Kiley.
nature” left undisturbed around it. The picturesque conception of the park had allowed for “improvement” of the landscape and the integration of rustic structures as parts of the scene. But in the modernist park the larger landscape was kept “unspoiled” by concentrating services in a central location, from which the surrounding landscape was viewed, often through a large window or from a structured terrace. While this increasingly alienated situation further removed people from the landscape, both emotionally and literally, it also enabled increased numbers to “enjoy” the park while producing less impact upon it.

But the “wilderness” preserved in the Mission 66 park was a modernist abstraction: a “dream” that required only that it be directly encroached on as little as possible. This modernist idea of wilderness was an essential park of the Mission 66 park, because as long as the wilderness of the larger park landscape remained an abstraction, the expansion of the capacity of the parks for automotive tourism could be carried out, without causing “impairment” simply by concentrating visitors in redeveloped, higher capacity frontcountry landscapes. As long as the visitor centre complexes did not extend “indefinitely into the natural setting” as Henry-Russell Hitchcock put it in 1937, the “values of the existing natural environment” would be preserved. The implication was that doing nothing, not even research, was acceptable. As Wirth wrote in 1958, trying to assuage contemporary wilderness advocates, wilderness preservation was not a specific “program item” in Mission 66 “because in a sense the less you have to do the better it [wilderness] is being preserved.”

Once environmental scientists and advocates began to more fully understand and describe wilderness in terms of ecological systems, however, it became clearer, at least to those advocates, that the modernist concept of wilderness that guided Mission 66 park plans would not guarantee the (biological) integrity of the larger park landscape. As wilderness advocates developed their own, more scientific and sophisticated concept of wilderness and how its integrity should be protected, they also grew more disillusioned with the Mission 66 conviction that unrestricted access for “public enjoyment” could be provided without impairing parks. The most basic premises of the nascent environmental movement, in other words, would soon conflict with the most fundamental assumptions of the Mission 66 modernist park.

---

The environmentalist ideal of a wilderness defined in ecological, not visual or aesthetic terms, implied a postmodernist critique of the modernist concept of wilderness, and of postwar American modernism in general. The ultimate perceived success or failure of Mission 66 therefore depended on perceptions of postwar American modernism, generally. Since the mid-nineteenth century, parks had always served as idealized civic visions. Just as Central Park embodied an ideal of a more healthful and humane industrialized city, the national park master plans of the 1920s and 1930s exemplified regional and town planning principles of that era. No one could really expect corporate parks, tract subdivisions, or shopping centres to apotheosize 1950s civic ideals; but the public expected exactly that from its national system of public landscapes. Mission 66 arrived with great fanfare during a time when many Americans were adapting to enormous changes in their social and geographic condition and felt a great need to rediscover or reinvent their historical and national identity. Mission 66 promised nothing less than to make the national park system—a coordinated system of scenic and historic places—a primary agent in establishing such identity through the creation, interpretation, and preservation of the national “heritage.” Mission 66 promised to continue the role of the American park, in other words, as a vital cultural institution, and as an essential part of American life and landscape, as they both went through momentous change.

But as Mission 66 moved into the reality of construction, it would encounter far greater scrutiny and criticism than it had while being planned and designed in 1955 and 1956. The essential deficiency of modernist theory as a basis for an adequate stewardship of wilderness, for example, became more evident as construction projects were completed, and ever larger numbers of automotive tourists arrived. And while many Americans might have been generally indifferent to mid-century American architecture, in the peculiarly significant setting of the national park, modernist buildings sometimes evoked strong reactions. This was the case at the Jackson Lake Lodge in 1955, and the same critique intensified as Mission 66 projects went into construction all over the country. The negative perception of modernist planning and design reinforced the characterization of Mission 66 as merely a construction or development program, not a coordinated conservation effort. To some degree this was unfair, since many thousands of acres of parkland were being acquired, including new national seashores, national lakeshores, national recreation areas, and national historical parks. But when critics saw what to them looked like a shopping centre being built in Yellowstone, for example, it reminded them of the “sprawl” outside park boundaries.
The reaction to modernist design in national parks inevitably was coloured by broader reactions and attitudes to postwar urbanization and development trends. While in 1956 many conservation groups greeted Mission 66 plans with enthusiasm, as Mission 66 moved from design to construction, their attitudes hardened. Many advocates, who would soon be known as “environmentalists,” could no longer tolerate further enlargement of park visitor facilities, road widenings, or other expansions of the capacity of the parks to accommodate visitors. They no longer believed that parks could provide unlimited public access—regardless of how that access was designed—and still maintain their integrity in the present much less the future. As the redevelopment of many national parks was implemented through a startling array of construction projects, the reactions to Mission 66 illustrated broad shifts in popular attitudes to trends in the American landscape generally, and towards the results of modernist planning and design specifically. For many, a visceral hatred of the effects of widespread, low density urbanization made it impossible to see Mission 66 construction as anything but an unacceptable extension of similarly flawed design into the sacred precincts of the national park system. Mission 66 aspired to embody a postwar ideal of progress, in which new aesthetic, conceptual, and technical designs addressed postwar problems and mitigated the “dilemma” in which the parks—and perhaps society as a whole—had been trapped. But by 1957, many advocates no longer believed that modern progress, in any form, would produce an acceptable future. Environmentalists would not so much try to reform the Mission 66 park as much as try to stop it altogether. They sought to prevent Park Service landscape architects, or anyone else, from expanding the capacity of parks for human use (or “enjoyment”) under any pretext.

In the course of building Mission 66, the Park Service discovered the limits of modernist theory, planning, and design as a means of reinventing the American national park. Mission 66 was not able to successfully harness or capture the energy and vision that would soon be evident in Stewart Udall’s “New Conservation,” the establishment of the Bureau of Recreation, the funding of the Land and Water Conservation Act, and ultimately, the entire environmental movement, including the impressive array of federal and state legislation passed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

On the other hand, neither the federal designation of many millions of acres of official wilderness, nor the new legal and administrative frameworks and procedures established through environmental legislation, were any more successful, really, in solving what Newton Drury described so long ago as the “dilemma of our parks.”
Wilderness designations and environmental protections had enormous beneficial effects, including the protection of vast areas from logging and mining, improved air and water quality, habitat conservation, and controls on destructive public works projects. But none of this ever amounted to a concrete plan for how to make it possible for hundreds of millions of Americans to have meaningful, transcendent experiences while visiting their national parks. Environmental quality is more closely monitored in parks today, and endangered species are better protected. But to a significant degree, as far as visitor experience is concerned, the national park system and the Park Service still function as artefacts of Mission 66. The logistical issues of traffic, basic services, interpretation, and public safety are still managed within the conceptual framework of the modernist park. National park staff are still trained in the Mission 66 training centres, visitors are still oriented in (sometimes grievously altered) Mission 66 visitor centres, and the basic relationship between the automotive public and their parks remains what it has been since it was reconceived through Mission 66. Parks have indeed become day use destinations more than ever before, with the majority of visitors staying in gateway communities or travelling from nearby metropolitan areas. Mission 66 construction, if sometimes controversial, has proved to be essential. Environmental ethics and laws have improved many aspects of park management, but they have not generally replaced Mission 66 infrastructure or the basic concept and development pattern of Mission 66 parks. Mission 66 park development remains today as much a part of the federal public landscape as its counterpart and contemporary, the Interstate Highway.

The postwar “dilemma” persists today, in other words, and so does the only comprehensive design response that the Park Service has managed to make to address it: the Mission 66 modernist park. The story of the construction of Mission 66 parks, and the sometimes dramatic responses to this phase of the program, is a history of the developed areas of the national park system as we know them today.
Chapter 14: Roads and Controversies

14.1 National Park Roads

An investigation of the controversies precipitated by Mission 66 construction is necessary for considering research questions addressing the relationship of Mission 66 and the nascent environmental movement. Mission 66 is as historically significant for the responses it evoked as for its built legacy; national park road improvements of the era caused more controversy than any other category of development. Park roads provide vital insight into the changes that occurred in the second half of Mission 66, and into the continued relevance of the program today. Park road construction had always shaped public park development plans. This was true in nineteenth-century municipal park designs, conceived around overlapping carriage drives and pedestrian paths, and it was true of prewar national park master planning, which to a considerable extent was the result of efforts to determine and limit the character and extent of roads in national parks.

In the late 1920s, when Horace Albright was determining Park Service “comprehensive planning” policy for future development in national parks, Thomas Vint asked that his division be in charge of producing “master plans” through which every aspect of land use and development—especially roads—would be controlled. Park development could proceed “on a Landscape or an Engineering basis,” he warned Albright. But if highway engineers were in charge, they would pursue an independent program of road construction, outside the context of more comprehensive plans for public use and landscape preservation. Roads were too important to be left to the engineers: they defined the overall pattern of public use in a park and had enormous implications for how that use would affect parks. Roads themselves could be profoundly destructive, particularly if they were built to overly high standards, or were located in ways that failed to at least visually minimize their presence. Park roads, in other words, were not merely infrastructure to be efficiently engineered. They determined levels and locations of access and use, and they were a principal mode of public perception of park landscapes. They were integral and essential components of park design, and needed to be planned as such.

Albright agreed, and Vint’s landscape architecture division eventually became a division of planning, design, and construction, overseeing all aspects of park
development. Throughout his career, many of Vint's most important design projects (and controversies) involved decisions of whether, and how, to build park roads. It was Vint's involvement in the Going-to-the-Sun Road, in Glacier National Park, in fact, that first established early policy on national park road design and construction standards. Vint personally convinced Stephen Mather, while they both were visiting the proposed road location in 1924, to adopt an alternative alignment that would reduce landscape scarring and create stunning experiences of park scenery for motorists. Going-to-the-Sun Road was the first major test of whether the Park Service would be able to control large and potentially destructive construction projects in the parks. Largely as a result of Vint's suggestions, observations, and protests, Mather fired his chief engineer and then entered into an "interbureau agreement" with the Bureau of Public Roads. This partnership with the federal road building agency proved to be a successful collaboration between Park Service landscape architects, who maintained their priorities for how and where roads should be built, and the Bureau of Public Roads engineers, who assured roads were well conceived and construction was carefully supervised. Vint's advance to become chief landscape architect in 1927 and the subsequent enforcement of his master planning procedures assured that most park road construction proceeded on a "Landscape basis." The roads built in the 1920s and 1930s, such as Going-to-the-Sun Road, Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Zion-Mt. Carmel Road in Zion National Park, survive as evidence of how successful these policies were.456

As noted earlier, Vint trained his own cadre of landscape architects in the Park Service, many of whom had strong preservationists tendencies. At Mount Rainier, Yosemite, and in many other cases, park superintendents or concessioners with ambitious plans for "scenic drives" or other development schemes found that agency landscape architects could be quick to oppose them, and that Vint would back up his staff from Washington. In a 1940 letter to Newton Drury, Vint reassured the incoming director that although Park Service landscape architects certainly dealt with "park development" (a subject Vint knew made Drury uneasy), they had their own peculiar ethos: "As a group each man feels he is a 'Non-Developer.' We take as much pride in heading off a project as we do in designing and building a necessary piece of work as best we can."457

457 Thomas C. Vint to Newton B. Drury, July 6, 1940 (Personal Papers of Newton B. Drury, Entry 19, RG 79, National Archives).
Many of the projects Vint’s park planners had “headed off” were roads. One of the principal characteristics of the national park master plan, as it took shape in the 1920s and afterwards, was that it amended earlier (pre-automobile) ideas for how national park circulation systems should be considered. At Yellowstone, for example, the Grand Loop was built at the beginning of the century as just that: an extensive circuit of wagon roads that reached most of the popular destinations in the park. At Mount Rainier, in particular, Vint recognized that this type of road pattern would need to be rethought for the automotive age. Automobiles had greater impacts than horse drawn wagons both on roads themselves and on surrounding landscapes. More heavily engineered automotive roads required a wider corridor of excavation, and they conveyed larger numbers of tourists resulting in higher levels of public use. A complete loop road around Mount Rainier, as it was planned at the beginning of the century, would have far more deleterious effects in the 1920s than originally anticipated, since obviously by that time it would be engineered for cars not wagons. As a result, Vint made sure the new master plan for the park truncated the planned road system, and the “round-the-mountain” road was never built. In many other park master plans, as well, a new park road policy took shape. Each park would indeed need at least one great automotive road that would provide access to significant destinations and a meaningful overall experience of the park’s landscape; but the parks would not be “gridironed” by highways. One scenic road would often be enough. One carefully planned road through a park could strike the necessary compromise between automotive access and landscape preservation.458

14.2 Tioga Road, Part One

This was the context for the original planning of Tioga Road in Yosemite National Park, a project destined to become the single most controversial project of the Mission 66 program. The first Tioga Road had been scratched and blasted out of the High Sierra granite as a turnpike in 1883. The road crossed the crest of the Sierras, and its backers hoped it would become an important transmountain route connecting mining communities on the east side of the Sierra Nevada to the rest of California. The turnpike never succeeded commercially, but in 1890 it remained a private inholding when Congress established Yosemite National Park. The road was situated directly across the middle of the new park, and there were soon calls to acquire and improve it in order to open the

scenic High Sierra to access for recreation. Tolls were not being collected on the road, but neither was it being maintained by its private owners. To make it a reliable route it would need to be acquired and made part of the park. By 1909 this suggestion was picked up by the Sierra Club, the organization founded by John Muir and others in 1892 to “explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast...[and] to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and the government in preserving...the Sierra Nevada Mountains.” Sierra Club members were interested because the Tioga Road offered access to Tuolumne Meadows, Tenaya Lake, and other high country destinations. In 1915, when Stephen Mather arrived at the Department of the Interior, the acquisition and improvement of Tioga Road became a priority for him. In one of his earliest, signature successes, Mather convinced a group of fellow national park advocates, local automobile clubs, and others to contribute money for the acquisition and maintenance of the road. Mather donated half of the needed $15,000 himself. Later that year the federal government received the road as a gift and opened it to automobiles.459

The old Tioga Road was an adventurous drive, only thirteen to fifteen feet wide, with no paving and extremely steep grades. The Park Service kept it passable for cars, however, and soon small tourist camps were built at Tuolumne Meadows, Tenaya Lake, and the White Wolf area. As traffic increased in the 1920s, more substantial improvements followed. Some curves were straightened, sections were widened, and a complete realignment of the eastern end of the road began to be investigated. By 1931 the Park Service had made plans with the Bureau of Public Roads to reconstruct the entire road and realign portions of it. The plans divided the road into three sections: a twelve-mile section between the park’s eastern entrance to Tuolumne Meadows; an eleven-mile section at the other end of the road, from its intersection with the Big Oak Flat Road to the White Wolf area; and a final, twenty-one-mile section in the middle, crossing over the high country through more difficult, mountainous terrain. Construction on the two end sections began in the early 1930s and continued with New Deal funds. By 1938 the two sections at either end were completed, and in these areas the old wagon trail became a paved, automotive road, twenty-feet wide with three-foot paved shoulders and maximum grades of 6%. The reconstruction of the middle, more rugged section of Tioga Road,

however, was not even begun. It remained narrow, twisting, and unpaved, with 15% grades in places.460

The reconstruction of an old wagon road to modern, automotive standards was typical of the prewar projects accomplished through the partnership of the Park Service and the Bureau of Public Roads. Where such an old right-of-way existed, it might be used for a new road, particularly in cases where the original location and structure were sound. In other cases it was desirable to abandon all or parts of the old alignment and find a new route better suited to the more demanding standards (greater width, easier hills, wider curves) of an automotive road. Although Tioga Road was a particularly important example, the plans for its modernization were typical of this era of national park road making. The rebuilt road also nicely served the overall goals of park master planning: one good road across the heart of the park would be adequate for access, and it would also help stifle other development schemes. As the Tioga Road widening project went ahead in the 1930s, for example, proposals for the Glacier Point “ropeway” and for a new road connecting the east end of Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne Meadows were permanently rejected.

The Tioga Road situation, in fact, typified how Vint and other Park Service officials felt automotive road making should be incorporated into a comprehensive park plan. It bore similarities to other park road projects of the era, including the first of this type, Going-to-the-Sun Road. That road was another important transmountain route, in this case over the Rocky Mountains in northern Montana. Like Tioga Road, it featured two relatively easy grades on either side of the mountains and one very mountainous section in the middle. This central portion of the road crossed the continental divide in one of the most scenic areas of the park, surrounded by views of high peaks and glaciers. Vint (and soon Mather) worried that building this section of road with multiple switchbacks, as the Park Service engineers first suggested, would cause massive destruction of the landscape and would discredit the Park Service as a preservation agency during its first major road building attempt. Vint’s solution at Glacier, which Mather adopted in 1924, was to build a more expensive, longer, but less visually intrusive road. The result was a success, not only because it minimized damage to the scenery, but because it established the credibility of the Park Service as an agency that would develop

parks, but would also be a responsible steward of them. Going-to-the-Sun Road legitimized the interbureau partnership with the Bureau of Public Roads and validated Vint's ideas for how landscape architecture could improve and curtail road construction in national parks.

About ten years later, the central section of Tioga Road raised similar concerns. The two sections of the road approaching the high country were built with little controversy (as they had been at Glacier). But the choice of how to re-engineer the middle section over and across the heart of Yosemite's high country again demanded careful consideration. Beginning in 1931 Vint, park landscape architect John B. Wosky, and their Bureau of Public Roads partners began studying alternatives. The existing wagon road followed a torturous path and at least some realignment would be needed. One option, in fact, was to abandon the road almost completely and locate a new road to the north, along a "high line" between Tuolumne Meadows and White Wolf, running north of Mount Hoffman and through the Ten Lakes region. These areas were previously undisturbed wilderness, but the route would allow for less destructive construction and would avoid direct encroachment on Tenaya Lake. As an alternative, Vint, Wosky, and their colleagues also were able to identify a feasible "low line," which stayed close to the existing wagon road while not following it exactly in places. As with any major development proposal for the park, the Advisory Board was asked to participate. For this group, there was no question that the disturbance of a large area of previously untouched High Sierra wilderness would do far more damage than realigning the existing road, even if the "low line" required blasting and excavation along the existing Tioga Road corridor. A special committee of directors of the Sierra Club agreed in a special report they made in 1934. Apparently Vint had felt the same way, or at least he was easily convinced. By the late 1930s, an approved "low line" strategy had been identified for the reconstruction of the final section of Tioga Road. But consideration of the alternatives had taken time, and World War II prevented construction from getting underway.461

After the war, Wirth, Vint, and the Yosemite Advisory Board all felt they had already decided the issue of how the Tioga Road reconstruction should be completed. The treatment of Tioga Road would be comparable to other road projects that had resulted in roads that the public (and conservation groups) considered to be scenic, sensitive, and appropriately limited in extent. But precedent would not be a reliable guide in this case;
too much was in the process of changing. By the time Mission 66 finally provided the funding to finish the Tioga Road project, the battle over how—and whether—the reconstruction should go forward became a contest of different visions of what a national park should be.

At their August, 1947 meeting, the Advisory Board issued a statement reiterating their support for completing the Tioga Road widening. They felt they it was needed because serious opposition to the project had already organized. Until that time, the Advisory Board had served as the principal conduit for conservation groups, especially the Sierra Club, to influence Yosemite management policies. Advisory Board members William Colby and Duncan McDuffie, for example, were also Sierra Club directors (and had been part of the 1934 committee approving the “low line” for Tioga Road). Colby was a particularly venerated figure in the club’s history. Born in 1875, in 1901 he organized the first Sierra Club “high trips” into the mountains and led these famous group outings for decades. A successful lawyer, he worked closely with Muir opposing the Hetch Hetchy Dam, and he later facilitated the transfer of ownership of Tioga Road for Mather. But in August 1947, certain Sierra Club members and directors dissented from the consensus on Tioga Road expressed by Colby and the Advisory Board. Harold C. Bradley, in particular, pointed out that once the road was improved, more people would use it, and the high country it traversed would lose the sense of isolation and remoteness that were essential qualities of wilderness. A retired professor of chemistry only a few years younger than Colby, Bradley described his position in an article he wrote that David Brower, then editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin, presented to the club’s board to be approved for publication. Bradley and Brower wanted the Park Service to consider making only minor improvements to the Tioga Road so that it would not serve larger volumes of traffic. They suggested that a second, parallel roadway designed to the same low standards as the existing road could be built, and that each roadway could then serve traffic in one direction. They also wanted the “high line” option to be revisited, because at least it avoided encroaching directly on the shores of Tenaya Lake and would not require blasting remarkable examples of glacially polished granite along the Tioga Road corridor.

462 Minutes of the Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, August 23-29, 1947 (Yosemite National Park Archives); Cohen, History of the Sierra Club, 97-100.
The Sierra Club board demurred from publishing the article, for the moment, noting that the road project was already more than half complete (referring to the work done in the 1930s), and that the plan for the “low line” reconstruction had been developed with their participation and approval. For its part, the Advisory Board issued their 1947 statement summarizing why they rejected the “high line” in the first place, and why the suggestion for a second, parallel roadway was “based on several misconceptions.” A second one-lane road, they pointed out, would cause almost as much landscape damage as the construction of a new two-lane road. Combined with at least some improvements to the existing road (which everyone agreed were needed), the result would be very close to having two transmountain highways rather than one, doubling the amount of disturbance. They remained convinced that the best way to minimize the impacts of the road project was to widen the existing road as planned. As for concern over the increased use of Tuolumne Meadows, they insisted that the area long ago had “ceased to be a primitive or wilderness area.” On the contrary, the area was already popular with campers and hikers and higher levels of use would not mean disturbing a formerly pristine area. The completion of Tioga Road would mean more visitors, but this was an appropriate location for this kind of use and would help reduce visitor pressure on Yosemite Valley. In 1948 Vint issued his own written statement in which he supported his conclusions and those of the Advisory Board. “The road would not open up a new section of the park to motor traffic,” he pointed out. As for anticipated damage to rock formations and other features, the “preservation of the immediate landscape along the route” was a high priority “in keeping with long-established practices.” Other options, such as a second roadway, would cause greater construction disturbance than their backers realized. And while Vint knew the completion of Tioga Road “would materially increase the number of visitors and the attendant disturbance to the area adjacent to the road,” the “solitude of the primeval” would still be available in “the surrounding untouched wilderness of 700,000 acres.”

From the beginning of the Tioga Road controversy, in other words, there were really two discussions taking place. The first was how to best build a park road according to the policies and standards developed by the Park Service in the 1920s and 1930s. Vint, Colby, the Yosemite Advisory Board, and later Wirth all argued this position effectively.

463 Minutes of the Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, August 23-29, 1947 (Yosemite National Park Archives); Thomas C. Vint, “Statement Concerning Road Development in the High Sierra Section of Yosemite National Park,” November 1, 1948 (Yosemite National Park Archives).
The Sierra Club board, however, soon split. Colby and other club members continued to agree with the basic need and justification for completing the road project. Their reasons were essentially unchanged: the improved road would make the Yosemite high country more accessible in a controlled and appropriate way. Secure in this philosophical position, they simply disagreed with technical suggestions (the "high line" and the second roadway) that seemed ill advised. They agreed with Vint that one automotive road across the park was not too many, and they trusted him to assure that the location and construction standards of the road would minimize scarring of the landscape.

Bradley, Brower, and soon a group of other (mostly younger) club members, however, were really arguing that Tioga Road should not be rebuilt at all, at least not to the same standards as the prewar sections of the road. Debate over their proposed alternatives gave Brower and Bradley time to pursue the real work of opposing the project: capturing public concern and influencing perceptions of the situation. If the project became enough of a political liability, the Department of the Interior would step in and tell the Park Service what to do. This strategy, versions of which would become so important to environmental activism and litigation in the coming decades, above all was the contribution of Brower. It later would become a critical component of his leadership of the struggle to preserve Dinosaur National Monument. Technical challenges to complacent (and sometimes mistaken) technocrats would become Brower's trademark, and would serve him well when he challenged Bureau of Reclamation engineers and defeated the Echo Park dam. It was the experience of the Tioga Road controversy that helped Brower develop this technique, and in the process transform the Sierra Club into a modern environmental advocacy group.

Bradley was perhaps the most honest in stating his opposition to the entire idea of modernizing Tioga Road. The Sierra Club finally published his article (now co-authored by Brower) in 1949, and soon others followed. Bradley felt that the increased access the road would create was simply no longer a good idea. Access to national park area should not be expanded, generally, and the Park Service should instead start finding ways to curtail it. Bradley had his own suggestion for Yosemite: leave Tioga Road in its "primitive state" and thereby prevent thousands of visitors to Tuolumne Meadows and Tenaya Lake from becoming millions. The condition of Tioga Road had "served to screen out those who must have speed to be happy; those who are not sufficiently interested to invest the time and effort; those who require a house on wheels when they rough it; those who are timid, or incompetent and realize it." The "check on traffic"
created by the twenty-one miles of old road had been “sufficient so that the high country has survived with little deterioration or loss of charm,” while more accessible areas, above all Yosemite Valley, exemplified the loss of everything national parks were supposed to preserve. Bradley insisted he was not supporting a form of “exclusion,” but of “voluntary screening.” Those willing to “pay the price in terms of effort and time” would have access; other visitors could “elect to drive somewhere else.” The policy was no more “punitive” or “snobbish” than a library demanding quiet so that readers could enjoy their books. “Park roads determine park history,” he accurately observed. Roads themselves “could be designed to diminish excessive trampling, overcrowding, and vandalism by filtering out those motorists who cannot tolerate being slowed down by scenery.”

This was the essence of the Tioga Road debate but it rarely would be expressed so clearly. Tioga Road did indeed curtail access: about 30,000 motorists drove it in 1955, just a year before the park recorded one million visits. But opponents of the reconstruction were careful to frame their arguments as one of appropriate “road standards for national parks,” emphasizing the direct damage to park landscapes done by road construction, even if planned by the most conscientious landscape architects. Vint, Colby, and others made the mistake of being drawn into a debate about the degree to which the road widening would desecrate the landscape, not whether it was sound and ethical policy to “filter” visitors to the Yosemite high country down to 30,000 out of one million. In 1951, for example, Colby personally investigated (on foot, at the age of seventy-six) a modified “high line” proposal made by the project’s opponents, comparing it to the “low line” alignment. This new “high line” was a shorter detour away from Tenaya Lake, via Polly Dome Lake. Colby’s report to the Advisory Board, illustrated with photographs and first hand observations, nevertheless reasserted that introducing a road anywhere to the north of Tenaya Lake would constitute an unwarranted “invasion” of an “untouched wilderness area.” The new proposal would have avoided directly encroaching on Tenaya Lake and the remarkable, glacially polished granite around it; but Colby pointed out the new proposal would result in similar or greater impacts to Polly

---

Dome Lake, which until then (unlike Tenaya Lake) had been unaffected by automobile access.466

Bradley and Brower kept the discussion on such proposals, however, and above all on “road standards” as the direct cause of “overcrowding.” Everyone agreed that Yosemite Valley was overcrowded, and the two authors shifted the discussion to conditions there. They concluded that there were six reasons for overcrowding in the valley: the increase in California’s population, more leisure time, more disposable income, the widespread use of cars, improved highways, and the presence of artificial “attractions imported from urban life” in the valley. Of these, only the last two could be affected by park managers. Artificial attractions (such as evening entertainments organized by concessioners) could “gradually be eliminated” through simple changes in policy. That left highway construction as the one “controllable factor” to be addressed. Not only did modernized highways bring in too many people but, like artificial entertainments, they attracted the wrong sort of people: “merely the restless driver and...the trailer tourist.” The character as well as the size of crowds were determined by “the quality of the roads provided to and within the park.” The difference between a true national park—a wilderness park—and an “overcrowded...recreational resort” depended on the width, alignment, and capacity of park roads. Roads that were easy and convenient to drive brought in people who were merely curious and not really interested in appreciating the natural wonders of Yosemite. Once there, they were bored and sought out “urban” distractions, which concessioners were happy to provide for a fee. More “primitive” and difficult roads would “screen out” the kind of visitor who would not be willing to drive them, and “filter” the public into a far smaller group of more appreciative individuals.467

Bradley and Brower succeeded in striking a nerve among many Sierra Club directors, such as Colby and Bestor Robinson, who felt they would be accused of elitism if they argued against road improvements based on the hope that “primitive” roads would keep most visitors away. But the idea also quickly found advocates among other members. The Sierra Club board was split, but the momentum was with those protesting the Tioga Road widening. This group included Richard M. Leonard, a lawyer who would

soon become club president, and Ansel Adams, on his way to becoming one of the most famous photographers in the country. Adams had been publishing photographs of Yosemite since the 1920s and had been a Sierra Club board member since the 1930s. He now turned his formidable artistic skill to the defence of Tenaya Lake, which he felt would be grievously harmed by the proposed “low line” road location. It had been Adams and Leonard who proposed the alternate “high line” route investigated by Colby in 1951. In 1952 Leonard dutifully reported on the ongoing controversy in the Sierra Club Bulletin, choosing his words carefully. He noted that the club’s board had asked for further investigation of a “relatively short bypass north of Tenaya Lake...thus avoiding the heavy and rapid traffic at the lake and the possibility of construction scars in one of the park’s most treasured scenic areas.” But both the Park Service and the Advisory Board, after further investigation, had rejected the idea. Leonard added, however, that the “low line” also traversed “areas heretofore untouched,” since it would not follow the old wagon road exactly. “The choice,” he concluded tendentiously, “would seem to be between (1) invading a primitive area and changing the mood of Tenaya Lake and (2) invading a different primitive area [Polly Dome Lake] and sparing Tenaya Lake.” No consensus came out of the discussion in the early 1950s. The Sierra Club board remained split and tabled the question.468

Leonard was one of a group of younger, activist Sierra Club members whom he described as “young Turks.” For this younger group of club directors, including Brower and Adams, the realities of postwar recreational trends demanded a complete reconsideration of how and where the Park Service provided access to parks. In 1951 this group may not have managed to change the club’s policy on Tioga Road, but they did succeed in changing the club’s bylaws from “explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast,” to “explore, enjoy, and preserve the Sierra Nevada and other scenic resources of the United States.” As Sierra Club Historian Michael Cohen observes, “the issue of access separated the newer generation from many of the old.” The Tioga Road corridor around Tenaya Lake was destined to become a battleground for opposing philosophies of access. Activists like Leonard and Brower echoed the old “purist” critiques, which the Park Service had easily dismissed since the 1920s. But in the 1950s there was an important difference: the “young Turks” were beginning to represent the mainstream of the Sierra Club’s membership, not a minority.

They were elected to the club’s board and in 1952 Leonard was elected club president. He immediately made a proposal that Brower be hired in a new position, as the club’s executive director. At the time Brower edited the Sierra Club Bulletin, but his public relations, writing, and organizational skills were soon put to better use. With the backing of their board, he and Leonard moved the Sierra Club onto a national stage, broadening its mission and greatly expanding membership along the way. The national public attention brought by the Echo Park controversy increased the club’s profile, and the 1956 defeat of the dam was, Cohen observes, “a crucial turning point” that determined the “nature of the club’s organizational structure and aims.” Encouraged by their success and growing strength, Brower and the Sierra Club now joined with the Wilderness Society and other groups in support of their next priority: federal legislation to create a “national wilderness preservation system.”

14.3 Park Roads and Postwar Wilderness

The Tioga Road controversy involved the question of greater public access to a relatively unvisited (although not roadless) area of Yosemite National Park. It therefore was a debate about wilderness, and how wilderness would be defined, designated, and managed in the postwar period. This made the fate of Tioga Road of signal importance to conservation groups, and tied the road project—and all of Mission 66—to early efforts to pass the “National Wilderness Preservation Act.” As it took shape in 1956, the draft wilderness act culminated decades of “purist” concern for “primeval” areas in the national parks, and especially in the national forests (where most of the potential wilderness designations would be made). Invigorated by the victory over the Echo Park dam, advocates felt the dream of a federal system of wilderness preserves now was within reach. The system would be created through legislation that conferred special protected status on federal lands that met certain criteria, regardless of what agency had jurisdiction over them. Congress would directly mandate that the areas be left undisturbed, undeveloped, and roadless forever. As defined in the final, 1964 version of the act, “a wilderness” was defined “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” Official wilderness would be “undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and

influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation,” with “the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.”

This postwar ideal of wilderness required, above all, the absence of people and of any significant trace of human occupation or history. The concept was perhaps more poetic than scientific, since human culture and its influence on even remote landscapes had been pervasive in North America for thousands of years. Postwar wilderness also evoked the modernist idyll of the “Virgilian dream”: an untouched, pristine and stable nature that would be violated by any signs of human presence. The best management plan for such areas, as modernist theorists such as Henry-Russell Hitchcock suggested, was to interfere as little as possible with them and avoid any suggestion of human influence on the inherent stability and balance of what appeared to be “undisturbed” nature. The emotional appeal of this wilderness ideal had great power in the postwar decades, capturing the national imagination at a time when Americans were experiencing overwhelming landscape change and modernization.

In many ways, this postwar ideal of wilderness should have been consistent with many of the goals of the Mission 66 modernist park. Both models implied an increased separation—a modernist alienation—between park landscapes and park visitors. The roads, roadside interpretation, and visitor centres of the Mission 66 park enforced a passive, visual relationship to surrounding landscapes that helped prevent the public from directly disturbing them. Mission 66 planning enforced a separation between people and wilderness by making it possible for people to enjoy the natural or historical resources of a park without ever leaving frontcountry areas (in some cases without ever leaving their cars). There were many ways in which Mission 66 could, indeed, be seen as a development program that would enable the preservation of wilderness, as it was being defined in the postwar era. But there was also one profound difference between the wilderness advocated by the conservation groups and the wilderness to be preserved in the Mission 66 park: the continued facilitation of public enjoyment of whatever it was that was being preserved. Wirth and his planners would not abandon the basic notion that a national park was intended to allow people, millions of them if they chose to visit, to experience the benefits and pleasures of what the Park Service now often described not as scenery and history, but as wilderness and heritage.

---

But the presence of people—crowds of noisy and perhaps all too unappreciative automotive tourists—created an irreconcilable conflict for wilderness advocates, even if those people were restricted to a frontcountry corridor of roads, overlooks, and visitor centres. Those advocating wilderness preservation in the 1950s were defining wilderness specifically as an absence of humanity and its influences. Millions of people therefore could not enjoy—or even be anywhere in the vicinity of—wilderness without destroying it, regardless of master plans, prospectuses, or any other park design that purported to achieve “enjoyment without impairment.” Any road construction or improvement simply could not be part of any strategy for wilderness preservation. Tioga Road was only one Mission 66 project, but it dramatically revealed the contrasting wilderness ideals of the Park Service and conservation groups in the mid-1950s. The planned “low line” would require the blasting and excavation of a High Sierra landscape held dear, personally, by Brower, Adams, and other leading advocates. But even worse, the road widening would result in easy public access to an entire corridor of what were then still remote, relatively unvisited areas of the park.

As a result of the Tioga Road controversy, wilderness advocates mistrusted Wirth and Mission 66 from the start. As soon as they got a complete picture of Mission 66, they responded by stepping up their campaign for a national system of wilderness preserves, which they now characterized as a counterpoint—and an antidote—to Mission 66. Brower and Howard C. Zahniser, director of the Wilderness Society, met with Wirth early in 1956 and asked him to back their draft wilderness legislation, which was first introduced in the Senate later that year. Wirth found reasons to deny support. First he claimed that by the time interest groups had watered down the provisions of the bill, official wilderness designation would actually offer less protection than parks and monuments would have without it. Later, there were other similarly contrived objections. But neither legalistic critiques nor the protection of bureaucratic “turf” fully explained Wirth’s opposition to the wilderness bill. The entire concept of congressionally designated wilderness, at least as it was being presented to Wirth in 1956, conflicted with his own ideas of how and why his agency preserved landscapes as public parks. How would the public be served by wilderness preservation, unless it was coupled with some form of access? This was the essence of national park design. Road corridors and developed areas served as mediating landscapes, making it possible to visually appreciate the surrounding wilderness as scenery, or serving (for those so inclined) as the starting point for backcountry trips. But to designate wilderness for its own sake, unaccompanied
by park planning and limited development, eliminated the public (at least in any meaningful number) from the entire undertaking. The art of national park design involved assuring meaningful public experiences of wilderness. Advocates of federal wilderness designation implied that the Park Service had dramatically failed its basic mandate by allowing too much access: the national park wilderness was being destroyed by too many visitors. Mission 66 would not solve the problem, but make it many times worse. Wirth understood that the new landscape ideal of wilderness was being presented not a complement to the model of the national park (as he understood it), but as a replacement.

If both models—the Mission 66 park and postwar wilderness—were influenced by contemporary modernist theory in planning and design, they were two very different responses. The critics of Tioga Road had begun to describe a new kind of national reservation that cut its ties to Olmstedian justifications and social purposes. Designated wilderness, in this sense, was not a public park, at least not in the same sense the term had been used in the United States for the previous 100 years. The concept of postwar wilderness, as advocated in the 1950s and then enacted in 1964, would mark the end of the dominance of public park ideology in the management of American national parks. As Wirth sensed, the rise of the postwar ideal of wilderness implied much more than a reduction of his agency’s jurisdictional authority.

Wirth, Vint, the Yosemite Advisory Board—a generation of national park planners—revered a tradition of public service that had been established, above all, by the elder Olmsted. In his 1865 Yosemite report (reassembled and published in a complete form in 1952), Olmsted justified government sponsorship of park making in terms of an obligation to protect the right to the “pursuit of happiness.” Because experiencing of landscape scenery was necessary for human fulfilment, preserving opportunities for everyone to do so was “justified and enforced as a political duty.” Government therefore had to make sure that the “enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the country and the means of recreation associated with them” were “laid open to the use of the body of the people,” because without government action private interests would monopolize “all places favourable in scenery to the recreation of the mind and body.” Those places would become unavailable to the public at large.471 This rhetoric justified municipal, regional, state, and national park making in the United States for the 100 years immediately
preceding Mission 66. But a small, self selected ("filtered") group no longer constituted the "body of the people." Designated wilderness areas, when planned without access by the public (meaning large and diverse groups of people), would not function as public parks, and park commissions could not make the same claims for why government had a "political duty" to preserve landscapes. The politics of preservation—and the role and responsibilities of government in park making—were changing. While Wirth was always careful to insist that he fully endorsed the overall goals of the wilderness bill (landscape preservation), he never really supported the legislation and he never positioned his agency in the new political and philosophical context it represented. Instead, Wirth conducted parallel operations intended to address some of the same concerns through a theoretical framework of national park planning that he understood and supported. And his very first task, he felt, was to define wilderness in terms that made sense for what his agency was trying to accomplish through Mission 66.

14.4 The "National Park Wilderness"

Wirth was a sensitive observer of federal politics, and he knew by 1956 that the wilderness advocates were gaining sympathy and leverage in Congress in a way that the prewar "purists" never had. That is why he met with Zahniser and Brower, and why he subsequently scheduled monthly meetings with the wilderness advocacy groups. He also brought Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks superintendent Eivend Scoyen to Washington as associate director and asked him to "set up procedures...so that wilderness preservation groups will feel their interests are better protected." Wirth noted that for years Scoyen had been having "conversations" with Brower, Zahniser, Leonard, Bradley, and George Marshall (of the Wilderness Society) "relative to the problems of wilderness protection in the parks." The superintendent had developed constructive relationships with conservation groups.472 Born and raised in Yellowstone National Park, Scoyen had worked as a backcountry ranger beginning in 1919. He had been one of Mather's original cadre of superintendents in the 1920s and had run a series of western parks in the 1930s and 1940s.473 As superintendent at Sequoia in 1955 he urged "some means to limit use and development" in the parks be made part of Mission 66 planning. He also warned that

471 For the complete text of the Yosemite report, see Ranney, Rauluk, and Hoffman, eds., The California Frontier, 1863-1865, 488-516.
472 Conrad L. Wirth to Howard Zahniser, March 19, 1956, copy (Box A248, Yellowstone National Park Archives).
the Sierra Club and other groups should be asked to participate in the planning process. Since 1949 he had attended the Sierra Club's biennial wilderness conferences, in which much of the early planning for the Wilderness Act was taking place. But Scoyen also had a profound sense of duty to the public, and a genuine affection for what he called the "tin can tourist" in the "disreputable flivver." Like Garrison, Scoyen had field experience that appealed to Wirth, and as associate director he became a close advisor, often acting for the director.

Scoyen had responsibility for a public relations effort intended to make it clear that the Park Service knew what wilderness was, and knew how to preserve it. He worked closely with Howard Stagner, assistant director of the Mission 66 working staff and later chief of the Branch of Natural History. Later that year Stagner produced a draft document, "Preservation of Natural and Wilderness Values in the National Parks," which assembled arguments and observations from various sources and offered an alternative to the definition of wilderness that Zahniser, Brower, and others advocated. The first point was that in considering wilderness, the Park Service was "as much concerned with the whole park as with any special area within it." This was because the "national park philosophy" was itself a "wilderness philosophy"; the two could not be separated. The same attitudes prevailed in the preservation of a large, roadless area as in the management of "wilderness values along a roadside." The successful preservation of large roadless areas of the park also depended directly upon "how the more accessible, developed, more heavily used portions of the park are treated." Throughout the document, Stagner resisted the bifurcation of the park into backcountry wilderness areas and frontcountry developed areas. Wilderness could be defined, as its postwar advocates did, in physical terms as a vast area in which human influence was minimal or absent; but Stagner insisted that "wilderness also needs to be regarded as a quality—defined in terms of personal experience, feelings, or benefits," and not solely in terms of physical attributes. The "quality of wilderness" could indeed be appreciated in a vast roadless area, but it could also be experienced under other circumstances. It could even exist "close to a major highway," so long as the road, visitor, and overall experience were "shielded from the effects of mechanized civilization." The "quality," or "value," of wilderness could be a "scene or a vista of...beauty unaffected by obvious man-made intrusions," or simply a "spot where one can feel personally removed from civilization." Wilderness certainly

474 Eivend T. Scoyen to Lemuel A. Garrison, March 8, 1955 (Box A8213, National Park Service History (cont.)
was a physical, "ecological condition," but it also was "a state of mind." The first concept was important in order to successfully protect physical wilderness; the second was vital to understanding how people enjoyed it and how best to plan for the "intelligent and beneficial use of this important cultural and recreational resource." In this sense, the park as a whole—backcountry and frontcountry—was one landscape, imbued throughout with the "quality of wilderness." The physical wilderness of the backcountry could coexist with the wilderness "state of mind" in the front country. The vitality of both was essential to the national park experience.475

If this definition of wilderness seemed broad, Stagner pointed out that "pure wilderness," as its advocates were describing it, did not exist in the United States, with the possible exception of the Brooks Range in Alaska. The more one knew about the ecology of a region, the more evident it became that human history had influenced it. "Time tends to paint our memory in rosy hues," the natural historian observed, but many parks had been "abused lands" in which overgrazing, extensive poaching, and predator exterminations had radically altered natural systems. This was a favourite theme of Wirth's as well, who liked to point out that some wilderness areas had histories of grazing, hunting, mining, and even logging. "Many times it has been said that a wilderness once destroyed is gone forever," he wrote to Bestor Robinson, a sympathetic Sierra Club director. "If this were true, then virtually all the High Sierra passed out of this category before the beginning of the century." Wirth felt that at the Park Service, "our wilderness concept" was more adaptable to local conditions and acknowledged that natural processes could restore wilderness over time.476 It was a less rigorous definition, but a more generous one. Park Service wilderness had seen human activity in the past, and had survived. The implication was that it could see a little more history—like a road widening—without being hopelessly and permanently desecrated.

Stagner's draft document identified the goals of wilderness preservation with those of public park making. Preservation and use were the single "true purpose" of a national park, which "indistinguishably" combined both in a single concept. Wilderness Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).  


476 Conrad L. Wirth to Bestor Robinson, May 8, 1958 (Box 25, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
was not restricted to back country areas that few visitors ever experienced directly. “Qualities of wilderness” extended “beyond the wilderness proper” and pervaded even “the most used portion of a park.” “Comparatively few park visitors experience true wilderness,” he pointed out. By contrast, “millions profit from those qualities of wilderness which are available to them in the near vicinity of park roads and developed areas. But who may say that the latter gain less than the former?” Many of these arguments had been elaborated already in the 1920s in response to the first wave of criticism of national park development. It was difficult to combine use and preservation—or people and wilderness—in a national park; but one without the other failed to fulfil the fundamental mandate. Yellowstone was “envisioned as a public park,” Stagner emphasized, recalling the 1870 campfire around which (supposedly) the idea for a national park had been first discussed. “And the public park proposal came as a counter proposal after private ownership was suggested.” What’s more, “it was the whole of the area they sought to set aside...the total scene” (emphasis in original). That was what a national park—and what Stagner called “the national park wilderness”—was: the total scene; backcountry and frontcountry; roadless and roaded; vast untouched areas and developed areas; physical wilderness and “wilderness qualities.” The public was part of the overall scene, and that was the essence of the challenge the Park Service faced. The “few—in this case meaning the wilderness lovers—are well provided for as far as the parks are concerned,” Wirth wrote Brower in 1958. “The over-riding problem of the Park Service is the millions, not the few. Our concern is to give the millions of good, sincere citizens and their families, who wish and intend to exercise their right to visit their national parks, an opportunity to do so.”

Stagner’s draft text was circulated to conservation groups and others, edited, and published in 1957 as a colour brochure (paid for by Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc.), The

---

477 As park superintendent at Zion in 1927, for example, Eivend Scoyen wrote Mather regarding “purist” criticism of the Park Service’s road building program. “The man who overcomes nature’s obstacles to reach some [roadless] point that thrills his nature loving instinct may be a nature lover,” he wrote. “However, at the same time we have a family rattling along in a disreputable flivver bound for a similar place. The father and mother have slaved and saved for 20 years for this opportunity, and only through the blessing of good roads have they been able to reach their goal. Considering these two, which is the true nature lover? Has one a right to condemn the other? I think it is the duty of the parks to find a place for both.” Eivend T. Scoyen to Stephen T. Mather, October 23, 1927, copy (Papers of Horace M. Albright, Entry 17, RG 79, National Archives, Washington, DC).


479 Conrad L. Wirth to David R. Brower, May 7, 1958 (Box 25, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
Wirth felt it fully expressed how the Park Service understood wilderness in the postwar era and often spoke of it, with Our Heritage, as the two guiding documents for Mission 66. But for wilderness advocates, and above all Brower, the document quickly became fodder for their own public relations and legislative campaign. Brower responded to the draft and final publication with outrage, but also almost with glee at the rich opportunities they presented for criticism. For Brower, Mission 66 had been planned without even considering the preservation of the "primary value of the parks, their wilderness." He disparaged the idea of "wilderness values along the roadside" as a confirmation of his worst fears that the Park Service wanted to "blur the distinction" between "the real wilderness" and places that had been compromised by development, even if they seemed scenic. Noting that the Park Service had been no use in the Echo Park fight and now did not support the wilderness bill, Brower disdained the agency's concern for "wilderness values." The very idea seemed to suggest that development would not harm wilderness, since the "quality of wilderness" could somehow "extend" into areas developed with roads and other facilities. "A Road—or a reservoir—could be fully rationalized" by such a philosophy. Brower went on to threaten that "some of our best-informed law-makers...see the situation somewhat differently," specifically naming Senator Hubert H. Humphrey and Congressman John P. Saylor, powerful backers of the wilderness legislation. Congressional politics had always been Wirth's strength; Brower was announcing a direct challenge. Published in National Parks Magazine, the article heralded the new position of the Sierra Club, the National Parks Association, the Wilderness Society, and other groups as a coalition that not only offered advice to the Park Service, but which drafted legislation intended to direct the agency's policies and actions.481

Brower ended his acerbic, line-by-line critique of The National Park Wilderness by calling for a "Mission 65"—honouring the date of Olmsted's 1865 Yosemite report—to replace Mission 66. Brower quoted the portion of the report stating that at Yosemite "the first point to be kept in mind...is the preservation and maintenance as exactly as is possible of the natural scenery." All improvements for public access, wrote Olmsted, should be kept to a minimum and should not be "inharmonious." But if Brower

understood Olmsted the preservationist, he ignored Olmsted the humanist. Olmsted was interested in preserving human as well as natural resources; public park landscapes manifested this combined concern. By identifying landscape preservation with social reform and public health, Olmsted established the intellectual, rhetorical, and political foundations for national park making up to and including Mission 66. Public parks served the “body of the people,” and Olmsted anticipated and welcomed the fact that millions would eventually enter Yosemite Valley every year. If the valley were developed along the lines he suggested, those millions would enjoy, but not impair, the landscape. But Olmsted’s report, after all, had been ignored by the managers of Yosemite Valley ever since it was written. Even Vint would have agreed that Mission 66 continued the “drift” towards overdevelopment in the valley and compounded the earlier mistake of allowing hotels and other development there in the first place. For Vint, in particular, Brower’s “Mission 65” jibe must have been galling, since it unwittingly echoed the landscape architect’s own attitudes and proposals dating back to the “Vint Plan” of 1945. Vint did not respond in writing at this point, but Wirth did not conceal his frustration and contempt. “As far as you are personally concerned,” he wrote Brower, “...your need for clarification” of Mission 66 policy “...will continue as long as you subject what we say to a microscopic search for hidden meanings and equivocations.” In a separate letter to Bruce M. Kilgore, editor of National Parks Magazine, Wirth deplored the timing of Brower’s article (it appeared in the same issue as one of Wirth’s own articles, “Mission 66 in the Headlines”) and declined to respond directly, noting that he “could not conceive that anything we have to say would be acceptable to Mr. Brower.”

As scores of parks became Mission 66 construction sites in the next several years, Wirth continued to struggle to control the popular definition of wilderness and the public’s perceptions of Mission 66. Between January and May, 1956, The Christian Science Monitor published a series of feature articles, “Our National Parks: A Heritage Worth Saving,” by reporter (and former park ranger) Max K. Gilstrap. While the series may have been originally conceived as one more exposé of deteriorating conditions in the parks, it coincided with the public presentation of Mission 66 and the official start of construction that July. As he did for other articles in newspapers and magazines at the time, Wirth provided quotations, information, and illustrations. While the series

482 Conrad L. Wirth to David R. Brower, May 7, 1958 (Box 25, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Conrad L. Wirth to Bruce M. Kilgore, February 18, 1958 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).
described a severe “crisis” in the parks, its overall tone was still sympathetic to Park Service efforts, characterizing Mission 66 as a “Crusade to Preserve.” Potential negative publicity from the Tioga Road debate, however, already worried the director. In his own written statement on Park Service policy, which Gilstrap used to conclude the series, Wirth wrote that “from time to time we hear it said” that the Park Service was “permitting the wilderness to be destroyed, principally by building roads that invade the wilderness.” But park roads were only being made “safe for today’s travel.” They were not becoming superhighways, nor were they being extended into roadless areas. One of the first “precepts” of Mission 66, he now insisted, “related specifically to wilderness protection.”

Scoyen coordinated other public information efforts in order to sustain the “enthusiastic support” he felt had launched the program. He directed staff to prepare “prospectus briefs” and accompanying press releases for wide distribution. All construction projects were to have somewhat enigmatic signs stating “This is a MISSION 66 Project,” or just “A MISSION 66 Project,” which hopefully would “stimulate curiosity” about the program and encourage visitors to ask questions and look at the informational posters and other materials that were being distributed to parks before the end of the first construction season. By 1957 these relatively modest efforts were replaced by more expensive, professionally designed brochures such as MISSION 66 In Action (paid for by the Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc.) and Your MISSION 66 and the National Parks: Passport to Adventure (paid for by Phillips Petroleum, and featuring their corporate logo on the cover). Like Our Heritage, the brochures reiterated, in a more popular idiom, the basic principles of Mission 66.

The most ambitious public relations effort of 1956, however, involved some of the new technology that park interpreters were just beginning to use. Thirty-five millimetre colour slides and slide projectors were features of the “automated” interpretive services being offered, especially in new visitor centres, amphitheatres, and campground circles that had been designed to accommodate them. Bill Carnes and the Mission 66 staff in

---

Washington assembled a slide show with over seventy images, mostly of park scenery and historic sites. Sets of the slides were distributed to parks, along with a tape recording of Wirth and his staff describing Mission 66, personally, for the public. Scripts of the narration were also provided, indicating the points at which the slides should be advanced. A great deal of effort went into the production of these audio-visual presentations, and over the next several years at least four updated versions were created with both images and text being altered to reflect progress. Howard Stagner served as narrator, but Carnes was in charge of production and distributed memoranda detailing the kinds of information and images he wanted from the field. Carnes himself, in his increasingly important role as “Chief of MISSION 66 Staff” in Washington, began the presentations with a description of park conditions in 1955. Wirth then described how Mission 66 had been planned, and the general goals of the program. Ronald Lee described interpretive programs and progress in historical parks. One of the longest, and perhaps most personal verbal presentations was by Eivend Scoyen, who related the story of his childhood and early rangering in Yellowstone as a preamble to his defence of Mission 66 wilderness policies. He remembered Yellowstone as it was in 1915, when there were 52,000 visitors. It was astonishing, he felt, that visitors in the 1950s still found accommodations basically within the footprint of development that had been established by 1908. At Yellowstone, he insisted, this precedent would be maintained. Millions of dollars were being spent on new facilities to accommodate millions of visitors, but “the job will be accomplished without taking another acre from the wilderness,” and this was true for other national parks, as well. “When MISSION 66 is completed,” Scoyen insisted, “the wilderness will still be there.”

14.5 Tioga Road, Part Two

In the meantime, Wirth pressed ahead with Mission 66 construction, knowing that public relations were vital, but that Congress and the Bureau of the Budget would now judge his program on the efficiency with which construction money was spent. With some exceptions, progress in this sense was good. In the initial years of Mission 66

486 These and other brochures are conserved at National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.
488 Several versions of these slide shows, with their written texts and reel-to-reel tape recordings, can be pieced together at National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.
construction, concessioner lodges, visitor centres, campgrounds, and many other facilities opened, and many other projects were underway. The widening of Tioga Road, however, continued to be controversial.

The final, central portion of the road was scheduled to be one of the first Mission 66 projects to go to construction in the summer of 1956, but flooding in Yosemite Valley caused Superintendent John C. Preston to shift priorities and delay construction for a year. Work on the approved "low line" route finally began in the summer of 1957. The delay had allowed time for the project’s opponents to protest, and for Wirth to respond. For years, even moderate Sierra Club board members had been writing angry letters to Wirth suspicious that Tioga Road was to become a "speedway" or even a commercial highway. Alex Hildebrand, for example pointed out to Wirth that "a highway down the centre aisle of a cathedral would enable more people to go through it, but it would not enable more people to come there for peace and spiritual inspiration." At the same time, Wirth was under pressure from Bureau of Public Roads engineers to widen the road to twenty-eight feet (two ten-foot travel lanes flanked by four-foot paved shoulders). Wirth responded by asking a sympathetic Sierra Club board member, Walter Huber, to investigate the situation. Huber was a former Sierra Club board president and a respected mining and road engineer who had worked extensively in the High Sierra. He recommended that two-foot shoulders would be adequate (almost everywhere along the road) for a total width of only twenty-four feet. The difference was significant and would help reduce the amount of excavation and scarring the project would inevitably produce. With Huber’s help, Wirth convinced the Bureau of Public Roads at least to accept three-foot paved shoulders.

The change, however, did not come close to mollifying the project’s opponents. Their complaints also involved the horizontal and vertical alignments of the road (the specifications that determined the tightness of curves and steepness of hills). These were critical factors in determining both the "design speed" of the road, and the total extent of excavation and filling that would be required. Less rigorous standards would result in a slower road with less capacity, but one that caused less disturbance. The Park Service

489 Quoted in Runte, Yosemite, 195. Alfred Runte suggests that Park Service plans for the Tioga Road widening in the 1950s were made at least in part at the behest of business owners in the gateway town of Lee Vining, who hoped to see more traffic cross the park and go through their town. Local businesses certainly attempted to influence park policies (as always). But the Park Service had other, longstanding reasons to complete Tioga Road, and the decision to proceed had already been made in the 1930s.
maintained standards (in terms of width and alignments) comparable to the prewar sections of the road, at what the engineers described as a "40-mile per hour design speed" (in this case 400-foot minimum radius horizontal curves and 7% maximum grades). As construction began that July, the Sierra Club's still divided board made no formal objection.\footnote{Richard H. Quin, "Yosemite National Park Roads and Bridges," Historic American Engineering Record (HAER No. CA-117), 1991, 18.} Ansel Adams, however, was urging fellow Sierra Club directors to oppose the project. His immediate concern was Tenaya Lake, and the fact that the "low line" of Tioga would now result in excavation and filling directly on its shore. By the end of the summer the split on the Sierra Club's board widened, with more board members swayed that the impacts of construction were too destructive.\footnote{John C. Preston, "Statement Before the Region Four Conference Held in Death Valley National Monument, January 11-16, 1959" (Yosemite National Park Archives).} 

The short construction season in the High Sierra soon brought work to a halt. Using the \textit{Sierra Club Bulletin} as a vehicle and with his board's approval, Brower now openly and fiercely condemned the construction of the "new speedway" that would encourage high speed driving and desecrate the shores of Tenaya Lake. He accused Park Service officials of deceit and continued to press them to completely reconsider the purpose of park roads and the standards for their construction. The road had already been "irrevocably carved," Brower lamented, into "one of the park's finest areas." The charm of the old road was destroyed. "Tenaya Lake, the Yosemite Indians' 'Lake of the Shining Rocks,' is strung on a highway now," he angrily protested, "and you will be able to skirt its very edge in 35 seconds' less time, not noticing, perhaps, that some of the shine is gone." What was more, "variations on the same theme" could be found wherever Mission 66 was at work.\footnote{Richard H. Quin, "Yosemite National Park Roads and Bridges," Historic American Engineering Record (HAER No. CA-117), 1991, 19; Cohen, \textit{History of the Sierra Club}, 141.}

The location and construction standards for the Tioga Road construction that took place in 1957 had been decided in the 1930s. The project was essentially comparable (although with changes in the design of culverts and other structures) to the sections of the road that had been completed before the war. But many Sierra Club members and directors, as well as other conservationists and park advocates, now came to see these road standards—at least when applied in the severely beautiful High Sierra landscape—as a disastrous form of overdevelopment that illustrated the misguided priorities Mission 66. By the start of the next construction season in July of 1958, both sides were committed to
irreconcilable positions. Sierra Club advocates deluged the Park Service and the Department of the Interior with demands to stop the project, or at least to consider further alternative proposals. Near Tenaya Lake, work planned for that summer included creating a parking area and overlook at a point where the road would cross over a prominent granite formation, or dome. While the views would be spectacular from the overlook, the granite feature itself would be seriously scarred by blasting. Brower and Adams, leading the opposition, proposed another alternative. They wanted the road relocated to the base of the dome, which would still allow visitors to climb up to see the view, while preventing more visible scarring. That August they pressed Wirth and Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton to order a stop to construction to allow time to consider their proposal. Wirth was either still hopeful of salvaging his relationship with the Sierra Club, or more likely was directed by Department of the Interior officials; in any case he agreed on August 5 to halt the work and meet the advocates on site.  

On August 19 Wirth walked the site with Brower and Adams and other Sierra Club and Park Service and officials. A meeting of minds did not take place. Brower and Adams remained adamant that the road should be relocated to the base of the rock formation, even if it meant far steeper grades and tighter turns that the standards allowed. Wirth’s engineers told him that the resulting alignment would create an unacceptable hazard, and he might as well also “build a hospital at the foot of the hill” to handle the wrecks it would cause. Wirth apparently tried to reach some kind of détente with Brower, engaging in lengthy discussion and making a show of ordering his staff to investigate the points being raised. At one point, perhaps regretting his agency’s increasingly confrontational relationship with the conservation groups, Wirth asked Brower why the Sierra Club’s leadership had “changed their minds,” reversing decades of support for the road project and the underlying philosophy it represented. According to Wirth, Brower responded curtly that “it was a different Sierra Club now.” Indeed, Tioga Road construction, as much as anything, had transformed the club and set it on the path of modern environmental advocacy.

Following this cool exchange, Wirth ordered work to resume. He did relocate the 1.2-mile section of road in question, but only part way down the granite formation. It was a compromise that pleased no one, since it created a less scenic road but still required highly visible blasting across the dome. The entire event, including the dramatic meeting near Tenaya Lake and the subsequent blasting and excavation that August, was a disaster for the image of Mission 66. If the Sierra Club lost the battle over Tioga Road, they began winning the public relations war. In his report on that summer’s events, Brower characterized Park Service officials as intransigent and duplicitous.496 The images of blasted granite rubble and excavated borrow pits provided Adams with a wealth of material for elegizing the scarred landscape and documenting the “Tenaya Tragedy.” The failure to stop the Tioga Road widening galvanized advocates as no victory ever could have. “There is no use fooling ourselves that nature with a slick highway running through it is any longer wild,” Adams wrote. “What possessed the minds and hearts of road people...to maintain ruinous standards in this priceless area?...The Tenaya tragedy stands as an example of what must never happen again in national park or other wild areas....The bulldozers of bureaucracy have bypassed the gentle persuasions and advice of our conservation spokesmen” (fig. 77).497

Adams published his harshest criticisms that December. The “failure in basic planning” at Yosemite should “stand out as a warning against future depredations of the natural scene.” Adams not only condemned the Tioga Road project, but Park Service planning in general. He demanded “the basic right to explore programs such as Mission 66 while they are being formulated....I have the right to penetrate the ‘paper curtain.’” Adams felt that “a complete re-evaluation of park and wilderness definitions and procedures” was urgently needed. “The National Gallery of Art...exists for those who desire to experience the great masterworks in an appropriate environment....I believe this is the way national parks should be presented.” He gladly accepted some of the Mission 66 prospectus, including the development of El Portal and the removal of some services from the valley, but he condemned the contemporary construction of the “merchandise centre” and other buildings that seemed to negate any advances. The “supreme problem” faced by the Park Service was to find ways to “depressurize the parks and return them to

their logical status.” But Mission 66 was “built upon a definition [of parks] which justifies the urge to expand and to manage.” Adams wanted “a reorganization of approach and planning within government…based on the establishment of a sound and enforceable definition of park and wilderness qualities, values, and functions,” and a “reformation of the park service.” He soon called for a complete halt to Mission 66 so that the “whole scheme” could be “studied afresh.” In the meantime, Adams felt that “all we can say is, ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’”

If nothing else, Tioga Road put the issue of park road standards under intense scrutiny. By 1959, Wirth had announced that road policy was going through a review, noting that his agency was now getting as much criticism from the Bureau of Public Roads for underbuilding as it was from conservation groups for overbuilding. The relative positions of the Park Service and the Bureau of Public Roads had changed. In 1924, Going-to-the-Sun Road was the biggest project the roads bureau had ever undertaken and the Park Service was their biggest client. But with Interstate Highway construction in full swing in the late 1950s, national park roads were no more than a minor subcategory of federal road building. The Park Service had less leverage to influence engineering standards and details, which the federal highway engineers were busily updating for postwar conditions. By 1962 Wirth was exploring the possibility of backing out of the partnership with the Bureau of Public Roads altogether in order to gain complete control over park road construction. But Congress had made road appropriations since 1924 on the assumption that the roads agency, as a full partner, would assure that construction was efficiently engineered and supervised. The legislators showed no sign they would pay for park road projects under any other arrangement. The Park Service was locked into the “interbureau agreement” that Mather had originally negotiated.

On the other hand, Harold Bradley and other conservation advocates continued to deplore Mission 66 and to publish articles with their own ideas for park road standards. Bradley, who was elected president of the Sierra Club board in 1957, framed the controversy as one of competing road standards: high speed “roads for access” versus low speed “roads for display.”


construction, Bradley and others also deflected analysis of their central proposition: that Yosemite and other parks should be enjoyed by those who could and would appreciate them, not by the public at large. One effective and perhaps even democratic means of limiting access was to avoid widening park roads. The public would then self select into those willing and able to be inconvenienced by narrow and congested roads, and those who would, as Bradley had put it earlier, “elect to drive elsewhere.”

Increasing the capacity of park roads, however, was an indispensable strategy for Mission 66, because the program was dedicated to making the parks work—as public parks—for the public at large. Bradley, Adams, Brower, and others had approved of the idea of Yosemite as a public park before the war, but they could no longer in the 1950s after the public had become so numerous. It also must be said that the public had become more diverse. Postwar demographic changes in California, such as the doubling of the population and the increasing relative affluence of Central Valley communities, made Yosemite not only a more crowded place, but one that was less dominated by the Bay Area professional classes that typically had provided the Sierra Club with its most active members. Put another way, Brower and Adams had not been against prewar park development, which had made their youthful experiences of Yosemite possible, but vigorously opposed postwar development, which opened the park to a larger, broader public. For all their outrage over the “Tenaya Tragedy,” they also deplored the planned visitor centre and expanded campground for Tuolumne Meadows, and in general regretted the fact that the high country would now be more accessible to a wider range of people.

Such analysis did not escape at least some Park Service officials, who were deeply angered by what they saw as hypocrisy and narcissism. John Preston, the embattled Yosemite superintendent during these years, was frustrated (or tactless) enough to put his opinions into written statements. In 1959 he vigorously defended his handling of the Tioga Road project to his fellow park superintendents. He also suggested that Adams suffered from a messianic complex, and that Brower had “excessive love for himself” and was using the situation to advance personal ambitions at the expense of sound policy for

---

500 John A. McPhee makes similar observations about Brower in *Encounters With the Archdruid* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971).
the organization he led. The Tioga Road controversy had coloured perceptions of the entire Mission 66 program. Park Service officials knew it and resented it.

One of the striking things about the 1958 meeting of Brower and Wirth on Tioga Road was the fact that Thomas Vint was not there. In some ways the meeting recalled another similarly dramatic meeting, when Vint had convinced Mather of an alternate route for Going-to-the-Sun Road in 1924. That conference had also taken place at the site of a disputed road alignment, at high elevation, surrounded by magnificent scenery. The outcome had been very different. In 1924 Vint had succeeded in altering Park Service road policy, and from that point he had assumed increased responsibilities within the agency and oversaw a new era of park road construction. But Vint had been increasingly silent on Tioga Road since issuing his 1947 written statement backing the “low line” strategy. He was uninvolved in the 1958 controversy, and now became even less engaged in Mission 66 as a whole. The two road controversies—at Glacier and Yosemite national parks—were bookends to Vint’s career. In 1961, the year Tioga Road was dedicated, Vint retired. He left no record of what he thought of the events of 1958. In one sense, Wirth’s actions that summer validated the prewar road policies that Vint had established. But Wirth’s decision also failed to meet the standard that Mather had set in 1924. Mather had recognized at that time that things needed to be done differently, and he took considerable risk in doing so. In hindsight, 1958 was another watershed moment that called for taking chances and devising fresh approaches; but Wirth chose to stay firmly within the intellectual framework he had devised for Mission 66. The Tioga Road debate caused a further hardening of attitudes, not the broad reassessment of the situation critics demanded. The effect of Wirth’s decision was exactly the opposite of Mather’s: it drastically eroded Park Service credibility at a crucial moment. Blasting and excavation for Tioga Road proceeded as planned, but undermined the reputation of Mission 66 and its planners in the process.

Wirth misjudged the great change taking place in the American conservation movement. He thought he, and Mission 66, would ride out the growing storm over Tioga Road. “We are aware,” he wrote to New York Times columnist John B. Oakes in one of many attempts to control the unfolding public relations debacle, “—at least in our own minds we think we are aware—of the pitfalls that are ahead of us in connection with

---

taking care of the large numbers of people that are coming to the parks.” Wirth pointed out that 1,000 projects had been begun or completed between 1956 and 1958, representing a $62 million commitment. But only eight miles of new roads had been built, while 130 miles had been rebuilt. Nine visitor centres, 3,200 campsites, and many “behind-the-scenes facilities” had been built. “I make no apology for the construction included in Mission 66,” he insisted. “It’s the people’s right to visit their parks, and they do so in large numbers.” The press and the conservation groups emphasized the “construction aspects of Mission 66” without acknowledging it was all done for the purpose of preservation. “There is no surer way to destroy a landscape than to permit undisciplined use by man,” he repeated not for the first or last time. “Roads, trails, campgrounds, and other developments are one means, perhaps the most important one, of localizing, limiting, and channelling park use.” There were other Mission 66 accomplishments to herald: 50,000 acres of parkland had been acquired and 750 employees hired. “But you can’t hang a sign on a new ranger saying ‘I’m a Mission 66 project,’” and the “headlines” inevitably stressed construction. That May, Wirth published a lavishly illustrated seventy-page article in National Geographic, showcasing the national “heritage of beauty and history,” as well as the “‘new look’ in park architecture.” Wirth’s most ambitious piece of publicity yet, it was a high water mark for Mission 66 in terms of public image.

By 1959 the tide was turning. Wirth issued agency memoranda admitting that it was “increasingly apparent that a greater effort must be made...to present the MISSION 66 program to the public in its true light.” There was a “misapprehension” among the public that “MISSION 66 is somehow damaging the Parks or that it is inimical to the purpose for which the Parks were created.” Wirth asked all staff that came into contact with the public to “redouble” their efforts to explain that almost all construction would take place within the envelopes of existing development in the parks. “All utterances, oral or written, relating to MISSION 66,” Wirth ordered, “...should place stress on such benefits as protection, preservation, and enjoyment of the parks, with lesser emphasis being given to the total dollars spent.” The “use rather that the cost” of new facilities was

502 Conrad L. Wirth to John B. Oakes, February 12, 1958 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center). Oakes, an influential environmental journalist, criticized the Park Service for construction at Yellowstone and elsewhere. In 1955 he had replaced Bernard De Voto on the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments.
to be emphasized. Wirth wanted more public relations events to be planned, and more articles to be written. But there was an underlying sense that control over “the MISSION 66 story” had been lost. There were even “indications” that in some cases park staff did not understand “the concept behind MISSION 66.” More informational materials were distributed to parks so that “all employees” would better appreciate the “basic purpose of the National Park Service” and how Mission 66 was a “tool to carry it out.” Wirth asked that park staff tell the public less about construction progress, and more about efforts such as “research studies in regard to use of back country.” But there was little to tell with regard to such limited aspects of Mission 66; construction in the upcoming 1959 season, on the other hand, would soon be reaching a peak.504

As for Wirth, his staff in Washington, and many of his superintendents, adverse publicity seems to have stiffened their resolve. Bill Carnes, for example, distributed a short essay written on the subject of Mission 66 by Robert M. Coates, Park Service “public policy analyst.” Describing the program as a “Renaissance movement in parks,” Coates explained why he (and Carnes) felt it was increasingly resented. Mission 66 was “returning to the basic fundamentals” of the park movement, and therefore was “destroying the false convictions, distortions, and teachings of those who were working the park idea around to a narrow and selfish exploitation for the select few—a doctrine that is the very antithesis of our democratic principles.” Mission 66 was in fact “a crusade” that carried on the ideals, first described by Andrew Jackson Downing and the Olmsteds, of American parks as the great public spaces of the nation. Regardless of the benefits of new construction, “without such a revival and resurgence” of “zeal, enthusiasm, and conviction,” the parks would be “doomed.”505

Regardless of these effort to control public perceptions, however, by the time Tioga Road was dedicated in 1961—the midpoint of the Mission 66 program—Wirth and his planners had been forced into a major “reassessment” of their efforts. Mission 66 would never again enjoy the optimism of its enthusiastic beginning. Wirth held the dedication ceremony for Tioga Road at the controversial overlook near Tenaya Lake, now


504 Conrad L. Wirth, ”Telling the Story of MISSION 66,” memorandum, February 27, 1959; Hugh M. Miller, “Need for All Employees to Understand MISSION 66,” memorandum, March 9, 1959 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

named in honour of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Olmsted had died in 1957, and William Colby was too old and sick to attend the ceremony. The Yosemite Advisory Board had disbanded, and Vint was retiring. The tone of Wirth’s comments were defensive. The project had caused a controversy, he admitted, and the greatest problem had occurred “right here where we stand.” He was making a point: “large numbers of park visitors” could now enjoy the beautiful views that surrounded the gathered dignitaries. “Look at it!” he exclaimed, “Have you ever seen anything more beautiful?...We have been criticized for this location. I hope our good friends, the critics, will forgive us for not following their advice” (figs. 78-85).506

The principal speaker at the ceremony, however, was John A. Carver, Jr., the new assistant secretary of the interior. Just as the arrival of Eisenhower had set the stage for the beginning of Mission 66, the arrival of Kennedy, and the appointment of Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall that January, put in motion the events that would lead to the announcement of Wirth’s retirement late in 1963. Udall’s philosophy of “New Conservation” differed from that of Mission 66. The Park Service provided a draft speech for Carver, which if he ever read, he completely ignored. “Tension mars this occasion, and I feel trepidation,” he began. “I’m tempted here to treat my delicate task as did the politician called to comment on the unlovely child. ‘Say,’ he exclaims, ‘that IS a baby.’ For it is a fact, for good or ill, that here there IS a road.” While he urged all sides to end their recriminations for the common good of shared goals, he made it clear that the change of administration meant that conservation groups now had a sympathetic ear at the Department of the Interior. In the meantime, “Connie Wirth’s reputation stands on a base of public service broader than this road” and no one could suggest that he had ever been motivated by anything but the “highest aspirations.” But from the beginning there was intense mutual distrust between Wirth and the outspoken assistant secretary.507

14.6 Denali Road

Tioga Road was not the only Mission 66 road project to generate heated debate. Plans for Mount McKinley (later Denali) National Park in Alaska were quickly opposed

506 Conrad L. Wirth, “Remarks at the Tioga Road Dedication,” June 24, 1961 (Yosemite National Park Archives).
by scientists and conservation advocates worried that a park known for its frontier wilderness character would be devastated by an influx of automotive tourists. In this case the conservationist Olaus J. Murie became another fierce critic of Mission 66. As a field biologist, Murie had done pioneering studies of the wildlife of Mount McKinley beginning in the 1920s. His younger half brother, Adolph Murie, was also a field biologist who produced his own major studies of Rocky Mountain and Alaskan fauna over a twenty-year career with the Park Service. Olaus was more the activist, and in the 1950s he was a key figure in drafting and advocating proposed wilderness legislation.\(^{508}\)

As president of the Wilderness Society, he also wrote Wirth a series of letters condemning Mission 66 projects all over the country and he became as potent an adversary as Brower and Adams.\(^{509}\) Wirth and Scoyen were kept busy writing long letters back, explaining details of park plans and defending their overall commitment to preserving wilderness. But these were the kinds of efforts that would have had better results in 1955, when conservationists had been anxious to join in early Mission 66 planning.

Both Olaus and Adolph Murie particularly opposed Mission 66 plans for Mount McKinley, where they had done many years of research over their long careers. Established in 1917, Mount McKinley had only begun receiving visitors in the early 1920s, when the Alaska Railroad opened. The Park Service and the Alaska Road Commission then extended a road into the park, allowing a concessioner to meet tourists at McKinley Station and bring them into the park in touring cars. In 1929 Vint drew up a plan calling for the road to be extended to the site of a proposed rustic lodge at Wonder Lake. By 1938 the unpaved road was completed, but it remained rough by prewar national park standards. Annual visitation to the park, however, was in the hundreds in the 1920s, reaching a high of only 2,200 in 1939. There was little pressure on the park from visitors, and little interest in Congress or from concessioners in further investment. The rustic lodge and other aspects of Vint’s master plan were never built.\(^{510}\)

The situation changed for the park, and for all of Alaska, after the Alcan Highway was built during World War II. After the war, state officials proposed the construction of the Denali Highway (not to be confused with the park road, later known as Denali Road),

---


\(^{509}\) Olaus J. Murie to Conrad L. Wirth, December 10, 1957; Olaus J. Murie to Conrad L. Wirth, January 7, 1958 (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

which connected Mount McKinley to the state’s highway system. Mission 66 planners anticipated the 1957 road’s opening, which they said would move the park from the old model of “package-type train and bus tour” to a situation comparable to parks in the rest of the country: “mobile visitors” in a private automobiles would want campgrounds, roadside visitor centres, and other car-friendly services. The prospectus characterized the existing park road as a “95 mile substandard gravel highway” that would be inadequate for the private automobile traffic that would begin arriving when the Denali Highway opened. The entire park road would need to be rebuilt and realigned where necessary “to reduce hazards or improve views.” It also would be brought up to “paving standards,” with a twenty-foot wide roadway and three-foot paved shoulders. The road would not be extended, however, nor would any new roads be proposed for the park. The prospectus also cancelled plans for a lodge at Wonder Lake. Campgrounds, a park store, and other day use services would be available, but “private enterprise would provide…[overnight lodgings] beyond park boundaries” as the need arose. Existing concession operations would continue, however, and several new visitor centres were planned. “Behind-the-scene improvements” would include housing, maintenance areas, and utilities, mostly in the administrative area near the park entrance. After ten years and about $10 million in planned construction, visitors would find the “remote and untouched aspect” of the park unaffected, but they would also be “impressed by the comfortable and well located” campgrounds and “well integrated interpretive program.” The overall “theme of the park,” as expressed in the prospectus, was “the maintenance of wilderness integrity.”

Some of the preservationist tone of the final park prospectus resulted from Adolph Murie’s comments and involvement. In 1956 Murie condemned earlier Mission 66 proposals that included overnight lodging (not at Wonder Lake but near the Savage River, closer to the park entrance) as well as other aspects of proposed plans. In a long, personal letter to Sanford Hill at the WODC, Murie worried that the park could become “another Yellowstone or Yosemite” unless Hill took advantage of the opportunity “for some planning along idealistic lines.” He insisted that “wilderness standards in McKinley must be maintained to a higher level than anything we have attempted in the States.” But although the final prospectus called for no overnight lodgings and made other changes, Murie and others were not completely satisfied. In an echo of the Tioga Road debate, they called for the park road to remain in its existing condition, and for basic priorities to

be reconsidered. They wanted the park to remain essentially undeveloped, with only the unpaved road and perhaps a few, carefully sited campgrounds to serve the public. The proposed widening and modernization of the road, in particular, threatened to destroy the very “wilderness integrity” that the Mission 66 planners had so dutifully described. The wilderness character of this most famous Alaskan park needed complete protection; even roadside interpretive signs were an unwelcome indication of civilization. As park historian William E. Brown observes, Mission 66 “brought the first phase of McKinley Park’s preservation-versus-development debate to a head.”512

Work proceeded slowly (by Mission 66 standards) at Mount McKinley, but by the early 1960s the construction program was well underway with construction on the Eielson Visitor Center, improvements in the park administrative area, and significant road work completed. By 1963, however, state highway plans again changed the situation. Another state highway was under construction between Anchorage and Fairbanks, roughly along the route of the Alaska Railroad. The new state highway from Anchorage would open the park to an even higher level of automotive tourism, and concern over Mission 66 plans quickly took on great urgency. Writing in *National Parks Magazine*, Olaus Murie warned readers that “the prevailing enthusiasm for what the bulldozer can do” had come to Alaska and particularly to Mount McKinley, where a “speedway was under construction.” Murie added that the Park Service was still under pressure from local interests to build a lodge in the park and (perhaps fearing another reversal, as at Everglades) the agency had not categorically ruled the possibility out. Architectural aesthetics were an issue as well. The Eielson Visitor Center—an unassuming but decided modernist building completed in 1960—was characterized as a “monstrosity” (and later, by Adolph Murie, as “the Dairy Queen”). The editors of *National Parks* agreed, calling again for a “complete reform of park road construction” and of park planning in general. Other articles, editorials, and letters to the editor echoed the sentiments.513

---


The situation recalled Tioga Road. But Secretary of the Interior Udall apparently was not interested in repeating that experience. Wilderness and wildlife protection had always been priorities at Mount McKinley, and relatively low numbers of visitors made arguments for accommodating public demand less persuasive. When the intensity of the opposition to Mission 66 plans for the park became clear in 1963, Vint's successor as director of design and construction, A. Clark Stratton, announced a major change in plans. The Mount McKinley park road would be completed according to what Stratton described as “telescoping standards.” The first thirty miles, mostly completed already, would be a paved, twenty-foot wide road with three-foot paved shoulders. The next forty miles, however, would be an unpaved, twenty-foot wide surface with minimal shoulders. The final eighteen miles to Wonder Lake would remain a “primitive gravel road.” Wherever possible, the new road would stay in its existing alignment.514 The “telescoping standards,” in other words, amounted to a termination of the Mission 66 road project in mid-construction. Work continued for several years before it officially halted, but the “telescoping” road, known today as Denali Road, remains as a physical record and expression of the changing fortunes of the Mission 66 program.

14.7 Other Mission 66 Roads

The reactions to the Tioga Road and later the Denali Road projects were intense and changed the climate in which the public, the Department of the Interior, and some employees of the Park Service received Mission 66. But the controversies around these roads were not typical. Hundreds of less dramatic road improvements and realignments were undertaken throughout the park system, and the majority of projects did not incite opposition (fig 86). Many in fact were welcomed as needed improvements. By Wirth's own estimate, 1,570 miles of roads were “reconstructed” under Mission 66, while 1,197 miles of new roads were built, “mostly in new areas” of the rapidly expanding park system.515 But the ambitious pace and scope of Mission 66, initially considered its virtue, now worked against its public image. The “bulldozers of bureaucracy” were active everywhere by the late 1950s, leading Ansel Adams, Olaus Murie, and other activists to suggest the bulldozer should be the symbol of Mission 66. By the early 1960s they had

514 The concept of “telescoping standards” apparently was worked out by Sanford Hill at the WODC. Brown, Denali, 195-204; Paul M. Tilden and Nancy L. Machler, “The Development of Mount McKinley National Park,” National Parks Magazine 37, no. 188 (May 1963): 10-15.
515 Wirth, Parks, Politics, and the People, 262.
succeeded in characterizing the program, at least for a significant and influential segment of the national park public, as one of rampant overdevelopment.

But for Wirth and his Mission 66 staff, road projects remained critical to their modernist concept of the park. Plans for overnight accommodations, for example, could be cancelled, as they were at Mount McKinley. Leaving roads in a “primitive” state, however, meant restricting not just overnight use, but day use as well. That left little of the public park idea; a park became a reservation to be used by a smaller, self selected group. There was also an important distinction, at least for Wirth and his staff, between building a new road and improving an existing one. Park Service officials repeatedly observed that neither the Tioga Road nor the Denali Road projects involved the invasion of a previously roadless area. For conservationists, however, this was a distinction without a difference; increasing the capacity of a road could be almost as bad as building a new one.

In cases where new roads had been proposed in roadless wilderness areas, however, Wirth and his planners were willing to cancel prewar road construction plans. They often described Mission 66 as a redevelopment, not a development plan, that would typically stay within the overall footprint of development in parks. Exactly what constituted an existing footprint of development was, of course, subject to interpretation. Scoyen insisted, for example, that Canyon and Grant villages in Yellowstone stayed within the park’s 1908 development footprint because they were sited along the corridor of the park road system, which had been laid out by that date. But in other cases, where new road development would undeniably penetrate existing wilderness, Mission 66 planners in fact tried to be true to their own policies.

At Olympic National Park, for example, numerous road proposals had been put forward for decades. As the bitter contest over whether valuable rain forests would be preserved or sent to the mills continued through the 1950s, conservationists, elected officials, and park planners also debated how this “wilderness park” should be developed for public use. Initial Mission 66 plans called for the construction of a scenic highway in the “coastal strip” portion of the park, where a road had been planned since the 1930s. But conservationists now objected to a new highway along the spectacular and undeveloped coastline, and in the spring of 1957 Wirth permanently removed the project from the park’s prospectus. Mission 66 paid for the completion of the spur road to the Hurricane Ridge Lodge (1952) in the park, but in 1959 Wirth decided the lodge should be converted to a day use facility rather than expanded for increased overnight use.
Olympic’s Mission 66 development plan ended up as a series of improvements to existing spur roads into the park, with visitor centres, campgrounds, and other facilities along or at the ends of the roads. The vast majority of the park remained roadless, as it had been before Mission 66. The park administrative area (as described earlier) had already been built outside the park in the nearby town of Port Angeles.516

At Kings Canyon National Parks, another of Ickes’s “wilderness parks,” Mission 66 plans called only for a minor extension to the prewar road into Kings Canyon, which had been built by the Forest Service. The rest of the park remained roadless. In neighbouring Sequoia National Park, plans called for some improvements to the Generals Highway, but not for any significant new roads. At Everglades, the new park road to Flamingo was, again, technically a reconstruction of the old Igraham Highway, and the Mission 66 prospectus characterized the park as primarily a “biological area” and a “wilderness preserve.” Major new road construction under Mission 66 usually occurred, as Wirth repeatedly asserted, in parks that were being added to the system, especially new national seashores, national recreation areas, and national historical parks. In addition, the relocation of existing roads considered inadequate (such as the approach road to Paradise at Mount Rainier) and the completion of projects begun before the war (such as the Stevens Canyon Highway, also at Mount Rainier) made up significant categories of new road construction. A large amount of new road mileage also fell into the category of “access roads” for new residential areas, maintenance yards, and concessioner developments. At least according to Wirth and his planners, none of these new roads invaded or reduced wilderness.

But by the early 1960s, as the Park Service efficiently spent the enormous construction appropriations Congress continued to make, for many people the bulldozer had indeed become the symbol of Wirth’s program. The controversies aroused by Mission 66 construction obscured some of the profound contributions to the national park system that the program was making, even as conservationists condemned it. Much of this legacy has already been described. Visitor centres and the revised approach to park interpretation they facilitated, for example, and the increased hiring, training, and professionalization of staff were physical and institutional foundations of the postwar Park Service that were created through Mission 66.

516 Lien, Olympic Battleground, 204, 302-303; Fringer, Olympic National Park, 154-155.
The most significant products of Mission 66, however, remain to be discussed. Considering Wirth’s career and interests, these achievements were appropriately in the fields of recreational planning, new park acquisition, and recreational and historical park developments. These categories of Mission 66 planning and development will outlast even the program’s built legacy of roads, utilities, residences, and visitor centres. The dramatic typological expansion of the park system, and the addition of new parks and thousands of acres of parkland occurred at a crucial moment in American landscape history, when private development was rapidly covering the nation’s last undeveloped seashores and lakeshores, for example. Mission 66 made big plans for public access and recreation at a time when such schemes could still be implemented. The new parks, and new types of parks, created through Mission 66 constitute the most vital—and often forgotten—category of the program’s accomplishments.
Chapter 15: “Parks for America”

15.1 The ORRRC

After 1958, national recreational planning at the Park Service went ahead in tandem with another federal initiative. That year Congress established the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, which was charged with reporting on the state of American outdoor recreation resources and making recommendations for federal legislation or other actions to meet the growing demand for access to parks and other recreation areas. The commission’s mandate, in other words, was to make suggestions for how to accomplish much of what Wirth had organized Mission 66 to do. Wirth had not led—nor did he support—the initiative to create the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. Like the contemporary campaign to pass the Wilderness Act, the group continued its work as Mission 66 went ahead on a parallel track. In the early 1960s Mission 66 construction went from ground breakings to ribbon cuttings; but the great social and political changes of the era demanded that Wirth reformulate Mission 66 for its second half.

When Stewart Udall resigned from Congress in 1960 to become Kennedy’s secretary of the interior, a new era in federal conservation began. From a prominent Arizona family, Udall had served on the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs since 1955 and was already informed and influential on federal conservation issues. Over the next nine years Udall helped assure the passage of the Wilderness Act (1964), the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (1964), the National Historic Preservation Act (1966), and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968), just to name some of the legislative accomplishments of the era.517 Through the remaining years of Mission 66 and for three years following, Udall oversaw a massive expansion of the national park system. His book on conservation policy, The Quiet Crisis, became a best seller in 1963, a year after Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring marked the onset of a broad social and political movement becoming known as environmentalism. Not since Harold Ickes oversaw New Deal programs in the 1930s had any secretary of the interior accomplished so much or been so

well known a public figure as Stewart Udall in the 1960s. Youthful and passionate, Udall contrasted with Eisenhower's more staid secretary, Fred Seaton, who had given his department's full support to Conrad Wirth since 1956.

The second half of Mission 66, during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, was played out in a completely changed political setting at the Department of the Interior. In his 1963 book, Udall described "the quiet conservation crisis of the 1960s." He observed that Americans were living "in a land of vanishing beauty, and of an overall environment that is diminished daily by pollution, noise, and blight." The book was a call to action: "We must act decisively—and soon—if we are to assert the people's right to clean air and water, to open space, to well-designed urban areas, to mental and physical health." But the action Udall had in mind did not sound much like Mission 66, nor did the secretary mention the ongoing program in his book. Udall called for a "preservation-of-environment" initiative based on the coordination of federal policies, including the acquisition of land for conservation and recreation areas. He urged the immediate passage of the Wilderness Act and other legislation. Invoking Aldo Leopold, the biologist and conservationist who died in 1948, he described a "land ethic for tomorrow" that would be the basis of a "balanced conservation program" and a "higher ideal of conservation" that would "make the earth a better home both for ourselves and for those as yet unborn." Even before the 1960 election, Wirth knew that he needed to act if he and his agency were to remain in step with the changes occurring in the political and philosophical culture of American conservation.

Many government officials and much of the public, however, still considered Mission 66 an outstanding success story. Other federal and state agencies imitated the program. In 1957 the Forest Service started its own five-year program, "Operation Outdoors," and realized increased appropriations for its own roads, campgrounds, and visitor centres. By 1960, a year when over 72 million people visited the national park system, Mission 66 had developed 7,000 individual campsites and rehabilitated another 4,000. Over 650 miles of old roads were improved and 140 miles of new roads and 880 new parking areas were built. Fifty-four visitor centres were opened or under construction and over 1,000 visitor centre interpretive displays and 1,500 "wayside"

interpretabe exhibits were designed and installed. Over 160 miles of new trails were built and another 120 miles were rebuilt. Hundreds of campfire circles and outdoor amphitheatre complemented the campgrounds and visitor centres. Millions of dollars had been spent on water lines and sewage treatment plants, and power lines connected many parks to regional grids for the first time. About $180 million had been spent on construction, and projects underway represented $60 million more. Concessioners had invested $20 million. Land acquisitions totalled 227,000 acres. Park staffing had admittedly lagged, as Congress proved less willing to fund new personnel than it was to build roads and facilities. But by 1959 the agency had 8,000 permanent and seasonal employees, up from 7,200 in 1956. Operations budgets had risen from $20 million to $37 million. Over 700 units of housing, much of it new ranch houses, were available for park staff. In 1959, Wirth claimed that, at least in terms of visitor and staff facilities, the national park system was "in the best condition in its history."

Changes were in order, nevertheless. Almost from the beginning Park Service officials had planned a "top-level review" of Mission 66 for 1960, an election year in which the program would also reach its halfway point. The objections of wilderness advocates and the creation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) in 1958 increased the urgency of such plans. By 1959 "a restudy of the original Mission 66 program" was already underway.

The creation of the ORRRC, in particular, had left Wirth with little option but to reconsider Mission 66. For three years, as the recreation commission assembled data and prepared its final report, Wirth struggled to retain the Park Service's role as the nation's recreational planning agency. But Congress had never really believed that Mission 66

---

520 "MISSION 66 PROGRESS REPORT," draft, April 1961, (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); Department of the Interior, 1959 Annual Report, 323-324; Rettie, Our National Park System, 251.
522 In 1957 the architect (and at the time assistant western regional director) Herbert Maier hoped that the review would be conducted by a panel including leading architects and landscape architects from private practice, biologist Olaus Murie, Horace Albright, and experts in public education. Herbert Maier, "Halfway Point Evaluation of MISSION 66," September 6, 1957 (Box 7, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
523 Department of the Interior, 1959 Annual Report, 324. In 1960 Secretary of the Interior Seaton also performed a review of all design and construction procedures in his department. The review was conducted in response to inquiries from Congressional committee staff concerned about costs and efficiency. The final report suggested increasing the use of standardized plans and reducing the amount of "design review" conducted. "Report of the Committee on Design and Construction in the Department of the Interior," Ralph C. Meima, chairman, 1960 (Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives).
was a "national recreational plan" rather than merely a development program requiring no legislative consideration beyond annual appropriation bills. Mission 66 therefore relied on the authority of New Deal legislation, such as the 1935 Historic Sites Act and the 1936 Park, Parkway, and Recreational-Area Study Act. In many ways Mission 66 was the last New Deal park initiative. Among the Park Service directorate (director, associate director, assistant and regional directors) in 1960, none had begun working for the government after 1934. Many Mission 66 projects, including Canyon Village and Tioga Road, had been planned in the 1930s, and the program held fast to the basic ideology of prewar national park making as well as many specific plans.

Wirth never secured a broad, new legislative mandate for his agency in the postwar era. Increased annual appropriations meant construction progress, but they did not authorize Mission 66 to coordinate an overall federal and state initiative for the recreational use of public lands. Mission 66 assistance to state park systems was limited to technical bulletins—design sheets and specifications for typical park facilities—issued through the National Conference on State Parks. This was a far cry from the role the agency had played in the expansion of state park systems during the New Deal.524

Neither did Mission 66 appropriations fund what many conservationists increasingly felt was needed: a massive program of federal land acquisition for new public park areas of all types. When it created the ORRRC, however, Congress began consideration of a new generation of broad legislation that would replace New Deal era policies and bureaucracies with new planning organizations and funding methods. Mission 66 had opened congressional purse strings for national park development. But the ORRRC heralded a new willingness to legislate a more comprehensive approach to the conservation and recreation issues of the day.

The advocates of the ORRRC were responding to the fact that all public lands—not just national parks—were overcrowded and overwhelmed by the demand for recreational access to lakes, seashores, forests, and mountains. Outdoor recreation was a huge industry by the 1950s, involving not only cars and roadside motel and restaurant development, but motor boats, camping trailers, and other equipment. Recreation rivalled logging, ranching, mining, and dam construction in terms of social and economic impact; it had become a primary function of federal and state public lands, including those, such

524 The bimonthly "information letter" was called Grist and included design sheets, specifications, and suggestions for "operational procedures...and "tricks of the trade." See Department of the Interior, 1957 Annual Report, 335.
as the national forests, in which recreation had never been a foremost consideration. Every federal and state land management agency had increased obligations to provide public access and facilities for recreation. Coordination across federal departments, and with state and local governments, was more vital than ever. The Park Service had provided this kind of coordination during the New Deal. The creation of the ORRRC indicated that Mission 66 had not continued that function.

The origins of the ORRRC legislation were somewhat obscure. The idea was first suggested by the conservationist Joseph W. Penfold of the Izaak Walton League of America. Penfold and an assistant chief of the Forest Service, Edward C. Crafts, drafted the first versions of the recreation legislation and soon attracted the backing of Brower and the Sierra Club. The precedent of Mission 66 helped inspire the ORRRC proposal, but from the beginning it described an alternative vision and implied a criticism of Wirth and his agency. Many government officials and private conservationists saw the professional culture of the Park Service as inimical to the spirit of interagency cooperation that they hoped the ORRRC would achieve. As the agency with the most to lose, the Park Service took exception to the entire ORRRC effort, reinforcing the impression that it would neither share authority nor cooperate in a multi-agency endeavour. The ORRRC legislation gathered broad support in Congress, however, thanks to the inclusive process it described, as well as the recognized economic and social importance of outdoor recreation to a variety of interests all over the country. Some of the legislators interested in the bill also backed wilderness legislation as a complementary measure. For a period “wilderness” and “recreation” bills—both opposed by the Park Service—were being considered in Congress simultaneously. Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall (Colorado), who chaired the House Public Lands Committee, and Senator Joseph C. O’Mahoney (Wyoming) endorsed the recreation plan. In the fall of 1957 Eisenhower sent a special message to Congress supporting it. According to historian Robin W. Winks, Nelson A. Rockefeller (Laurance’s brother) also lobbied at a crucial point, convincing House Speaker Sam Rayburn to move the legislation forward quickly, with little debate. Eisenhower signed the bill in June 1958.525

The ORRRC consisted of eight designated members of Congress and seven outside experts in recreation. The latter were appointed by Eisenhower, who also named

the commission chairman. A large and inclusive advisory council brought in representatives from federal, state, and local governments, business interests, and conservation groups. The new commission was empowered to survey all the nation’s “nonurban” recreational resources (those not associated with municipal park systems), and to assess what the nation’s recreational needs would be for the remainder of the twentieth century. The commission was then to “determine what policies and programs should be recommended to assure that the needs of the present and the future” were met. Appointments were made, staff was hired, and the commission got to work early in 1959. Special research studies—on wilderness, on hunting and fishing, on “metropolitan areas,” and many others—were commissioned. The Census Bureau conducted a national survey of public activities and preferences. The scope of the undertaking was impressive, and the open meetings and broad partnership of federal, state, public, and private interests contrasted with the way Mission 66 had been planned four years earlier. Charged with making their report and then disbanding by January 1962, the ORRRC had funding, a legislative mandate, and broad support.526 A new era of federal conservation and recreational planning had been set in motion, but not by the Park Service. In fact, as inclusive as the ORRRC was, it all but excluded the Park Service from participation. The backers of the legislation made sure that Wirth and his staff, regardless of their experience in park planning, would not be in a position to control the commission’s process, activities, or recommendations.

Wirth’s one consolation, he thought, was that Laurance Rockefeller was appointed commission chairman. Rockefeller’s long association with the Park Service and close friendship with Albright, Wirth, and other officials made him a member of the “family.” By the 1950s Laurance had assumed his father’s interest in conservation issues, beginning with the planning and development of the Jackson Lake Lodge and other developments at Grand Tetons. In 1956 he gave the federal government over 5,000 acres on the island of St. John to create Virgin Islands National Park, which was dedicated that December.527 The national park surrounded Rockefeller’s newly opened hotel and resort complex, Caneel Bay, in which he anticipated the low impact, nature oriented experience later

---


527 Rockefeller initially contacted Wirth regarding the creation of Virgin Islands National Park in 1955, after seeing a park proposal for the areas prepared by the Park Service in 1939. His interest in Caneel Bay (cont.)
described as “eco-tourism.” Although the new Virgin Islands park had been planned independently of Mission 66, it greatly boosted the program during its first year. Rockefeller also financed other projects and publications for the Park Service, many through his family’s non-profit organization, Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., of which he was president. His appointment to lead the ORRRC (which apparently had been suggested by Albright) solved a sensitive problem. The Park Service had decades of recreational planning data and surveys that the ORRRC would need to consult and use. Rockefeller’s appointment helped assure that Wirth would cooperate with the ORRRC and share his agency’s information and expertise, even as he was left out of the process. “An earlier recreational study program, started by the National Park Service in 1936...and accelerated under the Mission 66 program,” Wirth reported in 1959, was now “tied in closely” with the ORRRC.

15.2 “PARKS FOR AMERICA”

Wirth hoped the Park Service could act as a consultant to the ORRRC, as it had in the 1930s for the National Resources Planning Board, producing the data and analysis for the acquisition of proposed national seashores, recreation areas, historical parks, and state parks. Above all he did not want to surrender his agency’s responsibility to plan for the expansion of the national park system itself. So while his staff cooperated with the ORRRC, Wirth began to envision changes to Mission 66 that would improve the program’s image, certainly, but that also would make it a better fit with the priorities being set by the new commission. In 1959 Wirth initiated a revision of Mission 66. “As we enter a year of study and reappraisal of our MISSION 66 status,” he wrote to his staff, “...certain changes of staffing and handling of the effort must be made. We will be in another period in which the efforts and best ideas of the whole Service ‘family’ will be required.” At a staff meeting in Washington in February of 1960, Wirth announced that the agency faced the task of “re-analyzing our entire MISSION 66 program to revitalize it.” The director tried to conjure up the urgency of the first meetings, held almost exactly five years earlier in the same room. He wanted to repeat the original Mission 66 planning process, on a reduced scale, in order to come up with a renewed vision in time to be

---

as the site of his resort development, however, was what had originally brought him to the area. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 52-53.

unveiled to the public at the next Park Service conference, scheduled for April 1961 at Grand Canyon. The revised Mission 66 program would be presented to a new administration (Eisenhower could not run for reelection), but still nine months before the ORRRC presented its final report. Whether he was dealing with Republicans or Democrats, he said, he wanted a renewed Mission 66 “locked” and “ready to roll.” Some things, however, had not changed. “There is to be no publicity,” the director warned, everything was “to be kept in the ‘family.’” The revision of Mission 66, like the original, was to be planned by his staff behind closed doors and then dramatically sprung on the public and press.  

As his reappraisal proceeded, Wirth repeatedly stated his commitment to contribute to the work of the ORRRC. The recreation commission promised to usher in an array of federal legislation that had eluded Wirth for years, including measures to fund the direct acquisition of new federal park land and to provide grants-in-aid to state park systems. If the ORRRC threatened his agency’s bureaucratic position, it also promised the achievement of legislative goals that Wirth had long wanted to make part of Mission 66. But since the Park Service did not directly participate in the ORRRC, Wirth had little opportunity to shape the recommendations it would make. He therefore created his own commission, of sorts, intended to support and help implement the ORRRC’s proposals, but also to upstage the commission’s final report. To do this, he drew on an extensive network of municipal, state, and federal park officials, most of whom had worked together on New Deal park programs. In the winter of 1956, Wirth later recalled, a group of these colleagues had already formed what they called the “Committee of Fifteen.” Made up of five members from each level of government, they discussed the coordination of recreational plans and possible means of renewing federal grants for state parks. Wirth characterized the committee as a continuation of an informal “discussion group” begun in the 1930s among agencies and individuals involved in the administration of the CCC. Whatever its origins, Wirth’s network of state and municipal park executives suddenly became very active in 1959, as they became aware that the ORRRC would make...  

529 “Excerpts from Director’s Staff Meeting Minutes, Feb. 11, 1960,” typescript; “Meeting February 10, 1960, Concerning Re-Study of the National Park System and Re-Evaluation of MISSION 66,” typescript (Box A8213, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center); “Meeting February 10, 1960, Concerning Re-Study of the National Park System and Re-Evaluation of MISSION 66,” typescript (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).  

530 “An Analysis of the MISSION 66 Program Made by C. L. Wirth at a Meeting at the Grand Canyon in 1961,” May 27, 1974 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Wirth, Parks, Politics, and the People, 281.
recommendations directly affecting them. In August 1960, at Secretary of the Interior Seaton's invitation, officials from the American Institute of Park Executives and the National Conference on State Parks were asked to join the Park Service to initiate a new park planning organization. Under the combined aegis of the three groups representing three levels of government, the initiative was named "PARKS FOR AMERICA."\textsuperscript{531}

Wirth insisted that Parks for America would "neither conflict nor duplicate" the ORRRC, but be an effective partner advocating legislation that would fund new federal and state parks. The ORRRC itself did not intend to make specific recommendations for land acquisitions; Wirth and his municipal and state partners, however, had a huge backlog of specific proposals waiting to be implemented. "Approximately 40 bills were introduced in the last Congress, to authorize the acquisition of national seashores...[and] state seashore areas as identified in the seashore survey reports," the Committee of Fifteen wrote. "None of these were enacted." Congress up to that point had never funded the direct acquisition of land for new national parks, and Parks for America welcomed the prospect that the ORRRC might change this attitude. But they also felt they already had their own plans for park system expansions, and so did not need advice as much as political support. Wirth and Benjamin H. Thompson, Park Service director of land planning, stressed that their agency had compiled "seashore reports and other data" since the 1930s and had continued these efforts through river basin studies in the 1940s. These surveys of recreational needs and opportunities had been elaborated under Mission 66 and now could "provide the basis for an immediate acquisition program" for national and state parks. Parks for America could begin its public relations campaign immediately; there was no need to wait for the ORRRC to publish its final report. Wirth even wanted another event "somewhat similar to the Pioneer Dinner" to kick off the legislative campaign to fund an unprecedented wave of direct federal acquisition of national parkland and grants-in-aid to states for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{532}

In December 1960, as the transition to the Kennedy administration was underway, Parks & Recreation magazine published an article describing Parks for America and the Committee of Fifteen met in Washington to further their plans. Knowing that Kennedy and Udall strongly supported the ORRRC and the proposals expected to come from it,

\textsuperscript{531} "Parks for America, Organizational Meeting," October 31, 1960, minutes, (Box 22, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
\textsuperscript{532} "Parks of the Future (Discussion Paper), October 31, 1960 (National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center); "Parks for America, Organizational Meeting," October 31, 1960, minutes, (Box 22, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
Wirth told the group that they had “the real opportunity of the century now.” Parks for America would seek “a new vitality in park land acquisition programs” and the new administration would help them realize their goals in Congress. Early in 1961 the group met with Udall, “who expressed his approval of the aims and objectives of the PARKS FOR AMERICA program.” The executive director of the ORRRC, Francis W. Sargent, attended the March meeting of the Committee of Fifteen, and told the group he considered them a “working unit” of the recreation commission. Wirth and Thompson were ready to give Sargent specific numbers for necessary state and local park system land acquisition: by 1970 the federal government should acquire over 9.6 million acres for state and local parks at a cost of $6.3 billion. By putting these numbers forward in 1961, Parks for America helped assure that the ORRRC would not fail make ambitious proposals for federally funded state and local park expansion.533

Parks for America was meant to complement, implement, and perhaps upstage the ORRRC. If some of the municipal, state, and national park executives that made up the campaign were threatened by the new recreation commission, they also intended to assure that they were not left out of federal spending programs that might result from it. On the national park side, Wirth used his plans for a revised Mission 66 to similar ends. Early in 1960 he built up anticipation for the “second stage of MISSION 66” that was to be “launched” at the Park Service conference at Grand Canyon in 1961. The new Mission 66 would increasingly emphasize land acquisition: the first two priorities of the program, as they were being drafted at the beginning of 1960, were “new areas” and the “expansion of the system.” Wirth began suggesting that construction had proceeded so well in the first half of Mission 66 that new priorities could now be addressed. By 1960 the agency was “over the hump, or at least 85% complete, in the repairs, reconstruction, [and] replacement of facilities.” The second half of Mission 66 would emphasize acquisition and expansion of parks in anticipation of new legislation made possible by the ORRRC. Wirth also anticipated other potential ORRRC recommendations, for example by experimenting with the idea that separate national park and national recreation systems should be defined, each with their own management policies.534 Wirth worked hard to show the incoming administration that he could adapt his agency, and Mission 66, to

533 “PARKS FOR AMERICA, The Committee of Fifteen, Minutes of December 5, 1960 Meeting, Washington, DC,” (Box 22, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); “Parks For America,” Parks & Recreation 43, no. 12 (December 1960): 528-29, 541-43.  
changing times. In the briefing paper he prepared for Udall at the end of 1960, he summarized some of the revised priorities being prepared for presentation at the Grand Canyon conference that spring. “Rounding out the national park system” was the first priority, and he listed over fifteen national seashore, national recreation area, and national historical park proposals for which legislation was already prepared.535

Wirth was not yet sixty-two and had already served as director for one Democratic and two Republican administrations. It was a testament to the perceived stature of the Park Service’s professional tradition, and to Wirth’s personal reputation, that Kennedy and Udall apparently did not consider replacing him in 1961. Although the ORRRC threatened the Park Service’s position in the federal government, the Parks for America campaign demonstrated the strength and support of Wirth’s network of state and local park commissions and executives. Mission 66 construction had incited controversy over the previous five years, but in its “second stage” the program promised to be more in harmony with New Conservation. Wirth was careful to show full support for the ORRRC, which Kennedy and Udall strongly supported, but he also protected his agency’s bureaucratic position. At least for the time being, Wirth and Mission 66 seemed to successfully transition to become part of the new spirit at the Department of the Interior.

But the strong image of Mission 66 cut both ways. Negative publicity about Mission 66—and therefore about the Park Service itself, which was now completely identified with the program—surged in the popular press just as the new administration was arriving. In 1961 The Atlantic magazine dedicated most of its February issue to withering critiques of Park Service policy. The timing of the issue was damaging, as was its content. In a long letter to Udall, Wirth tried to mitigate the impact of the bad publicity. He acknowledged that Paul Brooks, who wrote on “The Pressure of Numbers,” was right: “We wholeheartedly endorse what Mr. Brooks has to say....Overdevelopment and more roads is not the answer. The pressures of numbers can only be relieved by the establishment of additional park and recreation areas on all levels.” On the other hand, Wirth rejected Devereux Butcher’s claim that “to popularize the national parks is to cheapen them and reduce them to the level of ordinary playgrounds.” Wirth pointed out that “the parks belong to the people and the people are determined to visit them....

535 “A Brief on the National Park System and the National Park Service prepared for Secretary Stewart L. Udall,” December 15, 1960 (Box 27, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); “An Analysis of the MISSION 66 Program Made by C. L. Wirth at a Meeting at the Grand Canyon in 1961,’ May 27, 1974 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
people cannot be unreasonably restricted or excluded from the parks and the parks must provide for them." The litany of defensive responses was familiar: few new roads (as opposed to road improvements) had been built; the basic footprint of development in the parks had not changed much (arguably) since the 1920s; Mission 66 development was more efficient and therefore had allowed the restoration of older, more destructive developed areas to "natural" conditions; the parks could not be "insulated" from their public, who had a right to visit them.536

Udall’s letter back to Wirth became the basis of an article the secretary published that summer, also in The Atlantic. The secretary defended Mission 66, but he also clarified that "a new administration [had] come to power" and that it was an "opportune moment to review the scope of the program and assess its work." Udall’s strategy was to write off certain experiences—such as Tioga Road—as "mistakes" that would not be repeated. A modernist, ramped observation tower at Clingman’s Dome in Great Smoky Mountains (similar to the Shark Valley observation tower in Everglades) was another "mistake" that was now often cited as an example of inappropriate architectural design in the parks. Other errors, such as the Flamingo motel in Everglades, had been forced on the Park Service. Some unfortunate situations, such as the amount of development on the south rim of the Grand Canyon, resulted from historical patterns over which the agency could have only limited control. "When you view the many Mission 66 projects in perspective," the new secretary observed, "it is amazing that so few egregious errors have been committed."537

15.3 Mission 66 “Frontiers”

This fair minded defence of the Park Service was possible because Udall had already secured the reorientation of Mission 66 along lines consistent with his goals. His confidence resulted from the "launch" of the "second stage" of Mission 66 at Grand Canyon that April. Named the "Mission 66 Frontiers Conference," the event was described as a "reappraisal"; but it really served to unveil the previous year of work reinventing Mission 66 that Wirth, Carnes, and the rest of the Park Service staff (in this


537 Stewart L. Udall to Conrad L. Wirth, March 20, 1961 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Stewart L. Udall, "National Parks for the Future," The Atlantic 207, no. 6 (June 1961): 81-84.

326
case mostly in Washington) had already prepared. The event marked a change in tone, and to some degree a reconciliation between the Park Service and the larger conservation community. Conservation organizations were ready, in some cases, to temper their criticisms. The National Parks Association officials, for example, now insisted that they had “concurred from the beginning on the importance of making reasonable provision for the great increase in the number of visitors.” They had fairly condemned “excesses” such as Tioga Road and “inappropriate architecture” such as the Clingman’s Dome observation tower. But Mission 66 was nevertheless “a grand idea,” especially now that they anticipated that the “balance” was to be shifted to increased funding for management, protection, and research.538

The Park Service strategy at the Frontiers Conference was to stress how well Mission 66 design and construction had proceeded, while at the same time acknowledging that priorities were being changed. In his opening address, Wirth insisted that Mission 66 was a “good and sound” success, but that he and his staff “did not plan it big enough!” (emphasis in original). The real opportunity was now before them, and the urgency was greater than ever. He quoted Kennedy and Udall and picked up the tone of emerging environmentalist rhetoric: “Unless the American people can act quickly, they and future generations will lose forever the opportunity to save a few remaining remnants of the natural shoreline, vast wilderness areas of scenic beauty, and simple open spaces for men to enjoy.” As for interagency cooperation, the national parks could “never again be islands standing isolated and lofty.” Their fate was linked to the management of other public and private recreational areas, and his agency was ready “in its thinking, planning, and actions” to “stand shoulder to shoulder” with other land management agencies, as well as conservation organizations of all types. Wirth described how Parks for America would advocate a “broad national plan for parks and recreation areas and an acquisition plan covering all levels of government which would incorporate the forthcoming recommendations of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission.” The Park Service “share of the program” would “probably call for as many as 25 new national parks...and a sizable number of new recreational areas.” Mission 66 was still the “long-range program it was before,” but its scope was being “widened greatly to meet the needs of rapidly changing times.” The “first part” of the job, addressing the “shameful physical facilities in the parks,” was well underway and would continue. But the new emphasis

would be on hiring and training staff for those facilities, on improving “protection and management” of parks, and above all on vastly expanding the federal park and recreation system. “I do not believe the climate has ever been better for the fulfilment of the National Park idea than it is right now,” the director concluded. The new administration had indicated the great urgency it placed on conservation and recreation issues, and beyond that “everyplace you go throughout the country, people are talking about the protection of our natural resources.” There was a strong feeling among the public that it was “absolutely necessary for the advancement of a free society...to appreciate and know what this earth of ours means to us.”

Eivend Scoyen gave the “oldtimer’s” perspective at the Frontiers Conference, which was probably appreciated considering that many of those present had been with the Park Service thirty years themselves. Lon Garrison attended the conference but did not make a presentation. Thomas Vint, who retired that November, did not attend. William Carnes, still the head of the Mission 66 working staff in Washington, had assumed most of the responsibility for the reappraisal and reorientation of the program in its second half. Wirth described Carnes as “the guiding factor...Mr. Mission 66 himself.” Carnes’s talk, however, was mainly a historical summary of public park ideology. Wirth himself concluded the conference by giving the clearest indication of what the revised priorities of Mission 66 would now be. In the excitement of the hour, exact figures seem to vary somewhat, but they got across the idea: at least ten seashore areas, forty to fifty historical areas, fifteen recreation areas, and fifteen national parks all were to be added to the system. The partnership with Parks for America would be instrumental in getting the necessary legislation passed. In addition, the director wanted at least $1 million a year for

---


540 Carnes quoted from Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmsted, and many other early park advocates whom he believed were “far more liberal in their outlook than many of their latter day disciples might realize. They believed in public parks for the benefit of the whole people.” He reminded the group that these ideas were the foundation of Mission 66, for which three “basic considerations” had evolved: “preservation of park resources”; “substantial and appropriate use of the National Park System”; and “adequate and appropriate developments” that made it possible to use, without impairing, parks. He spoke again of the “renaissance” of traditional public park values that he hoped Mission 66 had sparked. “Report of the National Park Service Mission 66 Frontiers Conference, Grand Canyon National park, April 24-28, 1961,” transcribed tape recording, (AC# 2886, National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).
“research,” increased funds for hiring and training staff, and a complete “revamp” of publications and interpretive displays.541

Secretary of the Interior Udall attended the Grand Canyon conference and described an inspiring vision of his conservation priorities. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations, he noted, had managed to add only 92,000 acres to the national park system; the Kennedy administration would reverse this dismal record and emulate the records of Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. Mission 66 had a remarkable record of achievement, but it had also “brought into sharp focus what we call the quiet crisis that confronts our nation today. The need to set aside—before it is gone—open spaces to meet the recreational needs of the future....What we save now may be all that is saved.” At the Frontiers Conference, and then in his article for The Atlantic, Udall urged all parties to move on, put aside resentment and rivalries, and join in a historic effort to expand all types of landscape reservations at a critical moment in American history.542

Following the reappraisal and the Frontiers Conference, the Washington and regional offices of the Park Service began a reorganization. In the Washington office, Vint and Scoyen both retired by the end of the year. Vint’s position was raised to the level of assistant director, and he was replaced not by an architect or engineer, but by an administrator, Clark Stratton. Separate divisions of construction and master planning were added, parallel to landscape architecture, architecture, and engineering. Scoyen’s replacement as associate director (just below director on the organizational chart) was seen at this point as a potential successor to Wirth. For the next year, however, that position remained vacant. Garrison, who might have been a logical choice for the post, had been somewhat distanced from events in Washington and had not played a role in Parks for America or the Mission 66 reappraisal. He remained superintendent of Yellowstone until 1963, when he became a regional director in Omaha, and later in Philadelphia.543 Carnes, who had been so instrumental on the Mission 66 working staff since 1955, left in 1962 to take a position with the landscape architecture faculty at the

543 Tolson, Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials, 9, 21; Olsen, Organizational Structures of the National Park Service, 83.
Regional directors started to regain some of the authority that they had lost under the 1954 reorganization, and to an even greater degree under Mission 66. Plans for concession developments, as well as site plans and working drawings for other projects, could be approved in the regional offices after 1961.

The Park Service personnel changes occurring at the beginning of the Kennedy administration probably had more to do with timing than politics. The New Deal generation was reaching retirement age just as New Conservation arrived. But the Park Service was also adapting, Wirth hoped, to accommodate the vision of the new secretary of the interior and the upcoming recommendations of ORRRC’s final report. But there were further changes in order. The ORRRC embodied a new approach not only to park planning, but to government itself. Rockefeller had a capable executive director of the ORRRC, Francis W. Sargent, who had trained as an architect at M.I.T. and who later went on to become governor of Massachusetts. Sargent directed partnerships, public meetings, extensive use of outside researchers and consultants, and in general a planning process unlike anything occurring at the Park Service. The ORRRC’s report described a “national outdoor recreation policy” that relied on extensive collaboration between local and state governments and among federal agencies to acquire (or otherwise preserve) large areas for outdoor recreation. Even the vocabulary used in the report indicated a new generation of thinking about recreation on public lands. “Outdoor recreation resources” were divided into six categories, including “high-density recreation areas,” “natural environment areas,” “unique natural areas,” and “historic and cultural sites.” The commissioners anticipated that “outdoor recreation activity” would “triple by the year 2000” (emphasis in original). The extensive data on this “demand” was broken down into types of recreation and analyzed in relationship to demographic trends and patterns of urbanization. The “supply” was analyzed in terms not of acres, but of “effective acres” that were accessible and appropriate for the kinds of recreation the public was seeking. Recreation needed to be more available near “metropolitan areas,” the commissioners determined, where “the typical subdivision of postwar suburbia” had “squared the recreation potentials” with houses “splattered...all over the countryside.” Suggestions for “cluster development,” therefore, were also part of how to effectively plan for outdoor

544 Conrad L. Wirth to William G. Carnes, July 20, 1962 (Box 24, Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives).
545 Master plans and plans for historic structures were still reviewed in Washington. “Interview with A. Clark Stratton,” March 1, 1962, conducted by S. Herbert Evison, transcript, p. 22, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).
recreation, and local governments should be encouraged to use their zoning powers as part of the solution. The ORRRC recommended not just major programs of land acquisition, but new ways of thinking about how federal and state governments should manage and pay for “recreation resources.” They recommended that land management agencies “adopt a system of user fees designed to recapture a significant portion of the operation and maintenance costs.” Congress should also enact a major federal grants-in-aid program for state park acquisition.546

15.4 The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

The ORRRC ushered in a new era of how state and federal governments considered the general issues of conservation and recreation. The commission’s recommendations led to a new federal emphasis on recreation in “metropolitan areas,” where the people were but the “effective acres” of recreation opportunity were not. The ORRRC urged spreading out recreational use on a wider variety of public lands. Above all, the proposed policies and initiatives the ORRRC described implied Congress should pass a variety of measures to address the situation. Considering the legislation that followed in the 1960s, the ORRRC must be seen as one of the most effective congressional commissions ever convened.

The new framework for conservation and recreational planning the ORRRC described, however, largely excluded the Park Service. In fact, one of its major recommendations was the creation of a new federal agency, the Bureau of Recreation, which would assume the responsibilities for national recreational planning that Congress had conferred on the Park Service in 1936. Udall, despite his early support of Wirth and Mission 66, did not even wait for Congress to act on the recommendation. Through an administrative order, he established the Bureau of Recreation (BOR) in April 1962, with the co-drafter of the ORRRC legislation, Edward Crafts, as its director. Adding insult to injury, Crafts was a Forest Service employee; most of the new agency’s personnel, however, along with most of its first year’s operating budget, were transferred from the Park Service. Many experienced Washington office landscape architects and planners, in particular, were transferred to the BOR.547

The creation of the BOR obviously was a huge blow to Wirth, personally, and one from which he would not recover, professionally. Rockefeller remained part of the "family," but he had demonstrated that his family's alliance with the Park Service, if not at an end, only went so far. The creation of the BOR further transformed how the Park Service and Mission 66 operated in the new decade. Wirth's subsequent inability to fully embrace the BOR, more than any other factor, caused Udall to lose confidence in him. The creation of the BOR represented a huge policy initiative at the Department of the Interior, and Wirth's lack of cooperation and continued hostility towards the new agency could only be interpreted as counterproductive disloyalty. The stakes were high for Udall. When Congress passed the 1963 Outdoor Recreation Act authorizing the Department of the Interior to continue the planning and surveys of the ORRRC, the secretary assigned these responsibilities to the BOR. The still tiny agency now "coordinated" planning among more than twenty federal agencies and various state and local organizations. Although it had no land management responsibilities, the BOR would have significant influence over where and how new national and state parks were created once the means of funding such acquisitions was established. This potential came to fruition in 1964 when Congress passed the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act, which authorized grants to federal agencies for the acquisition and development of new parks and recreation areas. The act also authorized grants-in-aid to the states (on a fifty-fifty matching basis) for the same purpose. The funds were to be supplied through a national system of park "user fees," the sale of surplus federal property, and federal gasoline taxes. Under a later amendment, revenues from offshore oil drilling were added for a total authorization of up to $200 million annually. The LWCF finally created a dedicated fund—alogous to the "trust fund" that financed Interstate Highway construction—for the acquisition of new national and state parks. The act was an unprecedented commitment to directly acquire property for a massive expansion of federal and state park systems. Congress and Udall had not made the program part of Mission 66, however, nor even of the Park Service.548

The LWCF was also unprecedented in the new role it described for user fees to cover the cost of acquiring and developing park and recreation areas. From 1918 until 1965 (when the LWCF became effective), the national park system had been supported entirely through "general treasury" funds. Park funding came from the taxation of the

---

548 Fitch and Shanklin, *The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation*, 86-89. For the text of the LWCF Act, see (cont.)
general public, in other words, not through fees paid by users or through any other income (such as concession fees) generated in the parks. In many parks the public paid a fee at an entrance station, but technically these charges were for permits to allow tourists to use their cars in the parks, not an admission fee. In any case, beginning in 1918 these permit fees went, like concession revenue, directly into the general treasury. Annual park appropriations therefore had no direct relationship to income generated in the parks. But this philosophy began to change by 1953 when Congress increased the automobile permit fees, which the legislators now referred to simply as “entrance fees.”

By that time other observers, such as the park historian John Ise, felt that the “entrance fees” should be raised further. Ise observed that there were too many visitors in the parks anyway, and “too many particularly who do not really care much for what they see.” Higher charges for admission might help weed out those who, as Harold Bradley put it, were not willing to “pay the price” and were better off elsewhere. But with the creation of the LWCF in 1965, a system of true “user fees” for federal public lands created an alternative source of funding, set aside in a fund earmarked for the purpose of supporting outdoor recreation. Funding parks through general taxation had been justified by the assertion that a national park system was necessary for the health and welfare of the American public as a whole.

The ORRRC, and the legislation that followed it, defined a watershed in the history of American parks and in the institutional history of the Park Service. Wirth was severely disappointed but could hardly have been surprised by the ORRRC’s recommendations. Shortly after the publication of the commission’s final report, he wrote his old friend Laurance Rockefeller to congratulate him, but also to express regret that the Park Service would lose the national planning functions that had been the basis of the director’s career since 1931. He tried to convince Rockefeller that he agreed with the ORRRC’s suggestions: “We are all more interested in an adequate and sound park and recreation program...than we are in building up our own little organizations, so if this is

---


550 By 1959 park entrance fees equalled only 6% of the agency’s appropriated budget. Ise, Our National Park Policy, 625.
the way to do it let’s all join together and put it across.”

Despite such attempted reassurances, however, he did not give the new agency the cooperation and support it needed. Within months Udall was soon considering who should replace Wirth as director. After an encouraging start with the Kennedy administration in 1961, by the end of 1962 Wirth was planning his retirement.

### 15.5 Park Science and the Leopold Report

The ORRRC report and the creation of the BOR were not the only instigators of change in the early 1960s. The advocacy for a federal system of designated wilderness, the maturing science of ecology, and the political movement of environmentalism all combined to shape New Conservation at the Department of the Interior. The Wilderness Act, after a long and fitful legislative history that had begun in 1956, was finally signed by Johnson in September 1964. The act allowed the eventual designation of many national park backcountry areas as official wilderness, assuring that they would remain roadless and completely undeveloped. But the act did more than provide another level of protection for wild places; it set down a new landscape ideal and new purposes for landscape preservation. Official “wilderness areas” set aside out of federal lands were not justified in Olmstedian terms, for the benefit of public enjoyment. They qualified as wilderness specifically because they were inaccessible to the public, and Congress designated them to assure their continued inaccessibility. Wilderness was an ideal of an “untrammelled” and “primeval” landscape, with little or no trace of human history or presence. Although large national parks, especially in the West, had always been (and continued to be) the icons of wilderness for the American public, they had in fact represented a very different kind of landscape reservation. Wilderness designation did not involve park making, it prohibited it. Wilderness areas were designated for their own sake, as primarily biological reserves, not necessarily for the sake of the public. Wilderness preserves were described by advocates (as parks had been) as necessary for a healthy society; but the social functionality of wilderness did not entail tourism or enjoyment. Its value to society was the benefit of its intrinsic biological integrity, and that integrity was understood in scientific, not visual (or scenic) terms.

---

551 Conrad L. Wirth to Laurance S. Rockefeller, February 5, 1962 (Box 24, Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives).

552 For the text of the act, see Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System*, 277-286.
The ideas inherent in the Wilderness Act reflected the maturing scientific discipline of ecology and its increased influence among scientists, policy makers, and preservation advocates. An awareness of the biological importance of national parks had been building since the 1930s and grew further in the postwar era. But Mission 66 had never included a significant scientific research component, at least in part because Congress would probably not have funded one. Nevertheless by the late 1950s prominent scientists and others argued that the Park Service had failed to exploit a historic opportunity to at least try to convince Congress to fund more scientific research in the parks.\(^5\) By the early 1960s, the lack of reliable information on wildlife populations—and the resulting lack of consistent wildlife policies—resulted in public outrage and more bad publicity for the Park Service. In Yellowstone, for example, biologists had long supported culling the park’s elk herd, since without “direct reductions” the population would grow beyond the “carrying capacity” of the park’s northern range. Public hunting was advocated by local sportsmen and elected officials, but was resisted by Garrison and others who did not want to establish such a precedent in a national park. Trapping and transporting the animals proved to be inefficient. With the elk growing to what scientists believed to be unsustainable numbers in the winter of 1961, Garrison order his rangers to shoot over 4,000 of the animals. Park and conservation advocates all over the country were enraged over what seemed to be a brutal and senseless action. Garrison, Wirth, and Udall were drawn into a national debate over whether and how elk should be hunted or otherwise reduced in Yellowstone.\(^6\)

Although Garrison had acted on the advice of scientists, the incident made clear the degree to which the Park Service was trying to manage wildlife with little or no program of consistent scientific research upon which to base decisions. Although Mission 66 planning documents had acknowledged the need for such a program, it had remained almost completely unfunded. Following the Yellowstone elk incident, however, Howard Stagner (now chief of the Branch of Natural History) made a report on the overall condition of “wildlife management in national parks.” Stagner outlined many of the ecological subjects that needed better and more scientific research if park managers were to make the best decisions. He also clarified key wildlife policies, including the


\(^{554}\) Pritchard, Preserving Yellowstone’s Natural Conditions, 201-205; Sellars, Preserving Nature in the National Parks, 198-199.
prohibition of public hunting, the protection of predators, the elimination of exotic species, the reintroduction of extirpated species, and the shooting of "hoofed animals" (by rangers) to lower their numbers below the carrying capacity of range lands. Following Stagner's report—and the damaging controversy over the Yellowstone elk—Udall initiated a broad and deep review of the entire subject of scientific research and wildlife management policies in the national parks. He asked the National Academy of Sciences to review the state of the Park Service's research activities and needs. Chaired by biologist William J. Robbins, the academy's committee reported in 1963 that "research by the National Park Service...lacked continuity, coordination, and depth." What was more, they were unconvinced that "the policies of the National Park Service have been such that the potential contribution of research and a research staff...[was] recognized and appreciated." The report sounded an unprecedented note of severe criticism of the Park Service by a respected outside organization.

At the same time Robbins and his committee were assessing the lack of effective Park Service scientific research, another group appointed by Udall was analyzing the agency's wildlife management policies. Headed by the biologist A. Starker Leopold (the son of Aldo Leopold), this committee also made its report in 1963. The Leopold Report took on a life of its own, reprinted by conservation organizations and read and admired extensively. The report acknowledged that most national parks had been through "periods of indiscriminate logging, burning, livestock grazing, hunting and predator control." After becoming parks, they then "shifted abruptly to a regime of equally unnatural protection from lightning fires, from insect outbreaks, absence from natural control of ungulates" (including elk), and other side effects of preservation. Parks therefore did not represent "primitive America." But "restoring the primitive scene," if impossible to do completely, should be the objective of park management. Literate and persuasive, for many readers the Leopold Report crystallized a new vision of a national park ideal: "The goal of managing the national parks and monuments should be to preserve, or where necessary to recreate, the ecologic scene as viewed by the first European visitors." National parks should "represent a vignette of primitive America." The basis for preserving and restoring ecosystems obviously needed to be scientific, not visual or scenic. "Mass recreation facilities" were also "incongruous" with this goal, and Leopold urged the Park Service to "reverse its policy of permitting these non-conforming

uses, and to liquidate them as soon as possible (painful as this will be to concessionaires).”

If detached from the political complexities of national park management, Leopold captured a vital and idealistic expression of preservation philosophy that had eluded Wirth and his staff at the time. Historian Richard West Sellars, in his authoritative history of natural resource management in the national parks, describes the Robbins and Leopold reports together as a “kind of ecological countermanifesto that marked the beginning of renewed efforts to redefine the basic purpose of the national parks.” Sellars notes that Mission 66 was “the culmination of the vision of Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, who had sought to develop the parks and make them accessible for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. The program was the high point of what might be termed the ‘landscape architecture approach.’” But after the scientific research reports of 1963, the Park Service entered “a new era, in which park management would be judged far more on ecological criteria.”

Ecological science of course did not immediately receive the funding and bureaucratic power that Robbins, Leopold, and others advocated. But the cumulative effects of their reports, with the ORRRC report, the creation of the BOR, the establishment of the LWCF, and the signing of the Wilderness Act permanently changed the political and ideological context in which the Park Service operated. Neither the director nor any other Park Service official would ever again set the national conservation agenda to the degree that Wirth had attempted through Mission 66. The Mission 66 modernist park had been conceived around older assumptions about the value of parks: about the rights of the public to enjoy them, about the meaning of wilderness, about what activities constituted impairment. The new generation of park advocates had pursued and won major legislative and administrative victories that redefined those assumptions at precisely the time Mission 66 construction was reaching its climax. This circumstance inevitably coloured Mission 66 as just a “development program,” and that is exactly how Congress treated it. Mission 66 appropriations for construction (and after 1961 land acquisition) kept rising; but far more significant discussions about the future of federal outdoor recreation policy, about public land use and acquisition, and about the management of parks as ecosystems all took place outside the Park Service. The new

556 For the text of report, see Dilsaver, ed., America’s National Park System, 253-262.
557 For the text of report, see Dilsaver, ed., America’s National Park System, 237-252.
agenda and vision for national parks was being set among a diverse group of federal agencies, environmental advocates, and private partners, not just among a network of aging New Dealers. By 1963, the entire world had moved out from under Wirth, his colleagues, and Mission 66. Congress, conservation organizations, and higher level officials at the Department of the Interior would set courses of action for the Park Service to a far greater degree than they had previously. Directors of the Park Service in the future would increasingly implement, not initiate, policy.

15.6 Wirth Steps Down

With his situation deteriorating fast, Wirth reported that on August 22, 1962, “the one billionth visit to the national parks was recorded since the first visit [was recorded] in 1904.” If the trend held, the second billionth would arrive in just eleven years. Although an ominous statistic, Wirth did not seem to find it regrettable. The parks were still “opportunities to enjoy great scenic and inspirational areas of the country,” and their experiences would help visitors “better comprehend the physical and spiritual links that bind America’s past to its present and future.” In private, Wirth was even more out of step with contemporary environmentalist sentiment. “I still maintain,” he said in one interview, “that the parks are for the people and not for the animals alone.” At the end of 1962 Mission 66 construction had exceeded any previous year: 2,343 individual projects totalling $152 million.559

Wirth later insisted that his retirement was his own idea and done on his own schedule. But there is no reason to believe he wanted to retire before 1966. That year he would be over sixty-five, in his thirty-fifth year with the agency, and he could celebrate the completion of Mission 66 and the fiftieth anniversary of the Park Service as he stepped down. But less than six months after the creation of the BOR, Udall and Carver were actively considering who should be the next Park Service director. By August 1962, Udall knew who he wanted to appoint: George B. Hartzog, Jr., a Park Service concessions lawyer and former superintendent of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. Udall had met Hartzog the previous summer while visiting the proposed Ozark Rivers National Monument in Missouri. Hartzog made a positive impression, and in October 1962 Udall offered him the position of director. Hartzog suggested, however, that he be made associate director instead (filling Scoyen’s vacant position), with the understanding that
he would be promoted to replace Wirth once the director retired. This interim appointment would allow a smoother transition and would help to avoid the impression that Wirth was being forced out.  

The exact circumstances and timing of Hartzog’s selection to replace Scoyen soon became a subject of some controversy, with different individuals telling slightly different versions of the story through speeches, interviews, and later in published memoirs. In 1961, after Scoyen told Wirth he intended to retire at the end of the year, the director assembled a small group of close associates to assemble a list of “career men” with the enough experience to qualify for the job. Apparently Wirth and Udall agreed that the position should be considered an apprenticeship, and whoever was selected would succeed Wirth as director. The meeting was held in Annapolis and included, besides Wirth and himself, Thomas Vint, Ronald Lee, and Yosemite superintendent John Preston. Later, Scoyen insisted that Hartzog’s name had been the first on the list. But Wirth recalled in 1974 that the list had not even been completed until “October or November of 1962.” In any case, Wirth did not forward the “Scoyen list” of candidates to Udall until October 1962, in other words after Hartzog was offered the job and Wirth had learned of his selection. The secretary made his choice, in other words, without the director’s advice. Wirth subsequently insisted, as Scoyen did, that Hartzog had always been on the “Scoyen list.” But he gave no details of when his name had been added or why. According to Hartzog himself, the other names on the list “were much senior to me in ranks and years of service.” In fact, it seems likely that Wirth only added Hartzog to the list of acceptable candidates after he learned that Udall had already selected the young lawyer to be the next Park Service director. But no one involved wanted to admit that Hartzog had not been on the “Scoyen list” all along. In any case, by November 1962 Hartzog was definitely on the list, which Wirth then shared with Udall for the first time. In January, Hartzog accepted the position of associate director, after Wirth privately

559 Department of the Interior, 1963 Annual Report, 95, 107; “Interview with Director Wirth on November 1, 1962” (Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives).

560 George B. Hartzog, Jr., Battling for the National Parks (Mount Kisco, New York: Moyer Bell, Ltd., 1988), 71-78; “An Analysis of the MISSION 66 Program Made by C. L. Wirth at a Meeting at the Grand Canyon in 1961,” May 27, 1974 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Eivend T. Scoyen, “Remarks...Conference of Challenges,” October 18, 1963 (Box 26, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Conrad L. Wirth to Stewart L. Udall, October 18, 1963 (Personal Papers of Conrad L. Wirth, RG 79, National Archives); Author interview with George B. Hartzog, Jr. (by telephone), December 14, 2005.
assured him that he would retire following the next Park Service conference in October 1963.561

Intelligent and affable, Hartzog was a talented government lawyer with over fifteen years of experience at the Park Service, including valuable field duty as a superintendent (fig. 87). But while he would easily qualify for a career appointment to an assistant or regional director position, he probably was not Wirth’s choice to become the seventh Park Service director. Hartzog had never had been a member of the agency’s directorate, and although he supervised much of the Gateway Arch construction in St. Louis, he had no major role in Mission 66. In August of 1962, when Hartzog had asked Wirth about possibilities for career advancement, Wirth insisted no suitable promotions were available. Hartzog then resigned from the Park Service and took a private sector job in St. Louis that he had already been offered.562 For Udall and Carver, Hartzog’s resignation was another point in his favour since it proved his independence. They approached him within months of his departure about the possibility of returning to the Park Service. The surprising move required promoting Hartzog over a number of higher level candidates—Garrison, Stratton, and Beard, for example—with more experience.563

Hartzog had quickly developed, he recalls in his memoirs, “a trusting, warm, personal friendship” with Udall at their initial meeting in the Ozarks, which had been characterized by “tremendous camaraderie.” Hartzog was the same age as the secretary, and he felt they shared similar “rural small town” backgrounds. Fed up with Wirth’s failure to support the BOR, Udall and Carver decided Hartzog had the qualities they needed in a director. He was younger and would be loyal and enthusiastic about the new administration. He had enough fortitude and intelligence to stand up to Wirth, and so hopefully he would not be intimidated by Wirth’s allies, who would still be running much of the Park Service. If Hartzog certainly was a “career man,” politics also figured in his selection. Neither party affiliation nor reward for political services were directly involved, but Udall and Carver knew he was a staunch Democrat. Wirth was supported by Republicans (although he had been appointed under Truman, and like previous

561 Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 71-78; “An Analysis of the MISSION 66 Program Made by C. L. Wirth at a Meeting at the Grand Canyon in 1961,” May 27, 1974 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
562 Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 76, 79. In a 1965 interview Hartzog said that when he approached Wirth in 1962 before leaving the Park Service, Wirth told him he was “on the list” for associate director, but gave no indication that he would be chosen. Either way, Wirth made no effort to keep him from leaving the agency in 1962. (“George B. Hartzog: The National Parks, 1965,” The Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, interview by Amelia R. Fry), 10.
directors tried to remain above partisan politics). Hartzog’s limited professional experience did not fully qualify him over other, more accomplished candidates; but the young lawyer would be a formidable and energetic advocate and his views were more compatible with the Kennedy administration. These were the qualifications that mattered to Udall and Carver. Whether or not he was originally on the “Scoyen list,” however, over the next nine years Hartzog’s legislative accomplishments would make him one of the most successful directors in the history of the Park Service.

The 1963 Park Service conference, titled “Conference of Challenges,” would be Wirth’s last. Held in Yosemite Valley, it featured summaries of Mission 66 progress over the previous eight years as well as the unveiling of a major agency policy document, soon titled the “Road to the Future.” Wirth wanted to emphasize continuity at the conference, where Hartzog would be introduced to the assembled superintendents as the next director. The appearance of continuity was important, because it implied that even if Wirth was stepping down, Mission 66 had been a success and Udall approved of its basic (if modified) policies and accomplishments. If the incoming director were painted as an outsider, it would imply that Udall had completely repudiated Mission 66. Even worse, if Hartzog were not seen as a “career man,” it would imply that the position of Park Service director had become a purely political appointment, to be filled by partisans interested mainly in advancing the current administration’s agenda. Not only Wirth, but also Albright, Scoyen, and other agency supporters desperately wanted to avoid even the appearance of such a precedent. Since Mather’s day, a broad consensus about national park policy and a high esteem for the professional expertise of Park Service staff had allowed the agency to occupy a bureaucratic high ground, above the appearance of political motivations. If the position of director was always political in nature, it also had always been filled by career conservationists and administrators, not political favourites or partisans. Events of the early 1960s, however, were eroding this position. If Hartzog were perceived as less than a completely qualified professional, the position of Park Service director would begin to lose the exceptional status that made party affiliation, for

563 Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 72; 90.
564 Whatever conclusions one comes to with regard to Hartzog’s appointment, there were other aspects of Udall’s politicization of the Park Service. Until the 1960s the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments in Washington was made up of members whose appointment (made by the secretary of the interior) was approved by the Park Service director. The Advisory Board served as a means for directors to cultivate a group of influential supporters, who were usually knowledgeable or at least involved in national park affairs. But Udall made appointments to the Advisory Board without consulting the Park Service, in part to reward political supporters. Foresta, America’s National Parks, 71-74.
example, irrelevant. For his part, Udall also did not want to appear to be politicizing the Park Service.

On the first full day of the conference at Yosemite, however, the outspoken Assistant Secretary Carver quickly disrupted the anticipated scenario and revealed how much had changed at the Department of the Interior (figs. 88, 89). If he had been unrestrained at the Tioga Road dedication, he now unleashed pure invective. "The entire Park Service is resolutely shutting its eyes to the fact of the creation of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation," he charged, undoubtedly waking up some of his early morning audience. He accused the assembled superintendents and agency officials of treating the BOR as "idle conversation" that they hoped would just "go away." When all else fails, he observed, "the Park Service seems always able to fall back upon mysticism, its own private mystique." Referring to an agency job description that described a required sense of the "rightness" of National Park Service philosophy," Carver claimed the document had "the mystic, quasi-religious sound of a manual for the Hitler Youth Movement." The Park Service was a branch of government, he reminded them, "it isn't a religion and it shouldn't be thought of as such." Noting that he had been caught in a "vicious cross-fire" over Yellowstone elk policy, he praised the Leopold Report as "solid backing for a good position." But "to credit the Park Service with the Leopold Report is like crediting a collision at sea for a dramatic rescue effort—the captain of the offending ship is hardly likely to get a medal for making the rescue effort possible." 565

What was "mystique" to Carver, however, was a tradition of professionalism for many among his audience. What Carver was really attacking was the Progressive Era idea that experts could administer a federal agency detached from politics, justifying their decisions by the prestige (and perhaps the effectiveness or value) of their professional knowledge and opinions. Carver announced that the world had changed, and the Park Service would not be able to use the purported "rightness" of its professional culture to exempt it from more participatory and cooperative—and inherently political—processes, as exemplified by the ORRRC. Wilderness advocates and environmentalists could cheer this relegation of Park Service professional culture, which at the time was dominated by landscape architects and other "development" experts. In the future, however, they would find it difficult to claim a similar position of detached, unassailable expertise for their own professional group: natural scientists. The changes being made in 1963 were
brought about through the dynamic and powerful influence of environmental politics. Once the Park Service was politicized, in this sense, it would in the future be run by politicians (for example assistant secretaries of the interior) with various allegiances. Professional experts—including scientists as well as landscape architects—would never again have the same bureaucratic power once Udall and Carver discredited the notion of such “mystique” and brought the agency fully into the political arena that matched environmentalists and their opponents.

Carver wisely left the Conference of Challenges, and the park, immediately after his speech. He had not spent all his arrows, however. He was one of a few officials who knew that Udall planned to announce Wirth’s retirement at the end of the conference. While this development was hardly in doubt, the timing and nature of Wirth’s departure held great symbolic significance. Immediately upon his return to Washington, Carver met with a New York Times reporter, taking the opportunity to suggest that Wirth was being fired specifically for his resistance to the BOR and for being out of step with administration policy on scientific research. The “semi-autonomous status assumed by the Park Service” would soon come to an end, reported the Times. Officials at the Department of the Interior felt that the agency had become “‘inbred’ and so professional that it has lost sight of its obligations to the public.” Hartzog was chosen mainly because he had “closer relations with Secretary Udall.” The story appeared on October 17, the fourth day of the conference, a day before Udall was scheduled to arrive and make his address. The tactic worked; Wirth, Scoyen, Albright and others spent months, and eventually years, trying to dispel the impression that Wirth had been fired and that Hartzog had been appointed primarily because he would do what he was told.566 Scoyen, who expressed the sentiments of many at the conference, reacted to the Times account with dismay. While addressing the assembled conference the following day, he denied that Wirth “was being precipitously forced out” and that Hartzog “was being given the job because he would be more cooperative with the Secretary’s Office.” The fact that

565 John A. Carver, Jr., “Remarks...Conference of Challenges,” October 14, 1963 (Box 26, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).
566 Carver also told the reporter that the position of director “was regarded as a professional and career one” until 1953 when Eisenhower turned it into a political appointment. He was referring to the fact that in 1953 Secretary of the Interior McKay put the positions of agency director, and one assistant to the director, into “Schedule C” civil service status. This action (which Wirth resisted) allowed for these positions to become political rather than career appointments. Wirth continued to fight the increased politicization of the Park Service throughout his retirement years. William M. Blair, “Park Service Due for Big Changes,” The New York Times (October 17, 1963): 25; “An Analysis of the MISSION 66 Program Made by C. L. Wirth at a (cont.)
many people now believed exactly that was "one of the most demoralizing things that has happened to the National Park Service since it was established." Scoyen and Wirth both insisted that Hartzog had "been on the list" all along and that they fully supported him. Scoyen in particular insisted that while the secretary could never "afford to ignore entirely the political aspects of the situation" when appointing a director, he was "deeply thankful" that Udall had chosen someone "capable of handling the job." Udall himself addressed the group later that day and tried to mend fences, effusive in his praise of the outgoing Wirth and of Park Service "tradition." Wirth retired at the end of the year and Hartzog replaced him in January 1964 (fig. 90).

15.7 “The Road to the Future”

The drama at the Conference of Challenges deflected attention from the main purpose of the event: to announce the results of a study of "long range requirements" prepared by a "special task force." The "long range plan," soon known as the Road to the Future, was prepared over the previous year by a different group of Washington staff, including Hartzog, Howard B. Stricklin, William C. Everhart, and Myron D. Sutton, Charles E. Shedd, Jr., and Robert M. Sharp. When the final report was published in 1964, it did not mention Mission 66. The Road to the Future described Udall's vision for the national park system, as implemented by Hartzog. It replaced Our Heritage and the other Mission 66 publications as a summary of the agency's policies and priorities.

The most significant aspect of the new "framework for planning" was the division of the park system into three categories: "natural areas," "historical areas," and "recreational areas." A series of new "objectives" were also defined for the agency, each with a set of "goals" divided into the separate headings for each of the three park types. The first objective, "to provide for the highest quality and use of the National Park System," for example, was first described, and then followed by a list of specific goals along with suggested actions to accomplish them. Many key policy statements throughout the plan established continuity with Mission 66: "Parks are preserved for

Meeting at the Grand Canyon in 1961, May 27, 1974 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Wirth, Parks, Politics, and the People, 364-365.

Eivend T. Scoyen, "Remarks...Conference of Challenges," October 18, 1963; Stewart L. Udall, "Remarks...Conference of Challenges," October 18, 1963 (Box 26, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre).

The division of the park system into three park types was made official Park Service policy with the adoption of Hartzog's park system plan of 1972. Hartzog credited the original concept to a suggestion by (cont.)
people” and “increased use...should therefore be welcomed.” There was no need to “limit entry” in “natural areas,” since “crowding” in the parks usually only occurred in certain areas at certain times of peak demand. The document was prepared, after all, while Wirth was still director. But if Hartzog denied there were too many people in the parks, he did insist that there were too many cars, as well as too few non-automotive experiences. Hiking, walking, and bicycling would be encouraged; methods of alternative transportation from buses to monorails would be explored. “Determining park capacity” was another goal for “natural areas,” as was encouraging backcountry use through “wilderness threshold” areas that made “less primitive” wilderness areas more accessible for day hikes. “Historical areas” and “recreation areas” received their own (much briefer) sets of goals under the same general objective.569

The next general objective, “to conserve and manage for their highest purpose the natural, historical and recreational resources of the National Park System,” further illustrated both continuity with Mission 66 policy and a fresh emphasis on new ideas. Udall’s enthusiastic support for the goals set out in the Leopold Report, for example, were fully elaborated as both natural resource management policies and as a commitment to seek an expanded scientific research program. Leopold later briefly served as the agency’s chief scientist. But the role of science and scientists in the Park Service bureaucracy would continue to be limited, even with Hartzog’s support as director. As Richard Sellars documents, integrating scientific research into national park management proved almost as difficult during the environmental era as it had been previously.570

The Road to the Future adopted the ORRRC’s typology of six outdoor recreation resource types. Master planning was restructured around six “resource classifications,” including “high-density recreation areas,” “natural environment areas,” “primitive areas,” and “historic and cultural sites.” Some of these resource classifications could potentially occur in different types of parks: natural environment areas, for example could be found in the natural, historical, and recreational areas of the park system. The new language was calculated to better integrate with planning efforts at other agencies, especially the BOR. Hartzog also emphasized that the Park Service had a broader responsibility to

Robert Coates; but different versions of the idea dated back to the 1930s. Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 102.

consider the state of the “total environment” that extended beyond park boundaries. Referring to Udall’s book, The Quiet Crisis, Hartzog described the need for “park management to find ways to widen the park’s influence on its surroundings and...on the region as a whole in an ever-broadening circle of involvement....Secretary Udall’s challenge to the nation is for every citizen to be aware of this interlocking responsibility to take part in applying this land ethic—to be concerned about the land and waters, its animals and plants; the air we breathe; our total environment.” The “concept of the total environment” was “a protest against ugliness, whether...in the cities or the countryside.” It implied that park master planning should be “comprehensive land planning...on the part of all agencies and organizations, in and outside the park” who could help “reduce the impact of use upon park resources and better serve the public need.” The fourth objective of the Road to the Future specifically identified the need “to cooperate with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation” and “to participate actively with organizations of this and other nations in conserving, improving and renewing the total environment.”

But the Road to the Future also continued many basic assumptions of Mission 66 policy: “conservation through development design” guided by “master plans,” for example, would “assure balanced relationships between preservation of the park resources and visitor needs.” The third objective of the Road to the Future entailed continued expansion of the national park system. In this case Mission 66 planners had been preparing the necessary plans and legislation for years and simply continued their activities. The final two objectives of the Road to the Future referred to commitments in the areas of park interpretation and the development of professional staff, both of which had already been greatly advanced through Mission 66, and again were continued without radical redirection. Visitor centres would continue to be built, and their architectural style would continue to reflect contemporary trends in American design. The basic planning and organizational structure of the agency, at least as it had been adapted since 1959, would continue intact.571

The Road to the Future restated and revised Mission 66, however, in order to make it consistent with Udall’s New Conservation and the broader environmental movement. At least in some respects, it also marked an end to Mission 66. Although

570 Sellars describes the resistance of “traditional management culture” to scientific research at the Park Service. Sellars, Preserving Nature in the National Parks, 226-229.
Wirth’s program continued to exist until it officially drew to a close in 1966, Udall and Hartzog rarely mentioned it. With a new director and a new rhetoric of park planning in place by the end of 1964, Mission 66 existed mainly as a budgetary entity, as compilations of construction statistics, and in the memories of Wirth and his fellow Park Service “alumni.”

During his last year as director, Wirth prepared a “Progress Report” that summarized Mission 66 statistics. In part such a report was needed because the format and content of Department of the Interior annual reports changed under Udall, and now included much less specific information. But Wirth also took the opportunity to create a complete record of what Mission 66 accomplished in eight years under his direction. Twenty-seven new areas had been added to the national park system and 100 visitor centres had been built or were under construction. The two new agency training centres held particular significance for Wirth, as he looked to the professional preparation of the next generation of rangers and park staff. Other projects of particular note were the “relocations necessary to protect park features from human impact” that had taken place at Yellowstone and Yosemite, and that were underway at Mount Rainier and Mesa Verde. The list of construction accomplishments was, of course, long and impressive; few had ever cast doubt on the efficiency of Mission 66 as a design and construction program.

But Wirth now quantified the results of the agency “research program” with similar precision: “45 projects and 77 reports, and the establishment of 15 current research projects partly or wholly funded by the Service.” The Historic American Buildings Surveys (HABS), reactivated under Vint in 1957, had documented over 2,000 structures, and the reinvigorated activities of the Historic Sites Survey included plans for a sixteen volume series of thematic studies of American history and prehistory.572

Above all, as he retired Wirth emphasized the ongoing planning and acquisition program that was expanding the national park system, and which had been (and would continue to be) the emphasis of Mission 66 in its second half. Wirth insisted that Mission 66 recreational planning had been conducted “in cooperation with” the BOR. In fact Wirth had gone ahead with his expansion program without paying much attention to the fledging agency. The Park Service lost much of its most experienced planning staff—including many of its landscape architects—to the BOR, but it nevertheless completed up to 200 “comprehensive studies” of potential additions to the park system. Wirth also
reported that he and his staff had completed their own national recreational plan, which surveyed 4,800 existing and 2,800 potential “parks and related types of recreation areas” throughout the United States. “Hereafter,” the director noted dryly, “this type of planning will be the responsibility of the Bureau of Recreation.” But the recreational plan was published in 1964 as Parks for America: A Survey of Park and Related Resources in the Fifty States, and a Preliminary Plan. The 500-page inventory recalled Wirth’s 1941 recreational plan in methodology and format, and it was the last report of its type produced at the Park Service. In his foreword, Udall rather acerbically observed that the report “should prove valuable to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation” but that it did not represent that agency’s (or Udall’s) own opinions or conclusions regarding potential additions to national or state park systems. The BOR was underway with its own studies, the secretary insisted, and Parks for America was only published as the Park Service’s “last report in the field of nationwide park planning” because it had already been mostly completed at the time the BOR was established.573

The twenty-seven additions to the national park system made during the first eight years of Mission 66 included Virgin Islands National Park; Booker T. Washington and Grand Portage national monuments; Fort Davis, Fort Smith, and Sagamore Hill national historic sites; City of Refuge and Minute Man national historical parks; and Arkansas Post, Fort Clatsop, and Lincoln Boyhood national memorials. But no categories of national park expansion loomed larger in Mission 66 and Road to the Future planning than national seashores and national recreation areas. Three new national seashores, Cape Cod, Padre Island, and Point Reyes, had been created and others were underway. With Lake Mead, Glen Canyon, and Flaming Gorge national recreation areas, these parks embodied how Mission 66 expanded the range and purposes of the national park system. Mission 66 planning for national seashores and national recreation areas anticipated the work of the BOR, and even preempted it to the degree that, already by 1963, an expansive scope and vision for these park types had already been thoroughly described.

As with so much of Mission 66 planning, the origins of national seashores and national recreation areas were firmly rooted in the New Deal. In this case Wirth had been personally involved from the outset. In 1934 and 1935 his branch of land planning

conducted extensive studies of undeveloped seashore areas along the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, and later the Pacific shorelines. The result was a recommendation that twelve to fifteen areas would qualify as new national parks and another thirty would as state parks. Congress authorized only one new seashore park, however, and in 1937 Cape Hatteras National Seashore became the first of its type. But as in other cases in which Congress created new parks in areas not already in federal ownership, land acquisition lagged. Congress had never appropriated funds for the direct acquisition of private property to create a new park. Western parks had typically been set aside out of lands already in the public domain, simply by retaining them in federal ownership. But creating a new national park out of private lands required that a state government (or an individual) first acquire the land and then give it to the federal government as a gift. In the case of Cape Hatteras, the Mellon family stepped in to provide over half the cost of the needed land, with North Carolina providing the balance. The national seashore was finally established in 1953. Developed through Mission 66, the new park was dedicated in 1958.574

By the early 1950s, the limited amount of undeveloped coastline left in the United States was rapidly disappearing. The other potential national seashores identified in 1935 were all lost to private resort, second home, and residential development. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Paul Mellon also agreed to fund Park Service studies that would pick up where New Deal plans had left off. As Park Service planners assembled data over the next several years, Mission 66 anticipated national seashores as an important category for expansion. But authorizing legislation for seashore parks did not occur during the first half of Mission 66. Unless Congress proved willing to break with tradition and fund the acquisition of land for the creation of new park areas, there was no way to proceed with ambitious plans for national seashores.

The first Mission 66 seashore report funded by Mellon, *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, was published in 1957 and covered only the East and Gulf coasts. The survey team included a biologist, a historian, and two landscape architects who covered 3,700 miles of coastline between Maine and Texas by air and in the field. They concluded that only 6.5% of the shoreline was in public ownership and that the figure should be increased at least to 15%. The planners identified fifty-four undeveloped areas with enough recreational potential to become federal, state, or local “public seashores,” including Cumberland Island (Georgia), Fire Island (New York), and Cape Cod (Massachusetts).

One third of the total shoreline suitable for parks was in Texas. The report recommended immediate federal legislation to acquire not only waterfront land for recreational purposes, but also “ample quantities of hinterland of marsh and swamp” to preserve habitat and ecological systems. Our Vanishing Shoreline was followed by further studies that by 1959 covered the Pacific Coast and Great Lakes shorelines. Wirth also used the 1959 Park Service conference at Colonial National Historical Park to publicize national seashore and lakeshore planning goals.\textsuperscript{575} “The lesson is all around us,” he wrote in a press release. “We can no longer depend on private philanthropy, [and] State donations...to meet our park and recreational requirements....We got our national park system the easy way....From now on they are going to cost money, and a great deal of it....The time is now. Ten years will be too late.”\textsuperscript{576} 

In August of 1961, after years of contentious consideration, Congress authorized the Cape Cod National Seashore and appropriated $16 million to initiate the purchase of what would eventually be over 44,000 acres (figs. 91-98). Point Reyes (California) and Padre Island (Texas) national seashores followed in 1962. By the end of 1966, Congress had authorized nine national seashores and lakeshores, and by 1972 four more that had been planned under Mission 66 followed. In all, 718 miles of shoreline were eventually protected through the acquisition of over 700,000 acres.\textsuperscript{577} Cape Cod had set a historic precedent for the direct federal acquisition of private land for park purposes. From 1961 to 1966, Congress authorized fifty-four additional national park areas, and in almost all cases the legislators included money for the purchase of land.\textsuperscript{578} 

National recreation areas had a parallel history. The recreational potential of reservoirs being built by the Bureau of Reclamation had been recognized since the 1920s. Wirth had begun planning recreation areas in cooperation with the dam builders beginning in 1934. Lake Mead National Recreation Area was the first of its type when Congress authorized it in 1936. The Park Service was given responsibility for developing the recreation area (which was administered jointly with the Bureau of Reclamation until


\textsuperscript{576} “Parks for America is Our Common Concern,” June 8, 1961, press release (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center).

1964) for boating, camping, and water oriented recreation. Land for national recreation areas was usually already in public ownership, since it had to be for dam construction purposes. At Lake Mead, therefore, the CCC was able to begin road construction and other park development as soon as the reservoir filled. After World War II, however, the use of the area intensified enormously, with over two million annual visits recorded in 1951. Mission 66 called for a complete redevelopment plan, including large campgrounds, visitor centres, employee housing, maintenance areas, utilities, marinas, and other features that would become typical of postwar national recreation areas.579

Mission 66 initiated the growth of federal recreation areas with the redevelopment of Lake Mead, followed by the establishment of Glen Canyon (Utah and Arizona, 1958), Whiskeytown (California, 1962), and Flaming Gorge (Utah and Wyoming, 1963) national recreation areas. Obviously the establishment of the BOR and the funds made available through the LWCF greatly accelerated the process. Between 1952 and 1972, the Park Service developed twelve federal reservoirs as national recreation areas. As national park historian Barry Mackintosh observes, of 100 additions to the national park system made between 1952 and 1972, thirty-two were primarily devoted to recreation (including national seashores and lakeshores). The increase vastly expanded the recreational dimension of the national park system. Soaring demand for such areas drove the expansion of national recreation areas and national seashores and lakeshores during the second half of Mission 66. But it was also true that remaining opportunities for large new parks in the “natural area” category had diminished. Virgin Islands National Park remained the most significant Mission 66 addition in the natural areas category until Canyonlands (Utah, 1964) and Guadalupe Mountains (Texas, 1966) national parks were established.580 After 1964 official wilderness designation also became an alternative to national park establishment for preservationists seeking more complete protection. The wilderness preservation system grew dramatically; but fewer large natural areas would be added or transferred to the Park Service from other federal agencies once wilderness designation was an option.

578 “An Analysis of the MISSION 66 Program Made by C. L. Wirth at a Meeting at the Grand Canyon in 1961,” May 27, 1974 (Box 33, Conrad L. Wirth Collection, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Centre); Wirth, Parks, Politics, and the People, 198-200.
580 Mackintosh, The National Parks, 71-78.
The expansion of the number of historical areas in the park system was prodigious under Mission 66, perhaps for some of the same reasons. As with recreation areas and seashores, this was where opportunities for expansion of the system (especially east of the Mississippi) were most available. Between 1952 and 1972, fifty-nine historical areas were added, including eleven sites associated with former presidents. Military history sites, as always, were well represented. In addition to the Minute Man National Historical Park (Massachusetts, 1959), Horseshoe Bend National Military Park (Alabama, 1956), and several Civil War battlefields, a series of frontier forts including Fort Clatsop (Oregon, 1958), Arkansas Post (Arkansas, 1960), and Fort Davis (Texas, 1961) were established and developed as historic sites. The proliferation of historical areas, some of them representative of themes not previously represented in the park system, was an important contribution of Mission 66. The homes of Booker T. Washington (Virginia, 1956) and Frederick Douglass (Washington, DC, 1962) became part of the park system, as did the memorial to the Johnstown Flood (Pennsylvania, 1964) and the Hubbell Trading Post (Arizona, 1965). The trend was continued during the Hartzog years, as the themes of American history represented in the park system further diversified.581

Another major land acquisition program funded through Mission 66 involved the national parkway system. Congress had been more forthcoming with funds for park road and parkway construction in the early 1950s than it had with appropriations for other purposes. The 1954 Federal Highway Act, for example, authorized $32 million for parkway construction over three years. The money was used mainly to help finish national parkway projects that had been begun during the 1930s, including the Blue Ridge (Virginia and North Carolina), Colonial (Virginia), George Washington Memorial (Virginia and Maryland), and Natchez Trace (Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi) parkways. Mission 66 funding immediately increased funding for these projects and fuelled hopes that the national parkway system would be significantly expanded. By 1957 parkway construction was at its “highest volume” since the program began in 1933. Mission 66 work on Colonial Parkway had been particularly intense in order to finish it (long with two of the first Mission 66 visitor centres) in time for the 350th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown. That year Dudley C. Bayliss, the landscape architect who headed the Park Service parkway program out of the Washington office, reported that the Blue Ridge Parkway was about “three-fourths complete” and the Natchez Trace Parkway

581 Mackintosh, The National Parks, 62-78.
was "nearing the halfway mark." Both of these linear parks were over 400-miles long. The Blue Ridge would be substantially completed under Mission 66, although the last, controversial seven miles would not be completed until 1987. The majority of the Natchez Trace was also completed under Mission 66, although that parkway was not officially dedicated until 2005.\textsuperscript{582}

Bayliss also described six other projects that were part of his program, including the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Parkway, which had been authorized in 1950 but had just been "restudied" and was about to be completely reconceived. The Foothills Parkway, planned to skirt the Tennessee foothills of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, was also in an early state of land acquisition and construction. The parkway program was part of the Landscape Architecture division in the Washington office and so was administered by Clark Stratton after he replaced Thomas Vint in 1961. Stratton had great hopes for a national parkway system that would complement the Interstate Highway system and would similarly benefit from Congress's apparent willingness to fund road construction. The most ambitious Mission 66 parkway proposal was for the Mississippi River Parkway, or Great River Road, that would follow the Mississippi on either side from Minnesota to Louisiana. The parkway had been planned since 1951, but Stratton and Bayliss hoped it would now be financed directly "as part of the Federal Aid Highway System," in other words with Interstate Highway money.\textsuperscript{583} There were other ambitious, and ultimately unrealized proposals: the Allegheny Parkway between Harpers Ferry and the Cumberland Gap; an extension of the Blue Ridge Parkway to Georgia; parkway connections between the George Washington Memorial, Colonial, and Blue Ridge parkways, and Harpers Ferry; the Cumberland Parkway connecting Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Cumberland Gap, Mammoth Cave, and the Natchez Trace Parkway.\textsuperscript{584} Whether or not a national system of noncommercial parkways connecting national parks and historic sites all over the country would have been desirable, these and other ambitious Mission 66 parkway proposals were never implemented. Congress continued to make appropriations to complete the Blue Ridge, Natchez Trace, and the George Washington Memorial, which were all nearing completion. But the Great River Road and the others remained in the

\textsuperscript{583} "Interview with A. Clark Stratton," March 1, 1962, conducted by S. Herbert Evison, transcript, p. 22, (National Park Service History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center). 
planning and “advisory” stage. National parkway proposals were not part of the ORRRC’s recommendations and neither did they fit well within New Conservation. The BOR did not assume parkway planning responsibilities, which remained at the Park Service as one of the most important remaining activities of the now greatly reduced Landscape Division. But already in 1959 the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments had suggested that the Park Service get out of the parkway business altogether. That did not happen; but neither did the growth of the national parkway system that Stratton and Bayliss had hoped for under the second half of Mission 66. The stagnation of the national parkway program, and the eventual failure to institute it as a complement to the Interstate Highway system, would remove a last bastion of significant influence among landscape architects at the Park Service.\textsuperscript{585}

National parkways aside, the enormous expansion of the national park system that occurred during the 1960s and early 1970s may be the most substantial legacy of the Mission 66 program, particularly in its second half. But was this great moment in American conservation history the result of Mission 66, or of the new priorities set by the ORRRC, Udall’s New Conservation, and the creation of the BOR? George Hartzog must certainly be given much of the credit. As Mackintosh points out, during Hartzog’s nine years as director (1964-1972), “69 of today’s park units were added to the System—nearly three-quarters as many as had been permanently added in the preceding 30 years.”\textsuperscript{586} The second half of Mission 66 obviously benefited from the fresh attitude in Congress that the ORRRC had managed to inspire. Without Kennedy and Udall, for example, it is doubtful that the landmark Cape Cod legislation would have succeeded in 1961.

But it is also apparent that the accomplishments of New Conservation would not have been as impressive had it not been for the foundation of recreational planning provided by Mission 66, which itself was based on decades of research and surveys by Wirth and his staff. The revised second half of Mission 66 and \textit{Parks for America} put specific plans and detailed legislation into the hands of lawmakers just as the political climate began to warm to such proposals. The result was richly productive for the national park system. Udall and Hartzog achieved political consensus; but they also came to Congress armed with detailed, impeccably prepared proposals for new parks and


\textsuperscript{586} Mackintosh, \textit{The National Parks}, 63.
recreation areas. Hartzog himself noted that “it was my good fortune to become director at a most propitious time in the history of the National Park System.” He was referring mainly to the “great waves of environmental concerns” that were “beginning to move.”

He might have also noted, though, that no incoming director had ever had a path more thoroughly prepared than he had when he assumed control over the last two years of Mission 66.

As the official conclusion of Mission 66 approached in 1966, Hartzog did not organize an extensive commemoration of the event. Wirth had moved to New York and taken a position as a consultant to Laurance Rockefeller (as Albright had for Laurance’s father). Working out of an office in Rockefeller Centre, Wirth remained active in public affairs, including contemporary national park plans such as the proposed Adirondack national park. In 1966 National Geographic magazine published a long article by Wirth about Mission 66, which was the most extensive published commemoration of the completion of his program. For his part, Hartzog organized a series of “fiftieth anniversary celebrations” that really diverted attention from Mission 66 as much as they celebrated it. In the agency’s official fiftieth anniversary brochure, the director briefly noted the “dramatically successful close” of Mission 66, but described at length the even greater challenge of “improving the total environment” that remained. Udall was also generous in his praise of the “amazingly successful program.” But these sentiments were not broadly published in 1966. Most Park Service press releases and events that emphasized the overall history of the Park Service on its “fiftieth birthday,” not the completion of the ten-year program. The dozens of newspapers and magazines that picked up on the story usually emphasized “Fifty Years of Parks,” and mentioned Mission 66 in passing, if at all. Other fiftieth anniversary events include lecture series,

---

587 Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 88.
588 Wirth was also a trustee of the National Geographic Society. Wirth began the article with an extensive defence of Tioga Road, a project he knew had cost him dearly but which he continued to feel had been justified and successful. Conrad L. Wirth, “Today in Our National Parks: The Mission Called 66,” National Geographic 130, no. 1 (July 1966): 7-46.
commemorative calendars and "50th Anniversary" stationery, and scores of tributes in individual parks and communities all over the country.591

During his long retirement, Conrad Wirth made a project of assembling figures and records, many of which ended up in his personal papers at the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Centre. His own summary was published in his 1980 memoir, Parks, Politics, and the People.592 In one analysis, Wirth added the initial $17,000,000 appropriated to the Park Service in Fiscal Year 1956, to the $884,534,000 appropriated between Fiscal Years 1957 through 1966 (July 1956 through June 1966), to the $110,000,000 in LWCF money appropriated to the BOR and transferred to the Park Service (in 1965 and 1966) for land purchases, to arrive at a total of $1,001,534,000 in Mission 66 spending. Concessioners invested another $33 million. The increase in total funding amounts (from the original $787 million estimate) reflected the expansion of the park system itself. According to the Park Service's 1966 Mission 66 progress report, between 1956 and 1966 seventy new park areas of all types and sizes were authorized between 1956 and 1966. A total area of 2.1 million acres was acquired through donations, transfers, exchanges, and purchase. Congress appropriated over $76 million for Mission 66 land purchases, in addition to the amount supplied through the LWCF.

Total visits to the park system rose from 61.5 million to 124.1 million. Total authorized Park Service staffing rose from 8,061 to 13,314. Other Mission 66 statistics, such as the total mileage of roads and trails reconstructed or constructed, and the numbers of visitor centres, utility buildings, campgrounds, picnic areas, residences, training facilities, and other Mission 66 structures built, have been cited earlier in this study.

The efficiency of Mission 66 as a park development and expansion program was impressive. More significantly, however, the program permanently enlarged the range and funding of Park Service activities. The agency's size and budgets, in other words, did not return to a previous level after 1966. According to author Dwight F. Rettie, total funding per unit of the park system in constant 1990 dollars rose from about $410,000 in 1949, to $1.8 million in 1959, and to $2 million in 1966. Appropriations continued to rise

591 See National Park Courier 5, no. 8 (August 1966). The American Society of Landscape Architects also held its annual meeting in Yosemite Valley in 1966 and organized a "panel presentation" with Albright, Drury, Wirth, and Carnes. The program in Landscape Architecture magazine mistakenly referred to the panel's topic as "Project '66."

after Mission 66, to $2.2 million per unit of the system in 1973 and $2.9 million in 1995.\textsuperscript{593} Mission 66 permanently altered the sense of what level of funding was appropriate for national parks. The program also permanently increased the number and diversity of park areas in the system, and the degree of professionalization of a much larger Park Service.

Twenty-two conservation organizations sponsored a “Golden Anniversary Dinner” held that August in a Washington hotel. Some 800 “distinguished friends” attended the event, but Wirth was not among them. Hartzog used the evening not to recall Mission 66, but to help inaugurate his own park development and expansion program: “PARKSCAPE, U.S.A.” First described as the “Centennial Challenge,” Parkscape was to be completed in time for the Yellowstone centennial in 1972. The new initiative was calculated to continue the strong public image—and increased budgets—of Mission 66, while leaving behind the controversies. Mission 66, which had been “brought about by a desperate need to catch up with work,” was “now in the history books.” In a series of memoranda and magazine articles, Hartzog outlined his priorities for Parkscape, many of which were drawn from the Road to the Future. The program had five major goals: “completing” the park system by 1972; developing “cooperative programs with other agencies”; “utilizing the national park concept” to improve life in American cities; better “communicating the values of park conservation”; and developing an international assistance program in anticipation of the second World Conference of National Parks, scheduled to be held in Yellowstone and Grand Tetons in 1972.\textsuperscript{594}

Many aspects of Parkscape essentially continued Mission 66, at least as the program had been modified since 1959. In hindsight, the most successful of the five initiatives Hartzog described was the first, which entailed the ongoing, massive expansion of the park system with new national parks, recreation areas, seashores, lakeshores, and historic sites. As noted, the growth of the park system under Hartzog was a prodigious feat completed in a relatively short time. As the system expanded, the idea of exactly what constituted a national park did as well. Building on the precedent of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways established in 1964, Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968. The act identified eight rivers to be designated as the first components of a “wild and scenic rivers system,” assuring they would remain in a “free-

\textsuperscript{593} Rettie, \textit{Our National Park System}, 251-253.

flowing condition” and that they and their “immediate environments” would be preserved undeveloped for future generations. Like designated wilderness areas, most wild and scenic rivers were not under the jurisdiction of the Park Service. But under Hartzog, five new wild and scenic rivers joined the national park system. The National Trail System Act, also signed in 1968, made the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail part of the park system and set up a process for identifying and adding other historic and recreational corridors to the “national trails system.” Hartzog’s interest in urban national parks also had major results. In 1972 Congress established Golden Gate (San Francisco and Marin County) and Gateway (New York and New Jersey) national recreation areas, giving the Park Service a greatly increased role in the management of metropolitan park systems. The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act also gave Hartzog the opportunity to “expand the National Register of Historic Landmarks to include properties of state and local significance,” thereby becoming “a record of all that merits preservation and a yardstick against which to measure the rightful roles of all concerned in the preservation movement.”

The Parkscape program itself, however, did not represent the same scale or level of original planning effort that Mission 66 or the ORRRC had. Parkscape was not intended to redo the work of the ORRRC, but to implement it. Another central purpose was to change the name and image of Mission 66 activities while essentially continuing many ongoing plans and construction projects. Over the previous ten years the Park Service had become completely identified with Mission 66. Parkscape was intended above all to change that identity. The rhetoric of New Conservation—and a new agency logo—were therefore essential aspects of Parkscape. Hartzog hired a prominent New York graphic design firm, Chermayeff & Geismar Associates, to devise the “symbol of PARKSCAPE U.S.A.” Bold and geometric, it consisted of two interlocking triangles with three black dots in the centre. The symbol represented the three types of national park areas: the triangles stood for a mountain (natural) and a tent (recreational), and the black dots for cannon balls (historical). While the design was effective and won professional awards, Hartzog immediately found himself defending it from critics. He did not intend to replace the arrowhead, he assured them; but the Parkscape symbol did

replace the arrowhead on stationery, agency reports and documents, and in interpretive park brochures and displays. The Post Office used the symbol as a five-cent stamp commemorating the agency’s fiftieth anniversary, and other commemorative events and publications featured it in 1966 (fig. 99). In 1968 Udall hired the same firm to produce a new Department of the Interior logo in a similar abstract, graphic style. The new logo replaced the department’s familiar “buffalo seal” that year. At the same time Hartzog announced that the Parkscape symbol would indeed now replace the arrowhead on all badges, uniforms, signs, and publications.596

Park rangers, superintendents, and other agency supporters rose up angrily at this point, urging Udall and Hartzog to reject their Chermayeff & Geismar logos and return to the buffalo seal and arrowhead. The dispute may seem trivial; but Parkscape was essentially a symbolic initiative intended to revamp the public image of the Park Service and its activities. Many employees (including former directors Wirth and Albright) felt that the agency’s tradition (or perhaps its “mystique”) was being erased. The new image generated a genuine outpouring of dismay. When Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel replaced Udall in 1969, he immediately disposed of the short lived Department of the Interior logo and restored the buffalo seal. Hartzog followed suit and brought back the arrowhead as the Park Service’s official symbol.

This misadventure in graphic design revealed a deeper problem with Parkscape: it never captured the imagination of agency staff or the public the way Mission 66 had. Hartzog was, it turned out, a “career man” fully “capable of the job.” His nine years of accomplishments put him comfortably in the company of Mather, Albright, Cammerer, Drury, and Wirth. But Parkscape did not survive long as a public relations entity. Soon the Park Service was preparing instead for the nation’s bicentennial, which became the next major deadline for agency preparations and expansions. Hartzog also delegated planning and design decisions to a greater degree than his predecessors (particularly Wirth), and so he was not personally involved in design and construction. His interests were more in the political and legislative arena, where he accomplished tremendous success. In his memoirs, Hartzog neglects to even mention Parkscape.

The BOR also had great success in the 1960s, but withered as the political climate shifted. Many of its early projects and activities began under Mission 66 and accelerated

as appropriations were made through the provisions of the LWCF and other park legislation. After 1963 the agency also benefited from more cooperation from the Park Service. But in 1969 it still had only 500 employees of its own.\textsuperscript{597} The BOR was something of an experiment in government: an agency whose primary mandate was to coordinate the work of other agencies. With no land management responsibilities, the BOR never gained the bureaucratic momentum it needed to survive in the long term.

With the arrival of the Nixon administration in 1969, Edwin Fitch reported that his agency was “at a crossroads in its existence.” Since it had been created through administrative, not legislative, authority, the new secretary of the interior could do away with the BOR as quickly as Udall had created it. But the BOR survived until 1978, when the Carter administration replaced it with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. In 1981 the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service was abolished in turn by Reagan’s first secretary of the interior, James G. Watt. What was left of the federal government’s recreational planning expertise at that point was given back to the Park Service. But the move was hardly intended to stimulate a new generation of park and recreational planning. On the contrary, the era of big federal recreation plans, which had begun with the Cape Cod legislation, was ending. Neither the Reagan administration nor Congress typically supported ambitious park plans during the next decade, particularly if they might involve federal acquisition of private property.

There were major changes, as well, for the planners and designers who had not been transferred to the BOR and remained at the Park Service after 1962. Hartzog understandably never had the close relationship with the WODC and EODC that Wirth had. With Mission 66 ended, the BOR functioning, and the regional offices taking on more responsibility for design and construction, the Park Service design offices were now subject to cutbacks. Hartzog also established the precedent of using outside management consultants, in this case James A. Kittleman and Associates of Chicago, for “organizational studies” and recommendations. In 1969 the Philadelphia office was replaced by a new Eastern Service Centre in Washington. The San Francisco office was renamed the Western Service Centre. In 1971 the combined service centres still had over 580 employees. That year they were abolished, however, and replaced by a new Denver Service Center, in Lakewood, Colorado, which had only 350 employees. The remainder

\textsuperscript{597} Although many of these had been transferred from the Park Service, Udall was careful not to place any former Park Service officials in top management positions at the BOR. Fitch and Shanklin, \textit{The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation}, 92-93, 189, 200-201.
of the Park Service planning, landscape architecture, architecture, engineering, and historian positions were eliminated or transferred to parks, regional offices, or other federal agencies. The Denver Service Center's first priority involved the design of various site developments and interpretive facilities planned to commemorate the events of 1776.

Compared to the events and changes of the early 1970s, the completion of Mission 66 in 1966 was an anticlimax. While there was a significant amount of continuity between the Wirth and Hartzog years, Hartzog's departure at the end of 1972 truly ended a period of national park history that had begun in 1945. Following the 1972 election, Nixon's second secretary of the interior, Rogers C. B. Morton, fired Hartzog (for unexplained but clearly political reasons) and replaced him with a political appointee with no professional qualifications for the job. Ronald H. Walker was only thirty-six, and although a trusted political lieutenant in the White House, he had no experience with state or national parks. He lasted only two years and was followed by a series of Park Service directors with diverse backgrounds (some indeed "career men"), who served relatively short terms and who came and went with the political winds at the Department of the Interior.

By the time Hartzog was fired, new public attitudes and congressional legislation had profoundly changed the federal administration of natural resources and public lands. Environmentalism, as a political movement, had assumed great influence in Washington. Besides the legislation already described, including the Wilderness Act, the LWCF Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the National Trail System Act, by 1973 Congress also passed the Water Pollution Control Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy (NEPA) Act. At the Park Service, organizational change, combined with prescribed procedures for assessing the "environmental impacts" of proposed actions, necessarily changed park management and agency culture. Park master planning, for example, continued to be revised until finally in the 1970s it was replaced by the "general management plan." The new park plans were far less specific, some featuring little or no actual site design at all. The general management plan did include, however, the

599 Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 239-248.
environmental review now required under NEPA. The plans therefore studied different strategic “alternatives” for future management, assessed the potential benefits and impacts of each, and selected a preferred alternative for implementation. With public process and other forms of review and participation also required by NEPA, by the 1970s national park planning and design required new sets of professional training and skills and a completely revised planning procedure (fig. 100).

Even as the Park Service went through these profound organizational, political, and professional changes, Congress continued to increase the size and diversity of the national park system. Over forty new park areas were established between 1973 and 1980. The 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act alone authorized fourteen additions. While the vast majority of these new parks were vital and worthwhile enhancements, critics began to sense that the entire process was driven by congressional politics, not national recreational planning.600 “Park barrel legislation,” such as the 1978 act for example, had become a means for Congress to deliver federal largesse to its constituencies. The lawmakers had little interest in “rounding out the system” or maintaining standards of national significance; nor did they necessarily care if the Park Service staff was stretched thin in the management of an ever larger and more diverse collection of federal reservations and sites. But the BOR and the Park Service seemed no longer to be in a position to control the legislators’ enthusiasms by providing authoritative recreational studies and plans. More park legislation, critics began to suggest, was not the same as good park legislation.

600 Mackintosh, The National Park System, 86-100. The story of the Alaskan parks (the national monuments declared by Carter in 1978 and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980) is a history in itself and is not considered here.
Conclusion

This Ph.D. thesis has been structured around a series of research questions developed during the initial stages of the study. Responses to these research questions determined the general outline, specific case studies, and overall themes of the narrative history of Mission 66 that has been presented here.

Question One: Origins of Mission 66 Controversy

The “dilemma” of the national parks in the 1940s and the controversies created by Mission 66 construction in the 1950s and 1960s were of enormous consequence in the formation of the modern environmental movement and in shaping the legislation and policies that determined park management to the present day. What were the origins of the controversies around Mission 66? Did they begin with the program itself, or are their roots deeper?

Research in the initial stages of the thesis project established conceptual links between mid-twentieth century responses to park making and landscape modernization to at least some attitudes evident in the 1790s. The theory and technology of park making were presented as a practice that originated with the profession of landscape gardening in Great Britain, and which then became the basis of the profession of landscape architecture in the United States. These roots helped define the theory and assumptions of Mission 66 planners, who to a considerable degree maintained an Olmstedian tradition of park making and preservation “for the people” and “public enjoyment.” Understanding these connections underscored the different philosophical convictions of early environmentalists at the Sierra Club and elsewhere, and so put the controversy over Mission 66 into a historical context.

Question Two: Contemporary Influences on Wirth and Mission 66 Policy

What were the relationships between Mission 66 and contemporary trends in American society and landscape, including the rise of environmentalism and the construction of the Interstate Highway system? What individuals, ideas, or trends influenced Conrad Wirth in the formulation of his practice of “recreational planning” and therefore in the establishment of Mission 66 policy?
These questions guided a lengthy narrative history of Park Service planning in the 1940s and 1950s, with an emphasis on the events of 1955 and 1956. This narrative was contextualized by a summary and analysis of contemporary trends in the American landscape, from the proliferation of shopping centres, to sprawling residential subdivisions, to the 1956 Interstate Highway Act. Park Service planning was also contextualized through biographical summaries of Conrad Wirth and some of the key officials he relied on to implement Mission 66.

The conclusions emphasize that almost all of the fundamental, guiding concepts of Mission 66 had deep roots in the New Deal and earlier. The new park types that came to characterize Mission 66—the national recreation area, the national historical park, and the national seashore—all originated in New Deal planning. Wirth himself was a consummate New Dealer, and developed his policies for “recreational planning” while administering the Park Service CCC program.

Mission 66 planning also reflected the long professional allegiances of Wirth, Vint, and others as landscape architects. Perhaps most telling in this regard was the close relationship both men had with Frederick law Olmsted, Jr., whom they considered a mentor and authority on policy as well as a personal friend. If the roots of Mission 66 were mainly in the New Deal, they also extended all the way back to the beginnings of the American park movement and the profession of landscape architecture in the United States. What has been defined here as Olmstedian park theory, to a remarkable degree, was the theoretical foundation of Mission 66, as it had been for American park projects for the previous century.

But Mission 66 also was shaped by responses to the remarkable transformation taking place in the postwar landscape. The Interstate Highway Act, above all, served as a clarion for Park Service planners who knew very well what expanded federal sponsorship of highways would mean for the national system of parks. Many Park Service officials, such as Vint, had begun their careers modernizing the national park system in the 1920s. This redevelopment and expansion of the national park system involved, for example, the construction of automotive roads and campgrounds. Mission 66 responded to similar pressures at an increased scale. The numbers of post-World War II visitors were even greater than they had been during the first great wave of automotive tourism following World War I. Mission 66 reconfigured prewar park development patterns in order to meet the increased demand. In this sense, Mission 66 finished the overall project of modernizing the park system for automotive tourism. It did so, however, by employing a
new, modernist building type the visitor centre), as well as a completely revised approach to park master planning (the Mission 66 prospectus). This thesis has described the result of this combination as a distinct form American park design, the Mission 66 modernist park.

**Question Three: Mission 66 and Attitudes Towards Modernism**

What can attitudes and perceptions of Mission 66 tell us about broader postwar attitudes towards landscape modernization in the United States, generally? What did visitors think of Mission 66 and how did it correspond to what officials, planners, and professional critics were thinking? Why was modernist design already accepted at the Park Service before Mission 66 even began?

The story of Mission 66 became the story of the limits of modernism in American national park planning. Reactions to the program, as it was actually built, would be particularly rich indicators of public attitudes towards modernism and its perceived association with the destruction of historical “landmarks” and natural “wilderness.” Mission 66 soon incited deeply felt responses to the results of modernist planning and architecture, generally, both within and beyond park boundaries.

One of the first questions to be formulated for this project was one that has been asked (but not answered) by historians and critics for many years: why did postwar American national park construction shift from a rustic to a modernist design idiom? This study has found that while this change seemed sudden, actually Park Service staff had altered their approaches to architectural and landscape design gradually over a period of decades, very much as professionals in private practice had during the same period. The use of private consultants to implement Mission 66 had some influence on this trend, but less than previously supposed. Park Service officials controlled planning and design policies within their agency; private consultants did not initiate the shift to modernism. But neither was there ever a significant policy decision or debate on the subject within the Park Service regarding the adoption of “contemporary” design. National park design, to a significant degree, simply followed a national trend and became a significant part of it. Modernist architectural design was not chosen as a matter of policy for any ideological associations or even its appearance. It was considered practical and even necessary, however, to employ building styles, types, materials, and construction techniques that were economical and familiar to the building industry of the day.
But modernist design was not employed merely because it was what architects and builders of the day produced. The visitor centre, for example, as a modernist building type, was valued as an effective means of implementing broader park planning policies and goals. Open floor plans, extensive interior spaces, large windows and window walls all made the centralized and increased efficiency of the visitor centre complex possible. The separation of pedestrians and vehicular traffic, and the convenience of “one-stop” centralized services were shared by contemporary planning and building projects, such as shopping centres. Design process emphasized planning conceived around greatly increased “visitor flow” and the efficient handling of large volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. “Flow diagrams” determined architectural floorplans as well as the surrounding site development. The modernist pavilion—as a nearly transparent architecture that served as a viewing platform—became an ideal model of the visitor centre. The visitor centre itself became the symbol and the means of implementing the Mission 66 prospectus, which reinvented the prewar master planning concept.

This thesis has shown that modernist architecture in the setting of national parks had very different meanings and associations for different individuals and groups. The investigation of perceptions of Mission 66 undertaken in the course of the study revealed a wide diversity of reactions that continue to the present day. Many architects and architecture critics, for example, reacted favourably to the program. During Mission 66 the Park Service enjoyed a high point in its reputation as a patron of progressive and creative architectural design. But while the American Institute of Architects (AIA) specifically cited a number of individual buildings (and eventually Mission 66 as a whole) the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) almost completely ignored the program. This is notable since Conrad Wirth, Thomas Vint, and other key Park Service officials, as well as much of the park planning cadre in the agency, were long time members of the ASLA.

The difference in the reactions of these professional organizations supports two conclusions made in this study. First, architecture (and history) became relatively more important in the multidisciplinary process used to develop visitor centres, interpretive programs, and Mission 66 prospectuses. Landscape architecture, which had been the profession most directly involved in prewar park master planning, became relatively less important within the Park Service planning and design bureaucracy under Mission 66. This trend occurred despite the fact that Wirth, Vint, and others were landscape architects. Second, the fact that the ASLA (and its leading, most successful members) were so
uninterested in Mission 66 indicates that the profound changes in the profession and postwar economic activities had indeed taken it away (relatively speaking) from park planning and into a new typology of commissions, from corporate parks to urban renewal plazas, that related to broad trends in the postwar landscape.

Public attitudes towards Mission 66 modernism were harder to gauge from the documentary sources. Overall, however, newspapers and other periodicals indicated that the public, at least initially, accepted modernist architecture and the planning principles it embodied in the national parks. The most strident exceptions to this general rule were the early wilderness advocates, who by the mid-1960s were known as environmentalists. From the beginning, many members of the Sierra Club and the National Parks Association, for example, objected to almost all aspects of Mission 66. They condemned the expansion of the capacity of frontcountry roads and facilities, and they despised the modernist architecture of visitor centres and other buildings. For this group, the appearance of new buildings represented a betrayal of Park Service tradition. And although they advocated a greater role for scientific research in park management (and so might have been expected to welcome the efficiency and minimal ornamentation of modernist buildings) they nevertheless clung to the picturesque architecture of the rustic era of park development, which they felt was less "urban" and more "harmonious" with park landscapes. This aesthetic preference, this study concludes, is an indication of the degree to which postwar wilderness was as much a poetic as a scientific ideal. It also suggests the extent to which 1960s environmentalist critic of national park policy was rooted in emotional (aesthetic) conviction as much as it was driven by scientific evidence or data.

**Question Four: Significance of the Mission 66 Prospectus**

What was the significance of the Mission 66 revision of national park master planning policy? Postwar park development looked different (modernist), but did it function differently and was it supported by new theory? What was essentially new, and what continued prewar policy, in the Mission 66 prospectus?

Mission 66 embodied a peculiarly American form of mid-twentieth-century design: Mission 66 created a modernist national park. But while modernist architectural and planning ideas shaped Mission 66, this formal adoption did not imply a break with essentially Olmstedian justifications and goals for public park development.
The new ideal of national park planning did respond to postwar trends, however, such as the rise in population, encroaching low density urbanization, new levels of automobile ownership, and the increased accessibility to parks created by federal-aid highway construction. American modernist design adapted and evolved into a wide variety of responses to postwar social and geographic change. The Mission 66 park was one of those adaptations. As such, it was a profound revision of prewar master planning procedures. Yet that revision was intended to maintain Park Service tradition, in that it continued the Progressive Era project of modernizing and expanding the national park system for the enjoyment of an automotive public. This continuity with Progressive Era (or earlier) ideology—despite the very different appearance and “new spirit” of modernism—typified many aspects of American mid-century planning and design, including the urban renewal and federal highway programs that were contemporary to Mission 66.

Critics who condemned Mission 66 for abandoning tradition (rustic design) in many cases were themselves advocating a more profound revision of tradition than they realized. The ideal of wilderness in the postwar period, for example, replaced the ideal of the public park, at least for many early environmentalists who were the strongest critics of Mission 66. While Mission 66 modernist architecture, it is argued here, continued established park ideology (preservation for public enjoyment), the ideal of wilderness implied no such responsibility to the public and a different set of justifications for preservation. While environmentalists became champions of rustic architecture, this thesis suggests that they were not advocates of the prewar ideology that rustic design originally expressed and facilitated.

Question Five: Mission 66 Design and Contemporary Context

What were contemporary developments in the professions of architecture and landscape architecture? What are the relationships of Mission 66 to contemporary professional (planning and design) history, and how does that history help explain changes in Park Service policy and design?

Clarifying the relationship between the Park Service and the profession of landscape architecture in the postwar period has been as important goal of this study. During the 1930s, the great majority of American landscape architects had been employed in public park programs of the New Deal. Many had worked directly for the Park Service. By the 1950s the economic situation had changed. The most successful
private practitioners of the day moved away from relying on public commissions. They also followed the trend to "go modern" in corporate and residential design. The Park Service and the profession of landscape architecture (as represented, in any case, by the ASLA) never again had the close relationship they enjoyed before the war. This study argues that Mission 66 proceeded without advice and involvement of leading (private) landscape architects. While Mission 66 itself can be seen as perhaps the most ambitious landscape architectural project of the postwar era, it has remained almost completely ignored by professionals and historians, who have not considered the program as part of the canon of postwar modernist design in the United States. This lack of attention has discouraged analysis of the Mission 66 park ideal—as expressed in dozens of Mission 66 prospectuses and as described here as the Mission 66 modernist park—as a significant achievement of postwar landscape architectural design.

One of the most important assertions of this thesis is that Mission 66 should be considered one of the most significant landscape architectural projects of the postwar era in the United States. While this period has become of increasing interest for design historians, Mission 66 has not been looked at in this light. Several conclusions in this thesis help explain why this is the case. First, the changes in the profession of landscape architecture moved it away from public park design, generally, and national park design, specifically. Second, Mission 66 planners proceeded in relative isolation from fellow landscape architects in the private sector. While this was not as true for architects working under Mission 66, the long tradition of Park Service landscape architecture helped maintain an independent, if isolated, professional context. Contemporary architects were used extensively as Mission 66 consultants; contemporary landscape architects, almost without exception, were not.

**Question Six: Changing Perceptions of Nature and History**

How did Mission 66 affect the way the visiting public perceived and appreciated the nature and history it sought to enjoy? To what degree were these changing perceptions related to the rise of the nascent environmental movement in the United States?

The reactions to Mission 66 design also were a function of public reactions to the broader landscape change occurring in North America. While in the 1950s Interstate Highways and urban renewal were generally perceived as "progress," by the 1960s attitudes changed for many Americans. Mission 66 helped instigate this change through
high profile controversies, for example at Canyon Village in Yellowstone and Tioga Road in Yosemite. In turn, the program fell victim to changing standards for how much change and development would be considered acceptable in national park frontcountries before they would be condemned as “overdevelopment.”

The historical significance of Mission 66 has as much to do with the controversies it provoked as it does with the physical development and institutional expansion it achieved. This study has described some of the relationships between Mission 66, modernism, the larger modernization of the North American landscape. Mission 66 provides a unique lens for seeing connections between Interstate Highways, postwar demographic and recreational trends, and the “suburban” patterns of postwar urbanization in the United States. Perhaps more than any other single federal program or event, the story of Mission 66 helps explain how many public and individual reactions to the events of the 1950s coalesced into what became known as the environmental movement. While other events of the day, such as the Echo Park dam controversy, have been fully explored as instigators of these social changes, this study has provided the first thorough examination of the enormous effects that the massive redevelopment of the national park system had in this regard.

Above all, Mission 66 profoundly affected how the American public—and increasingly an international public—used, appreciated, and “enjoyed” what they experienced as nature and history. The Mission 66 modernist park reinvented how people moved through, viewed, experienced, and above all “enjoyed” park landscapes. It permanently altered how the Park Service conceived of its essential tasks: the preservation and interpretation of nature and history. Out of the experience, debates over what constituted “impairment” of park landscapes, over when and how visitation should be curtailed, over what level of funding for parks was appropriate, over what places should be included in a national park system all began. They continue to the present day.

**Question Seven: Continued Significance of Mission 66**

What is the significance of Mission 66 today? To what degree is the national park system, the Park Service, and the public’s experience of national parks a product of Mission 66 planning and design?

This thesis has shown the degree to which Mission 66 shaped the national park system, the Park Service, and the public’s experience of park landscapes. To a remarkable degree, the physical and institutional development created through Mission 66
remains the foundation of park management and public experience. From the visitor centre, to the improved roads and enlarged campgrounds, to the modern level of service in comfort stations, park staff and visitors have come to see what Mission 66 accomplished as a standard level of public service and protection of parks.

The great changes that occurred in government and society in the early 1970s perhaps assured that Mission 66 would not be repeated. While levels of funding have increased or remained constant (in constant dollars, per unit of the park system), these funds have not resulted in the kind of physical redevelopment of park frontcountries that Mission 66 accomplished. As a result, to a significant degree, the institution of the Park Service, and more importantly the underlying basis of the public’s experience of the parks, are functions of Mission 66, its successes and its failures.
Bibliography


376


---

Habitat for the National Parks.


_____. “Landscape Development Based in Conservation As Practiced in the National Park Service.” *Landscape Architecture* 29, no. 3 (April 1939): 105-21.


State University, 1966.


Francisco, 1937.


Vint, Thomas C. "National Park Service Master Plans." In *Planning and Civic Comment*, 1946.


——. "Parks and Their Uses." In American Planning and Civic Annual, Harlean James, ed.


"MISSION 66":
Modernism and the national park dilemma in the United States, 1945-1972

FIGURES

To accompany a thesis submitted by Ethan Carr to the School of Landscape Architecture at the Edinburgh College of Art in fulfilment of the requirements for the

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
2006
Two national park areas in the lower 48 states have adjoining national preserves that are separate units of the National Park System but managed jointly. They are: Great Sand Dunes and Craters of the Moon.
Figure 1  Park Service Director Newton Drury (left) with Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug (centre) and Assistant Secretary (and Krug's successor) Oscar Chapman in 1949. *Photo by Abbie Rowe, NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 2  Park Service officials in Washington, ca. 1950. Left to right, seated: Conrad Wirth, Arthur Demaray, Hillory Tolson; standing, Thomas Allen, Minor Tillotson, Michael Becker, Lawrence Merriam, Ronald Lee. NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 3  Mission 66 "steering committee" in Yellowstone in 1957. Left to right: Jackson Price, Donald Lee, Harry Langley, Lon Garrison, Vint, John Doerr.  NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 4  The Jackson Lake Lodge, Grand Teton National Park (Gilbert Stanley Underwood, 1955). *NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 5  The Old Faithful Inn, perched on the edge of the Old Faithful geyser basin in Yellowstone (Robert Reamer, 1904). Author's photo
Figure 6 Yosemite Village, park housing (Eldridge Spencer, 1941). The several houses designed by Spencer in the early 1940s are probably the oldest remaining modernist architecture in the park system. *Author’s photo*
Figure 8  Canyon Village, main lodge building (Welton Becket Associates, 1956)

Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 9  Main lodge building, Yosemite Lodge (Spencer and Ambrose, 1955).

Author’s photo
Figures 10, 11  Quarry Visitor Center, Dinosaur National Monument (1958, Anshen and Allen).  Photos Courtesy National Park Service
Figure 12  Wright Brothers Visitor Center (1960, Mitchell/Giurgola). The interior space created by intersecting concrete vaults housed a replica of the Wright brothers' first successful powered aircraft. The Wright Monument, visible through the window wall, commemorates the site of their first powered flight in 1903. *Courtesy North Carolina State Preservation Office*
Figure 13  Gettysburg Cyclorama Visitor Center (1962, Neutra and Alexander).  Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 14  Gettysburg Cyclorama Visitor Center (1962, Neutra and Alexander). Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 15  
Everglades Visitor Center, Flamingo (1957), photographed ca. 1960. The concessioner contributed to the construction of the complex, which included a restaurant (on the right, at the other end of a raised bridge from the visitor centre and administrative space). The concessioner’s architect, Harry Keck, worked with the EODC, and in this case Thomas Vint (Washington office) and Cecil Doty (WODC) participated in planning and design personally as well.  
*Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy National Park Service*
Figure 16  Everglades Visitor Center, Flamingo. *Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy National Park Service*
Figures 17, 18  Early visitor centres: 1953 Carlsbad Caverns (above, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive) and 1954 Grand Canyon (Author's photo) were two early, transitional buildings designed inhouse (WODC, Cecil Doty) and described at first “public use” and “administrative-museum” buildings.
Figures 19, 20  Carlsbad Caverns Visitor Center, 1953 (Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive) and amphitheatre (Author's photo) at cavern entrance.
Figure 21  Park Service “chiefs” ca. 1956. Left to right, seated: Scoyen, Merriam, Wirth, Allen, Tollson, Vint; standing, Howard Baker, Elbert Cox, Hugh Miller, Daniel Tobin, Lee, Ben Thompson, Sanford Hill, Edward Zimmer. Photo by Abbie Rowe, NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 22  Sanford ("Red") Hill, head of the WODC, and Wirth in Yellowstone in 1959.  
Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 23  Wirth (seated centre) and his Washington staff ca. 1960. Eivend Scoyen is seated to Wirth’s right, and Thomas Vint is standing immediately behind him. *Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 24  Mission 66 “working committee” in Washington in 1956. Left to right: Howard Stagner, Robert Coates, Jack Dodd, Bill Cames, Harold Smith, Roy Appleman, Ray Freeman. Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Mountains cannot last forever. These are some of the ways in which stability were threatened.

Figure 25  Lon Garrison (in uniform) and Wirth (right) in 1958 presenting a new interpretive display in Yellowstone to Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton. Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 26  The "arrowhead logo," designed by Park Service architect Herbert Maier in 1951. *NPS Harpers Ferry Center*
Figures 27, 28  Contemporary brochure graphics describing Mission 66 planning and design.  
Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Center
Figure 29  Wirth sampling elk and bison meat at the American Pioneer Dinner that launched Mission 66. AAA official Russell Singer is serving. *Photo by Abbie Rowe, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 30  The cover of Our Heritage, the brochure presented at the American Pioneer Dinner that described Mission 66 for Congress and the public. NPS Harpers Ferry Center
From coast to coast Mission 66 means better vacations for you.

The month of June is beginning in 1966 a special group of ministers, congressmen, oil company representatives and others paid a visit to the National Parks. It is an unusual, I believe, for so many people to come together to view the nation's heritage in such a concentrated period of time.

The visit was the first step in the development of a major project to promote the National Parks and their heritage. The project will include a series of brochures and maps, as well as public service announcements on radio and television.

Figures 31, 32 Indications of close ties between Park Service officials and private corporations were evident during the Mission 66 era in contemporary oil company advertisements and sponsorships of brochures and maps. NPS Harpers Ferry Center
Figure 33  Central “plaza” in Yosemite Village, 1950s. Courtesy Yosemite National Park Archive
Figure 34 Degnan's Store, Yosemite Village (Spencer and Ambrose, 1958). Author's photo
Figure 35  The problem: ranger housing in Yellowstone in 1956. The caption read: "roofs leak, doors and windows not tight." Photo by Jean Speiser, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Center

Figure 36  The problem: traffic jam outside Yellowstone in 1956. Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figures 37, 38 Images taken by Mission 66 planners ca. 1955 showing new commercial services and facilities available in “gateway towns.” *NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 39  Master plan sheet signed by Wirth in 1952. The future Canyon Village, which had first been proposed in the 1930s, is shown in red to the right. Existing development around the Upper and Lower falls of the Yellowstone is shown at the left.

*Courtesy Yellowstone National Park Archives*
Figure 40  Pre-Mission 66 master plan sheet showing Canyon Village complex.

Courtesy Yellowstone National Park Archives
Figure 41  Park Service Director Wirth speaking at the dedication ceremony for Canyon Village, Yellowstone, in August, 1958. The project was already beset by difficulties.  *Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 42     Canyon Village, main lodge building. *Author’s photo*
Figure 43 Canyon Village, main lodge building. *Author's photo*
Figure 44  Canyon Village, motel units. *Author's photo*

Figure 45  Canyon Village, village store cafeteria. *Author's photo*
Figure 46 Pre-Mission 66 master plan sheet showing existing development around West Thumb, and proposed locations for what would become Grant Village. Courtesy Yellowstone National Park Archives
Figure 47, 48  Bridge Bay Marina, Yellowstone. *Author's photos*
Figure 49  Everglades, Shark Valley Observation Tower. *Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy National Park Service*
Figure 50  Illustration of a schematic, idealized visitor centre from the cover of a Mission 66 brochure. *Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Center*
Figures 51, 52  Zion Visitor Center under construction (above) and newly completed in 1960. Postwar construction technology helped create large, uninterrupted public spaces including an interpretive and arrival area (left) and an auditorium (centre). The wing to the right was administrative space. (WODC, Cecil Doty, 1960)  Courtesy Zion National Park Archives
Figures 53, 54  Zion Visitor Center. From the front, the administrative wing appeared to have only one story. The public entrance (below) was completely separate (as was the entire public experience of the building) from the administrative and maintenance areas to the left and behind the building.  *Courtesy Zion National Park Archives*
Figures 55, 56  Zion Visitor Center. Central interpretive space with contact station, window wall, and exterior terrace. *Courtesy Zion National Park Archives*
Figure 57  Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Rocky Mountain National Park (1967, Taliesen Associates). The Cor-Ten steel decorative façade also served a structural function.  
Author's photo
Figure 58  Standard “Mission 66 ranch,” as drawn in 1962. Courtesy NPS Technical Information Center, Denver
Figure 59  Mission 66 “ranch,” Yellowstone. Author’s photo

Figure 60  Mission 66 housing area, Yellowstone. Author’s photo
Figure 61  Panther Junction Visitor Centre, Big Bend (WODC, Cecil Doty, 1964).  
*Author’s photo*

Figure 62  Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend (1966).  *Author’s photo*
Figure 63  Main building, Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend (1966). Author's photo

Figure 64  Motel units, Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend (1966). Author's photo
Figure 65  Typical Mission 66 amphitheatre, Big Bend. *Author's photo*

Figure 66  Typical Mission 66 picnic shelter, Big Bend. *Author's photo*
Figures 67, 68  Glacier Bay Lodge (1965, John Morse and WODC). Photos Courtesy National Park Service
Figure 69  Sitka Visitor Centre (1964, John Morse, WODC). Author's Photo
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

Figure 70  Demolition site, St. Louis waterfront. *NPS Harpers Ferry Center*


Figure 71  Saarinen’s arch, St. Louis waterfront. *NPS Harpers Ferry Center*
Figures 72, 73  Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia. Downtown as photographed in 1950 and 1959.  *Courtesy National Park Service*
Figure 74    Mission 66 historical planning reports.  

NPS Harpers Ferry Center
Figure 75  Cover of inhouse Park Service magazine *In Touch*, early 1960s. *Courtesy Yellowstone National Park Archive*
Figure 76  Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, historic reconstruction, 1961. *Photo by Jack Boucher, Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 77  Period cartoon by Dave Bixby. *Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Center*

Figure 78  Wirth and Lawrence Merriam (seated, left to right) inspecting Yosemite plans on site in 1956. Superintendent John Preston is looking over Wirth's shoulder. *Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive*
Figure 79  Tioga Road today, approaching Tenaya Lake. Author's photo
Figure 80  Tioga Road, view from shore of Tenaya Lake to road cut across granite dome. *Author’s photo*

Figure 81  Tioga Road, view of fill along shore of Tenaya Lake. *Author’s photo*
Figure 82  Tioga Road, view of road cut across granite dome. Author's photo

Figure 83  Tioga Road traversing the high country of Yosemite. Author's photo
Figure 84  Olmsted Point on Tioga Road, showing construction scars. *Author's photo*

Figure 85  View from Olmsted Point. *Author's photo*
Figure 86  Park road, Big Bend National Park.  Courtesy Big Bend National Park
Figure 87  George Hartzog (left) and Horace Albright in 1966.  Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 88  Assistant Secretary Carver (second from right) arriving at Yosemite to give his “National Park Service mystique” speech. Hartzog is standing between Carver and Yosemite Superintendent Preston. Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive

Figure 89  Udall announcing Wirth’s retirement, and the appointment of Hartzog as Park Service director, at the 1963 Yosemite conference. Hartzog is seated behind him. Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 90  Wirth, shortly after his retirement in 1964, at the dedication of the Mather Homestead in Connecticut as a National Historic Landmark. Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive
Figure 91  Salt Pond Visitor Center (EODC, Biderman, 1964), Cape Cod National Seashore. Courtesy NPS Technical Information Centre, Denver

Figure 92  Salt Pond Visitor Center, Cape Cod National Seashore. Author's photo
Figure 93  Bathhouse, Cape Cod National Seashore. Author's photo

Figure 94  Overlook shelter, Cape Cod National Seashore. Author's photo
Figure 95  View from Provincelands Visitor Center, Cape Cod National Seashore.
Author’s photo

Figure 96  Provincelands Visitor Center parking lot, Cape Cod National Seashore.
Author’s photo
Figure 97  Typical Mission 66 amphitheatre, Cape Cod National Seashore. *Author's photo*

Figure 98  Typical Mission 66 comfort station, Cape Cod National Seashore. *Author's photo*
Figure 99  “PARKSCAPE, U.S.A.” commemorative stamp.  Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Center

Figure 100  Hartzog (with arms crossed) inspecting new women’s Park Service uniforms in 1972. Lon Garrison is standing to the left next to his wife Inger, who is one of the models.  Courtesy NPS Harpers Ferry Photo Archive