

AMERICANS OUTDOORS: PREPARING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

HAL SALWASSER, President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, and USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 2417, Washington, DC 20013

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We like to remind ourselves that, in a democracy, power comes from the people. And, just like in athletic teams, the power of individuals is magnified through well orchestrated coalitions striving for a common goal. For some reason, in our system of government coalitions have the magic to make things happen. So, don't take lightly the fact that this meeting brings together individuals from the full range of roles in wildlife conservation for one goal: the protection and wise use of the great wildlife resources of this country. Most importantly, it brings together professional wildlifers with the reasons for their craft, the citizens who demand healthy and productive lands and waters. Believe me, when research and development, education, production, management, marketing, and customers join forces and speak with one voice, everybody in Sacramento, Carson City, and Washington, DC, listens. The report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors talks repeatedly of a prairie fire of local actions and partnerships. That means all of us.

Some of you were probably not out of elementary school when the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) submitted its report to President Kennedy. Some of you may have provided counsel to that Commission. Certainly all us know the results of their recommendations: the National System of Wild and Scenic Rivers, the National Wilderness Preservation System, the National Trails System, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation among them. It has been 25 years since ORRRC, and much has changed: the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation is gone, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has suffered from federal deficits, and the trails and scenic rivers systems are woefully short of expectations. But most importantly, we are a different people in a different time. A new review was needed.

When political maneuvering stalled a Congressionally mandated review, as ORRRC had been, President Reagan called for a President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. Mr. Reagan asked the Commission to look ahead for a generation, find out what Americans want to do outdoors, what they care about, and then recommend actions to insure opportunities. The 15 member, bipartisan Commission covered the broad spectrum of outdoors recreation interests: a State parks director, a city parks director, the mayor of Palm Springs, Sheldon Coleman of lantern and canoe fame, Gil Grosvenor of the National Geographic Society, the chief executive of a bicycle company, spokespersons for

ORV's, wilderness, land trusts, concessioners, outfitters, and wildlife, and four members of Congress, each a leader of a key committee: Senator L. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, Senator Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming, Representative Morris Udall of Arizona, and Representative Barbara Vucanovich of Nevada. Governor Lamar Alexander of Tennessee chaired the Commission, guiding its philosophy, focus, and findings.

The Commission had a professional staff of 25, many from the major federal agencies with a recreation mission. ORRRC took three years and did a scholarly analysis of the situation in their time. This Commission had one year and went to the people. It was a profound difference. There were 18 open hearings around the country, strategic planning sessions, and solicited concept and option papers. Over 2,000 people provided direct and documented input. One man wrote a brief note and enclosed a photo of his daughter to remind the Commission who it was working for. The National Geographic Society financed a public opinion poll, and 20 distinguished conservation leaders served as senior advisors, providing frequent review and counsel. One hundred scientists conducted extensive literature reviews. Many States organized their own outdoors commissions and submitted reports. The result was a comprehensive and a reaching set of findings and recommendations.

There was much controversy and no small amount of attention from special interest groups and the press as the report took shape. Much of the criticism helped refine the report. This was especially true where draft recommendations were misunderstood, misconstrued, or ascribed a higher priority than the Commission intended. That told us to be clearer and more exact. But, as with all works of this nature, there remain points of fundamental disagreement between the Commission and various interests.

If you have followed the press reports you may have heard that the report was suppressed because it proposed increased federal land use control, federally mandated Greenways, large scale expansion of federal land systems, and funding recreation primarily through a \$1 billion Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Commission had much to say about these issues, but that is not exactly what they said.

I'll give you the perspective of one staff member on those and other topics. But first let us be clear on just what the Commission's Report is and is not. The report is advice to the President on what the Commission thinks is

important and how they think issues should be handled. It is not, by itself, a new federal recreation policy. Whatever that may eventually be will require far more work and political negotiation. The report is what the 15 Commissioners could agree to endorse. It is not all of the fine ideas and major options available for providing future recreation opportunities. Many of those are in the documentation of the Commission's work, others are yet to surface. When policies and programs are eventually refined those ideas will have their day. The report is also a committee product. It is not a concise, narrowly focused statement. It is to be read for ideas and guidance, and occasionally inspiration. So, what did the Commission find and recommend that most directly effects wildlife and wildlife based recreation?

FINDINGS

Americans are a people immensely proud of their diverse natural, cultural, and historic heritage. We love this land and share the conviction that a healthy environment is our legacy for the future. We have sacrificed much to keep it healthy. The outdoors and recreation are important parts of our daily lives. Just look at fish and wildlife as one indicator of the importance of a healthy outdoors.

Fishing, hunting, trapping, and observational uses of fish and wildlife are among the top outdoor activities in this country. They bring over 50 percent of the adult population of the country into close contact with our wild heritage every year. Habitats productive of rich and diverse fish and wildlife populations tend to be good indicators of overall environmental health, an important concern of most Americans. And recreation based on fish and wildlife is an economic powerhouse. An estimated \$27 billion annually flows through our economy from fish and wildlife based activities.

Between 1955, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted the first National Survey of Hunting and Fishing, and the last such survey in 1980, the numbers of American fishermen doubled, and the ranks of hunters grew by half. Ninety-three million people actively took part in some form of nonconsumptive recreation based on wildlife and fish in 1980.

Part of the high value of fish and wildlife recreation comes from the diversity of activities and the degree to which each individual is able to create his or her own unique experience. I would venture that many sportsmen can remember the stalk that produced the trophy elk photo, the perfect cast that brought a rainbow to the frying pan, or the call that brought a gobbler to a Thanksgiving table much as Reggie Jackson can remember how he pulled a high inside fastball for a ninth inning homer one October day ten years ago.

Fish and wildlife recreation is millions of Americans

practicing their art in countless ways in thousands of places. That diversity and the premium on individual creativity is part of the heritage of America's outdoors. The right to mold recreational experiences from the raw materials of natural abundance and individual imagination has almost been an unwritten part of our Bill of Rights. And there is no better example of the power of this right than hunting, fishing, trapping, and nature appreciation.

Least we get to thinking that recreation activities are just nice diversions to have around, let me call your attention to George Will's essay on the Democracy of Angling. It's about fishing, but I think you can read a broader message between the lines:

"Fishing leaves formative lines on the soft wax of a child's temperament. A boy who is painfully shy when required to say even a simple 'hello' to an adult in a social setting can suddenly become bold about calling out to adults in other boats or on opposite riverbanks to find out what lure they used to hook that pike. It is stirring to see one's son engaged in earnest conversation, on a basis of perfect equality, with a stranger five times his age, concerning the relative merits of squid slices and casting jigs as bass bait."

You should read in: backpacking, white-water rafting, birdwatching, wind-surfing, hunting, and so on.

But these outdoors we cherish are deteriorating. While great progress has occurred in wildlife and fish restoration and air and water quality, local problems continue to plague outdoor activities. Open spaces are disappearing or declining in accessibility, including wetlands, shorelines, countrysides. Wildlife and fish habitats continue to change into farms, residences, and reservoirs. Hundreds of species' very survival is threatened by human-induced changes. Americans want the good life that comes from economic development, and at the same time the natural amenities of times past. Everyone knows this can result in conflict and that resolution is often costly. And, Americans are willing to pay those costs. The job starts in communities through the actions of individuals working in coalitions and partnerships.

Outdoors quality, good facilities and services, and recreation have many values. They are part of our personal, community, and national goals. They support the creation of jobs and economic vitality. They are compatible parts of other land uses. They stimulate tourism. They help reduce crime. They lead to civic pride, social unity, and a sense of accomplishment. They are key parts of our education and culture.

But we are a dramatically changing people and these

Table 1. Major issues needing resolution.

Issue	Relative Score
Protection of natural resources and open space	131
Resolution of conflicting uses of lands and waters	130
Roles of public and private recreation providers	110
Liability	88
Access to open space	85
Funding management of resources and facilities: how much to spend	84
Sources of funding: where to get the dollars	69
Recognition of the benefits and values of recreation	67
Acquisition of open space	67
Land use planning	54

things no longer come free and easy. Population continues to grow at the rate of a new Houston and New Orleans combined per year (2.2 million). Of that growth, about 20 percent results from legal immigration. By the year 2000, 60 percent of the population will live in the South or West. The West has abundant public lands open for recreation, not so the South. Eventually, 80 percent of us will live in urban or suburban areas.

The over 65 age group will grow from 12 percent now to approximately 20 percent by the year 2030. Technology and innovation continually expand our activities and demands; windsurfing, hang gliding, snowmobiling, skiing, backpacking, and jogging all have boomed in unforeseen ways since the time of ORRRC. Leisure time has declined about eight hours per week since the 1970's, but we spend the same amount of time on recreation.

Retirement now comes at an earlier age and many of these folks are active outdoors. Ability to pay for recreation may be becoming polarized along with the shrinking middle class. This could signal an increased demand for upscale recreation for pay from the private sector, plus a corresponding need for publicly provided resources for lower income households. Overall income and the share of disposable personal income spent on recreation have increased. Approximately 6.5 percent of disposable personal income is spent on recreation.

We remain a mobile people, but the characteristics of our excursions are much different. The annual cross country family trip of the middle class in years past has given way to more frequent, shorter trips. Outdoors activities are far more diversified.

The most significant trends effecting recreation were predicted through the strategic planning sessions as: (1) changing social and demographic composition, aging, ethnic mix, education, work, and population centers, (2) energy availability and cost, (3) technological innovation and new products, (4) shifts in political power to the people and to local levels, (5) increased accountability of institutions and leaders to people, (6) concern for the

environment and threats to personal health and safety, (7) creation of partnerships between the public and private sectors, and (8) shifts in economic strengths away from manufacturing toward services and information. The major issues needing resolution were also identified (Table 1).

The land and water base for outdoors activities is vast and varied. One third of the lower 48 states is public land open for recreation, mostly in the West. Another third is private land that is forests and rangeland. It is potentially open for recreation and it's mostly in the East. Yet, with upwards of 80 percent of the people in urban settings we will need open spaces closer to home.

We will need a 3-point strategy on land, water, and resources: (1) more effective use of existing public lands and their resources for recreation, (2) greater incentives for private lands to become increasingly involved in supplying resources and opportunities, and (3) increased opportunities for outdoor activities in the communities, towns, and cities where people live.

THE PEOPLE

It all starts with people. At this time, still very close to the crafting of the Report, hence lacking the perspective that time brings, I would say that a major difference between this Commission and ORRRC is focus on people first, then resources. That is not to say that resources are secondary. Rather it reflects the view that people are what make things resources. People are the stewards of the land. And people are the threats to resource quality and quantity. People are what can make a difference.

Another difference between the Commission and ORRRC is the shift in responsibility from national and federal to local and community. Governor Alexander called it a prairie fire of community interest and action. These communities are not just geographic centers of population, but include communities of like interest, as all of us here today are a community of conservationists. The major recommendation is for communities to form coalitions around an outdoor theme: organize, have a

dream, set a course of action. The Commission calls on mayors and governors to start the prairie fire.

To an outsider looking in, the finding that Americans love their land may seem ironical given the evidence of abuse and vandalism. What seems to be missing is a commonly shared ethic, a Leopold-like sense of relationship with and stewardship for the land, and a sense of statesmanship towards others and their rights. The Report calls for development, community by community, of an outdoor ethic and its inculcation in the citizenry beginning in the elementary schools. As an example the report cites Project Wild and features the National Wildlife Federation Creed. The Commission also makes a pitch for resources to become a fourth R in Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and Resources.

Hands on experience is cited as a vital step in forming an ethic. Toward that end and to capture the American spirit of commitment to the land the Commission endorses community-by-community outdoor corps, like the California Conservation Corps, and increased use of volunteers. Just to summarize the section on people: they are the focus for change, they should organize locally around common interests, and they should be active in all aspects of conservation and facilities management.

THE RESOURCES

Obviously, people alone are not the whole solution to future needs. There must be resources for whatever people wish to do outdoors. Those resources must be healthy, safe, and accessible.

Environmental quality is the key to outdoor recreation. It is essential to fishing, boating, camping, hunting, hiking, you name it. There is no outdoor recreation activity that is not effected by the quality of the environment. America has made great progress in cleaning up air and water, and in sustaining wildlife and fisheries, but the job is not done. The Commission endorses strict enforcement of environmental quality laws and policies. It further identifies the need to strengthen nongame wildlife programs and to integrate the maintenance of biological diversity into environmental laws and policies.

Greenways

A major land resource recommendation of the Commission is for communities to establish Greenways: corridors of private and public recreation lands and waters to provide people with access to open spaces close to where they live, and to link together the rural and urban spaces in the American landscape. Greenways is not a federal system. Nor is it a federal land use control. It is a nationwide initiative based on local priorities and decisions. Many communities already have them, for

example, the East Bay Regional Parks in California, and the creek that runs through San Luis Obispo. We wish to spread the concept and speed up its use. The framework is river and stream courses, abandoned rail lines, utility corridors, wildlife migration routes, trails, paths, ridges, and floodplains. Greenways could include lands as diverse as California's Ranches for Wildlife, a Nature Conservancy Preserve, and a public equestrian trail. The common thread is that they offer recreation among their many purposes and values. They could have immense values for wildlife and fisheries.

The Commission believes that Greenways could be the impetus for local coalitions, that they could: provide Americans with access to open spaces and wildlands for the widest possible variety of outdoor activities close to home, conserve elements of the American landscape in all its diversity, build partnerships among private enterprise, landowners, and local governments for recreation and conservation, encourage local pride and celebration of accomplishment, diversify and strengthen local economics and life-styles, and just maybe, eventually form corridors that would link this nation's great parks, forests, and refuges into a vast and varied network for conservation and recreation. There is boldness and magic in Greenways.

The Commission also found a special need for protection and management of rivers, wetlands, and shorelines. Losses of these prime areas continue, with dire consequences for a healthy environment and recreation. Specifically, the Commission calls for ending federal subsidies for new development in floodplains, protection of at least 2000 new river segments by the year 2000, and increased protection of remaining wetlands.

Federal Lands and Waters

Nearly 1/3 of this country is managed by federal agencies in the public trust. Most of it is open for recreation along with other uses. Whole hearings were held on the topic of federal lands and waters and dozens of concept papers were submitted. As you are all aware there are great controversies waging over the uses and purposes of these lands: recreation and subsistence versus natural integrity in the National Parks, amenity values versus commodity benefits on the National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and Public Lands, white water versus flat water, preservation versus conservation, and so on. The Commission's action on federal lands reflects the difficulty of forging policy in the midst of controversy. The Report recommends that recreation should be accorded equal standing with other uses of federal lands, that quality of federal lands and resource management should be models for the world, and that Congressionally authorized land acquisition be expedited. The Commission also recommends an annual report on the

state of the federal estate, examination of existing laws and regulations to ensure that they provide for quality recreation, and a periodic review of how well federal land management policies and programs are working.

Hidden in the text of the federal lands chapter are some sleepers for wildlife and fish. For example, the recognition that the federal land systems are one of the world's greatest nature reserve systems, that wildlife and fish are among the highest and unique values on federal lands, that the contribution of recreation to local economies often outweighs commodity uses, that partnerships, as in fish and wildlife management, are sound ways of doing business, that Coordinated Resources Management Planning is a viable approach to conflict resolution, and that multiple-value may better describe most federal lands than multiple-use.

Federal lands have plenty of attention these days, and it will continue. So it is probably appropriate that the Commission expended most of its energy on other issues. Specifically it was on how to get things done.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Making it happen is the final major section of the report. It returns to the theme of partnerships and local coalitions of interests as the most important agent for action. It recognizes the tremendous potential of private land owners and private sector business and groups. On private lands the Commission recommends the removal of disincentives and the establishment of incentives, identifying enforcement of trespass and vandalism laws, resolution of liability problems, the conservation aspects of the Farm Bill, and coordination of government actions as some major needs. Interestingly, the Commission was silent on the existence of free access recreation on public lands as a disincentive to private land developments.

The Commission reiterated its concern for communities to identify their assets and plan growth around them. It cited the California Coastal Conservancy as an example.

The report saves for last what have been two of the hottest issues, institutions and paying the bills. Leadership is needed. There is no common voice for recreation: fewer than 10 percent of American cities have a policy statement recognizing recreation as being necessary for the public good, and less than 1 percent of charitable contributions go to conservation programs. A Congressionally authorized, private, non-profit outdoors institution to stimulate grass roots leadership, innovation, and excellence is recommended. A Congressional caucus and Presidential sub-cabinet council are also suggested. Innovative grants would be used along with general marketing of good ideas to help speed the prairie fire of local action.

Finally, the Report addresses funding. The

Commission recommends: (1) that local, state, and federal recreation and resources management agencies charge visitor fees to supplement regular appropriations, (2) that Congress strengthen existing laws that help fund recreation, such as Pittman-Robertson, Dingel-Johnson, Sikes Act, and Wallop-Breaux, (3) that Land and Water Conservation Fund be succeeded by a dedicated trust, providing a minimum of \$1 billion per year to help pay for federal, state, and local land acquisition and facility rehabilitation, and (4) that States establish similar trusts.

The bottom line is that meeting people's growing demand for more and better quality outdoor recreation opportunities needs more dollars than we are currently investing. People are willing to pay a greater share of the costs directly and that should be the strategy of choice. The example cited in the Report is the \$5 stamp now purchased by hunters and fishermen in New Mexico to go for habitat management on the Lincoln National Forest and adjoining BLM lands. Excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment are also noted. Unfortunately the Commission wants all the monies to go back to the collecting agencies for their management. As long as some resource uses, such as timber, grazing, and mining, return revenues to local, state, and federal treasuries they will be more equal than those that do not!

Some of the sleepers in recommendations on existing laws include the suggestions to direct receipts from the Reclamation Fund and excise taxes on motor fuels toward recreation projects.

SUMMARY

I mentioned at the outset a few misperceptions about the Commission's recommendations. Let me return to them as away of closing. Federal land use control is not a theme of the Commission's Report. Local land use control, determined community-by-community, is. Funding is a market basket of tools, beginning with user pay and strengthening existing mechanisms, but including a substantial trust that can generate \$1 billion per year. Greenways is the major land based resource recommendation, but not as a federal program. And land acquisition is recommended to resolve outstanding commitments, not as a means to greatly expand the federal estate.

This was a conservative commission that knew well the differences between conservation and preservation, between wise use and exploitation, and between a continuing legacy and short run expediency. I suspect they also knew that their job was to open the doors for dialogue and ask the right questions, rather than find final solutions. In the eyes of some they went too far, in others not far enough.

Americans have been about the business of conservation for over 100 years now. It should be clear

that no generation can fix for all time the roles, goals, and uses of this nation's assets. Such things are evolutionary, not constant. But each generation can, with foresight and care, continue to chart a course that reflects both current needs and future expectations.

It is in that spirit that the preamble to the Report says that the majesty of the great outdoors helped make America, and Americans, what we are today. We match a

national character of independence, of resourcefulness, and of generosity, with a land that challenges, inspires, rewards, and awes. The American outdoors tells of our condition. These recommendations reflect our shared commitment to keep that message strong and vital. The American outdoors, like all our basic freedoms, requires constant vigilance and nurture.