

# The Conservative Roots of American Conservationism

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*America's earliest conservationist thinkers, from Thomas Jefferson to Theodore Roosevelt, understood that protecting the nation's distinctive landforms and landscapes would conserve far more than the natural resources the land provides. As important as those resources remain, equally vital is the relationship to the land that conservationism facilitates, connecting citizens to their ancestors and endowing them with a strong sense of place while nurturing in them virtues of humility, industry, manliness, and hope. In other words, American conservationism tends not just to the material health and wealth of America's people, but to the health of its soul as well.*

American patriotism and trust in institutions—especially those of government—have plummeted in recent years, but last spring the Pew Research Center found an outlier: the National Park Service (NPS).<sup>1</sup> The park system enjoys more public support than any other federal agency or department and almost double the levels of support for the government's least popular agencies—the IRS and Department of Education.<sup>2</sup> More than 80 percent of Americans view the Park Service favorably, an approval rating that becomes more impressive in light of its consistency across the political spectrum.<sup>3</sup> Nor is support for the National Park Service all talk. Americans have flocked to the parks in record numbers over the past decade, making over 300 million recreation visits in 2022 alone.<sup>4</sup> The parks have become so popular

that Congress has held two hearings in as many years on overcrowding in the protected wilderness areas, investigating strategies that different parks have employed to manage their surging numbers of visitors.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the National Park Service is not immune to the problems that beset the modern administrative state. Like most administrative agencies, its size and scope have ballooned since its inception in 1916, with Presidents of both parties departing from the text of the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate more federally protected lands than the government can responsibly manage.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the unchecked growth of governmental bureaucracy leaves bureaus open to ideological capture in various ways, as the stubborn adherence of the Park Service and Department of Agriculture to destructive forest management practices rather than the sound Native American practices of controlled burns and timber harvests illustrates.<sup>7</sup> The infiltration of critical race theory at historic homes included on the Park Service's National Register of Historic Places further underscores the Park Service's vulnerability to ideological takeover.<sup>8</sup> As historians, friends, and critics of the park system reconsider its relationship to the shameful oppression of Native American individuals and tribes, study of the purpose of the national parks and the land they protect—to preserve the legacy of natives and immigrants alike—becomes all the more urgent.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the aforementioned threats to their integrity, national parks have nevertheless remained a source of common ground for Americans. What has protected them from Americans' otherwise pervasive loss of faith in its institutions and fellow citizens? Why do the national parks still draw hundreds of millions of Americans of all stripes to them even if visiting them means foregoing modern comforts and conveniences?

These questions raise a more fundamental one about the role of the land in shaping its citizens. It is often said that America is a credal nation, and this formulation emphasizes an important truth: America is uniquely defined in part by its commitment to the universal principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence. Yet those principles are rooted in human nature, and this lends a particular importance to Americans' relationship to nature—including the natural world of which we are a part—in shaping our self-understanding. Furthermore, as political scientist Carson Holloway has quipped, "America is not just an idea; it's a country."<sup>10</sup> That is, it is defined not only by its theoretical principles, but also by its particular history and way of life, its culture and its geography, its cities and its countryside. In fact, America's most cherished patriotic songs speak to the abiding affection its citizens have for the land, from its "purple mountain majesties" to its "oceans white with foam."<sup>11</sup> To better grasp what it means to be an American,

then, it is worth investigating the traditional citizen-shaping role of the country's natural landscapes.

This *First Principles* report begins with a brief assessment of the extraordinary breakdown of confidence in America's institutions today before turning to how national parks have been exempt from this trend. The anomaly they present would not have surprised the parks' forefathers, who understood the nation's land to play a foundational role in uniting Americans across generations and inculcating the virtues necessary to preserve democratic freedoms. In reconsidering their reflections, ranging from Thomas Jefferson's hopes for Natural Bridge and John Quincy Adams's vision for the first national forest to Theodore Roosevelt's appreciation for the West, Americans can learn not only what their natural landscapes meant for their ancestors, but also how they might help Americans flourish today.

## Crisis of Alienation

In his insightful 2020 book *A Time to Build*, Yuval Levin, Director of Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, identified the social crisis enveloping America today as one of alienation.<sup>12</sup> Americans feel alienated not only from the experts and elites who seem to rule them, but from one another as well.

In 2023, for example, the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory declared an epidemic of loneliness in America with individuals on average reporting fewer friends, smaller households, and less social engagement than they did just two decades ago.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, as Levin pointed out, and as the pandemic intensified, a growing number of everyday activities—from grocery shopping and exercise classes to office work and church services—have become virtual. Research conducted since the pandemic demonstrates that these behavioral trends persist, reducing the frequency of interactions with neighbors and fellow citizens outside of one's close circle of friends.<sup>14</sup> Habits like these further alienate Americans from one another and from a concrete sense of reality, leaving them “voracious for sources of belonging and meaning and for some sense of relation and place.”<sup>15</sup>

To restore this loss, Levin proposed a recommitment to America's atrophying institutions, which, when healthy, constitute “the durable forms of our common life.”<sup>16</sup> As political animals, human beings cannot flourish in isolation, but rather depend for their moral and intellectual development on established ways of life that order and orient them. Social and political institutions, ranging from the family and religious associations to professional guilds and Congress, provide this structure and purpose in

two important ways, Levin argued. In the first place, institutions endure. “That they are *durable* is essential,” he emphasized. “An institution keeps its shape over time, and so shapes the realm of life in which it operates.”<sup>17</sup> Rooted in structures and traditions that span generations, people within an institution thus gain the sense of relation and place that has become so hard to find in the Internet age.

Second, institutions order social life by establishing ethics and procedures by which things are done. That is, they form the people within them to behave in a certain way, habituating them to “carry out their intended work...appropriately, properly, and ethically.”<sup>18</sup> Levin distinguished this formative role from the indoctrination that has become so prevalent at most American universities and, increasingly, professional institutions.<sup>19</sup> Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training may “form” (or deform) an institution’s members to speak and act according to certain dogmas, but it does so in ways at best irrelevant to, and at worst at odds with, the ostensible missions of those institutions. When a school, for instance, turns students into ideologues intolerant of anything that contradicts their own beliefs, it undermines its own reason for existence: to pursue knowledge of the truth through teaching and learning.<sup>20</sup> Inconsistency with its primary purpose in turn sows distrust among the public—witness the low confidence Americans report having in the Department of Education.<sup>21</sup>

A healthy institution, by contrast, earns trust by forming members who contribute to the institution’s practical mission in an honest way, thereby forging citizens of integrity. “We trust an institution, then,” Levin concluded, “because it seems to have an ethic that makes the people within it more trustworthy.”<sup>22</sup> Strong institutions reduce alienation both by anchoring citizens in place and time and by fostering virtue and therefore trust between them.

Levin’s insight into institutions and what makes them trustworthy helps to illuminate why the National Park Service enjoys such remarkable favor among Americans today even as confidence in other institutions dwindles. As spaces that the earliest Americans traveled through, explored, and in some cases inhabited, the national parks connect present-day Americans to past generations and what Theodore Roosevelt described as “the rich heritage that is theirs.”<sup>23</sup> In this, they stand apart from other American institutions with long pedigrees, such as the presidency or the nation’s oldest universities, that have deliberately distanced themselves from this heritage, repudiating Founders and Founding documents alike.

The parks, overall, have not abandoned the task of conserving their heritage, the express purpose for which they were created. In carrying on this conservative enterprise, the parks provide some of the durability

missing from so much of modern life. Moreover, the features of nature thereby preserved by them—its beauty and grandeur as well as its ruggedness and might—form those who spend time in them, endowing them with the hardiness and humility that are essential for democratic citizenship. As early as the Founding—long before the Park Service made the land’s institutional character official—America’s leading thinkers and statesmen grasped the durable and formative nature of the country’s distinct landforms and landscapes.

## Landforms at the Founding

As the Industrial Revolution got underway, leading thinkers and statesmen of the Founding generation offered competing visions for the future of the American economy. In his influential *Report on Manufactures*, for example, which became the blueprint for the American System of the 19th century, Alexander Hamilton made the case for the encouragement of industry and commerce through governmental subsidies and protective tariffs.<sup>24</sup> The growth of manufacturing would expand the wealth of the nation, Hamilton argued, both by increasing workforce participation among those otherwise unsuited to “toils of the Country,” such as women and young children, and by enticing European manufacturers to emigrate to America for greater economic opportunity.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, equipping the nation with the means to manufacture weapons and materials necessary for its own defense would advance national security interests. In short, Hamilton and his Federalist supporters saw the growth of industry and commerce—and, by extension, the growth of cities—as “necessary to the perfection of the body politic.”<sup>26</sup>

## Jefferson’s Yeomanry

Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, countered that the perfection of *virtue* in the body politic required that America take care to maintain her robust countryside rather than rush to convert its open fields to crowded factories. Although his arguments highlighted the virtues fostered by working the land, they encompassed reasons for spending time in nature in general—to be formed according to the principles of nature and nature’s God.

“Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God,” Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, adding that their “breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”<sup>27</sup> Unlike those who depend on the “casualties and caprice of customers” to make a living,

farmers depend on the laws of nature, “looking up to heaven” and “to their own soil and industry” for their subsistence.<sup>28</sup> The land does not reward trendiness or smooth talking the way fellow traders or city patrons may. Rather, it responds only to careful attention to nature’s needs. Consequently, farmers, disincentivized to flatter or embellish, are better prepared by their way of life to cultivate honesty and independence of spirit.

Of course, farmers do engage in commerce, as Jefferson himself acknowledged, arguing that it would be better for American farmers to export surplus produce to Europe in exchange for foreign manufactures than it would be to multiply and build up American cities into manufacturing centers.<sup>29</sup> Hence, Harry Jaffa, an American political philosopher and scholar of the American Founding, criticized Jefferson’s notion of the husbandman’s independence from the casualties and caprice of customers as mistaken, noting that “agriculture in the United States, then as now, has been emphatically a commercial operation.”<sup>30</sup>

The virtue Jefferson identified with working the land ran deeper than the aristocratic disdain for commerce that Jaffa attributed to him, however. For Jefferson, husbandry enkindled godliness by making visible man’s ultimate dependence on God’s creation. Through their close relationship with the land, farmers could see that the true source of man’s subsistence—his being—was neither himself nor his fellow man, but nature’s God. While the manufacturer may manipulate his machine and the seller of manufactured goods may manipulate his customer, the farmer can neither persuade nor compel the rain to fall from the heavens. His “substantial and genuine virtue” rested in this recognition.

Jefferson gave further support to this virtue, in fact, in his condemnation of the institution of slavery, which directly preceded and therefore qualified his praise of agriculture.<sup>31</sup> In contradistinction to husbandry, slavery destroyed morals, spawning despotic masters who, in violating slaves’ natural liberties that are “the gift of God,” defied both nature and nature’s God.<sup>32</sup> Jefferson underlined this rejection when he denounced slave owners’ refusal to “labour in the earth,” looking not “to heaven” for their subsistence but to another man’s labor.<sup>33</sup> Far from including slave owners like himself among “the chosen people of God,” then, Jefferson’s account, if anything, implied that such favor belonged to slaves, whose liberation “may become probable by supernatural interference.”<sup>34</sup>

Jefferson’s caution against transforming America into a “mere city of London” stemmed not from aristocratic pretention or desire to preserve the environment for its own sake, then, but from a conviction that the earth was a gift for man’s body and soul.<sup>35</sup> “The earth is given as a common stock for man

to labour and live on,” Jefferson wrote in a letter to James Madison, lamenting the concentration of property in France in “a very few hands,” which excluded the numerous poor from its bounds.<sup>36</sup> He hoped that widespread land ownership in the U.S., by contrast, would prevent such marginalization, permitting every man to exercise his “fundamental right to labour the earth.”<sup>37</sup> In a similar way, the conservation of public lands preserves the “common stock” in part by giving all citizens access to land not only through park visits, but also through leases for productive uses.<sup>38</sup> By facilitating man’s reliance on nature and nature’s God, along with the virtues that this reliance fosters, land conservation facilitates republican government.

### Intergenerational Obligation

Indeed, in September 1789, just six months after the ratified U.S. Constitution went into effect, Jefferson, then the U.S. Minister to France, wrote to Madison about republican self-government in terms of land conservation. Questioning whether one generation of citizens can rightfully constrain future generations by its actions, Jefferson posed a principle he deemed self-evident: “that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living.”<sup>39</sup> From this, he argued that no property owner has the right to “eat up the usufruct of the lands for several generations to come,” for “then the lands would belong to the dead, and not to the living, which would be the reverse of our principle.”<sup>40</sup> Jefferson’s argument resembles one that conservationists would later give about the duty to conserve land and natural resources for the sake of future generations who might need them.<sup>41</sup>

Madison, however, in his response to Jefferson, qualified the latter’s principle: “If the earth be the gift of nature to the living their title can extend to the earth in its natural State only.”<sup>42</sup> Hence, any improvements that the dead have made to the land do indeed “form a charge against the living who take the benefit of them.”<sup>43</sup> Madison’s qualification added another dimension to Jefferson’s proto-conservationist argument. The living not only should take measures to conserve and improve the land for the sake of future generations, but also have an obligation to conserve the marks made by the dead, whose exploration and cultivation of the land turned it into a place to call home.

Jefferson’s and Madison’s debate over intergenerational obligation with respect to the land and its resources anticipated concerns that would preoccupy generations of conservationists in the centuries after their deaths. In this way, their arguments provide a helpful framework for analyzing the tradition of American conservationist thought that undergirds the National

Park Service. From the creation of the first state and national parks in the 19th century to the environmentalist visions of Wendell Berry in the 21st century, conservationism in America has been animated by this two-pronged sense of intergenerational interdependence. Conserving our natural inheritance links us to our ancestors as much as it links us to our descendants.

## Natural Bridge

The first state and national parks were not formally established until the late 19th century, but one glimpses a precursor to them in Jefferson's vision for Natural Bridge, a limestone arch located in Rockbridge County, Virginia. Dazzled by what he called "the most sublime of Nature's works," Jefferson purchased the natural formation from King George III in 1774.<sup>44</sup> Yet even while its private owner, Jefferson understood Natural Bridge to belong to the public and lamented that few Virginians knew it was there. Describing the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains as "worth a voyage across the Atlantic," he noted that "here, as in the neighborhood of the natural bridge, are people who have passed their lives within half a dozen miles, and have never been to survey these monuments of a war between rivers and mountains, which must have shaken the earth itself to its center."<sup>45</sup> Jefferson nonetheless hoped that the public would come to appreciate these landforms as monuments, writing toward the end of his life that he viewed Natural Bridge "in some degree as a public trust, and would on no consideration permit the bridge to be injured, defaced or masked from public view."<sup>46</sup>

Jefferson's enthusiasm for Natural Bridge and its preservation sprung not just from its pleasing scenery, but also from the particular relationship to nature it facilitated. For Jefferson, the sublime arch inspired humility and awe, making man aware of his relative smallness in the face of the tremendous time and force that must have been necessary to craft something so grand.<sup>47</sup> By the same token, the distinct design found in Natural Bridge revealed nature's purposiveness and partnership with man, "afford[ing] a public and commodious passage over a valley, which cannot be crossed elsewhere for a considerable distance."<sup>48</sup> As American political philosopher Michael Zuckert put it in his account of Jefferson's description, "The bridge stands between the natural and the human and connects them."<sup>49</sup>

In this way, Jefferson understood natural monuments like Natural Bridge to connect man to his origins even as they manifested concern for his progeny. "The first glance of this scene hurries our senses into the opinion that this earth has been created in time," Jefferson wrote of the impression

left by the Blue Ridge Mountains.<sup>50</sup> By calling to mind the history of creation, these landforms suggest the role of a Creator and thus a teleological understanding of nature, one that undergirds the Declaration of Independence. When Jefferson contemplated the nature of the bridge, “springing, as it were, up to heaven,” he echoed the Declaration’s portrait of man, whose nature orients him to pursue the freedom, flourishing, and blessedness that happiness consists in.<sup>51</sup> In America, a nation founded on the principles of nature, natural monuments become national monuments.

## The Frontier’s Education

In many ways, Hamilton’s vision of an urban America absorbed in manufacturing and commercial pursuits overtook Jefferson’s rural ideals. Nevertheless, over the next century or so, the Hamiltonian ambition that drove skilled manufacturers to America for economic opportunity likewise propelled other Americans “to seek a fortune in the wilderness,” as Tocqueville put it.<sup>52</sup> Allured by land and the opportunity to build something of their own, pioneers headed out West, where the horizons remained unobstructed and the rugged landscapes continued to mold characters in the ways Jefferson described. In his biographical account of 19th-century conservationist John Wesley Powell, nature writer and conservationist Wallace Stegner argued that this mold amounted to a “Western education” that produced men of such nobility and renown as Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, and John Muir as well as lesser-known figures like Powell, who surveyed much of the American West and fought for its conservation.<sup>53</sup> Like Jefferson’s yeomanry, these self-reliant frontiersmen learned the power and providence of nature, the wildness of which instilled in them diligence and thrift as well as hope.

Days on a frontier settlement were long and hard, requiring all hands on deck just to survive, but as Stegner pointed out, the necessities of the wilderness bred industry and self-reliance along with interdependence within families and communities.<sup>54</sup> Accustomed to making use of available resources, Western boys (and girls) learned to educate themselves, starting with examining their natural surroundings. “Every blade of grass is a study,” Lincoln himself remarked, “and to produce two, where there was but one, is both a profit and a pleasure.”<sup>55</sup> Both Muir’s and Powell’s interests in natural history began in the backwoods around their family farms, where they hunted for specimens and studied “nature in its intimate variety,” Stegner noted, and this same resourcefulness characterized the book-borrowing that led Lincoln to Shakespeare and Powell to Hume.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, the mystery and magnitude of the open country they worked and explored induced wonder and hope for renewal.<sup>57</sup> In accounts of his travels to Alaska, Muir described what is now Glacier Bay National Park in terms of its promise of new beginnings. Writing of the “earth-sculpturing, landscape-making” work of the glaciers, Muir noted that “here, too, one learns that the world, though made is yet being made; that this is still the morning of creation; that mountains long conceived are now being born.”<sup>58</sup> The “invisibly slow” flow of the glaciers through “wide, high-walled valleys like Yosemite” called to mind for Muir not just the work of creation, but the ongoing nature of it.<sup>59</sup> In America, the Earth’s story is still being written, and if nature, though ancient, can begin anew, then perhaps man can too. Stegner, writing to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission in 1960, argued that the wilderness teaches Americans that they, too, are “part of the geography of hope.”<sup>60</sup> Schoolhouses on the frontier may have been few and far between, but the “homemade education” the natural environment facilitated formed Americans just the same.

### Roosevelt’s Strenuous Life

Unlike Lincoln, Muir, and Powell, Theodore Roosevelt was born and raised in New York City. Yet as a young man, he came to feel that he was “at heart as much a westerner as an easterner,” and this love for the open country and the formation it gave him motivated him to fight for its conservation.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, Roosevelt “set in motion most of the conservation agenda that [would] define the first half of the twentieth century,” as environmental historian William Cronon put it.<sup>62</sup> During his nearly eight years as President, Roosevelt oversaw the creation of five National Parks, four big game refuges, and 51 bird reservations, not to mention his work to conserve the nation’s forestry and waterways.<sup>63</sup> “At a time when more Americans were clustering in cities,” explains political scientist and Roosevelt scholar Jean Yarbrough, “these spaces would offer spiritual refreshment as well as opportunities to strengthen the manly virtues” that Roosevelt so highly esteemed.<sup>64</sup> Like Jefferson’s, Roosevelt’s efforts were motivated by a deep concern for the national character.

Though he grew up a city dweller, Roosevelt developed a love for the outdoors and the study of natural history early on—a love that was encouraged by his family’s summers in the country and adventures abroad.<sup>65</sup> It was also shaped by his sickness and timidity as a child, which he learned to

overcome by undergoing vigorous exercise.<sup>66</sup> Activities like horseback-riding, hunting, and rowing trained him to deny bodily desires for comfort and ease and thereby likewise strengthened his mind and soul.<sup>67</sup> When he headed out West to try his hand at cattle-ranching, Roosevelt found that “life in the open country” provided even greater opportunity for virtue.<sup>68</sup> The harsh climate, scattered population, and scarcity of supplies taught man “self-reliance, hardihood, and the value of instant decision,” all virtues that Roosevelt became convinced no healthy nation could do without.<sup>69</sup> “The dweller in cities has less chance than the dweller in the country to keep his body sound and vigorous,” Roosevelt reflected in his autobiography. “But he can do so, if only he will take the trouble.”<sup>70</sup>

Thus, when as Governor of New York he called for greater preservation measures for the Adirondacks and Catskills, he did so in terms of their value to the character of the people who enjoy them.<sup>71</sup> “Men who go into the wilderness,” he noted, “receive a benefit which can hardly be given by even the most vigorous athletic games.”<sup>72</sup> While games to a certain extent control for the environment, as Roosevelt’s allusions to wrestling mats, prize rings, and boxing gloves suggest, the conditions of the wilderness cannot be managed in the same way, as his accounts of the Dakota cattle roundups depict.<sup>73</sup> An unexpected thunderstorm that spooked the herd one night, for example, turned into a nearly 40-hour ride in the saddle for Roosevelt that included a surprise stumble “off a cut bank into the Little Missouri.”<sup>74</sup>

Man emerges from this intimacy with nature’s uncertainty with a “cool-headedness,” Roosevelt argued, that prepares him not only for action, but also for contemplation.<sup>75</sup> “The loneliness, under the vast empty sky,” he described, “and the silence, in which the breathing of the cattle sounded loud, and the alert readiness to meet any emergency which might suddenly arise out of the formless night, all combined to give one a sense of subdued interest.”<sup>76</sup>

As President, Roosevelt endeavored to give a glimpse of this experience to his own Cabinet members through afternoon “point-to-point walks” down and across the Potomac, and he even implemented 50-mile walking tests for all military officers.<sup>77</sup> But the national parks, he hoped, would make his experience out West accessible to the American people at large. “I have always thought it was a liberal education to any man of the East to come West,” he remarked at Yellowstone. Through the parks, he added, this education is made available to all Americans “with small regard for what their fortune may be.”<sup>78</sup>

## Attachment to the Land

The national parks inculcate in American citizens not just virtues of manliness and humility, but what environmental historian William Cronon calls “the love of place, the love of nation that the national parks are meant to stand for.”<sup>79</sup> Traveling to Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Canyon, and Yosemite National Park in the spring of 1903, President Roosevelt emphasized this sense of place when he spoke of the singularity of the wonders preserved in each park. At the time, great numbers of Europeans were crossing the Atlantic to see America’s extraordinary heritage, he noted at the laying of the cornerstone of the gateway to Yellowstone, adding that “[t]he geysers, the extraordinary hot springs, the lakes, the mountains, the canyons, and cataracts unite to make this region something not wholly to be paralleled elsewhere on the globe.”<sup>80</sup>

In safeguarding landscapes and species unique to America, the national parks help to endow Americans with an attachment to their fatherland, providing the durability that Levin argues is essential to healthy institutions and societies, but this attachment is one that is particularly difficult to cultivate in a democracy where egalitarian estate laws undermine attempts to accumulate and preserve tracts of family land. John Quincy Adams pondered this difficulty amid his own endeavors to plant orchards and forests that he hoped would shelter and shade his family for centuries to come.<sup>81</sup> Aware that growing and maintaining “long-lived trees” would depend on successive generations keeping and tending the family property, Adams feared that his personal planting projects might be futile.<sup>82</sup> “I am yet convinced that much useful service to the Country might thus be performed, by the raising of forest trees,” Adams wrote in his diary; “but it would require a permanency of property, not adapted to our political Institutions and Laws; with us each Generation looks only to itself.”<sup>83</sup>

When Alexis de Tocqueville traveled through America in 1831, he described the effects of these laws by comparing them to their aristocratic counterparts. While aristocratic laws of entail and primogeniture kept family estates intact, passing them down to the firstborn of each generation, democratic laws permit “equal partition of the father’s goods among all the children” so as to foster the social mobility and widespread property ownership necessary for democratic self-government.<sup>84</sup> These salutary effects come at the expense of family land, which “must constantly be diminished and in the end disappear entirely.”<sup>85</sup> In aristocracies, where families remain in the same place for centuries, Tocqueville observed, men develop deep affection not only for the land, but for its

past and future occupants as well. Democratic mobility, by contrast, not only “make[s] each man forget his ancestors,” he argued, “but hides his descendants from him.”<sup>86</sup>

## National Parks

The national parks mitigate this tendency. By connecting Americans to distinctive tracts of land that generations of their ancestors have enjoyed, the parks cultivate a sense of place for those who are disconnected from family plots. Roosevelt conveyed the closeness to the nation’s past that the parks make available when at Yellowstone he noted that “[h]ere all the wild creatures of the old days are being preserved,” enabling Americans “to insure to themselves and to their children and to their children’s children much of the old-time pleasure of the hardy life of the wilderness and of the hunter in the wilderness.”<sup>87</sup>

In showcasing ancient beauties, the parks also challenge other democratic traits that Tocqueville discerned among Americans—habits of mind that tend to dismiss what is old and prefer what is new.<sup>88</sup> Roosevelt gave voice to this challenge during his visit to the Grand Canyon, urging his audience to “[l]eave it as it is. You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it.”<sup>89</sup>

Going against the grain of both democratic individualism and presentism, the parks nurture Americans’ appreciation for nature, history, and place. In doing so, the parks highlight democracy’s strengths even as they address some of its weaknesses, for as citizens of a democratic republic, Americans can take not only pride but ownership in the land the parks preserve. Whereas British citizens may visit Buckingham Palace and its gardens at the pleasure of the reigning monarch, Americans, Roosevelt explained, enjoy the national parks “with the sense on the part of every visitor that it is in part his property.”<sup>90</sup>

Having been set aside by Americans, through their representatives, “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” as both the act establishing Yellowstone National Park and the Roosevelt Arch at the park’s entrance read, national parks manifest America’s commitment to self-government.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, in addition to reminding Americans of their nation’s beauty, national parks also remind them of their nation’s principles. “I cannot too often repeat,” Roosevelt concluded his speech at the nation’s first national park, “that the essential feature in the present management of the Yellowstone Park, as in all similar places, is its essential democracy.”<sup>92</sup>

The parks' essential democracy provides an education in itself, in fact. Their low entrance fees—ranging from \$10 to \$20 per person per week—and opportunities for camping and picnicking make the cost of trips to the parks a fraction of the cost of visiting America's fanciest restaurants, shops, or beaches.<sup>93</sup> As a result, visitors are likely to encounter fellow travelers from all socioeconomic levels and walks of life, a reality they cannot easily escape by staring at their phones thanks to the sparse cell service in most parks. Just as time spent in the parks reminds us of our vulnerability in the face of nature's severity, the company of fellow citizens offers an opportunity to engage in the art of association, helping one another in times of need. Time spent in the parks' wilderness reminds us not only of the grand inheritance conserved by our ancestors, but also of the political association that makes such conservation possible.

## Conservationism's Lessons for Today's Environmentalism

America's earliest conservationist thinkers, from Jefferson to Roosevelt, understood that protecting the nation's distinctive landforms and landscapes would conserve far more than the natural resources the land provides. As important as those resources remain, equally vital is the relationship to the land that conservationism facilitates, connecting citizens to their ancestors and endowing them with a strong sense of place while nurturing in them virtues of humility, industry, manliness, and hope. In other words, American conservationism tends not just to the material health and wealth of America's people, but to the health of its soul as well.

The more technocratic modern life has become, the more pressing is Americans' need for this education that wilderness provides. Nature writer and conservationist Wendell Berry made this argument in a 1970 essay inspired by his efforts to save Kentucky's Red River Gorge from the state and federal governments' proposed dam.<sup>94</sup> "Whether [man] intends it or not," Berry wrote, "the wilderness receives him as a student," teaching him "to live within his own personal limits, for he has left behind the machines and the devices that amplify his power."<sup>95</sup> Among these limits are limits to the scope of man's knowledge. What Berry calls the "engineer's assumption" implies that with enough data, one can know and control something. The wilderness exposes such knowledge as an illusion because its nature is "not just spatial in dimension, but temporal as well."<sup>96</sup> Time spent in the wilderness therefore engenders intellectual humility. As Berry concluded in his 2012 Jefferson Lecture, "[t]he reality that is responsibly manageable by human intelligence is much nearer in scale to a small rural community or urban neighborhood than to the 'globe.'"<sup>97</sup>

Hence, Berry has critiqued the modern environmentalist movement, which not only claims intellectual certainty where ambiguities abound, but insists that global governance is needed to avert the destruction it misrepresents as certain.<sup>98</sup> When “[t]he concept of country, homeland, dwelling place becomes simplified as ‘the environment,’” Berry wrote in *The Unsettling of America*, “[w]e have given up the understanding—dropped it out of our language and so out of our thought—that we and our country create one another, depend on one another, are literally part of one another.”<sup>99</sup>

As environmentalists place their hopes in international agreements and regulations to save the Earth, they abandon and undermine the conservationist understanding of the land as providing the sense of place and durability that Levin argues our modern age so desperately needs. At the same time, they dismiss the formation of character that conservationism traditionally embraced as its purpose, instead advocating for policies that positively undermine virtue: discouraging family formation, for example, and incentivizing consumerism of the newest cars and appliances.<sup>100</sup> To recover the fertile relationship between man and nature that American conservationism once fostered, we should heed the wisdom of its words and wilderness.

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## Endnotes

1. J. Baxter Oliphant and Andy Cerda, "Americans Feel Favorably About Many Federal Agencies, Especially the Park Service, Postal Service and NASA," Pew Research Center, March 30, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/03/30/americans-feel-favorably-about-many-federal-agencies-especially-the-park-service-postal-service-and-nasa/> (accessed January 8, 2024). See, by contrast, Lydia Saad, "Historically Low Faith in U.S. Institutions Continues," Gallup, July 6, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508169/historically-low-faith-institutions-continues.aspx> (accessed January 8, 2024); Brian Kennedy, Alec Tyson, and Cary Funk, "Americans' Trust in Scientists, Other Groups Declines," Pew Research Center, February 15, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2022/02/15/americans-trust-in-scientists-other-groups-declines/> (accessed January 8, 2024); and Daniel A. Cox, M. Anthony Mills, Ian R. Banks, Kelsey Eyre Hammond, and Kyle Gray, "America's Crisis of Confidence: Rising Mistrust, Conspiracies, and Vaccine Hesitancy After COVID-19," American Enterprise Institute, Survey Center on American Life, September 28, 2023, <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/americas-crisis-of-confidence-rising-mistrust-conspiracies-and-vaccine-hesitancy-after-covid-19/> (accessed January 8, 2024).
2. While 42 percent of Americans view the IRS favorably, 51 percent view it unfavorably. Similarly, while 45 percent view the Department of Education favorably, 47 percent view it unfavorably. Oliphant and Cerda, "Americans Feel Favorably About Many Federal Agencies, Especially the Park Service, Postal Service and NASA."
3. The Pew survey reported that 81 percent of Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party and 84 percent of Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party view the National Park Service favorably. *Ibid.*
4. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "About Us: Visitation Numbers," last updated February 27, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/visitation-numbers.htm> (accessed January 8, 2024), and Julia Haines, "Visitors Flock to Less Popular Parks," *U.S. News & World Report*, April 21, 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2023-04-21/visitors-flock-to-less-popular-parks> (accessed January 8, 2024).
5. Archived webcast of *Hearing to Review the Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Use Management*, Subcommittee on National Parks, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate, July 28, 2021, <https://www.energy.senate.gov/hearings/2021/7/national-parks-subcommittee-hearing> (accessed January 8, 2024), and webcast of *Oversight Hearing on Overcrowding in National Parks*, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives, December 6, 2022, <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=412682> (accessed January 8, 2024).
6. For a brief history of the Department of the Interior and its nine bureaus, see William Perry Pendley, "Department of the Interior," in *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, ed. Paul Dans and Steven Groves (Washington: The Heritage Foundation, 2023), pp. 517-544, [https://thf\\_media.s3.amazonaws.com/project2025/2025\\_MandateForLeadership\\_FULL.pdf](https://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf); for a history of the Antiquities Act and its use, see Carol Hardy Vincent, "National Monuments and the Antiquities Act," Congressional Research Service *Report for Members and Committees of Congress* No. R41330, updated January 2, 2024, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41330.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2024). See also Philip H. Devoe, "The Distant Conservative Heritage of the National Park Service," *National Review*, August 25, 2017, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/08/national-park-service-federal-lands-over-protection/> (accessed January 8, 2024).
7. For a brief history of the management of U.S. national forests, see Julian Morris, "Devastating Fires Show Forest Management Reforms Are Badly Needed," Reason Foundation *Policy Brief*, September 1, 2015, <https://reason.org/policy-brief/forest-fires-management-reform/> (accessed January 8, 2024). For policy proposals for reforming forest and wildfire management, see Daren Bakst, "Department of Agriculture," in *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, p. 308; Jarrett Stepman, "Lesson from Canadian Fires: We Need Better Forest Management, Not Utopian Fantasies," *The Daily Signal*, June 8, 2023, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2023/06/08/lesson-from-canadian-fires-we-need-better-forest-management-not-utopian-fantasies/>; Jarrett Stepman, "California and the West Burn Again," *The Daily Signal*, August 24, 2021, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2021/08/24/california-and-the-west-burn-again/>; and Nicolas Loris, "Look to Native Americans' Forest Management for Better Wildfire Abatement," *The Daily Signal*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2020/11/16/look-to-native-americans-forest-management-for-better-wildfire-abatement/>.
8. Brenda M. Hafera, "A Tale of Three Presidential Houses: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 260, July 27, 2022, [https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/report/tale-three-presidential-houses-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/#\\_ftnref120](https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/report/tale-three-presidential-houses-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/#_ftnref120).
9. See Elliott West, *Continental Reckoning: The American West in the Age of Expansion* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2023); Bradley J. Birzer, "A Panoramic View of the West," *Law & Liberty*, December 13, 2023, <https://lawliberty.org/book-review/a-panoramic-view-of-the-west/> (accessed January 8, 2024); David Treuer, "Return the National Parks to the Tribes," *The Atlantic*, May 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/05/return-the-national-parks-to-the-tribes/618395/> (accessed January 8, 2024); and Ken Burns, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, Public Broadcasting Service, 2009.
10. Carson Holloway, "The Meaning of American Citizenship," Heritage Foundation *First Principles Report* No. 74, June 2019, <https://www.heritage.org/civil-society/report/the-meaning-american-citizenship>.
11. The lyrics quoted come from "America the Beautiful," a poem published by Katharine Lee Bates in 1895 and later put to music by Samuel A. Ward, and "God Bless America," written and composed by Irving Berlin in 1918. For reflections on both songs, along with other patriotic songs in which America's landforms feature prominently, see *What So Proudly We Hail: The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song*, ed. Amy A. Kass, Leon R. Kass, and Diana Schaub (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2011).
12. Yuval Levin, *A Time to Build: From Family and Community to Congress and the Campus, How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

13. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*, 2023, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2024).
14. Caitlin Gilbert and Lindsey Bever, "Gyms, Pets and Takeout: How the Pandemic Has Shifted Daily Life," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/interactive/2023/pandemic-changes-daily-life/> (accessed January 8, 2024).
15. Levin, *A Time To Build*, p. 133.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 155–156.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
21. See notes 1 and 2, *supra*.
22. Levin, *A Time to Build*, p. 31.
23. Theodore Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 317, <https://archive.org/details/outdoor-pastimes-of-an-american-hunter-1905/page/n11/mode/2up> (accessed January 8, 2024).
24. Alexander Hamilton, *Report on the Subject of Manufactures*, December 5, 1791, U.S. National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-10-02-0001-0007> (accessed January 8, 2024). For a discussion of Hamilton's influence on 19th-century American political economy, see Wells King, "Rediscovering a Genuine American System," *American Compass*, *Rebooting the American System*, May 4, 2020, <https://americancompass.org/rediscovering-a-genuine-american-system/> (accessed January 8, 2024).
25. Hamilton, *Report on the Subject of Manufactures*.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), pp. 164–165.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
29. "It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there [in Europe], than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles.... The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body." *Ibid.*
30. Harry V. Jaffa, "Agrarian Virtue and Republican Freedom: An Historical Perspective," in *Goals and Values in Agricultural Policy*, ed. Earl O. Heady (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1961), p. 58.
31. In her book on American cities, Jane Jacobs rightly pointed out the hypocrisy in "Jefferson's intellectual rejection of cities of free artisans and mechanics, and his dream of an ideal republic of self-reliant rural yeoman—a pathetic dream for a good and great man whose land was tilled by slaves." Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 444. Jefferson was aware of this hypocrisy, however, as he made clear in his praise of the industry and humility of small farmers over against their lazy, despotic, slave-owning counterparts.
32. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 162–163.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 165. "With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labour." *Ibid.*, p. 163.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
35. In a letter to William Crawford, Jefferson granted that "[t]he exercise, by our own citizens, of so much commerce as may suffice to exchange our superfluities for our wants, may be advantageous for the whole. But it does not follow, that with a territory so boundless, it is the interest of the whole to become a mere city of London.... The agricultural capacities of our country constitute its distinguishing feature; and the adapting our policy and pursuits to that, is more likely to make us a numerous and happy people, than the mimicry of an Amsterdam, a Hamburg, or a city of London." "Thomas Jefferson to William H. Crawford, 20 June 1816," U.S. National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-10-02-0101#:~:text=every%20society%20has%20a%20right,that%20we%20want%20no%20citizens%2C%20%26> (accessed January 8, 2024).
36. "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 28 October 1785," U.S. National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-08-02-0534> (accessed January 8, 2024). Jefferson's argument resembles that of St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, in which he defends the possession of private property as consistent with the natural law so long as man "possess[es] external things, not as his own, but as common, so that, to wit, he is ready to communicate them to others in their need." See "Question 66. Theft and robbery," *New Advent*, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3066.htm> (accessed January 10, 2024).
37. "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 28 October 1785."
38. For more on the Bureau of Land Management's legal responsibility to issue leases for multiple—including productive—uses, see Pendley, "Department of the Interior."

39. "Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 6 September 1789," U.S. National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-15-02-0375-0003> (accessed January 8, 2024).
40. Ibid.
41. Applying these principles to the realm of constitutional law, Jefferson concluded that no generation has the right to impose its laws on generations to come but should instead leave future generations free to rewrite the constitution and laws for itself. Ibid.
42. "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 4 February 1790," U.S. National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-13-02-0020> (accessed January 8, 2024).
43. Ibid.
44. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 24, and Rebecca Bowman, "Natural Bridge," Thomas Jefferson's Monticello: Research & Education: Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia," <https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/natural-bridge/> (accessed January 8, 2024).
45. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 19–20.
46. "Thomas Jefferson to William Caruthers, 15 March 1815," U.S. National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-08-02-0272> (accessed January 8, 2024).
47. Describing the experience of approaching the edge of Natural Bridge, Jefferson writes, "You involuntarily fall on your hands and feet, creep to the parapet and peep over it." He depicts a similar experience of viewing the Blue Ridge Mountains, which leave signs of the "most powerful agents of nature." Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 24–25, 19.
48. Ibid., p. 25.
49. While Zuckert takes Jefferson's account of Natural Bridge to convey "two very different views" of nature—one suggesting nihilism with the other pointing to divine providence—I find consistency in the account's inducing humble awareness of the beauty and longevity of a cosmos of which man is just a part. Michael P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic: Studies in the Foundation of the American Political Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 62.
50. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 19.
51. Ibid., p. 25, and "Declaration of Independence" in *The Founders' Constitution, Vol. I*, ed. Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), pp. 9–11.
52. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 267–272.
53. See Stegner's biography of John Wesley Powell, whose upbringing out West "is less interesting as a personal than as a regional experience." Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1953), pp. 8–21.
54. Here Stegner echoes not only Jefferson, but Lincoln: "No community whose every member possesses this art [of deriving a comfortable subsistence from the smallest area of soil], can ever be the victim of oppression of any of its forms. Such [a] community will be alike independent of crowned kings, money kings, and land kings." Abraham Lincoln, "Address Before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society," September 30, 1859, Ashbrook Center at Ashland University, Teaching American History, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/address-before-the-wisconsin-state-agricultural-society/> (accessed January 8, 2024).
55. Ibid.
56. Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, pp. 15, 11.
57. See also Bill McClay's history of America, which he fittingly titles *Land of Hope*. Wilfred M. McClay, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story* (New York: Encounter Books, 2019).
58. John Muir, "A Cruise in the Cassiar," in *Travels in Alaska* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7345/7345-h/7345-h.htm#chap05> (accessed January 12, 2024).
59. Ibid.
60. Wallace Stegner, "Wilderness Letter" to David E. Pesonen, December 3, 1960," The Wilderness Society, "Wallace Stegner," <https://www.wilderness.org/articles/article/wallace-stegner> (accessed January 8, 2024).
61. Theodore Roosevelt, "Doing As Our Forefathers Did..." July 4, 1886, Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record/PrintFull?libID=o273668> (accessed January 8, 2024).
62. William Cronon, "The Last Refuge, 1890–1915," in Burns, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*.
63. Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 1913), pp. 408–436.
64. Jean M. Yarbrough, *Theodore Roosevelt and the American Political Tradition* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012), p. 170.
65. Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, pp. 6, 20, 25–26.
66. "Having been a rather sickly and awkward boy, I was a young man at first both nervous and distrustful of my own prowess. I had to train myself painfully and laboriously not merely as regards my body but as regards my soul and spirit." Ibid., p. 53.

67. “I have mentioned all these experiences [of practicing physical exercise and encouraging it among others], and I could mention scores of others, because out of them grew my philosophy—perhaps they were in part caused by my philosophy—of bodily vigor as a method of getting that vigor of soul without which vigor of body counts for nothing.” *Ibid.*, p. 51.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95, 96.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
71. Roosevelt reprinted text from his Second Annual Message as Governor, delivered in January of 1900, in his autobiography. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
72. *Ibid.* See also Yarbrough, *Theodore Roosevelt and the American Political Tradition*, p. 130.
73. Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, pp. 42–44.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 105–106.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–51.
78. Theodore Roosevelt, “Remarks at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Gateway to Yellowstone National Park in Gardiner, Montana,” April 24, 1903, University of California, Santa Barbara, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-laying-the-cornerstone-the-gateway-yellowstone-national-park-gardiner-montana> (accessed January 8, 2024).
79. William Cronon, “The Scripture of Nature, 1851–1890,” in Burns, *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*.
80. Roosevelt, “Remarks at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Gateway to Yellowstone National Park in Gardiner, Montana.”
81. William R. Adams, “Florida Live Oak Farm of John Quincy Adams,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (October 1972), pp. 129–142, <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3274&context=fhq> (accessed January 8, 2024).
82. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
83. John Quincy Adams, *John Quincy Adams Digital Diary, Volume 36*, 17 June 1830, Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries-v36-1830-06-17-p465#sn=8> (accessed January 9, 2024).
84. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 47. When Thomas Jefferson traveled through France 50 years before Tocqueville’s travels, he depicted a similar contrast between democratic and aristocratic property laws, albeit from a democratic perspective, defending the abolition of laws of primogeniture on the grounds that it would allow for better stewardship of the land and its resources. “From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 28 October 1785.”
85. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 48.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 483–484.
87. Roosevelt, “Remarks at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Gateway to Yellowstone National Park in Gardiner, Montana.”
88. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 404–405.
89. Theodore Roosevelt, “Remarks at Grand Canyon, Arizona,” May 6, 1903, University of California, Santa Barbara, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-grand-canyon-arizona> (accessed January 9, 2024).
90. *Ibid.*
91. “An Act to Set Apart a Certain Tract of Land Lying Near the Headwaters of the Yellowstone River as a Public Park,” 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, signed into law March 1, 1872, <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/yellowstoneprotectionact1872.htm> (accessed January 9, 2024).
92. Roosevelt, “Remarks at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Gateway to Yellowstone National Park in Gardiner, Montana.”
93. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “About Us: Entrance Fees by Park,” last updated December 15, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/entrance-fee-prices.htm> (accessed January 9, 2024).
94. See, for example, “Memorandum of Agreement Among the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, the Kentucky Heritage Council, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Concerning the Management of Heritage Resources and the Limits of Acceptable Change Study of the Red River Gorge National Register District on the Daniel Boone National Forest,” 2005, [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5346567.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5346567.pdf) (accessed January 9, 2024).
95. Wendell Berry, “The Unforeseen Wilderness,” *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Winter 1971), pp. 633–647.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 633–634.
97. Wendell E. Berry, “It All Turns on Affection,” April 23, 2012, National Endowment for the Humanities, *Jefferson Lecture*, April 23, 2012, <https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/wendell-e-berry-biography> (accessed January 9, 2024). For the ways in which the “engineer’s assumption” misguides city planning, see Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.
98. For a history of the politicization of climate science, see Patrick Allitt, *A Climate of Crisis: America in the Age of Environmentalism* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), pp. 250–254.

99. Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 1977), p. 24, <https://kyl.neocities.org/books/%5bSOC%20BER%5d%20the%20unsettling%20of%20america.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2023).
100. See, for example, climate activists' open letter to the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, arguing for policies to further decrease the birth rate, and the Inflation Reduction Act's rebates for clean vehicles and appliance upgrades. Carter Dillard, Gyula I. Simonyi, and Brixton Vincent Reyes, "Call on COP28 for Urgent Action for Climate, Reproductive, and Intergenerational Justice," September 26, 2023, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tPgyS3O\\_SDqvqt43hKiP6-B4pn4SaGHD/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tPgyS3O_SDqvqt43hKiP6-B4pn4SaGHD/view) (accessed January 9, 2024), and H.R. 5376, Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, Public Law 117-169, 117th Congress, August 16, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ169/PLAW-117publ169.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2024).