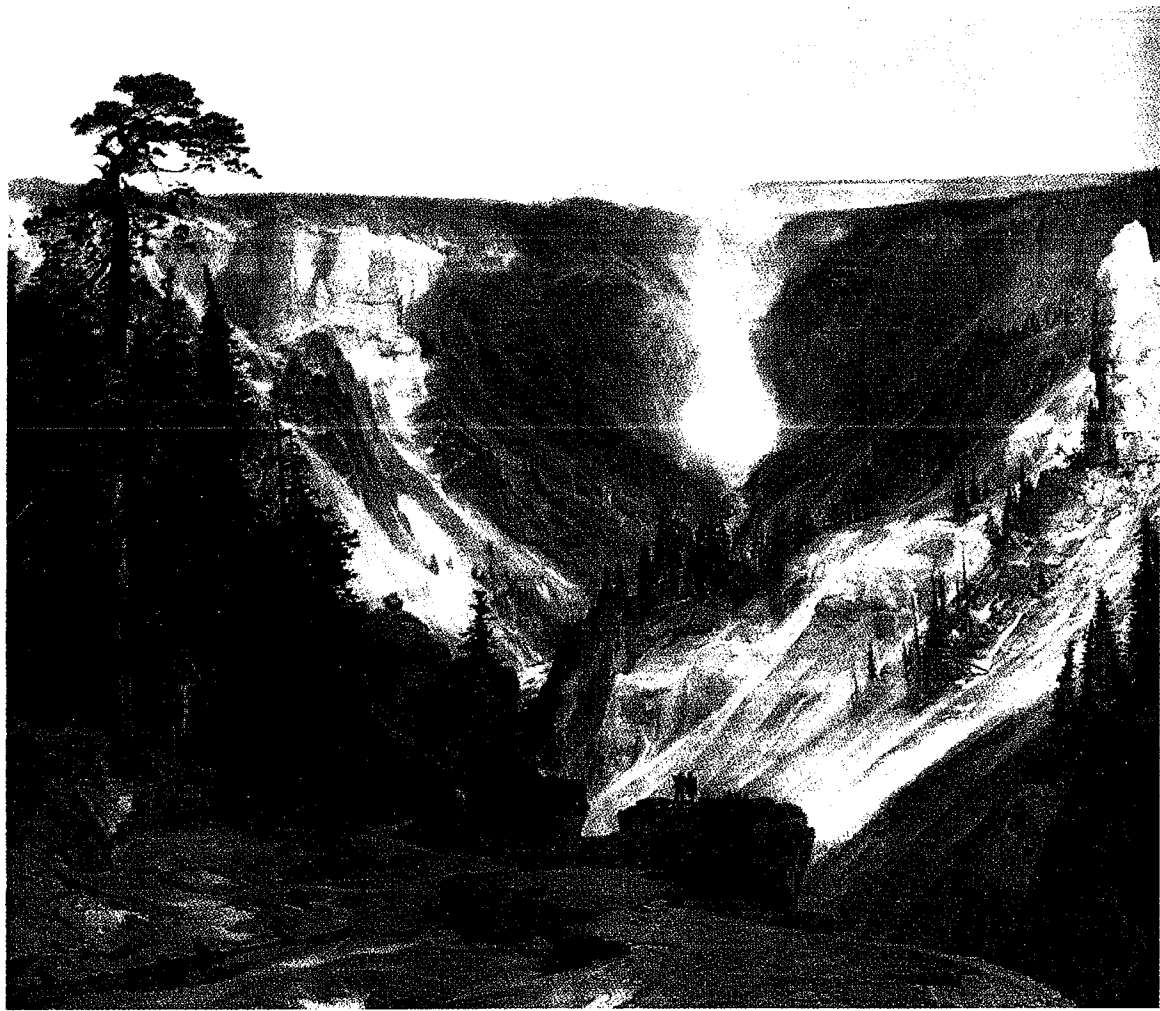


WILDEARTH

SUMMER 2000

History and Opportunity



American Parks and Protected Areas

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YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY

Around the Campfire

by Dave Foreman



Resourcism vs. Will of the Land

IN 1987, THEN-PRESIDENT OF THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY GEORGE FRAMPTON wrote, "It may come as something of a shock to our current generation of committed environmentalists to discover that the modern conservation movement sprang from a highly developed philosophy of *intensive use*, that is, exploitation, of our natural resources."¹ In all due respect, I think Frampton's map is thuddingly wrong. The modern wilderness conservation movement sprang from no such thing.

The early rally against landscaping split in the 1890s, a victim of unbridgeable visions of Nature. The two movements that came out of the split were both backlashes to landscaping, and both were centered on the public lands and wildlife. They were, however, far different in how they saw the future of the public lands and the value of the other species that lived throughout the United States. These reactions were Conservation (represented now by private groups like the Sierra Club and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance) and Resourcism (represented now by government agencies like the United States Forest Service and state game and fish agencies). They have deeply opposed views about self-willed land.

Words have power, and I believe it is important to carefully name things. Both these movements have claimed the conservation label and this leads to considerable confusion. What do we call these two conservation movements? Resource Conservation vs. Nature Conservation? Conservation vs. Preservation? Gifford Pinchot claimed he invented the word "conservation" and used it to describe his "wise use" of natural resources. He disparagingly referred to John Muir and others as "preservationists." However, through the twentieth century the word "conservation" has become more and more attached to the so-called preservationists. Neil Evernden at Ontario's York University described the resource conservation ideology as "resourcism" in 1985, writing, "Resourcism is a kind of modern religion which casts all of creation into categories of utility."² In *The Idea of Wilderness*, philosopher

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About Wild Earth and The Wildlands Project

Wild Earth and The Wildlands Project are closely allied but independent nonprofit organizations dedicated to the restoration and protection of wilderness and biodiversity. We share a vision of an ecologically healthy North America—with adequate habitat for all native species, containing vibrant natural and human communities.



Through the quarterly journal *Wild Earth*, other publications, and advocacy, **Wild Earth** works to foster a culture of conservation, helping to communicate and shape the latest thinking in conservation science, philosophy, politics, and activism.

- We make the teachings of conservation biology accessible to non-scientists, that citizen advocates may employ them in defense of biodiversity.
- We provide a forum for dialogue within the conservation movement on the scientific, strategic, and spiritual foundations of effective conservation action.
- We highlight the campaigns of biodiversity preservation groups and coalitions across North America, and serve as a networking tool for wilderness activists.
- We serve as the publishing wing of The Wildlands Project.
- We expose threats to habitat and wildlife, and regularly explore the links between human population growth and biodiversity loss.
- We defend wilderness both as *idea* and as *place*.



The Wildlands Project is the organization guiding the design of a continental wilderness recovery strategy. Through advocacy, education, scientific consultation, and cooperation with many regional groups, The Wildlands Project is working to design and implement systems of protected natural areas—wildlands networks—across the continent.

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The opinions expressed in Campfire are my own, and do not necessarily reflect official policy of The Wildlands Project or *Wild Earth*. —DF



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"The Grand Cañon of the
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Background: Map of Yellowstone
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