Machines Over the Garden:

Wilderness Values and Aviation in Alaska's Gates of the Arctic National Park

by

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"Ironically, I know that after a D-2 bill is passed, I will then be fighting to protect the D-2 lands from . . . the very agencies instructed to protect them."

--Ginny Wood, 1977

"And if we screw it up here . . . we can all stop arguing, because there won't be anything left to argue about!"

--Ray Bane, 1980

[Prefatory Note: In the summer of 1982 the Charles Lindbergh Fund gave Professor Nash, the author of Wilderness and the American Mind (3d rev. ed., Yale, 1982), the opportunity to investigate the impact of presently-unrestricted air access on the experience of visitors in one of the new Alaskan national parks. In this report to the Lindbergh Fund and the National Park Service, Nash attempts to identify the problems airplanes pose for Gates of the Arctic and, by extrapolation, to wilderness everywhere. He also suggests needs and opportunities for quantitative research.]

Gates of the Arctic National Park: Idea

Especially people who have not seen it think of the Brooks Range as close to the wilderness end of the environmental spectrum. The Gates of the Arctic country has been called "ultimate wilderness", "quintessential wilderness", and "benchmark wilderness." Adjectives like "pure", "real" and "pristine" are common in its descriptions. In terms of the human experience, the repeated words are "isolation", "exploration", "self-reliance" and "risk". "If God lives anywhere in Alaska," editorializes the Anchorage Daily News (July 16, 1982), "it is in the Brooks Range." The National Park Service brochure for the park refers to it as "one of the finest remaining wildernesses in the world." The "Draft Statement for Management" (p. 29) uses "solitude", "self-reliance," "challenge" and "discovery", and this passage is generally applauded in the letters of persons offering comments.

Robert Marshall, of course, began the tradition of ascribing superlative wilderness qualities to the area that has become Gates of the Arctic National Park. Between July 22, 1929, when an aircraft brought him to the edge of--but not into--the present parkland, and his premature death in 1939, Marshall spent 425 days in the central Brooks Range. He came seeking a blank space on the map, and he found one. Marshall's accounts of his trips make liberal use of words such as "virgin", "unbroken", "trackless" and, anticipating the language of the 1964 Wilderness Act, "untrammeled". He thought of himself as a traveler "beyond the ends of the earth . . . living in a different world which men have not discovered." (Marshall, Alaska Wilderness, 1970, p. xxxii.) Of course he was wrong. Only in terms of white tourists from New York City was the land Marshall visited virgin. Natives had lived there for centuries; each "nameless" valley had a name in their tongues. But an important point emerges from Marshall's fancy. If he thought that his were the first eyes to look up a vally or over a pass, then for him the country was absolutely wild and he was a discoverer. The conclusion, vital to management principles, is that the wilderness experience has much more to do with the attitudes of visitors than with the actual circumstances of history and geography. In the final analysis, wilderness is a game everyone plays in his own way.

This clarifies the belief of National Park Service cultural anthropologist and Bettles resident, Ray Bane, that the goal of management in Gates of the Arctic National Park should be to keep the land "in such a way that a visitor one hundred years from now could experience the same feeling of discovery . . . that Bob Marshall felt more than forty years ago." (Quoted in Body Norton, "A Gentle, Welcoming Wilderness," Audubon, 79, 1977, p. 45.)

Subsequent commentators on the Gates expanded upon the idea that the area was different, special and, specifically, wilder than any other part of the United States. John Kauffmann, a planner associated with the Alaska office of the National Park Service in the 1970s, recognized that "the greatest resource which this proposed park offers is space—space for wandering, space

for solitude . . . . This region is our ultimate scenic wilderness." (typescript, National Park Service Regional Headquarters, Anchorage, Alaska). To Joe McGinnis, author of Going to Extremes (1980), the Brooks Range seemed "as isolated as the surface of Mars." The mountains "seemed to just go on forever in all directions, displaying no traces of the presence of man" (pp. 50, 236). What was unique about the Gates, McGinnis felt, was not the height of its peaks or even its scenic qualities, but the purity of its wildness. For Bill Brown, of the present National Park Service regional staff, the Gates country "offers that total immersion in wilderness that has ever been an essential part of life in the New World." (Draft book manuscript, "Far North Parklands," p. 233).

One of the best places to observe the idea of the Gates of the Arctic in the American mind is in the thousands of pages of testimony collected at Congressional hearings preceeding the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980. (I have reviewed this record in detail in Chapter 14 of the 1982 revision of Wilderness and the American Mind.) Supporters of the bill poured out their feelings with a degree of emotionalism rare even in environmental politics. They really thought of the wilderness of Alaska as a last frontier. It offered the United Staes a final chance to preserve complete wilderness ecosystems. Parks like Gates of the Arctic were said to offer future generations a kind of environmental time machine, a place to be pioneers. Overlooking the eleventh-hour compromises that weakened the act, preservationists thought they had done something qualitatively different for wilderness. The reality, however, was something else again.

Gates of the Arctic National Park: Reality

Few places, as Horace Greeley recognized a century ago in regard to Yosemite, can live up to the brag, and the higher the expectations the harder the subsequent fall. So it is that people who actually make the long and costly journey to Gates of the Arctic National Park are primed for disappointment. The hype about "ultimate wilderness" has oversensitized them. Thus an intrusion that might be taken in stride in, say, Yosemite or Grand Canyon, becomes devastating when encountered in "the yardstick by which all wilderness areas must be measured." (Louis Sharman, draft visitor information sheet, Gates of the Arctic National Park Headquarters, Fairbanks, Alaska.)

Allowance of so-called subsistence activities (primarily hunting and trapping) inside the park by local rural residents is one way that the park differs from non-Alaskan units of the national system, and it deserves further scrutiny. Should, for example, the desire of a handful of people to live off the land be allowed to compromise the wilderness experience of thousands of visitors for years to come? But the primary concern of this research is air access. The fact is that Gates of the Arctic National Park is far more accessible than any national park backcountry

or designated Wilderness in the Lower 48. It is easier for a visitor who chooses to fly to reach and return from the very heart of this 8,000,000-acre reserve than to enter parts of Gateway National Recreation Area within sight of New York's skyscrapers. Landings are banned in park backcountry and Wildernesses in the Lower 48, but they are legal, by the terms of Section 1110 of ANILCA anywhere in Gates of the Arctic and all other national parks in Alaska. Put another way, in the Lower 48 parks all backcountry is closed to mechanized access unless specifically opened; in Alaska the parks are entirely open unless specifically closed. Moreover, there is absolutely no control over the numbers of persons who gain access to the park by air. In theory, twenty planes could put one hundred visitors on the same lake on the same day. The only reason this has not yet occurred is the absence of a sizeable body of visitors willing and financially able to take advantage of the air access option. It is the premise of this report that such factors offer insufficient guarantees that the nation's "benchmark" wilderness will remain such over time. In view of the world's growing appetite for wilderness, it is unlikely that isolation and expense will constitute permanent safeguards of something as fragile as wilderness values. After-all, national park experiences such as floating the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon were thought as recently as the late 1960s to be so difficult and expensive as to preclude large amounts of visitation. In 1972 the National Park Service placed an annual limit of 16,000 on visitation, and the waiting list for non-commercial boating permits is now ten years long and 21 commercial concessionaires compete for the chance to sell $1000 trips. If the Alaskan parks represent the chance to "do things right the first time" (a phrase heard frequently among supporters of ANILCA), the lessons of the Lower 48 need further study.

At this point it should be noted, especially for persons not acquainted with the realities of bush flying in Alaska, that specially-equipped modern aircraft require no airports. The workhorse planes of the Alaskan backcountry, Super Cubs, Cessena 170s and 185s, Beavers and the like, routinely land and take off from terrain that would astonish the outsider. In the relatively gentle, open topographic context of Gates of the Arctic (compared for example to the interior of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park), there are few places that would be more than five miles from a landing site. Experienced backcountry pilots utilize the gravel bars alongside rivers, tundra ridges, lakes and ponds and snowfields. Super Cubs with oversize "tundra tires" are capable of rising from the ground within <u>fifty feet</u> after beginning their take-off roll. Landings require a bit more space, but a roll of two hundred feet after touchdown is more than enough for many planes. Four hundred feet is considered a huge strip! The terrain, moreover, need not be flat or particularly smooth. Egg-sized rocks and low brush present no problems. Gates of the Arctic, to repeat, is not only legally but physically open to aircraft.

Two other aviation-related problems are on the horizon for Gates of the Arctic. One is the guarantee ANILCA provides to park inholders concerning access to and development of their properties. There are approximately sixty native and ten non-native inholders in Gates. Some of the latter are already engaged in the fly-in resort business. If an inholder wishes to develop a greatly-expanded resort operation along the lines of Brooks Lodge in Katami National Park, the frequency of flights into the park is sure to increase dramatically. The low present levels of inholder flights and of subsistence-oriented flights (permitted local rural residents under ANILCA) should not be taken as evidence that greatly-expanded air travel will not occur.

Another reality moving quickly into the status of a major threat to wilderness values in Gates of the Arctic and other Alaskan parks is ultralight aviation. The motor-powered hang glider has been available less than a decade, but the "personal aircraft" industry appears to be thriving and even boasts its own periodical: Glider Rider. The May 1982 issue gives the specifications of fifty-one models. The little planes average 200 pounds and many can be packed into the family car. The cost averages $4,500. Ultralights have a range of up to 250 miles, and, by definition, they are capable of being foot-launched and landed. This means an ultralight can take off anywhere a pilot can run a few steps. Some models come equipped with floats for operation on water.

Ultralights might be thought of as snowmachines of the sky. They could make possible plane camping along the lines of car camping or river raft camping. Squadrons of brightly-colored aircraft could tour the park without restriction, bouncing from lake to lake or camping on a ridgetop. The Dalton Highway could be a major launching corridor.

At present there is no recognition of ultralights in the regulations that govern Gates of the Arctic National Park. The Wilderness Act bars their operation in designated Wilderness in the Lower 48, but, to repeat, ANILCA specifically excludes the Alaskan parks from the mandates of this legislation as far as access is concerned. To make matters worse, ultralight aircraft are not recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration; their pilots need no license. This is backyard business.

The certain improvement and proliferation of ultralights poses an enormous problem for parks, like Gates of the Arctic, where they are presently legal. The planes have industrial as well as recreational potential. Three dealers already sell ultralights in Fairbanks, touting them as "ideal for the bush". Like the snowmachi and the three-wheel All Terrain Carrier, the personal aircraft is he to stay. With no precedent for control of aircraft, the wilderness qualities of Gates of the Arctic are vulnerable.

But what is the real problem with aircraft in a wilderness park? A first-level answer is that air access contributes directly to a level of visitation some might find inappropriate for "benchmark" wilderness as the Gates is considered. In some opinions that level has already been reached in "hotspots" such as the Noatak River boat-launching lakes, the Arregetch area, and the upper North Fork of the Koyukuk. Then there is the intangible but important issue of ease of access. Wilderness enthsiasts frequently take pride in and derive enjoyment from paying the physical price for experiencing backcountry. It can be argued that aircraft makes it too easy to reach the inner sanctums; that getting there is part of the fun. From another perspective, air travel is like watching a performance on television; there is no relationship to what is seen. Robert Belous of the National Park Service's Anchorage office points out that during the Vietnam War pilots involved in napalming villages had a very different attitude toward burned bodies than ground troops. For Ray Bane, park service anthropologist, the difference between flying over country and backpacking is comparable to looking at a picture of a woman and making love to her.

Even visitors who use aircraft to enter the park recognize their own hypocrisy. They understand that technology, and the money to buy it, have replaced qualities traditionally associated with wilderness use in America such as toughness and persistence and skill in long-distance backwoods travel.

Moreover, the presence of aircraft completely dispells the sense of discovery and exploration that visitors since Robert Marshall have associated with Gates of the Arctic. Even if it is a myth, the idea of unknown country is a vital component of the mystique of the Brooks Range. It is arguable that Congress had it in mind in creating a park there. Certainly the reiterated phrase "last frontier" has the connotation of unexplored territory. Interestingly, Marshall was aware of the impact of aviation on what he thought of as the need to prolong the "possibility of exploration". "I do not believe," he wrote in 1935, "that one man can get any more pleasure looking over 10,000 square miles by airplane than he could by exploring 500 square miles on foot." But Marshall understood that by doing the overflight the one man "would be robbing nineteen people of the inestimable thrill of first exploration." He went on to state his belief that "one of the great values of exploration is in pitting oneself without the aid of machinery against unknown Nature." Marshall added that he did not expect everyone to share his viewpoint and that he felt no "bitterness and animosity" toward those who disagreed. (Alaska Wilderness, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.) It must be recalled, however, that Marshall saw no airplanes during his hundreds of days in the Brooks Range. He might well be bitter at even today's amount of air access and greatly apprehensive about the future.

Flying aircraft obviously make no physical impact on the land. Sound is of course present and at low levels of flight can disturb wildlife and visitors. Float planes leave no trace of their landing, and the gravel bars wheeled-aircraft favor are periodically cleaned by high water. Repeated landing on tundra, or the improvement of gravel bar strips, can scar the land, but in proportion to the impact of a highway the impact is minor. What is not minor is the psychological impact. The airplane is a product, indeed a symbol, of a highly sophisticated technological civilization, and this is precisely what some visitors go to the wilderness to escape. It is true from another perspective that the bush plane is a traditional pioneering tool as appropriate to 20th-century Alaska as the horse was to 19th-century Colorado. ANILCA apparantly accepted this logic. But this can not override the feelings of visitors for whom aviation symbolizes an order antipodal to that which they often travel so far to try to find in northern Alaska.

The Experience of Robert Woutat: A Case Study

As a short example of these issues consider the experience of Robert Woutat and six companions from Minnesota who visited Gates of the Arctic (then a national monument) in the summer of 1979. Woutat wrote a lengthy and as yet unpublished account of his trip: "Koyukuk: A Story of Arctic Alaska" (manuscript in the possession of Jerry Stansel, Bettles, Alaska, 1980). Woutat's group travelled on foot from Anaktuvuk over Ernie Pass and down the North Fork of the Koyukuk. At the foot of Boreal Mountain (one of the gateposts of Gates of the Arctic) the backpackers stumbled upon the temporary camp of Jerry Stansel, a Bettles and Fairbanks-based guide. Stansel provisioned his camp with a Super Cub, and when Woutat's group saw him land on a gravel bar it was "with the sickening realization that our entire route so far had been a potential landing strip." Although the group came to like Jerry Stansel as a person and ended up renting his rafts for the float to Bettles (they had anticipated returning on foot to Anaktukuk Pass), they did so knowing the feeling they had relished of being in little-known, wild country was "dissolved completely". The Super Cub on the gravel bar propelled them "out of the Palezoic and out of the Arctic wilderness of Bob Marshall, forward again into the age of mechanization, the age of efficiency and convenience, the age of excess." And so it was that they realized that "the wilderness we had looked forward to for years, the wilderness we had come more than 2,300 miles to find, the wilderness we thought we could find in the Brooks Range and nowhere else on this continent, simply did not exist." There was the further depressing realization that "there is no spot left on this planet that man cannot reach with the greatest ease." In this respect, of course, Woutat was incorrect. There are such spots, the park backcountry and designated Wilderness in the Lower 48, where mechanical access is prohibited. In Alaska, however, management is prevented by the organic legislation from managing for the very values visitors like Robert Woutat seek.

Woutat's experience is an admission of the failure for him of Gates of the Arctic as a national monument and park. It suggests that the ideals that many Americans and their elected representatives held with respect to northern Alaska were hollow at the core. There was enormous naivete or enormous deception involved. The "ultimate" wilderness park turned out quite differently than millions of people expected. Marshall's concerns had been substantiated. Airplanes were "robbing" park visitors of the thrill of wilderness exploration.

Options for Management: Principles

Chiefly as an ideal, a definition of one end of the specturm of management options, it is interesting to contemplate total exclusion of aircraft from Gates of the Arctic National Park. Had the park been established at the time of the designation of the old Mt. McKinley National Park in 1917 and before an airplane had crossed the Arctic Circle, this might have been possible. In this case the Gates could have been managed in the manner of park backcountry and designated Wilderness in the Lower 48. Perhaps the pattern of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in Minnesota could have been followed. In 1949 an executive order signed by President Harry Truman banned flight below 4,000 feet over this national forest "roadless area". (The story is well described in R. Newton Searle, Saving Quetico-Superior: A Land Set Apart, 1977). Apart from a few small wildlife sanctuaries, like the California condor reserves, this remains the only non-military, recreational airspace closure in American history. In the opinion of wilderness advocates, the 1949 order saved the Boundary Waters from being overwhelmed by fly-in fishing resorts.

But, of course, aviation preceeded the parks in Alaska by a half century and, in 1980, received the blessing of ANILCA. It seems politically unproductive at this point to press for a closure in Gates of the Arctic comparable to that which exists over the Boundary Waters. What does seem feasible under existing legislation is not the elimination but the control of air access in Gates of the Arctic. It appears that ANILCA and subsequent statements in the Code of Federal Regulations authorize such control. ANILCA begins (Sec. 101) with the principle that the protection of "wilderness resource values" is one of the general purposes of all the Alaskan national interest lands. Wilderness is thus identified at the outset as a resource. This is important since the Code of Federal Regulations (June 17, 1981, p. 31859) authorizes management to institute closures and restrictions only in the interest of "resource protection."

ANILCA goes on to specify (Sec. 201, 4a) that the purpose of Gates of the Arctic National Park is "to maintain the wild and undeveloped character

of the area, including opportunities for visitors to experience solitude." This would appear to authorize the restriction of aircraft if their presence threatened the opportunity of visitors to enjoy wilderness values such as being alone. Arguably, then, tangible resource destruction is not the only criteria that managemnt is authorized to use in planning and instituting closures. Alternately, the wilderness experience of visitors to the park is a suitable basis for defending aircraft restriction. Everything that follows depends of these principles. If they can not be sustained, the chances of controlling aviation in Gates of the Arctic are dim.

It is instructive in this regard to pause for a moment and review the history of policy with respect to Wonder Lake, a scenic highlight of Denali National Park. Under the regulations pertaining to the old Mt. McKinley National Park, float plane landings on Wonder Lake were prohibited. ANILCA, however, opened not only the new Alaskan parks but all the old ones to air access. But, using their authority to close certain areas in the interest of preserving a park value, national park personnel have placed Wonder Lake off limits to float planes. The regional director of national parks in Alaska, John Cook, contends that the scenic values of the famous lake take precedence over the general mandate for air access, and, thus far, pilots have not tested the restriction. Granted wilderness isnot involved in the case of Wonder Lake (a road leads directly to it), but the precedent of using an experiential quality like scenic beauty as grounds for regulating air access has enormous importance for protecting the wilderness experience in Gates of the Arctic.

Returning to an analysis of ANILCA, Congress has directed the National Park service (Sec. 201) "to provide continued opportunities, including reasonable access, for mountain climbing, mountaineering, and other wilderness recreational activities." The key word here is "reasonable". The following recommendations will advance the thesis that widely-separated zones of air access do constitute such reasonable recreational access. Again, this has to be a matter of judgement, but it appears that ANILCA gives the National Park Service the chance to make that judgement on behalf of wilderness values.

The specific procedure for closing parts of the park to certain kinds of use is outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations for June 17, 1981. The superintendent of a park like Gates of the Arctic has the power to institute emergency, temporary or permanent closures provided he hold public hearings. Grounds for the closures are stated to be "resource protection" (arguably, including wilderness resources) and "other management considerations necessary to ensure that the activity or area is being managed in a manner compatible with the purposes for which the park area was established" (p. 31859). In the case of Gates of the Arctic this purpose, as stated, is specifically maintainence of "the wild and undeveloped character" of the park and "solitude". The duty of management in the event of compromise of these goals by air access seems clear.

There is another avenue of approach to restricting at least some aviation over and in Alaskan parks. The air taxi operators, who presently serve almost all the fly-in visitors to Gates of the Arctic, are subject to regulation under the terms of the "Commercial Use Licence" granted by the park. The power to condition such licensees is not limited to instances where resource damage can be demonstrated. Thus, Attachment A of the present license prohibits fuel caches and temporary guides' camps on park land and requires removal of downed aircraft. Noncomplicance can result in revocation of the license. Why not regulate landings in the same manner?

It seems clear from the pertinent legislation that the National Park Service faces a harder challenge in regulating the operation of aircraft use for subsistence purposes and for access to private lands surrounded by the park. ANILCA (Title XI) guarantees free operation of planes and other mechanized vehicles subject only to "reasonable regulations" designed to protect "the natural and other values" of the park. Here again the line of reasoning that derives from wilderness being a primary resource of Gates of the Arctic could be advanced as grounds for at least maintaining present small levels of non-recreational flight. For instance, the decision of an inholder to create a lavish fly-in resort with ten landings per day could be opposed on the grounds of its impact on the wilderness qualities of the surrounding lands.

Another principle to bear in mind in formulating a management plan for Gates of the Arctic National Park concerns the definition of "future". In general politicians and bureaucrats think of the future in too limited terms--the next election or the term of their appointment. The challenge in dealing with an area like the Gates is to think a century or more ahead. What will wilderness and wilderness recreation be like in 2082? The inescapable conclusion is that wild places are shrinking rapidly in quantity and quality. If this erosion is not controlled in "ultimate" wildernesses like the Brooks Range, it is unlikely it will be controlled at all. One suspects, then, that the stakes involved in developing a management plan for the Gates are much higher than most people realize. (On this point, see my essay, "The Future of Wilderness," Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 31, May, 1978) and the concluding chapter in the 1982 edition of Wilderness and the American Mind.)

A final management principle would regard airplane travel as facilitating a wilderness trip and not a part of the trip. The distinction is important. It tolerates air access as necessary compromise rather than celebrates it as a positive good. The point is that in all decisions respecting Gates of the Arctic management should take the point of view that aviation --anywhere and in any quantity--is taking something away from the experience the park was established to provide. This doesn't mean banning all aircraft, but it does put their presence in the proper perspective.

Options for Management: Recommendations

1. Non-licensed Pilots: Prohibit operation of any aircraft in or over the park by non-licensed pilots. This policy would effectively exclude presently-unlicensed operators of ultralights, and is consistent with FAA regulations. The well-known dangers of backcountry flying in Alaska argue for such a rule.

2. Overnight parking: Prohibit aircraft from remaining overnight on the ground on park land. This rule would deter "airplane camping" and remove the constantly-disturbing visual presence of parked aircraft. The rule would work in favor of the drop-off business of air-taxi operators and against privately-owned aircraft whose owners might wish to camp with their planes inside the park boundaries. Of course this regulation, and many of those that follow, would be waived in the event of genuine emergencies.

3. Day trips. Discourage use of the park based on same-day entrance and exit by prohibiting visitors to land unless they spend a night in the park. Coupled with Recommendation 2, this policy would oblige visitors to deal with the park in terms arguably more in keeping with the values for which it was established. Anyone landing in the park would be required to spend a night camping out away from aircraft. The growing use of planes for fishing and photography visits of a few hours or less would be prohibited. Disturbing landings and take-offs would be limited to parties engaged in wilderness camping. "Flightseeing" would not be affected provided no landings occurred, although park personnel should be aware of, even if they can not presently control, the heavy impact of flightseeing on parts of Glacier Bay National Monument and Grand Canyon National Park where, during daylight hours, the sound of airplanes is almost continuous.

4. Air corridors. The recommendation to pilots (it could, not under present legislation, be required) that designated trails in the sky be followed could do much to lessen the impact of aircraft on park visitors. Air taxi operators, private pilots, inholder pilots and overflying commercial users could be advised of the corridors and their importance.

The air corridor system would be more workable than might at first appear due to the tendency of pilots to prefer the drainages that lead to low passes over the Arctic Divide. The John River Valley, for instance, is an obvious candidate for a corridor since it is frequently by pilots heading for the airport at Anaktuvuk Pass as well as those destined for North Slope destinations. Boaters and backpackers interested in the John River would be advised of the probability of seeing a relatively large number of overflying aircraft. But there is no reason why the roughly parallel drainage of the Tinayguk River need be overflown at all. Further to the east, the North Fork of the Koyukuk

is a natural air corridor, but the Clear River could be placed off limits without major disturbance of flight patterns. It would be important to obtain the opinion of local pilots on the question of air corridors if only in the interest of securing their complicance with the suggestions of park personnel.

There is a related opportunity to suggest positioning of aircraft within a particular corridor. Pilots might be requested to avoid flying directly over the rivers. By keeping to the sides of the valleys, the impact of the majority of boaters and walkers would be lessened if not eliminated.

In the matter of air corridors, as in all the recommendations, the National Park Service might adopt a "heal thyself" philosophy as a prelude to dealing with visitors and concessionaires. The park aircraft impact just as heavily on wilderness qualities as do those of private and commercial pilots. In general there appears to be an unnecessary amount of overlying, flightseeing, and remote landing by park pilots transporting "big wigs" and rangers. In this regard, the big wigs should understand better than anyone the need for restraint in the park, and the rangers, to use the phrase of Richard B. Smith of Evergaldes National Park, should range—on the ground.

5. Minimum altitudes. Although again a question of persuasion rather than enforcement due to lack of jurisdiction, the national park service should take a strong stand favoring high flight. Two thousand feet over ground level seems to be a common standard for acceptable levels of noise pollution. Joy rides at tree-top level should be strongly discouraged and, under federal fish and wildlife regulations, are illegal if game is disturbed. Of course VFR flying under low cloud conditions might necessitate variances, but the distinction between mandatory low altitude flight and joyriding is clear to any responsible pilot. Certainly the established and licensed air taxi operators could be expected to adhere to minimum altitude regulations.

6. Technology. It has been demonstrated that certain kinds of aviation hardware, such as three-bladed propellers, result in quieter flight. Use of such technology could be encouraged and, in the case of licensed air taxi operator required.

7. Air access zones. The most far-reaching recommendation proposed as a result of the present study concerns the establishment of landing areas within the park. This does not mean landing strips or improvements of any kind. The zone of air access is simply an area approved for landings by the national park. The idea would be to distribute the zones that several days of unmechanized travel time would exist between them. The policy of land-anywhere-you-can would be terminated in the interest of enhancing wilderness values.

In the older parks in the Lower 48 roadheads spread visitors. Limiting aircraft to zones of access (one hesitates to call them "airheads"!) could do

the same thing for the Alaskan parks. An access zone in Gates of the Arctic might be a mile-long stretch of river containing several gravel bars, or it might encompass a small group of lakes. Tundra landings should be banned completely due to the probability of permanent scarring. Even in the winter, when skis permit a wide choice of landing sites, it is hope that a few, widely separated zones could be designated.

Although air access zones would concentrate visitors, no facilites should be built in them. Even outhouses or small ranger shacks would cause heavy erosion in the wilderness experience Gates of the Arctic is mandated to provide. Indeed, visitors sould be encouraged to leave the access zone quickly and most will want to do so. The zones would be drop-off, pick-up and resupply points for wilderness travelers. They will inevitably concentrate use and, in that sense, will be sacrifice areas where heavier impact is accepted in order to enhance preservation of the wilderness resource and the wilderness experience elsewhere in the park. A system of rotating access zones is not recommended. In the fragile arctic environment this might only lower the qualities of many areas rather than one. But in all such decisions an experimental, wait-and-see approach should be used.

Planning zones of access within a huge park like Gates of the Arctic should be the result of collaboration between visitors, guides, air taxi operations and park personnel. Existing use patterns should be carefully noted. The popularity of places such as the Arrigetch Peaks and the Noatak River would seem to support the designation of zones at Circle and Pingo (Embryo) Lakes. But other lakes in their vicinity (Takahula, for example) could be placed off limits. The payoff of this policy would be for the visitor who could camp on Takahula without becoming involuntary witness to a succession of float plane landings. Certainly the planning process should make careful note of places where air access is beyond the control of the National Park Service such as Anaktuvuk Pass and Wild Lake. Where private inholdings make air access inevitable (Walker Lake, for instance), park managers should bow to reality and regard these spots as access zones.

As a case study in how the access zone concept might work, consider the North Fork of the Koyukuk River and its tributaries--the region given detailed, on-the-ground study in the present project. Summit Lake, near the North Fork's headwaters and virtually on the Arctic Divide, is a heavily-used landing site There is also a native allotment on the lake which means, according to ANILCA, that aircraft can not be banned. Let Summit Lake, then, be an access zone.

The three Redstar Lakes are located about 45 miles (one week's foot travel time) down the North Fork from Summit Lake. They are frequently used by float planes, and there are opportunities for wheeled aircraft to use gravel bars along the river in the immediate area. Let the Redstar area be an air access zone, and establish no other zones in the upper North Fork drainage.

Such a policy would alter several present use patterns in a desirable and defensible direction. Chimney Lake on the Clear River would be closed to landings. The visitors and pilots who presently use this lake would be diverted instead to the Summit or Redstar zones. From either it is entirely possible to enter the drainage of the Clear River on a backpack of reasonable duration. And once there they would be able to experience a place Bob Marshall called the most beautiful he had ever seen (Alaska Wilderness, p. 139) under conditions approximating those that Marshall encountered. Similarly, the entire Tinayguk River would be off limits to aircraft landings and, hopefully, overflights (see above, Recommendation 4). As with the Clear, visitors would not be denied access but only asked to obtain it unassisted by machines. In the case of the Tinayguk, either Summit Lake (via the North Fork and Kachwona Creek) or Anaktuvuk Pass could be a starting point for a walking journey. Parties desiring to float the Tinayguk would be obliged to pack in folding or inflatable raft. Again, this is not asking the impossible. Some modern boats weigh as little as twelve pounds.

A final impact of the access system proposed for the upper North Fork of the Koyukuk would be the closure of gravel bars along the river north of Redstar Lakes to aircraft. This would protect the wilderness qualities of the scenic heart of the North Fork drainage and the feature after which Gates of the Artic is named. The policy would necessitate disestablishment of Jerry Stansel's temporary guide camp which is served by Super Cub landing on gravel bars squarely between Frigid Crags and Boreal Mountain (the Gates of the Arctic). In this reporter's opinion the benefits thirty or forty of Stansel's guests derive from air access does not offset the erosion of the wilderness qualities of perhaps three times that number of park visitors each season. Robert Woutat's disappointment (see above) may be taken as representative. A further argument in defense of the closure of the upper North Fork is that Stansel's operation need not be eliminated but only relocated at the Redstar access zone some ten miles from its present position. His clients, and others, would not be denied access but only asked to gain it in a different place. The ten mile walk to the Gates area does not seem at all unreasonable in a park established for its wilderness values Of course management must decide on the desirability of having facilities such as Stancel's in the park at all. They are not, to reiterate, necessary for development of a clientele for Gates of the Arctic, and the impact of four fixed tents, a shower and a chemical toilet on the visitor experience is considerable. But should Stansel's claim to a valid operation (he began it in the five-year lease interval between December 18, 1973 and December 18, 1978) be sustained, the National Park Service would still appear to retain the option of relocating the highly portable camp at Redstar.

Similar case studies of potential zones of air access and opportunities for excluding aircraft should be made of the rest of Gates of the Arctic. There would seem to be no-plane potential for large portions of the northwest corner of the park including the upper Killik River and its tributaries, Easter and April Creeks. Closure of the upper Alatna River is complicated by the existence of inholdings accessed by air, but the upper Nigu River should be reviewed as a potential no-air zone.

8. Temporal zoning. The previous recommendation concerned a system of spacial zonings. But Gates of the Arctic National Park might consider as a management option the idea of alternating periods of air access with periods of no landings in a particular portion of the park. Thus July might be a fly-in month and August a walk-in time. In this way visitors who wished the convenience of air access could be served as well as those who desired a trip to the same place with no mechanical intrusions. It is significant that this scheme has worked well in separating cross-country skiers from snowmachiners in some of the Western national parks, and it has been proposed for dividing rowers and paddlers from motorboaters.

9. Permits and quotas. The establishment of air access zones will help, but will not by itself solve, the problem of loving Gates of the Arctic National Park to death. It is an unpleasant fact of the end of the twentieth century that wilderness preservation depends on the imposition of precisely those kinds of restrictions that define wilderness by their absence. But the alternative— an outdoor free-for-all in which no one obtains what he seeks and the resource deteriorates--is more unpleasant. In the Lower 48 mandatory wilderness permits accompanied by area-specific visitation quotas have worked to maintain the wilderness character of many national parks. Indeed few popular areas are now without some kind of permit-quota system. In Alaska, Denali National Park (the old Mt. McKinley section) is divided into thirty-four zones with visitor quotas for each, Permits can be hard to get but once obtained the visitor has a good chance of experiencing solitude. Just as is the case with lottery-distributed hunting permits. Restrictions ultimately work to the advantage of the hunter by balancing supply and demand. Since ANILCA mandates the custodians of Gates of the Arctic to provide "opportunities for visitors to experience solitude, a similar policy seems inevitable. And the longer its institution is delayed, the harder this will become.

In Gates of the Arctic, air access is the key management tool in establishing permits and quotas. The objective should be to keep the number of weekly or daily landings in a given zone of access (see Recommendation 7) below the point of substantial erosion of the wilderness resource and the wilderness experience. To be sure, wilderness is a state of mind as is the perception of crowding. Visitors, as Professor Alan Jubenville of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks has argued, desire different kinds of outdoor experiences. Their toleration for other people, evidence of aircraft, temporary camps, maintained trails and the like will vary. But, and this is important, Gates of the Arctic should not try to be all things to all people. This was the flaw in park management philosophy that brought the bear feedings, firefalls, swimming pools and hotels into the older parks of the Lower 48. Instead of following in this pattern, managers of Gates should hold fast to the philosophy that their park is something special, "ultimate" wilderness, and that their task is to manage for what is increasingly difficult to find elsewhere. This means low visitor quotas and, given the certain growth in demand, restrictions on the visitor. The present policy of

unrestricted access to all comers must give way to some type of carrying-capacity management plan. Restricting publicity and information (the current management philosophy) will not, in the long run, be sufficient to protect what is special about Gates of the Arctic.

It is significant that John Kauffmann and other national park personnel of the 1970s had quotas in mind. Kauffmann remembers that the "cornerstone of all our planning . . . was a reservation and permit system, instituted at the very outset, to control access and use before any erosive patters and habits began." (Kauffmann to Nash, May 28, 1982) He envisioned a computerized reservation system based on strict carrying capacity standards. Although Kauffmann had some misgivings about air access, he recognized it as a fact of life in a huge roadless park like Gates and accepted it as far superior to a road network. But aircraft made access easy by removing the physical barriers that often protected wilderness from overuse in other parks. A permit and quota system with low visitation levels was his solution. "We should take the bold position," he told the Alaska Task Force leaders in 1975, "that we are not proposing a park to be beaten to death." (Kauffmann to Keymen, Alaska Task Force, November 25, 1975, Gates of the Arctic National Park planning file, National Park Service Regional Headquarters, Anchorage.) But this idea fell between the slats during the D(2) debates. Alaskans criticized any type of visitor restriction, and park management has thus far hesitated to impose controls.

With regard to the light-use philosophy he proposed, John Kauffmann raised an interesting and important idea. Planners and managers, he felt, should stop "trying to justify the park on the basis of actual park use alone; we should also emphasize its vicarious value." (Kauffmann to Keymen, November 25, 1975). What he had in mind was the pleasure that the thousands who worked hard for establishment of Gates of the Arctic derived from just knowing that an ultimate wilderness exists. "Much park 'use'," he argued, "is . . . by means of . . . the imagination The armchair clientele of the park, people who would never visit it, were a vital force in its establishment. For them the present management philosophy, and the directions in which it will lead, would, if known, be the the ultimate disappointment.

10. Data. A start for any carrying capacity access management plan is accurate use data and information about visitor experiences. Regrettably almost no data exists for Gates of the Arctic National Park. Air taxi operators and guides licensed to work in the park are supposed to file an annual "Activity Summary". Based on an examination of the 1981 returns, most appear to have complied with this requirement, but unquestionably there is a significant amount of unreported air chartering and guiding in the park. Non-commercial (private) use is completely unreported. Consequently the 859 visitors reported for Gates of the Arctic in 1981 is a very rough approximation. Locals "feel" that there are anywhere between 1,000 and 6,000 visitors annually.

One obvious answer to the data deficit is institution of a regulation under which visitors must secure a permit to enter the park. Initially, at least, this need be no more than a registration procedure unaccompanied by quota restrictions. Such a system had created the data base necessary for more refined management methods in Lower 48 parks and Wildernesses. Grand Canyon National Park, for example, had a permit system in effect five years before the institution of quotas in 1973. The data collected determined the visitor quotas. Since almost all visitors to Gates of the Arctic pass through Fairbanks or Bettles or Anaktuvuk (or, commonly, all three places), and since there is a national park presence in each location, a mandatory permit rule would not create much hardship for the visitor. The park, on the other hand, would gain a great deal of valuable information on number of users, time spent in the park and specific itineraries. There would also be an opportunity for park personnel to advise visitors on equipment and behavior. It is rather shocking to realize that at present most visitors to Gates of the Arctic have no contact with national park personnel. For the nation's "benchmark" wilderness, a once-in-a-lifetime destination for most visitors, this seems especially unfortunate. Significantly, one of the largest air taxi operators in Bettles added the following comment to his 1981 activity report: "I would like to suggest mandatory visitor registration before entering the parks, therefore your office would be able to obtain all detailed and necessary information as to park usage." (Concessionaire Division files, National Park Service Regional Headquarters, Anchorage.) This is surely an instance of the tail wagging the dog. When local bush pilots favor regulation, especially in Alaska, present national park policy must be lagging far behind.

Mandatory permits might be accompanied by a voluntary trip questionnaire to be mailed in to park offices at the conclusion of the visit. Independent researchers and some government land-managing agencies have used this method (in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, for example) to obtain key data that later informed management decisions. A useful model of such a questionnarie is the one Gregory A. Warren, working under the auspices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, used in 1977 to sample the attitudes of 248 hunters and 186 non-hunting visitors to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. (Gregory A. Warren, "Activities, Attitudes and Management Preferences of Visitors of the Arctic of the Arctic National Wildlife Range, Alaska," M.A. thesis, University of Idaho, 1980.) Warren's survey included attitude toward aircraft use. He found that non-hunters (backpackers) witnessed 0.7 landings and 2.5 overflights <u>per week</u>. They reported the tolerable maximum levels for these encounters was 1.3 landings and 3.4 overflights per week. Parenthetically, the present reporter found that the 0.7 landings and 2.5 overflights would be low figures even for one day when weather permitted aviation in the drainage of the North Fork of the Koyukuk.

The Warren thesis also found that in 1977 72% of the non-hunting visitors to the Refuge favored mandatory permits and quotas in heavy-use areas. Sixty-three

these management devices, but this user group is, of course, absent from the park portion of Gates of the Arctic. Again, it would appear that the National Park Service is leading from the rear. Although studies should be made for the Gates, it appears that the visiting public wants more regulation than the park is prepared to give.

11. Enforcement. The difficulty of enforcing air access regulations is frequently offered as a reason for not undertaking positive management. The logic seems faulty. Drunk driving is also hard to stop but it understandably remains a law and enforcement efforts continue. Rather than emphasize the problems, the National Park Service should note the possibility of impounding violating aircraft in the same manner that fishing tackle and guns of fish and game law violators are impounded. The value of aircraft would appear to be a major deterrant to violation, particularly when the testimony and photographs of on-ground witnesses to illicit landings is used as evidence. How can pilots ever be sure they were unobserved?

There is also the probability of greatly refined monitoring methods perhaps based on the placement of transmitting devices in aircraft similar to those used in keeping track of grizzly bears in some parks. Given the present pace of change in communications technology, such options can not be ruled out of the question.

As an alternative to a road network, the airplane can be an asset to preserving wilderness values in Gates of the Arctic National Park, but only if it is controlled. This may not be as difficult as it would appear at first glance. The recommendations presented here would not close the park to aircraft. The "reasonable access" mandated by ANILCA would still be available, but so would the opportunity of the National Park Service to follow Congress' instructions "to maintain the wild and undeveloped character of the area, including opportunities for visitors to experience solitude." The objective of the recommendations is to enhance the experience of visitors in one of the world's last great wildernesses and, in the long run, guides and air taxi operators stand to benefit from such a policy in a park where a wilderness experience is their bread and butter.

Finally, in all matters concerning Gates of the Arctic, it is vital to establish the principle the national parks are different and that Alaskan national parks are especially different. The huge citizens' coalition that pushed ANILCA through rough political seas counted on this, but its members would likely be disappointed in the present reality. It is time in Alaska for bold action on the part of the National Park Service. The principle must

be established that air access in Gates of the Arctic is not a positive good but a necessary compromise. The controls advocated here would, in effect, "grandfather in the right and responsibility of the National Park Service to manage for the intangible but vitally important values that the Gates is almost uniquely able to provide both the actual and the airchair visitor. There is much to be said in favor of a "do it now" philosophy. Let the courts, if necessary, decide on the intent of Congress with respect to the Gates. In this regard the National Park Service must face up to the fact that some of the needed policies will not be locally popular in Alaska. But winning local popularity contests should not be the primary role of the service there or anywhere. The real meaning of ANILCA is that things are not the same anymore in parts of Alaska's wilderness. The custodians that the nation, and the world, counts on to manage Gates of the Arctic should dare to specialize in wilderness. Let other places and other agencies provice recreational opportunities further along the civilized end of the spectrum. Let the Gates try to live up to the "ultimate" wilderness brag. On this earth, at least, there will be no second chance. If the young profession of wilderness management has something positive to contribute, this is the time and the place.

THE WILDNESS IN WILDERNESS

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We face here today one of the most explosive contemporary issues in the use and management of both designated and de facto wilderness. In essence it boils down to this: Who gets what? What kind of experience will we manage for and who will we allow to have it? Like most wilderness recreation problems this one is very, very recent. John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt had no inkling of the concept of wilderness quotas and the need to allocate use under them. Neither did the next generation of American outdoorsmen. As late as 1970 I could on the spur of the moment drive with river-running friends to Lee's Ferry, rig out and float down the Colorado through the Grand Canyon. Ten years later the wait for a noncommercial, summer boating permit in Grand Canyon National Park is close to eight years and lengthening at a rate of 100 trip applications per month. On the Forest Service's Selway River in Idaho an applicant with poor luck in lotteries could spend a lifetime in fruitless pursuit of a recreational opportunity.

What this underscores is that the honeymoon of unregulated use of prime public lands, especially wilderness, is over. Defenders of wilderness did their job perhaps too well. In arousing public interest in preserving wild conditions against developers, they created a new threat: themselves. "The woods are overrun," Colin Fletcher observes, and sons of bitches like me are half the problem." The new challenge is not how to save wild places from their enemies but, rather, from their friends.*

*I have commented on this issue in the concluding chapter of Wilderness and the American Mind (Nash 1973). While I will not cite it, this book underlies and documents many of the points that follow in this paper.

Wilderness permits and allocation formulas are responses to this unprecedented situation. They are essential if wildness is to remain part of wilderness, but many of the management decisions have been made in haste, under great pressure, and without a philosophy of wilderness and the wilderness experience. This conference starts to fashion a remedy; its organizers deserve everyone's thanks.

Grappling with the issues before us will not be easy because wilderness allocation is a subject loaded with emotion. It involves an experience of great personal importance to some people. "Recreation" is much too casual a word for what frequently takes on deep spiritual significance. Deny access to a wilderness to a person who lives it intensely, and you have significantly diminished the quality of his life. Remember, too, there is no civilized substitute for a wilderness experience. Parenthetically, neither is there a satisfactory substitute for a person with whom one is in love. The stakes in the matter of wilderness access are not greatly different.

Because of the emotional dynamite underlying wilderness allocation, and since I fully intend to ruffle some feathers, I wish to make my biases clear at the outset. On a nonoutfitted basis I spend 45 to 60 days a year in wilderness. I am also a professional guide and river outfitter, a ten-year member of the Western River Guides Association. Twice or three times a year I am in wilderness with clients. I do not, however, make more than a small fraction of my living in this manner. Finally, as a professor, I think I bring a broader scholarly perspective to this issue than is typical of most contestants.

Let's start with some definitions that underlie the wilderness allocation issue. The word that comes closest to describing a wilderness condition is "uncontrolled." When human beings began to herd and cultivate, they controlled parts of nature. Dogs and cows became domesticated; wolves and deer remained uncontrolled--or wild. A similar distinction applied to land. Beyond the city walls and the village fences was terra incognita, the outback, no man's

land, wilderness. The use of the word "untrammeled" in the Wilderness Act of 1964 is instructive in this regard. A trammel is a kind of net used to capture or restrain animals. It's a controlling device, a way of imposing man's will on nature. The 1964 legislation appears to intend to keep parts of the environment uncontrolled.

Several things follow from this basic definition. Wilderness, real wilderness, it seems is an environment that poses some risk or challenge to human visitors. As an uncontrolled place, it entails a degree of uncertainty and of fear. One can become bewildered (the word has the same roots) in wilderness. For this reason there is a central contradiction in the Romantic movement, particularly in the effort to spiritualize and sanitize wilderness--to make it godly. "Centerfold wilderness" is what I call the images in Sierra Club calendars and similar publications. It's too perfect. The modern wilderness movement has created a clientele for a myth.

A few voices, however, recognized that the value of wilderness was precisely in the contrast it constituted to civilized conditions. As early as 1865 Frederick Law Olmsted recommended that Yosemite Valley, then a state park, be managed to provide the maximum contrast to conditions people normally experienced in their civilized lives. Joseph Sax in Mountains Without Handrails (1980) comments on this theme in a contemporary context. Let public wilderness be difficult and frightening, he argues. Let visitors be exposed to risk. The possibility that a few may be hurt, or even killed, is no reason to destroy the essential quality of wilderness. Grizzlies and big rapids and cliffs without guard rails are, in Sax's view and in mine, what wilderness is all about. There is risk in wilderness; that's why many of us seek it for a special kind of recreation unobtainable at the YMCA summer camp.

According to this reasoning, wilderness management is a contradiction in terms. How can you control the uncontrolled, manage the unmanaged?* The answer, of course, is that managing wilderness is the lesser of several evils, the most noticeable of which is loving wilderness to death.

But are there not ways of at least lessening the contradiction inherent in a controlled wilderness? One philosophy is to favor management that aims at creating the greatest possible contrast between conditions that people find in civilized environments. This leads to the role in wilderness of the guide and outfitter. There is not question in my mind that the guide/outfitter lessens the wilderness experience for the visitor. A guide provides an element of security, or control. Like a cabin, which is illegal in designated wilderness, a guide interjects an element of civilization between the user and the wild. The guide decreases risk, limits opportunities for self-sufficiency, reduces pride in achievement, and, in a deeply psychological sense, eliminates discovery. This is not to say that the guide spoils the experience for many people. On the contrary, he or she may enhance it. But is the experience the clients get as much of a wilderness experience as they would have gotten on their own? Is writing a check to an outfitter the equivalent of the physical, intellectual and psychological preparation necessary to conduct one's own wilderness trip? And if the land in question is legally-designated wilderness, should not the land manager favor a form of use more in keeping with wilderness conditions? Finally, to play this logic out, should not the nonguided use always be given preference on legally-designated wilderness?

Let me substantiate this point with an experience I had guiding in the Grand Canyon. There is a lovely side canyon most parties reach in the second or third day of the river trip. Ten years ago I would take clients up the canyon, showing them how to climb around waterfalls, placing their hands and feet, rigging fixed handrail ropes. They had a good time. But on one trip I decided to remain in camp. Preparing the people for the hike, I gathered them

*I addressed these questions in Wilderness Management: A Contradiction in Terms?, The Wilderness Resource Distinguished Lectureship (Nash 1978), and in the second chapter of Wilderness Management (Hendee, Stankey and Lucas 1978).

around and explained in detail what they would encounter. When the self-guided group returned, they seemed more excited about an achievement that was more their own. Taking this into account, I pulled onto the beach the next trip and casually mentioned that it was two hours until dinner and that a hike up the canyon was a possibility. The people were gone a long time; dinner started to cool. But when the group returned there was fire in their eyes! Instead of my telling them about the grottoes and pools, they told me. Their enthusiasm was that of discoverers. Wilderness, it seemed to me, had served its highest function. By deliberately eliminating my presense as a guide, I enhanced their wilderness experience.

Later in these trips I helped the customers learn to row in whitewater. Some of them now own their own boats and conduct their own trips when they can secure permits. This phenomena of "graduating" from a client on an outfitted trip to a do-it-yourselfer gave me reason to think that effective guiding is a self-destructive process. As in any form of teaching, success is achieved when the student learns to stand on his own feet. Granted that some people prefer to be guided (just as they enjoy going to restaurants rather than cooking at home), but a remarkably high percentage of current nonguided wilderness users began as paying customers on outfitted trips. The policy question facing management is this: when demand for wilderness exceeds supply (the visitor quota) do guided or nonguided users receive preference? I have suggested nonguided use is most consistent with the wilderness experience. Such a policy could mean the reduction or even elimination of professional guiding in designated wilderness areas. Unfortunate as this might be for the guides and outfitters, I submit that the primary purpose of wilderness is not to make anyone a living.

A quick examination of the history of professional wilderness guiding sheds light on these issues. The first people who made their living as recreational guides were the Swiss living in the alpine regions. Beginning in the 1850s and 1860s they assisted English gentlemen climbers

on the Matterhorn and other peaks. These first guides were simply packers. Their employers, the so-called "amateur" climbers, were the real pros in terms of skill. In time the situation reversed. The Swiss guide became an established institution. Unskilled tourists hired them to lead climbs. Eventually regulations required climbing parties to employ a professional guide. The qualified amateur could no longer climb without one.

The American experience with wilderness guiding began after the publication in 1869 of William H.H. Murray's Wilderness: or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks. Murray's tales of hunting, fishing and camping in northern New York created a clientele for the region among well-to-do Eastern city folk. The "Adirondack Guide" became a celebrity as did the "Maine Guide," and they served a purpose. The "sports," as the summer people were called, lacked wilderness skills. These greenhorns needed guidance. But some of the customer/students went on to surpass their teachers. Theodore Roosevelt, one of the best wilderness hunters of his time, is a case in point. Robert Marshall was another New York City kid who learned about wilderness at the feet of the Adirondack guide, Herb Clark. Marshall, of course, went on to become a legend in the wilderness of Montana and Alaska. Grateful as he was to Herb Clark for starting him out, Marshall wrote in 1933 that the essential characteristic of wilderness was that "visitors...have to depend exclusively on their own efforts for survival." The implication is that while guiding has its role in some areas as an introduction, the fullest wilderness experience demands self-reliance.

Marshall was not alone in his point of view. His colleague in the wilderness preservation movement, Aldo Leopold, saw guides carrying the gear of a canoe party over a portage in what is now the Boundary Waters Canoe area in Minnesota. "We objected," Leopold commented in 1926, "to people in the wilderness who hired guides to carry their packs. We objected because they had bought their way instead of working their way into our wilderness." I think it significant that the two men most responsible for

the origin of a system of designated wilderness in the United States shared a strong bias against guides and outfitters.

As a final instance there is the outdoor writer Emerson Hough. Proving that what we are considering is hardly new, Hough wrote in 1898 that he most enjoyed traveling in places "where a man could get lost if he wanted to, and where perhaps he could not get a guide if he cared to do so." Wilderness, Hough explained, meant "unchart-ed...country which had its own secrets." It appealed to a person who wanted to escape the "business methods" associated with hiring professionals. Hough concluded that "the deer killed under the tutelage of a licensed guide will never have the same value as that killed by the sportsman himself in a country which he discovers for himself."

In this context the question always surfaces, "What about those people who cannot get into wilderness without a guide? Don't they have a right to see these public lands? Wouldn't a nonguide policy favor an elite?" My response to this argument is based on my understanding of the concept of "right" and what it means in American culture. I take it to signify "equal opportunity." As I see it everyone has a chance to prepare for a wilderness rec-reation experience on the public lands. Anyone can acquire outdoor skills in nonwilderness areas, accumulate equipment, obtain knowledge, plan and execute a non-guided trip. I know of no policy that forbids old, young, fat, short, female, handicapped or any other social cate-gory from doing this. Of course there are many people unwilling to invest the time, energy and money in such preparation. This is their right, too; they have opted to allocate their resources in other directions.

There is a parallel here with public education. When I say that access to public wilderness should demand prepa-ration and skill, I am saying no more than every high school student hears regularly with regard to public colleges and universities. These insitutions have quotas. Ability is the basis of deciding who is admitted. If the high school student chooses to allocate his time and energy in non-

academic directions, he is frequently denied admission to college. No one calls such a system "elitist" or rants about the "rights" of high-school dropouts to attend the state university. The genius of the American political system is that we have choice. Opportunity means a free chance to choose. Take it or leave it.

To return to and summarize my central point, guides and outfitters are crutches. They accomodate people unwilling to prepare for a nonguided experience. On much of the public lands I have no problem with guiding and outfitting. But in designated wilderness, places that in theory are uncontrolled environments which place a premium on self-sufficiency, a case can be made for favoring nonguided over guided use. In other words, if society wants to manage <u>for</u> wilderness experiences, non-guided use should be preferred.

Based on this logic, there is clearly an inequity in places such as the Grand Canyon where qualified nonguided users must now wait almost eight years for an opportunity that a guided user can have immediately as the result of writing a check to an outfitter. Granted, the Grand Canyon is an extreme case. But given the growing demand for wilderness recreation we can assume that in the next half century more and more of the American backcountry will come under similar pressures. What is at stake is the wildness of our remaining wilderness. There appears to be a crying need for someone--probably the courts--to interpret the intent of the Wilderness Act in this regard. Discussions, such as those that will follow at this conference, will surely inform these decisions.