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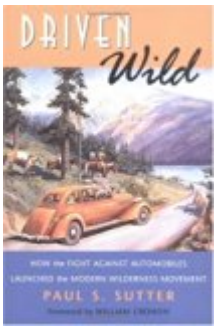

Paul S. Sutter. *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002. xvi + 343 pp. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-295-98219-9.

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Writing in 1921 on "The Wilderness and Its Place in Forest Recreation Policy," Aldo Leopold explained that, "recreational plans are leaning toward the segregation of certain areas from certain developments, so that having been led into the wilderness, the people may have some wilderness left to enjoy" (p. 69). Setting aside lands designated as wilderness, continued the man who would pen *A Sand County Almanac*, was not merely a way to preserve natural resources such as timber and water, but a means to create level-headed policy concerning public lands recreation. Thus Leopold's vision of the value of wilderness was much more than a means to set aside lands from industrial exploitation. Rather, Leopold found in wilderness a way to preserve lands from recreational overuse, particularly road building.

I learned this, and much more, from Paul Sutter's superb study of the origins of wilderness advocacy, *Driven Wild*. The relationship between "the automobile and the making of modern wilderness" is the "overarching theme and thesis" of this investigation of the foundations of wilderness activism (p. 10). By focusing on wilderness as a strategy to contain the impact of the automobile on public lands, Sutter emphasizes that wilderness policy arose from the material and cultural conditions of interwar America, rather than from an ideal reinvigorated by ecological thought and preservationist politics. This method rediscovers the historic meaning of wilderness, a term defined not by counter-modern ideals, but one that exists in constant yet creative tension with modernity itself.

To investigate the origins of wilderness policy, Sutter presents intellectual biographies of four prominent founders of the Wilderness Society: the aforementioned Aldo Leopold, Robert Sterling Yard, Benton MacKaye, and Bob Marshall. He grounds all of their thought in the explosion of outdoor recreation following the first World War. This boom in tourist activity grew from transportation, information about parks and other public lands, and the existence of such lands. Tourism, however, embodied (and continues to embody) an ironic contradiction: the tourist desires real or authentic experience and thus seeks to visit exotic or "undiscovered" places. Yet such

tourism of course pulls such authentic destinations--that is, places relatively untouched by tourism--into the realm of tourist activity. As tourists pushed into untrammeled lands to find real nature, they brought with them the types of development they sought to escape. Put another way, the nature enthusiast wants a place free from the markers of modern life, a desire that is itself modern. Wilderness emerged as a way to mollify these commercial impulses and to protect public lands from the ravages of the automobile--what Edward Abbey would later dub "industrial tourism."

This engagement with commercial culture shaped early wilderness activism in different ways. Indeed, though united by their desire to establish wilderness areas, the activist founders of the Wilderness Society were of one mind about little else. Through Sutter's short biographies, the reader discovers the complex and, at times, surprising foundations of wilderness policy. Robert Sterling Yard, for example, came to wilderness advocacy through his career in advertising. His interest in public lands began with his career as a Park Service publicist. While an employee of the Park Service, Yard developed a notion of "complete conservation"--an insistence that commercialism be kept out of the parks whose primary mission should be the preservation of sublime beauty. Initially, "commercialism" meant industrial development. Yet by the late 1920s, the consequences of road building and automobile intrusion in park lands coupled with the draining from advertising of its informative and educational (as opposed to persuasive) purpose, led Yard first to education and eventually to wilderness as a means to combat tourist development. Yard, then, was a conservative in many senses of the word, one who continued to view the purpose of national parks as providing the masses a means of spiritual and cultural uplift. Eventually, he argued that forest or state lands should be subject to tourism while other, more significant, lands should remain free from popular development. In the idea of wilderness he found a means to maintain his vision of sacred American lands against the superficial consumerism that might destroy them.

Yard's elitist vision of tourism conflicted with the very idea of widespread public appreciation for wilderness lands. For example, when confronted with Bob Marshall's pleas that wilderness areas function as purposeful relief for the masses, Yard crankily complained that natural areas "cannot be applied to social uses and stay natural" (p. 235). The national parks, asserted Yard, were exhibit "A" in such folly. These arguments did not dissuade Marshall who combined a sophisticated understanding of forest ecology with socialist egalitarianism in his wilderness activism. For Marshall, forestry had gone astray from its promise of providing a foundation for progressive resource policy. Like his fellows in the Wilderness Society, he detested the damage inflicted by road building on public lands. Yet he found ways to reconcile resource use with wilderness areas, arguing, for example, that wilderness areas could provide American Indian communities with a resource base that would help preserve their economic and cultural autonomy. Marshall's arguments influenced policy, as they found a receptive audience in John Collier, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier adopted wilderness policy as one strategy to allow Indians the autonomy promised to them by the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

Like Marshall, Benton MacKaye critiqued Progressive conservation policy from the left. Sutter lauds MacKaye, a regional planner who created the Appalachian Trail, as a "visionary" and one of the "most important and imaginative environmental thinkers of the early twentieth century" (p. 142). Like his fellow Wilderness Society founders, MacKaye was driven into wilderness advocacy by cars and roads. For MacKaye, planning could help specific localities retain a spirit of community against the chaotic recklessness of commercial forces. Wilderness areas were a de-

sign choice, an important tool for enlightened planners who must preserve some areas while allowing for the intelligent use of others. As Sutter points out, MacKaye did not always fully appreciate the tensions between planning and the volatility of democratic choice, or comprehend the contradictions of controlled development against the anarchy of market capitalism. Yet his inclusion of wilderness and multihued defense of its necessity was unique among regional planners. Like Marshall, MacKaye reconciled his utilitarian and preservationist sympathies into a broadly socialist appeal to the value of wilderness that combined the insights of forest ecology with a belief in the humanizing affects of wilderness travel.

This readable and cogent book should find a wide audience. Its clear and compelling arguments suggest that it will be an excellent addition to advanced undergraduate or graduate classes. The analysis of wilderness policy in *Driven Wild* demonstrates that careful historical delineation must exist alongside the examination of the language of environmentalism. Most importantly, this work is rich with examples that illustrate how political ideas arise as strategies to resolve specific problems. Indeed, wilderness policy and its early proponents turn out to be more complex--and more interesting--than many other writers have suggested. Sutter's historical reexamination of the origins of wilderness policy is the most sophisticated and thorough entry in the historiography of wilderness that I have yet seen. As such, it is a must read for environmental historians.