

**The Roots and Early Efforts at Forest Conservation in Southern
Appalachia**

By

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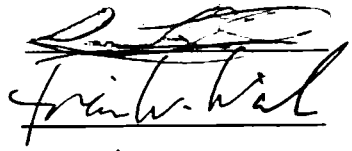
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The Roots and Early Attempts at Forest Conservation in Southern Appalachia

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Introduction

Currently, environmentalists are battling developmental interests in Third World countries. Non-governmental organizations have identified the world's last remaining "wild places," and in the last few years, there has been a scramble to conserve these lands. As post-materialist issues like biodiversity and cataclysmic climatic phenomenon like El Nino have become buzzwords in the 1990s, the Third World has become the battleground for conservation. The domestic context of these countries, in most cases, is fairly analogous to the late nineteenth century United States. Thus, the details of the US Progressive conservation movement may shed some light on the current Third World conservation movements. To some extent, both feature developmental interests at odds with environmental interests.¹

Although the Progressive conservation movement in Southern Appalachia made little tangible success, the intricacies of the movement, including its composition, support, opposition, and pathways, provide valuable insight into environmental history. The limited success of the group serves to teach us a lesson. The wide range of persons which the movement courted held distinct advantages and disadvantages: the details of which have been ignored by the existing body of historical literature.

Around the turn of the century, America encountered a watershed period in environmental history. The over-logging of Appalachian forests created a host of environmental problems. After a few small-scale attempts to preserve these forests in the 1880s, the Progressive movement facilitated the creation of conservationist groups to

¹ For information on Third World conservation, see Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990).

elicit federal action. The Progressive conservation movement, based on principles of scientific management, attempted to reel in Appalachian timbering in order to create and maintain an equilibrium between exploitation and preservation. The Progressive answer was conservation: somewhere in between preservation and clear-cutting, conservation sought to come to terms with extractive industry.

Asheville citizens, concerned about the permanence of logging in Appalachia, mobilized in the fall of 1899. In December of 1899, the Appalachian National Park Association presented the United States Congress with a proposal for forest conservation in Southern Appalachia. The Appalachian National Park Association, or ANPA, was an eclectic group composed of scientists, businesspersons of various sorts, physicians, and attorneys. These Progressive conservationists were the first group to elicit a formal response from the federal government, and although Congress eventually balked, the ANPA proposal contributed much to the conservation movement. The ANPA's proposal was the first eastern conservation proposal to progress to a legislative vote; more importantly, the group forced Congress to take a pragmatic look at the details involved in forest conservation in the East. Whereas conservation in the West was relatively substantial, eastern conservation necessitated funds for the purchase of private property. The ANPA was a very Progressive group, but the traditional characterization of the group is an oversimplification as Progressive conservation involved multiple actors with a spectrum of ideologies.

The Progressive conservation movement asserted that business and nature could coexist as mutual beneficiaries. The ANPA and its supporters believed in the preservation of the mountain forests, but the primary justification was not the safeguard

of the land's beauty for the benefit of generations to come. On the contrary, the Progressive conservation movement was pragmatic and sought to exploit the land at a sustainable level while simultaneously protecting the South's watersheds and fertile valleys.

The material written on the Southern Appalachian Progressive conservation movement is not detailed. This subject matter falls under several topical histories that all provide some insight into the movement. The existing body of literature does not necessarily address this matter directly. Thus, this study lies within several historical genres: park histories, conservation studies, environmental histories, logging histories, and Appalachian studies. No one author has synthesized these topics into a coherent case study of Southern Appalachia as effected by the Progressive conservation movement.² The idea of being homeless is encouraging because it provides an opportunity to shed new light on historical account.

The conservation movement of the United States primarily focused on the Western rangelands and forests. These lands were easily converted into federally protected lands since they were already owned by the Division of the General Land Office. Millions of acres were conserved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and thus, the Progressive conservation movement is almost synonymous with these Western lands. However, there was an eastern movement. Authors such as David Cushman Coyle and Frank Smith overlook the eastern component of the conservation

² One could argue that Eller, Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982) presents a synthesis of the Progressive conservation movement. That is, by no means, however, Eller's primary concern.

movement.³ Since eastern conservation entailed the procurement of private property and no precedent had been set for such assertion of eminent domain, the Appalachian component of the conservation movement died in the House of Representatives in 1902.⁴

Conservation studies, such as Smith and Coyle, do, however, give detail about the actions of the leaders of the movement. They are highly dependent, however, upon the stories of these leaders, successful legislation, and successfully conserved lands. These analyses are top down studies that ignore actor-based factors. Thus, the detailed grassroots canvassing of conservation groups is overlooked.

Carlos Campbell's *Birth of a National Park*, which claims to pay homage to those who fought for the preservation of the mountain forests, gives little credit to the efforts of the Appalachian National Park Association. "The very fact that the North Carolina group abandoned the fight for a national park and adopted a different far easier goal," Campbell writes, "must disqualify its efforts as a step in the successful movement that started in 1923."⁵ In fact, in a book length study, Campbell dedicated three paragraphs to the six year efforts of the ANPA. Campbell's research was primarily from oral accounts and US Park Service information; thus, his analysis of the prehistory of the park movement is inadequate. Campbell mistook the shrewdness of the ANPA for lack of vision.

In *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South*, Ronald Eller presents a more comprehensive study of Appalachian conservation. Eller gave more credit to the group, suggesting that their continued efforts led to the

³ David Cushman Coyle. *Conservation: An American Study of Conflict and Accomplishment* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Press, 1957).

Frank E. Smith, *Politics of Conservation* (New York: Random House, 1966).

⁴ There was one federal purchase of private property for conservation in Montana. The government paid the Blackfoot Indians one and a half million dollars for lands to be added to the Flathead Forest Reservation.

⁵ Carlos C. Campbell *Birth of a National Park*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 1960) p. 16.

establishment of national forests through the Weeks Act.⁶ Eller's concern was with the logging of the mountains; he criticized logging companies, especially those whose interest lay above the Mason- Dixon line, for their lack of regard for the ecological stability of Appalachia.⁷

In *Strangers in High Places*, Michael Frome shows concern for the damage done by timbering and characterized the progress of Appalachian conservationists. Frome is complimentary of the ANPA's efforts: he believes they were dedicated and energetic. However, Frome's analysis is insufficient and oversimplified.⁸ *Strangers in High Places* is, by no means, about the conservation movement. Frome's concentration is on the culture of mountain peoples; thus, conservationist is one of the many faces of the Southern Appalachian. Frome, like most authors concerned with the conservation movement, gloss over the early parts of the battle to preserve the mountains. They pay little attention to detail; they simply catalog the failed attempts and exhaustively praise successful ones.

Authors engaged in "hero worship" typically overlook the importance of early proposals; historians often disregard losers. Essentially, this work is one of few that seeks to methodically analyze the roots of conservation in Southern Appalachia. Authors such as Samuel Hays and David Coyle⁹ describe conservation in detail, but these studies almost exclusively deal with western examples of conservation and neglect to give

⁶ The Weeks Act is a 1911 bill to establish forest reserve above the headwaters of navigable waterways in Southern Appalachia. Its passage, and the allocation of funds to said bill, eventually led to the first national forest reserves in Southern Appalachia.

⁷ Ronald D. Eller *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982) p. 112.

⁸ Michael Frome *Strangers in High Places*. (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, 1966) p. 175.

⁹ Samuel P. Hays *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement 1880-1920*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1959)

David Cushman Coyle *Conservation: An American Study of Conflict and Accomplishment*. (New

adequate attention to eastern efforts. Many scholars of Appalachian timbering, such as Robert Lambert ¹⁰, do not include the aftermath: the fight to save the forests. Other Appalachian authors like Frome and Eller are often more concerned with the effects on the mountain people than with the effects on the mountain lands.

This study finds itself nestled somewhere within these various historical genres. All of these genres simultaneously contribute and ignore some of the facets of the Progressive conservation movement in Southern Appalachia. This study seeks to fill those gaps.

There is one clarification to be made before entering the body of this text. This study will liberally utilize concepts such as Appalachia, Southern Appalachia, Smoky Mountains, and ANPA park. These are all quite different geographic regions and are not, by any means, interchangeable. Appalachia refers to the region about the Appalachian Mountain range which extends from Georgia north into Canada. Southern Appalachia is the southern portion of said range. ¹¹ The US Geological Survey defines Southern Appalachia as the contiguous mountain region south of the Kanawha River. Thus, where the Kanawha River in West Virginia metaphorically slices the Appalachian chain into Southern and Northern Appalachia is the divider. ¹² The Smoky Mountains refer to the portion of Southern Appalachia in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. The

Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Press, 1957).

¹⁰Robert Lambert "Logging in the Smokies: 1880-1930." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 21 1961. Pp. 350-363

¹¹ See Map 1 on next page. The map comes from the first attempt at empirically defining Appalachia by John C. Campbell. *Our Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (Spartanburg: Reprint Co., 1973) p. 10 [originally published in 1921].

¹²Arthur Keith. "Topography and Geology of the Southern Appalachians" In U.S. Congress, Senate. *Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of Agriculture in relation to the Forests, Rivers, and Mountains of the Southern Appalachian Region*. 57th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902). (*Senate Document 84*). From now on referred to as "Topography and Geology" *Senate Document 84*.

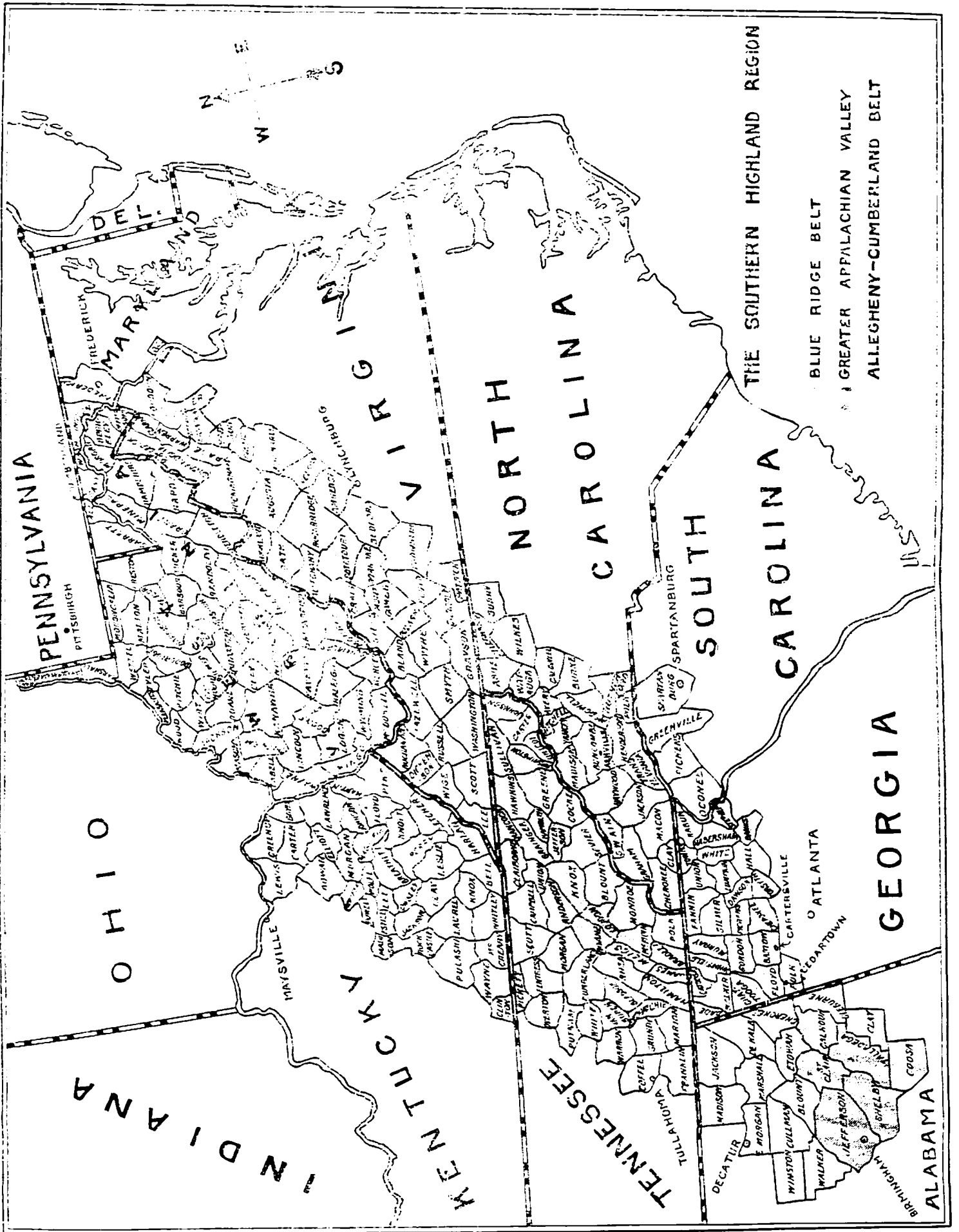
boundaries of the contemporary national park also hold for the term Smoky Mountains.

The ANPA park boundaries are quite similar to the Smoky Mountains.¹³

Chapter One of this text does twofold. Part One follows the evolution of Appalachian timbering and the subsequent effects on the environment. Chapter One: Part Two explains the phenomenon of conservation, the rise of scientific forestry, and the reshaping of federal forest policy through the cultural revolution known as the Progressive era. Chapter Two tells the story of Appalachian conservation. Part One is the movement itself, primarily the activities of the ANPA. Part Two tells the story of the federal response to the Appalachian National Park Association and its supporters.

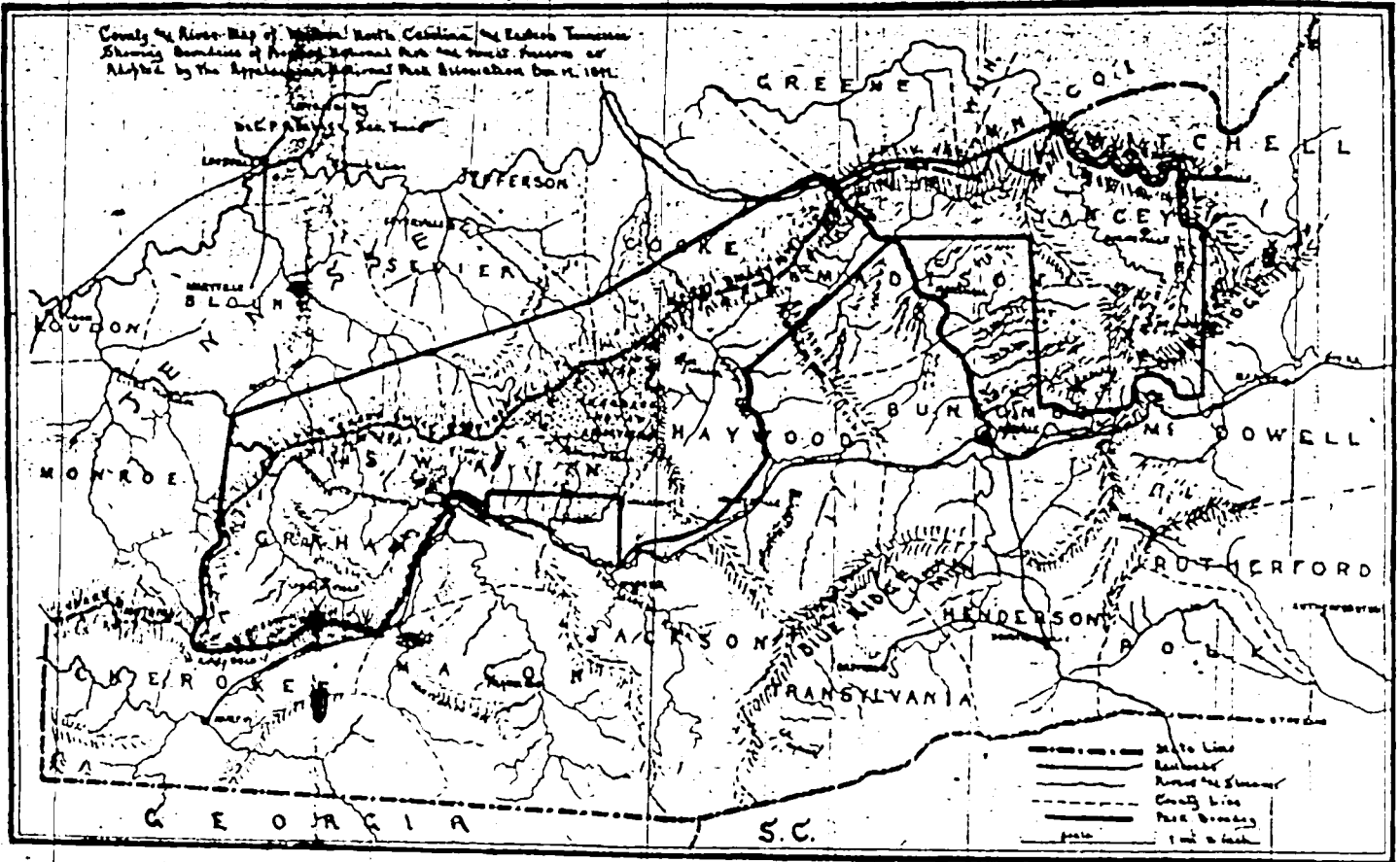
¹³ The ANPA park was comprised of lands in Graham, Swain, haywood, Buncumbe, Madison, Yancey Counties in North Carolina, and lands of Monroe, Blount, Sevier, Cooke, and Unicoi Counties. Information determined from Map #2

Source: "Park Boundary As Proposed by the Memorial Committee of the Appalachian National Park Association, Adopted December 19, 1899." *Asheville Citizen*. 5 January 1900, p. 1.



Map #1

LE. N. O., FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 6, 1890



Reduced two and one-half times from original drawing.

PARK BOUNDARY AS PROPOSED BY THE MEMORIAL COMMITTEE OF THE APPALACHIAN NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION, ADOPTED DECEMBER 19, 1899.

This map accompanies and illustrates a memorial to Congress from the Appalachian National Park Association. The memorial was presented to Congress by Senator Pritchard. It sets forth the natural beauty of the Southern Appalachian region, their superb forests and the necessity for preserving them in order to protect the headwaters of the many rivers rising in these mountains and to preserve the healthfulness of the region, which is now a great national park. The location of the proposed park is central; and would give to the Eastern States a National Park, to which they are entitled. It is asserted that they should pay as a forest reserve. Reasons are given why the Park should be laid out as shown on the map.

Map #2

Chapter One

The Path to Conservation: Industrialization to Progressivism

Since the establishment of permanent European settlements in Appalachia, mountain people have culled the mountain forests for timber. Originally, small farmers engaged in small-scale timbering; however, the intensity of Appalachian timbering dramatically increased with the influx of settlers and the development of more efficient and more productive extraction and transportation technologies. The advancements of the Industrial Revolution created an industry out of a low-impact way of life. With the development of extensive timbering, Appalachians gained a much-needed, but highly controversial, source of revenue. Eventually, despite economic benefits, lumbermen inflicted drastic environmental degradation that would devastate the landscape.

Scientists and timber interests sought to harness the productive capabilities of the Appalachian forests through more efficient and permanent logging practices. The result was the rise of scientific forestry, which sought to apply the scientific management of forests by professional foresters. The Progressive era facilitated the creation of political pressure groups, formed to advocate and seek the federal application of scientific forestry. This simplified progression was the birth of conservation.

Part One: Appalachian Deforestation: Timbering, Slash-and-Burn, and Pastoralism.

Historians have traditionally divided logging in Appalachia into two phases. The first phase was a low-impact exploitation, or selective cutting, of the forests in which farmers cut timber for their personal use or sold it to mills for supplemental income. The second phase was more thorough; it involved the systematic clear cutting of forests by

mechanized logging.¹⁴ Although imprecise, historians generally date the first phase of timbering as beginning around 1880. Robert Lambert describes the first phase as “peripheral logging” or “selective cutting.”¹⁵ The primary distinction of the first phase was that logging was not a livelihood, but part of a way of life. The Southern Appalachian Mountain forests were dense and variable; thus they were invaluable natural resources. However, the long-term, low level exploitation of the first phase affected the populations of species such as cherry and walnut, but in the main, the forest cover of the mountain slopes remained intact.¹⁶

Professional loggers and large scale logging operations were few and far between during the first phase: the farmer was the primary logger. The farmer would fell timber to clear fields and fuel fires. Farmers also cut timber during the growing season and the winter months as a means of supplementing their income. Farming remained the primary occupation, but agricultural practices in Appalachia, hardly a breadbasket, was a marginal existence. Thus, logging was not only a means of generating revenue in the off season, but part of a mixed subsistence strategy, which allowed Appalachia to sustain a dense population relative to the agricultural productivity of the land.¹⁷

Primarily, farmers would utilize some of the fallen timber themselves; they sold the extraneous timber to the local mill. Most of the timber mills in Appalachia were along rivers because rivers were mobile centers of commerce and had access to electrical power. Farmers used this to their advantage and utilized either a team of oxen or a splash dam to transport the timber to nearby waterways. On the banks of a convenient river,

¹⁴ This rough sketch of the two phases is taken from: Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers*. Pp. 101- 120 And Robert Lambert, “Logging in the Great Smokies: 1880- 1930” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 21. Pp. 350-363.

¹⁵Robert Lambert. “Logging in the Great Smokies 1880-1930” p. 351

farmers constructed rafts out of fallen timber and simply floated the rafts downstream to a mill. The rafts were dismantled and sold to the mill: mills typically paid farmers fifty cents per foot, measured across the stump of the tree.¹⁶ Timber mills of the first phase were moderately successful. Farmers did not cut timber during planting and harvesting time, and consequently, mills received timber very irregularly.

While the first phase was, by no means, a thorough clear cutting of the mountain forests, it must be clear that the techniques and practices of the loggers, or more accurately, of the farmers, were not environmentally sound. For example, splash dams were very devastating to local aquatic ecology. Oxen teams utilized to drag felled timber across the forest floor destroyed groundcover and killed fragile saplings. The first phase did much in the way of environmental damage, but largely left the regional ecosystem intact. In the late nineteenth century, pockets of deforestation remained interspersed with substantial areas of dense, primeval forest.

Although historians disagree on the ending of the first phase, they generally agree that land developers began to buy unusually large tracts of land in southern Appalachia around the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁷ These individuals, or the interests they represented, were primarily Northern. The timber companies that followed in the wake of these developers would change the course of Appalachia's history.

The intensification of timbering and the reluctance to adopt more costly, but more environmentally conscious, extraction techniques during the second phase, led to the eventual devastation of Appalachian forests. At the most primitive level, the second

¹⁶Albert Cowdrey. *This Land, This South*. (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1983) p. 33.

¹⁷Ronald Eller, *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers*. P. 90

¹⁸This simplistic explanation of early timbering methods is taken from Eller's *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers*. For a more detailed analysis of early logging techniques, see Eller.

phase was just much more thorough. Instead of cutting a small field for growing corn, the timber operations of the second phase cleared an entire mountainside.

The increase in intensity of Appalachian timbering had multiple causes. One of those causes was the increased demand for timber. America had a rapidly increasing population and expanding borders. The Midwest lacked significant forest cover, and the Pacific Northwest was too far for lumbering to be economically feasible. America was a wood-based society, and the shrinking forests of the Northeast and the Great Lakes could not accommodate the growing demand for high quality timber. Robert Lambert states that

“in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the great hardwood forests of the Northeast and the Middle West began to reflect the heavy commercial exploitation which had been necessary to produce the lumber for a rapidly expanding population. This led lumbermen to search Canada and the more remote regions of the United States for new sources of supply.”²⁰

Timber interests turned their eyes to the Southern Appalachian hardwood and Southern pine forests.

Increasing demand was not the only factor that made Appalachian timbering appear lucrative to business interests. In the mid-nineteenth century, Appalachia appeared a rugged and impassable obstacle. Major road and rail networks only passed through low gaps and lower elevations; the higher areas of the Southern Appalachians lacked the solid transportation infrastructure needed to successfully timber on a large scale. Thus, early timbering operations had to build and maintain extensive transportation networks, a very costly endeavor. For timbering to intensify, this inaccessibility needed to be overcome. Whereas, local farmers turned a small profit with

¹⁹ Ibid p. 345-355 and p. 90-95.

²⁰ Ibid p. 350-1.

low level exploitation, the steep mountain slopes of the Appalachian forests were not ideal for intensive timber extraction. What evolved, however, was a highly effective industry that was able to thoroughly extract vast amounts of timber. Ronald Eller describes a typical “second phase” Appalachian timber endeavor: a company would buy up land, hire a crew, build a mill, construct a railroad network, and establish a timber camp.²¹ Companies followed this “blueprint” time again, and timbering in Appalachia became a substantial industry.

Timber operations utilized various innovative technologies of the Industrial Revolution. Narrow gauge rail, steam-powered saws, and cable skidders made the extraction of timber more efficient and more productive.²² These new technologies and the increased demand allowed timbering to evolve from a source of supplemental income to the principal livelihood for thousands. These new methods of timbering required large amounts of start-up capital, however. Thus, investors expected big returns. The natural consequence was the clear cutting of the mountain forests. Logging became a full time, all season occupation for many. Farmers remained, but logging created a substantial change in lifestyle for many Appalachians.²³

This intensification led to the extensive timbering of all of Southern Appalachia, even the steep slopes and remote mountain coves. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson wrote that “during the past few years he [the lumberman] has cut everything merchantable. He is now beginning to extend his operations to considerable distances beyond the main lines of transportation by the construction of tramways and even cheap,

²¹ Eller, Ronald. *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers*. P. 92.

²² *Ibid* p. 95.

²³ *Ibid* p. 92.

short railways.”²⁴ The intensification of timbering operations led to the virtual exhaustion of supply in the Northeast and the Great Lakes area, and to the brink of disaster in Southern Appalachia.

The second phase of timbering differed from the first phase in another important regard. Since the second phase took place on a grand scale and utilized sophisticated machinery, it required a large amount of capital. Appalachia, historically an underdeveloped region, was void of extensive industrial development. Thus, the financial backings of most of the large timber operations were Northern in origin. Robert Lambert describes the investors as non-Appalachian.²⁵ While Lambert’s statement may be factually true, he provides no evidence to substantiate it. Thus, Albert Cowdrey’s analysis of purchased land titles in the region is very important in justifying historians’ claim: “sixty-eight percent of the lands sold between 1881 and 1888 were acquired by northern lumbermen and dealers.”²⁶ The interests of the lumbermen and the timber operator, rooted in profit, held little concern for the long-term effects of intensive timbering. Timbering operations gave little thought to maintaining forest cover levels, which would assure sustainability to the industry. Short-term profit overtook any restraint to assure a lumber supply in the future. Appalachian forests appeared infinite. The lumbermen’s “careless methods destroy the greater part of the young growth, which

²⁴James Wilson, “Report of the Forest Conditions of the Southern Appalachian Mountain Region” In *Senate Document 84*. p. 24 (from here on out referred to as Wilson’s Report in *Senate Document 84*). Senate Document 84 is the most complete compilation of studies of deforestation in turn of the century Southern Appalachia; thus, it will be referenced quite frequently in Chapter One. However, the document’s value to the conservation movement will come into play in Chapter Two where the document will be formally introduced.

²⁵ Robert Lambert, “Logging in the Great Smokies 1880-1930.” p. 354.

²⁶ Albert Cowdrey, *This Land, This South*. p. 112.

would otherwise in course of time replenish the supply.”²⁷ Northern financiers expected big returns, and the clear cutting of the forests became the goal of technological innovators.

Historians argue that the absentee origin of the capital, and thus of the interests, had drastic consequences for Appalachian timbering. Albert Cowdrey alleges that the absentee ownership of timber operations relegated Appalachia a quasi-colonial status.²⁸ This assertion is very problematic, however. Cowdrey assumes that local lumber operations acted in a manner contrary to external lumber operations. One only has to look at the actions of the loggers of the first phase, who were almost exclusively Appalachian, to refute Cowdrey’s assertion. Profit drove the loggers of the first phase just as profit drove the larger operations of the second phase. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson agreed, stating that “the home and permanent interests of the lumbermen are generally in another State or region. and his interest in these mountains, begins and ends with the hope of profit. There is, however, no evidence that the native lumberman has in the past exhibited any different spirit.”²⁹ Environmental degradation did not become an issue because of the purchase of Appalachian timberlands by “outsiders.” Environmental degradation became an issue because of the potential of late nineteenth and early twentieth century logging operations to utilize extractive and transportation technologies to exploit the forests more effectively. There is no evidence to suggest or reason to believe that Appalachians would have refrained from harnessing these

²⁷ H.A. Pressey and R.W. Myers “Hydrography of the Southern Appalachians.” In *Senate Document 84* p. 132.

²⁸ Albert Cowdrey, *This Land, This South*. p. 112.

²⁹ “Wilson’s Report” *Senate Document 84*. p. 24.

innovations. Appalachians simply lacked the capital to procure and maintain these expensive technologies.

Both large-scale corporations and small-scale operations were successful during the second phase, and Appalachia experienced a timber boom. Mill towns along rivers and in the foothills of the mountains experienced huge population growth.³⁰ By 1900, timber had become the second leading industry in North Carolina. More importantly, however, Appalachia now supplied the country with over thirty percent of its hardwood timber.³¹

This timber boom brought great economic benefits to many timber operations, but the timbermen's saws could only cut for so long until eventually they would begin to threaten their own means of existence. The sensitivity of mountain forests is such that clear cutting can be devastating to the mountain ecosystem. The deforesting of mountain slopes also affects the drainage areas, which are subsequently the majority of the Southeast. Appalachians of the Industrial Revolution followed the American precedent for natural resource exploitation. Benjamin Kline frames environmental exploitation in the Industrial Revolution as evidence of:

“the traditional belief that nature existed for the benefit of humanity. This mechanized period glorified tools as a means to further exploit the riches of the nature. The use of the nation's natural resources during the Industrial Revolution followed a consistent theme- a resource was exploited until it ran out, was no longer economically attractive, was replaced by technological advancements, or was made obsolete by an alternative invention.”³²

Capitalism proved to be a very thorough means by which to exploit the natural resources of America. The timber industry was shockingly thorough: over eighty-five percent of

³⁰ Ronald Eller, *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers* p. 100.

³¹ *Ibid* p. 104.

what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was under some level of timber extraction at some time.³³ The Smokies, which are the steepest and most inaccessible region within Southern Appalachia, held the most prized timber. The old growth of the Unaka and Balsam Mountains proved too tempting, and ambitious operations within the industry found a way to overcome the natural barriers to extraction.

Loggers only spared the steepest of slopes. The damage to the mountains was widespread; deforestation afflicted all sub-regions of Southern Appalachia. In 1902, Secretary Wilson stated that “there is but one discordant fact- the calamitous destruction of the forests on these mountain slopes.”³⁴ W.W. Ashe and H.B. Ayres, in a two year (1900- 1901) study of the Southern Appalachian forest conditions, made both positive and negative findings. They estimated that over seventy-five percent of Southern Appalachia retained some form of forest cover; however, they also found that “of this total area in forest about 7.4 percent, or 303,000 acres, is still in primeval condition, i.e., has never been culled at all.”³⁵ That is to say that, of a total area of over five million acres of contiguous land from Virginia to Alabama, only 7.4 percent remained virgin forest. Timbering in Appalachia was remarkably thorough.

The most significant culprit of deforestation, other than logging operations, was the farmer. In order to cultivate lands in Appalachia successfully, farmers must first remove the forest cover. The practice of slash-and-burn agriculture was a means of existence in Appalachia before European settlement. Slash-and-burn agriculture requires the use of a substantial amount of land per person, however, and the population growth of

³² Benjamin Kline, *First Along the River* (San Francisco, CA: Acadia, 1997) p. 39.

³³ Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places* p. 161.

³⁴ “Wilson’s Report” In *Senate Document 84*. p. 20.

the late nineteenth century threatened this existence. US hydrographers H.A. Pressey and R.W. Myers stated that Appalachian "soil is deep and fertile, as is shown by the splendid growth of forest trees and by its yield under the first cultivation, but it is only a matter of time, if the forests are wantonly cut, when all of the soil and vegetation will be washed from the mountain sides."³⁶ Slash-and-burn agriculture has highly productive yields for several years, but crops and erosion remove the soil's nutrients relatively quickly.

Thus, while cleared lands are quite productive in the short-term, slash-and-burn agriculture involves the alternation of a number of fields between cultivation and fallow. H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe, in "Forests and Forest Conditions in the Southern Appalachians" wrote that "cleared mountain lands have a short-lived usefulness, and new clearings are made to replace the fields which from year to year are abandoned because they cease to be productive."³⁷ When soils are depleted, farmers must clear another plot and allow the depleted field to remain fallow, slowly returning to forest and replenishing the soil's nutrients. Thus, individual farmers are responsible for the clearing of a very large amount of land. In a given valley in 1900, over half of the lands cleared for agricultural uses were in fallow.³⁸

The problems surrounding slash-and-burn agriculture culminated because the lands cultivated were mountain slopes. The farmers chose to cultivate the valleys first, then as settlers moved in, newly arrived farmers moved their fields further up the slopes. When farmers cleared fields in highland areas, erosion and flooding affect the lowlands.

³⁵ H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe. "Forests and Forest Conditions in the Southern Appalachians" In *Senate Document 84*. p. 45.

³⁶ H.A. Pressey and R.W. Myers. "Hydrography of the Southern Appalachians" In *Senate Document 84*. p. 129.

³⁷ H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe, "Forests and Forest Conditions in the Southern Appalachians." In *Senate Document 84* p. 58.

³⁸ "Wilson's Report" In *Senate Document 84* p. 24.

As the farmers moved up the slopes, the rate of erosion and flooding increased exponentially because the angle of the slope increased.³⁹ The removal of the forest cover by farmers in the highlands was also damaging to the farmlands in the fertile valleys. Farms in the Carolina piedmont and Tennessee River valley flooded regularly in the early summers and winters because of the deforestation in the highlands. Farmland clearings contributed to said flooding: “it is then, exactly true that the making of farms on the mountain slopes is destroying the farms in the valleys.”⁴⁰ The cultivation of crops was not the only agricultural subsistence strategy attempted.

Appalachians also practiced pastoralism, the raising of domesticated animals as a means of existence. Animals such as sheep and goats easily adapt to the perils of a mountain existence. However, in a late nineteenth century study of lumbering, Overton Price found that Southern Appalachia lacked certain types of vegetation necessary for the successful grazing of domesticated animals. Price stated that Appalachia lacked enough winter forage to maintain livestock populations in the winter months. Furthermore, the temporary life of the grasses on the lower slopes made grazing sources regenerate slowly.⁴¹ Price’s study was important because it suggested that agriculture, both cultivating domesticated plants and raising domesticated animals, was ecologically incongruent with Appalachia. Price implied that lumbering, and essentially federally regulated lumbering, was the only way to reap the benefits of the forests without destroying them.

Fire also threatened to deforest the mountains of Appalachia. Logging operations, especially the mechanized companies of the second phase, were notorious for negligent

³⁹ H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe, “Forests and Forest Conditions in the Southern Appalachians” In *Senate Document 84* p. 59.

⁴⁰ “Wilson’s Report” In *Senate Document 84* p. 27.

practices that set forest fires. The incidence of forest fires increased dramatically with the intensification of logging. Logging operations had little concern for the condition of the land after the removal of the timber. Loggers often left the tops and branches of trees in their wake. Even more dangerous were the huge piles of sawdust from the cuttings. This material easily ignited and was highly flammable. Instead of burning wood wastes under controlled conditions, however; loggers left them to ignite whenever lightning struck.⁴² Fire had been a consistent element in Appalachian forests since humans had inhabited the region. However, these fires intensified when loggers' methods became sloppy and negligent.

The deforesting of the slopes was not only increasing fires, but also increasing flooding. The forests of mountain ecosystems have an irreplaceable function. In January 1890, the Memorial of the American Forestry Association presented a statement to that concern.

“It has never been realized that mountain forest land differs from all other land in this important respect, that its condition can not substantially be changed without disastrous results; that it must, for the sake of the properly agricultural land, always remain in forest.”⁴³

The complex root systems of mountain forests act as organic sponges and absorb most of the water within mountain ecosystems. The remainder of the water gently funnels into mountain streams, where most rivers find their source.

In the Great Smoky Mountains, this role is of the utmost importance because of the large amount of precipitation, which falls primarily in the early summer and winter.

⁴¹ Overton W. Price. “Lumbering in the Southern Appalachians Now and Under Government Ownership and Supervision.” In *Senate Document 84* p. 61.

⁴² “Wilson’s Report” In *Senate Document 84* p. 24

⁴³ “Memorial of the American Forestry Association” In Frank E. Smith (Ed.) *Conservation in the United States: Land and Water 1492-1900* (New York: Chelsea House, 1971) p. 707.

The average annual rainfall in the Smokies is over eighty inches a year. Often very violent rains, during which several inches would fall within a short amount of time, intensify this. Within the continental United States, only the temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest experience more rainfall. During one exceptionally wet year, some locations within the Smokies received over one hundred and twenty inches rainfall in twelve months.⁴⁴ When loggers remove trees from mountain slopes, the rainwater simply moves down the mountainsides, stripping the land of soil as it goes. In very basic terms, the deforestation of mountain forests creates drought in the highlands and flooding in the lowlands.

Flooding, caused by the wanton destruction of Appalachian forests, was at all time highs in the first few years of the twentieth century. The floods of May 1901 affected the Yadkin River in North Carolina, the New River in Virginia and West Virginia and the tributaries of the Tennessee River. These floods damaged or destroyed seven million dollars in public and private property.⁴⁵ Floods during other times of the year, especially December of 1901, added to a damage estimate that totaled over ten million dollars. U.S. Hydrographers Pressey and Myers estimated that floods totaled an “aggregate of \$10,000,000 tells a story of destruction never before equaled in this region. Bridges were swept away by the score; houses by the hundred; thousands of miles of public roads were washed away almost beyond the possibility of repair.”⁴⁶ The fertile farm valleys within the Carolina piedmont and Tennessee River valley were also

⁴⁴ Alfred J. Henry, “Climate of the Southern Appalachians” In *Senate Document 84* p. 145.

⁴⁵ “Wilson’s Report” In *Senate Document 84* p. 33

⁴⁶ H.A. Pressey and R.W. Myers. “Hydrography of the Southern Appalachians” In *Senate Document 84*. p. 130.

affected by the flooding. Secretary Wilson reported that highland deforestation damaged “the most productive valley lands in this mountain region”⁴⁷

Thus, one must understand the importance of Appalachian forests as a natural control of the uniformity of flow of many important rivers. The Appalachian drainage system is of integral importance to the watersheds of the Southeast. In “Topography and Geology of the Southern Appalachians,” Arthur Keith wrote that “the region distributes its waters in all directions and is practically the apex of the drainage of many thousand square miles.”⁴⁸ This seemingly far-reaching allegation is attested to in fieldwork done by the US Geological Survey in 1900 and 1901.

“It should be understood clearly, however, that the dangers of these floods are not limited to the region about the mountains. The floods from the May storm of the present year on the Blue Ridge, about the sources of the Catawba, swept the best of the farm lands along the course of that stream for upward of 200 miles, and cost farmers more than a million and half dollars.”⁴⁹

Thus, the deforestation of the mountain slopes began to degrade flood plains hundreds of miles away. The environmental integrity of Appalachia thus became a regional issue and not solely a local issue.

In the last years of the nineteenth century, scientists, alarmed at the rapidly increasing rates of deforestation, expressed concern for the stability of mountain ecosystems.⁵⁰ The highly effective and thus brutally devastating, second phase of Appalachian timbering began to call into question the sustainability of timbering. This chapter asserts that the second phase timber operations were not the greedy capitalistic

⁴⁷ “Wilson’s Report” In *Senate Document 84* p. 27.

⁴⁸ Arthur Keith, “Topography and Geology of the Southern Appalachians” In *Senate Document 84*. p. 116.

⁴⁹“Wilson’s Report” In *Senate Document 84*. p. 32.

“invaders” that many historians have painted them out to be. The second phase simply harnessed the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution: both the Appalachian and non-Appalachian loggers were notorious for their destructive practices. However, the increase of the intensity of logging during the second phase led to the screams of victims of fire and flood. The environmental effects of deforestation were new to Southern Appalachia, and the changing political climate of the late nineteenth century finally allowed for these issues to be redressed. The Progressive era, a broad sweeping cultural phenomenon, facilitated the creation of grassroots, political pressure groups to influence federal involvement in forestry issues on private property.

Part Two: Conservation, Forest Policy, and Scientific Forestry

American perceptions of nature have changed over time. European explorers in the 1600s reported that the New World held bountiful resources; however, the first settlers viewed the American wilderness as dark, dangerous, and savage.⁵¹ Over time, these views were replaced by perceptions of nature as beautiful, pure, and spiritual. These evolving views and the over-exploitation of natural resources through the utilization of Industrial Revolution technologies led to a change in Americans’ concept of natural landscapes and resources and a progressive formulation of federal forest policy to conserve these values.

The timber industry of Southern Appalachia was not solely affected by economic factors like supply and demand and cost effectiveness; the political climate of the late

⁵⁰ This assertion is backed by the creation and growing support for groups in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These groups include the American Association for the Advancement of Science and American Forestry Association just to name a few.

⁵¹ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

nineteenth century had serious effects on Appalachian timbering. As the Industrial Revolution ended and the Progressive era took up the reins, extractive industry was subject to reform. For the first time in American history, the Progressive era, a broad cultural phenomenon relating to every facet of American life, allowed environmental problems like flooding, deforestation, and habitat loss to be methodically addressed by trained professionals.

The federal government was not the primary actor in environmental movements in the Progressive era, however. Grassroots pressure groups were formed by concerned citizens to influence legislative initiation. During this time, groups such as the Sierra Club, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Appalachian Mountain Club, and American Forestry Association formed. These groups used grassroots canvassing to gather support and thus influence the government through “pressure.”

The rapid urbanization of the middle-nineteenth century created an environment of filth and squalor in urban centers. Coupled with a rise in literacy and a growing middle class, urban Americans read escape literature, or local color, in the late nineteenth century. Authors such as John Fox, Jr. and Mary Noailles Murfree wrote about idealistic rural America.⁵² Environmental historian Benjamin Kline asserts that “people developed a wilderness myth that popularized an idealistic version of rural America and longingly recalled an imagined, cleaner, healthier past.”⁵³ This wilderness myth facilitated the growth of these environmental pressure groups.

The environmentalists of the Progressive era believed that science and rationale could be applied to extractive industry in order to come up with a solution. Depleted

⁵² David Carlton, “Lecture on Local Color” (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1998) February 9.

⁵³ Benjamin Kline, *First Along the River* (San Francisco, CA: Acadia, 1997), P. 47

supply in the Northeast and Great Lakes area called into question the permanence of timbering. The notion that America was a closed system with a limited amount of resources eventually aided in the Progressive formulation of conservation as a viable and feasible solution to the problems. A Progressive brainchild, conservation sought to allow environmental stability and economic sustainability to coexist. David Cushman Coyle states that conservation was born when concerned citizens mobilized about deforestation.⁵⁴ In its most basic terms, conservation is the management and protection of natural resources. W.J. Mcgee, an associate of the infamous conservationist Gifford Pinchot, said conservation was the “use of the natural resources for the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time.”⁵⁵ This definition implies a utilitarian aspect to Progressive era conservation.

The composition of the Progressive conservation movement verifies the utilitarian tinge of the movement, to some extent. Progressive conservation involved broad coalitions of interested parties. These coalitions often brought certain types of businesspersons in line with the idealistic wishes of scientists. Politicians of localities with a strong extractive sector also often fell in line with the interests of science. These diverse actors had a least common denominator: conservation. Broad-based associations of seemingly contradictory interests are rare in the history of environmental movements. This diverse base made Progressive conservationists able to gather lots of support. However, when differences in detail were revealed, the diversity of actors and ambiguity surrounding their beliefs made Progressive conservation coalitions very tenuous in nature.

⁵⁴ David Cushman Coyle, *Conservation: An American Study of Conflict and Accomplishment* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Press, 1957). p. 3.

The motives of Progressive conservationists were not black and white by any means. The Progressive conservation movement was multifaceted, and the supporters of preservation were not necessarily the supporters of conservation. For example, many of the motives of forest conservationists involved economics. On the other hand, idealistic conservationists valued the scenic and recreational uses of America's unique lands. Individuals of this mindset believed that the wilderness was more than a resource: the wilderness was a depository of spiritual values. An example of this type of conservationist was John Muir. More of a preservationist than a conservationist, Muir fought for federal protection of scenic lands in the West. He began the, now worldwide, Sierra Club in 1872 to facilitate his quest. Idealists such as Muir supported Appalachian conservation but comprised only a small proportion of Progressive conservationists, and idealists and business interests often locked horns on key issues. Conservation for economic reasons was not in the same spirit as Muir's preservation.

The primary factor which unified Progressive conservationists, was the realization that conservation would increase profit in the long-term by stabilizing the forest ecosystem. Obviously, in the short-term, clear-cutting was the most lucrative option for timber companies; conservation sought to calm any fears industrialists had about the diminishing timber supply. Franklin Hough, one of the first experts utilized by Congress to investigate America's forests, was a proponent of conservation for economic reasons. On August 21, 1873, in his speech "Hough's Report 'On the Duty of Governments in the Preservation of Forests,'" he stated that "it must be come to be understood that a tree or a forest planted is an investment of capital, increasing annually in value as it grows. like

⁵⁵ Ibid p. vii

money at interest.”⁵⁶ This idea obviously resonated with some Progressive conservationists in a positive manner and others in a negative manner.

The Progressive conservation movement also almost exclusively vied for forest reserves. These lands were managed by the federal government; commercial interests such as timber and mining operators were still allowed within the reserve. Permits were necessary, however.⁵⁷ National parks were less “in line” with Progressive notions of conservation. From the name, one can see that Progressives were very much for economic “progress.” However, the variant nature of conservation coalitions complicated these goals. On October 4, 1893, Representative Thomas McRae wrote “these reservations are not in the nature of parks set aside for non-use, but they are established solely for economic reasons.”⁵⁸ The national forest reserve was the only form of conservation which the broad-based Progressive conservationist coalitions could hope to agree upon as a goal. A national park movement would not be supported by businesspersons for sure, and politicians, potentially.

Idealist facets of conservation often penetrated the powerful economic interests. Preservationist rhetoric that bordered on idealism sometimes accompanied very pragmatic pleas for conservation. These preservationist tinges often confused purpose and made details more difficult to settle. This led to a disunity among the Progressive conservationists. Often, contradictory evidence and rhetoric were presented.

⁵⁶ Franklin Hough. “Hough’s Report ‘On the Duty of Governments in the Preservation of Forests.’” August 21, 1873. In *Conservation: Land and Water 1492-1900*. Ed. Frank E. Smith (New York, NY: Chelsea House, 1971), p. 687

⁵⁷ Later on, this would have serious repercussions. Historically, forest authorities have almost exclusively granted permits to large capital operations. Because of convenience and economies of scale, large companies have been the ones cutting within reserve boundaries. Thus, in general, large operators support conservation, while smaller operations opposed it.

⁵⁸ Thomas McRae, “Report From Representative Thomas McRae on the Forest Reservations” October 4, 1893 In *Conservation: Land and Water 1492-1900* Ed. Frank E. Smith (New York: Chelsea House,

The Progressive conservationists had to be very aware of federal forest policy and law because the federal government was the only actor in late nineteenth century America that had enough money to establish and maintain conserved lands. Only very wealthy states such as New York or Pennsylvania had enough money to establish state reserves.⁵⁹ Southern Appalachian states were some of the poorest in the nation. Thus, Progressive conservationists in Southern Appalachia concentrated on federal involvement.

The history of federal forestry begins in 1876, when Congress formed the Division of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture.⁶⁰ The Division of Forestry was to regulate the national forest reserves using trained foresters. At this time, there were few conserved lands, however. This would radically change after 1891: the General Land Law Revision Act of 1891 allowed the formation of forest reserves by Presidential proclamation.⁶¹ This only applied to lands which the Division of General Land Office already possessed; thus, the first acts of conservation were in Western states. In Western states, conservation typically meant simply a change in a land's status. The lands which were previously for sale to private commercial and residential parties were withdrawn from market and set-up as federally managed land. Because the Division of General Land Office was under the Department of Interior, not the Department of Agriculture, these Western lands remained under the guise of the Department of Interior. In March of 1891, President Harrison decreed reserves around Yellowstone National Park and several locations in Colorado, Wyoming, and California, totaling thirteen million acres. By

1971). pp. 721.

⁵⁹ Samuel Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement: 1880-1920*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 112

⁶⁰ Eller p. 112

1900, thirty five million acres of lands were under federal management. However, these lands all laid west of the Mississippi River.

Conservation of eastern lands involved much larger start-up costs. Eastern states, even Appalachian states, were more densely populated and more thoroughly privatized. Thus, conservationists in the East were confronted with a people problem as well as an environmental problem: what was to be done with the people on these lands that were to be established for the public good? Because eastern lands were not previously owned by the government, Appalachian conservation did not fall under the terms of the General Land Law Revision Act. Thus, the Progressive conservation movement had a much more formidable barrier to overcome: Congress. The primary reason that Congress decided the fate of Appalachian conservation, and the President did not, was the factor of private property. Eastern conservation, and Appalachian conservation, would have to involve the procurement of privately owned lands. The image that Appalachia was rustic and unsettled is incomplete: Appalachia was not impenetrable. Summer homes, logging camps, and farms dotted the Appalachian mountains, and the populations of mountain towns were actually surprisingly large.⁶²

Possibly more important to Congress than the effects of conservation on the people was the additional costs of purchasing private property. The initial costs of conservation dramatically increased when private property entered the equation. Thus, additional western conservation remained preferable to establishing a precedent in private

⁶¹ Hays, *Conservation* p. 36

⁶² There was no study of land titles down, but the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park did involve the purchasing of over 6600 tracts of land. Thus, this case attests to the relatively dense settlement of the land. The early settlement of such communities as Cades Cove, and the ability of those communities to maintain significant populations over time also strengthens this claim. Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community 1818-1937*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

property purchase for conservation.

Conservationists concerned with economics embraced the scientific management of forests because it guaranteed a sustained yield. Science developed a method of forestry whereby, the Taylorization applied to the business world around the turn of the century, would also hold in the forests. Scientific forestry became the predominant ideology of cutting edge foresters.⁶³ In *Politics of Conservation*, Frank Smith states that “for the first time in the nation’s history, new principles of efficiency and scientific management were gaining acceptance among the better educated and economically favored elements of the population.”⁶⁴ Productivity and sustainability were to coexist for the first time. In order to be successful, however, this theory required the utilization of professionally trained foresters.

By and large in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, scientific forestry emerged as the most widely accepted theory in liberal forestry circles. The federal Division of Forestry, however, was yet to embrace these ideals formally. Before 1898, Bernard Fernow was head of the Division: he believed that private enterprise would not support scientific management.⁶⁵ Thus, to federal managers, the theory was little more than a theory. Then, President McKinley appointed Gifford Pinchot head of the Division in 1898. Pinchot, a revolutionary political Progressive and forester, dramatically altered the relationship between the Division of Forestry and private logging companies. In 1900, the Bureau of Forestry replaced the existing Division of Forestry within the

⁶³ Scientific forestry is not an American development. Deforestation plagued the crowded European continent well before it effected the more rugged New World. Even America’s version of scientific forestry was fashioned by Europeans. Carl Alwin Schenck and Gifford Pinchot, both of German origins, were two of the first to apply scientific principles of management to American forests. The Biltmore Estate, in this regard, was a scientific frontrunner. The management of the Biltmore held very strictly to scientific forestry in the 1880s.

⁶⁴ Frank E. Smith, *The Politics of Conservation* (New York: Random House, 1966) p. 87.

Department of Agriculture, further proclaiming the changing of the guard. The Chief of Forestry was the new title of the head of this Bureau.⁶⁶

Pinchot, the newly declared Chief, offered the services of federal foresters to private enterprise in order to show “business” that “science” could actually help them make more money.⁶⁷ “Federal officials,” states Samuel Hays, “experimented with scientific planning in which each piece of public land would be developed to its highest potential use.”⁶⁸ The adoption of scientific forestry hinged on the logging companies’ recognition that scientific management would create a sustained yield of timber and thus, a sustained income for the companies. Logging companies had to be persuaded to overlook the temptation of a one-time clear-cut.

However, applying the principles of scientific forestry in practice required money. Thus, companies often heralded these principles in design, but thwarted them in practice. Pinchot devised a plan to overcome this obstacle. He wanted to raise the price of timber and regulate the extraction methods used, and then, logging companies would utilize the ideals of scientific management.⁶⁹ Pinchot believed that scientific management was in the long-term financial interests of logging companies, and price regulation was a way for logging companies to relieve themselves of their own short-sightedness.

The ultimate goal of Pinchot and his following was for timber operations, both public and private, to adopt the principles of scientific forestry.⁷⁰ The Department of Agriculture began to look at Appalachia as a testing ground for these new principles.

⁶⁵ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* p. 32.

⁶⁶ Ibid p. 32.

⁶⁷ Ibid p. 33.

⁶⁸ Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialization 1885-1914*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957) p. 157.

⁶⁹ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* p. 33.

⁷⁰ David Cushman Coyle, *Conservation: An American Study of Conflict and Accomplishment* p. 4.

Although some corporations did adopt scientific planning, the theory was still in the wash. Southern Appalachia's environmental problems and questionable long-term supply made it a worthy proving ground.

“The establishment of such a reserve will remedy many of the evils now threatened in this region, and under the efficient management of the practical foresters now being trained in this Department its working will serve as a test and demonstration of the wisdom and success of practical forestry operations on a large scale.”⁷¹

Scientific forestry was the product of a Progressive reform of science. As a scientific discipline, forestry was a Progressive creation.

The Progressives created conservation as a means of managing the effects of intensive timbering. The absence of governmental regulation during the Industrial Revolution created a score of environmental problems that required address. The Progressive era was a series of reforms that attempted to come to terms with the costs and benefits of industrial America. Conservation sought to strike a balance between exploitation and preservation. Such a balance was of urgency in Appalachia.

The damage and effectiveness of Appalachian timbering required regulating. The creation of the discipline of forestry and the importation of European ideals of scientific management converted bureaucrats within the federal government to the principles of scientific management. The government's primary objective was to maintain forest cover while allowing a desired timber yield. The newly formed Bureau of Forestry and the Department of Agriculture desired a large-scale testing ground to determine the national value of scientific forestry. Appalachia was to be that test. However, federal legislation for that purpose had yet to initiate this test. Chapter Two examines the Progressive conservation movement in Southern Appalachia. Part one of Chapter Two presents the

activity of the movement leaders and supporters; part two provides the federal government's response and the subsequent Congressional debate.

⁷¹ "Wilson's Report." In *Senate Document 84* p. 37.

Chapter Two:

The Progressive Conservation Movement in Southern Appalachia

Appalachia provided a worthy testing ground for Progressive formulations of forest policy. The movement was sparked by local interests but quickly gathered national steam. Many proposals would fall by the wayside, but when Asheville citizens organized into a highly effective lobby in 1899, the Progressive conservation movement was able to reach a broad support base. When details were laid out on paper, however, the movement's fragility showed through its unified exterior.

Part One: The Movement

While the Progressives were the first persons to propose legislation for conservation in Southern Appalachia, the story-line of forest conservation begins twenty years earlier. Before mineral and timber interests "discovered" Appalachia, doctors took an interest in the Southern highlands. America's sick and elderly utilized Appalachia as a quasi-sanitarium and place of healing. Southern Appalachia was unique as it remained free from many of the diseases that plagued the rest of the South. Malaria was absent, and the mountain air seemed to cleanse one's body in addition to one's soul.

Historians debate the origins of the first proposal for federal conservation. Ronald Eller claims that Dr. Henry O. Marcy, of Boston, Massachusetts, was the first person to propose conservation in Southern Appalachia. Dr. Marcy proposed to the American Academy of Medicine in 1885 that Southern Appalachia be established as a medicinal spa for health care patients and soldiers: the Academy refused.⁷² Michael Frome credits Reverend C.D. Smith, of Franklin, North Carolina, with making the first

proposal for Appalachian conservation sometime in the 1880s. Frome provides little detail about Smith's proposal, but contends that it was prior to Marcy's proposal.⁷³ The details of these dates are of secondary importance; what is more important however, is that these proposals are the roots of the idea of Appalachian conservation. Although little is known of them, in this regard Dr. Marcy and Rev. Smith were certainly visionaries.

Entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, and local boosters also recognized the potential of Appalachia as a tourist destination. The attractiveness of Appalachia as a tourist destination hinged on the aesthetic beauty of the mountains, and thus, on the integrity of its forests. Boosters interested in the promotion of their local tourist industry formed local interest groups to foster conservation initiatives. In the late nineteenth century, Asheville, North Carolina, became a focal point of such activity. The mountains surrounding Asheville provided city folk with a relaxing vacation destination.⁷⁴ A local tourism boom fostered the construction of motels, restaurants, and rail lines. In the desire to sustain this tourism boom, in 1893 the North Carolina General Assembly sought to initiate forest conservation, but the idea once again failed to materialize.⁷⁵

These early proposals sought to preserve Southern Appalachia's pristine quality and scenic beauty. The Progressive conservation movement, however, was quite different. The Progressive conservationists were not naturalists per se; on the contrary, Progressive conservationists often sided with industrial interests. Slowly, over-logging

⁷² Ronald Eller, *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers* p. 112.

⁷³ Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places* p. 174.

⁷⁴ Tourism in Appalachia was sparked by local color authors. Novels by authors such as John Fox, Jr. and Mary Noailles Murfree became big sellers in middle class urban America. The genre created an escape where the reader envisioned fresh air, pure souls, and beautiful countryside, instead of sewer-filled streets, paupers, and criminals that he or she encountered on a daily basis. For a detailed analysis of the evolution of attitudes toward wilderness and environment, see Kaye Adkins, *Paradise Renamed: Context and the Metaphoric Reconstruction of American Wilderness, 1872-1916*. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, PhD diss., 1998).

was creating a wasteland out of a paradise, but Progressivism believed that it was possible to strike a balance between industrial interests and conservation, and thus minimize deforestation.

The revival of the Appalachian conservation movement began with a fishing trip in the Toxaway section of the Appalachian highlands. In summer 1899, Judge William R. Day of Ohio, George H. Smathers, an Asheville, North Carolina attorney, and Dr. Chase Ambler, an Asheville physician, “gave impetus to the idea”⁷⁶ of a national park in the area. After some word-of-mouth communication in Asheville, Ambler organized a meeting of influential local residents, which took place on November 22, 1899, at the Old Battery Park Hotel in Asheville, in order to discuss the formation of a national park in Southern Appalachia. Locke Craig, future governor of North Carolina, presided over the group; N.G. Gonzales, of Columbia, South Carolina, was the temporary chairperson. The Asheville-based group formed committees, elected officers, and proclaimed themselves the Appalachian National Park Association, or ANPA. The group elected George Powell its president and Dr. Chase Ambler the secretary and treasurer.⁷⁷

Locke Craig’s speech to the local body stated that “it is remarkable that this mountain region of the South has heretofore been overlooked: for above all other sections it is an ideal country for a park.”⁷⁸ The composition of the group listening to such was surprisingly diverse. The group’s membership included local doctors, lawyers, and businesspersons although eventually the ANPA’s membership would expand to include

⁷⁵ Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places* p. 174.

⁷⁶ George McCoy, *Guide to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*, 2^d ed., (Asheville, NC: Inland Press, 1935) p. 93.

⁷⁷ *Ibid* p. 93

⁷⁸ “Campaign for a National Park” *Asheville Citizen* 23 November 1899 p. 1.

outsiders “from Northern, Southern, and Western states.”⁷⁹ The group was full of enthusiasm and idealism: Senator Marion Butler told the group “don’t be too modest; ask for a big park.”⁸⁰ Commenting on the spirit of the meeting, the *Washington Post* stated that it was “both harmonious and enthusiastic.”⁸¹

Behind the support of high level politicians like Senator Butler, the ANPA launched the first methodical attempt to realize conservation in Appalachia. The key document in this crusade emerged on December 19, 1899, when the group submitted a formal memorial to the United States Congress asking for forest conservation in Southern Appalachia. Charles McNamee, an Asheville attorney, authored the document, a five-page work, that, often with idealistic rhetoric, justified a national park in Southern Appalachia.

The Memorial stated that the ANPA “was formed for the purpose of bringing to the attention of Congress of the United States the desirability of establishing a national park at some place in the Southern Appalachian region.”⁸² The Memorial also noted that the mountains of Southern Appalachia were the highest in the East and wonderfully unique.⁸³ The Memorial idealized the natural beauty of the mountains that appeared “blue” or “smoky” and the sense of timelessness, calm, wisdom, and grace they produced.⁸⁴ The forests of the mountains, the Memorial continued, housed a remarkable number and variety of species. The flora and fauna of the North merged with the flora

⁷⁹ “Present Status of the Movement” In *Senate Document 84* p. 157.

⁸⁰ “Campaign for a National Park” *Asheville Citizen* 23 November 1899 p. 1.

⁸¹ “Appalachian National Park” *Asheville Citizen* 12 January 1900 p. 2.

⁸² U.S. Congress, Senate. *Memorial of the Appalachian National Park Association* 56th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900) (*Senate Document 58*) p. 1.

⁸³ *Ibid* p. 1.

⁸⁴ Hence the names Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains

and fauna of the South, which bequeathed Appalachia a uniquely large species density.⁸⁵ This variety facilitated an equally diverse animal life. Southern Appalachia housed species such as black bear and hellbender salamander that were absent anywhere else in the South. "There is but one such forest in America," the Memorial charged, "and neglect of opportunity now presented of saving it may work irretrievable loss."⁸⁶

The ANPA, composed primarily of political and industrial elites, attempted to invoke a sense of urgency and patriotism as well. "The National Government, and it alone, can prevent the destruction, and by the application of scientific forestry preserve the forest as a heritage and blessing to unborn generations."⁸⁷ The Memorial urged the government to act in its own selfish interests. The conservation of the mountain forests, the ANPA asserted, was in the national interest because it would protect the uniform flow of our nation's navigable waterways and the quality of our nation's drinking water.⁸⁸

The ANPA also appealed to potential tourism interests. The "rare natural beauty" described in the Memorial needed to be protected from the logger and farmer to encourage tourism. The conservation of Southern Appalachian forests would allow US citizens from all over the United States to enjoy the splendors of the eastern mountains. "This part of the Appalachian Range is but twenty-four hours from New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Toledo, and the Gulf States. It is therefore within easy reach of millions of people, and a park there could be in fact, as in name, a national park."⁸⁹ In addition, the ANPA claimed that the East was entitled to a national park. Since all conservation was

⁸⁵ H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe. "Trees of the Southern Appalachian Region" In *Senate Document 84*.

⁸⁶ *Memorial of the Appalachian National Park Association (Senate Document 58)* p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid* p. 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid* p. 3.

west of the Mississippi, the citizens in the East and South did not have access to federally managed lands for recreation.

The Memorial of the ANPA did not solely consist of idealistic rhetoric about the preservation of the mountains. The proposal was very frugal and reasonable and was very much in line with the principles of the Progressive conservation movement described in Part Two of Chapter One.

“The Government is now about to institute methods of scientific forestry. No better place in the United States can be found for this institution on a governmental scale of forestry operations; and because of the fine climate, summer and winter alike, it would be the only forest reserve in the country where such operations could be carried on uninterruptedly throughout the year.”⁹⁰

The Memorial not only played upon the Progressive approach to forestry, but also to the ability to overcome the difficulties inherent in practicing conservation in the East.

The burden of purchasing private property was a substantial obstacle not only because it increased initial costs but also because there was a stigma surrounding the forced relocation of Americans. The Memorial skirted the latter issue but did speak to the former. “The land now sells for about \$2 an acre, so that a comparatively large park could be secured at would be greatly less than its value to the nation.”⁹¹ The Memorial implied that the contribution of the park to the regional ecology would dramatically outweigh, and even make obsolete, any start-up purchase costs that might deter federal action.

Finally, the Memorial provided a detailed explanation of the boundaries of the proposed park.⁹² The details of such are insignificant, but the ANPA’s proposed park

⁹⁰ Ibid p. 3.

⁹¹ Ibid p. 4.

⁹² Ibid p. 5.

was not dissimilar to the contemporary Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The entirety of the proposed park's lands lay within western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee and centered on the border of those two states.⁹³

The ANPA gathered support for their cause. The potential growth of Appalachian tourism caught the eye of local interests, and the movement immediately gained the local eye.⁹⁴ The federal government's characterization of the movement, "Present Status of the Movement," stated that "the growing prominence and recognized suitability of much of this region as a health and pleasure resort has added this element also to the movement for the preservation of these forests and rivers."⁹⁵

The ANPA focused on gathering a variety of support, and thus, the group also courted science and business authorities and interests. Science wholeheartedly supported the ANPA. The American Association for the Advancement of Science petitioned Congress for the establishment of a forest reserve in Southern Appalachia. The American Forestry Association, America's preeminent group of professional foresters, also endorsed the ANPA's work.⁹⁶

Business did not fit so neatly into a categorization. Facets of "business" supported forest conservation while other facets of "business" opposed it. There is no consensus in the secondary literature about the role of business interests in the Progressive conservation movement: authors such as Michael Frome and Ronald Eller state contradictory claims. However, it is clear that business was split on conservation. Boards of Trade, lumbermen's groups, and trade unions publicly supported Appalachian

⁹³ Refer to Map #2 p. 11.

⁹⁴ The *Asheville Citizen* printed articles concerning the Appalachian national park movement several times a week for the first few months after the formation of the ANPA. "Appalachian National Park." *Asheville Citizen*. Asheville. NC. Complete listing of dates in bibliography.

conservation.⁹⁷ In fact, contrary to Frome's assertions, evidence suggests that big business, in the form of large capital logging operations, had much to gain from forest conservation.⁹⁸ Historically, the Bureau of Forestry, and later the US Forest Service, primarily dealt with large capital companies in the formation of commercial contracts within forest reserve borders.⁹⁹ Thus, the large capital operations gained access to timber managed by federal foresters. These select companies were able to save enormous amounts of money on management costs. The small timber operators not granted access were the ones who had the most to lose in the event of forest conservation. Thus, Eller's assertion that big operations supported the ANPA, and small operators opposed them seems more accurate than Frome's assertion.¹⁰⁰

The ANPA also sought and won support of the national and the scientific press.¹⁰¹ These included: *Scientific American*, *New York Times*, *Forest and Stream*, *Forester*, and the *Chicago Times-Herald*.¹⁰² In response to the ANPA's proposal, the *New York Herald* asked Congress "what of the East? What of the South?"¹⁰³ The Progressive conservation movement sought to play on the geographical discrimination of conservation.

The movement also catered to the economic concerns of the timber industry and the general industrial interests of the region. The rise of scientific forestry as the most prevalent theory in forestry sought to make an example out of Appalachia. Scientific forestry believed that with professional management through scientific principles the

⁹⁵ "Present Status of the Movement" *Senate Document 84* p. 157.

⁹⁶ *Ibid* p. 165.

⁹⁷ "Present Status of the Movement" In *Senate Document 84*. p. 157.

⁹⁸ Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places* p. 172.

⁹⁹ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* p. 99.

¹⁰⁰ Ronald Eller, *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers* p. 112.

¹⁰¹ "Wilson's Report" In *Senate Document 84* p. 14.

¹⁰² *Senate Document 84* p. 180-190.

¹⁰³ *New York Herald*, In "Appalachian National Park" *Asheville Citizen* 28 December 1900 p. 2.

timber industry could become a staple industry of the region. Overton Price stated that “the safety of the forest from fire must form the foundation of any system of practical forestry which is to be permanently successful.”¹⁰⁴ Scientific forestry would reduce the harmful effects of deforestation, which plagued turn-of-the-century Appalachia. The *Asheville Citizen* claimed that the “application of scientific forestry is the backbone of arguments in favor of the park.”¹⁰⁵

The possible gains from the scientific management led to the support of Progressive conservatism by certain types of business interests. In 1902, the National Hardwood Lumber Association and National Lumber Manufacturers’ Association both sent letters of support to the ANPA. Large-scale lumbering could not continue forever without regulation.

To some degree, however, the movement attempted to accommodate too many interests. Some of the Progressive conservationists’ interests came in direct opposition to other’s interests. For example, some conservationists valued “the protection of game, songbirds, and fish of the region;” however others desired a national park to open “up thihs great and impressingly beautiful region by adequate roads, thus supplying the large centers of trade with a great sanatorium and resort, within a few hours journey.”¹⁰⁶ Whether the building of infrastructure and the protection of biodiversity could coexist in some form of compromise was questionable, but to be sure, the spirit of the movement was called into question when their own interests had such competing motives.

Part Two: The Federal Response

¹⁰⁴ Overton Price, “Lumbering in the Southern Appalachians” In *Senate Document 84* p. 65.

¹⁰⁵ “Progress of the Park Movement” *Asheville Citizen* 14 May 1900 p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ “Progress of the Park Movement” *Asheville Citizen* 14 May 1900 p. 1.

The ANPA movement could have all of the support it could muster, but the establishment of a forest reserve depended on the receptiveness of Congress to conservation. The Congressional response, in the form of a vote, was essentially the last word. After all the coalition building the ANPA had created, the ability of that coalition to effectively influence Congress was all that mattered.

After Congress initially received the proposal, they acted with extreme caution. They first stated that they would not act without the endorsement of the relevant states. The federal government did not wish to create any tension over issues of state sovereignty. The states responded to this concern; legislators of six states including Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia held debates concerning the proposed Appalachian park.¹⁰⁷ These legislatures, pending the establishment of an Appalachian national park, ceded property rights to the federal government. The resolution from North Carolina read “an act to give consent by the State of North Carolina to the acquisition by the United States of such lands as may be needed for the establishment of a national forest reserve in said state.”¹⁰⁸ Each state’s resolution was a little different. Some of them had provisions that insured that the state would retain certain rights over the land such as law enforcement jurisdiction; other resolutions’ validity hinged on the amount of acreage established within the given state.¹⁰⁹ These resolutions eventually passed each respective legislature in the first months of 1901. Now that the ANPA overcame this obstacle, the federal government could not hold issues of states’ rights over the heads of the ANPA.

¹⁰⁷ The borders of the ANPA proposed park included lands in NC and TN only. The inclusion of these other states indicates the ANPA’s flexibility to the park’s borders and reinforces the group’s shrewdness in seeking legislative success. See Maps 1 and 2 on p. 10-1.

¹⁰⁸ “An Act to give consent by the State of North Carolina” January 1901 In *Senate Document 84* p. 178.

A second impediment at the federal level was bureaucratic ignorance of Appalachia's environmental condition. Thus, Congress desired more information from their internal bureaucracies before they acted. In 1900, Congress authorized the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), headed by Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson, to conduct a formal study into the practicality of an Appalachian national park. The study, which was not to exceed a cost of five thousand dollars, was to be conducted from June 30, 1900 to June 30, 1901. ¹¹⁰ "In particular the region was studied as to its relative adaptability to future development along the lines of practical forestry and practical agriculture." ¹¹¹ This study is of monumental importance to the Southern Appalachian region and people, not only for the information it presented but also because it contributed to an Appalachian identity. ¹¹²

The USDA detached various technocrats including hydrographers, foresters, meteorologists, and geologists to the far reaches of Southern Appalachia to study the region. The information that these scientists reported back was to be used to compile a report on environmental damage, which could then be used by Congress to decide the fate of forest conservation legislation. These scientists spent twelve months at numerous workstations methodically taking scientific data and recordings. The conclusions drawn from this data would be the authoritative scientific information considered by Congress. Thus, their work was of the utmost importance.

While Congress awaited the USDA's report, Senator Jeter Pritchard introduced a bill for Appalachian conservation on January 10, 1901, to be known as S. 5518. The bill

¹⁰⁹ *Senate Document 84* p. 172-179

¹¹⁰ "Wilson's Report" *Senate Document 84* p. 13.

¹¹¹ *Ibid* p. 14.

¹¹² The present study, in the ever present avoidance of tangential thought will resist the urge to discuss

provided for a two million acre forest reserve in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia. The bill was sent to the Committee on Forest Reservations and Protection of Game. They reported back to the Senate on February 12, 1901 in favor of Pritchard's bill. ¹¹³

Six days later after the bill was introduced, on January 16, Secretary of Agriculture, who officially headed the USDA's ongoing study, presented a preliminary report to Congress. Senate Document 93, entitled *Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a report of the Secretary of Agriculture presenting a preliminary report of investigations upon the forests of the southern Appalachian region*, was pro-conservation. In this preliminary report, Secretary Wilson characterized the work done by the scientists, who were currently on-site in Southern Appalachia:

“The forest investigation was made to include a study of the characteristics and distribution of the species of timber trees, the density and value of forest growth, the extent to which the timber has been cut or damaged by fire, the size and nature of the present holdings, the prices at which the forest lands can now be purchased, and the general and special conditions that affect the prosecution of conservative forestry on a large scale.” ¹¹⁴

Federal support for the movement gained momentum.

Senator Pritchard's bill was revised and reintroduced into the Senate as S. 492 on December 4, 1901. S. 492, like S. 5118, appropriated five million dollars to the Secretary of Agriculture for the purchase of two million acres of forests in Southern Appalachia. ¹¹⁵

Appalachian identity, but for more information on Appalachian identity see any number of relevant authors: Horace Kephart, Ronald Eller, Michael Frome, etc.

¹¹³ U.S. Congress. Senate, *A Bill for the Purchase of a National Forest Reserve in the Southern Appalachian Mountains* 56th Cong., 2d sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901) (S. 5518). p. 1-2.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Congress. Senate, *Message From the President of the United States Transmitting A Report of the Secretary of Agriculture Presenting a Preliminary Report of Investigations Upon the Forests of the Southern Appalachian Mountain Region*, 56th Cong., 2d sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901) (*Senate Document 93*). p. 2.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Congress. Senate. *A Bill For the Purchase of a National Forest Reserve in the Southern*

These lands were not necessarily to be contiguous. In fact, in such a large area, they were expected not to be. Two days later, on December 6, a sister bill was introduced in the House (H.R. 3128).¹¹⁶

On December 19, 1901, the year-long USDA study, was printed as the massive *Senate Document 84*, which presented a unified voice in favor of forest conservation. The study was quite progressive and provided a solid framework for the justification of conservation. The document, compiled to instigate legislative affirmation of conservation, contained a variety of influential works. H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe's cataloged the numerous tree and shrub species of Southern Appalachia in a prehistoric plea for the modern notion of biodiversity.¹¹⁷ Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson conveyed thoughts, originally expressed by Overton W. Price, of the hostility of Appalachia's landscape to settlement: "ordinary farming on these mountain slopes cannot exist permanently and should never exist at all."¹¹⁸ The USDA hinted that Appalachia's destiny lay not in the development of the region, but in the protection of the underdevelopment of the region.

In order to facilitate industrial growth, the federal government was also aware of the potential for Appalachian water sources to be utilized for cheap power production. However, hydropower depended on the uniform flow of the mountain watersheds. Thus, secure forest cover insured the protection of valley farms, reduction of erosion and flooding, and the possibility of utilizing river systems in hydropower production. "The

Appalachian Mountains 57th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901) (S. 492) p. 1-2.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Congress, House, *A Bill For the Purchase of a National Forest Reserve in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, to be known as the "McKinley National Park and Forest Reserve."* 57th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901) (H.R. 3128). p. 1-2.

¹¹⁷ H.B. Ayres and W.W. Ashe, "Trees of the Southern Appalachians" *Senate Document 84* p. 93 - 109.

¹¹⁸ "Wilson's Report" *Senate Document 84* p. 26.

perpetuation of the streams and maintenance of their regular flow, so as to prevent floods and maintain their water powers," Secretary Wilson stated. "are among the prime objects of forest preservation in the Southern Appalachians."¹¹⁹ The welfare of the region, as a whole, depended upon the ability to utilize cheap power: "any impairment of these powers by diminution of the low-water flow of these streams will most assuredly work great injury in future years to the industrial welfare of the region."¹²⁰ The hydrographers felt that economic disparity would certainly follow deforestation.¹²¹

Pressey and Myers estimated the potential wattage that could be harnessed by Appalachia's rivers. They found countless sites for hydropower plants, and their estimates were staggering.

"It would be entirely safe to estimate the available but undeveloped water power on the streams rising among the southern Appalachian Mountains as equivalent to not less than 1,067,000 horsepower, and the developed power is 117,750. It would also be entirely correct to state that the future value of these water powers, as indeed the future value of almost everything of value about these mountains, depends largely upon the future preservation of the forests."¹²²

The hydrography report expressed sincere urgency: the fate of the forests determined the fate of the Southeastern drainage system.

In the end, the USDA supported the establishment, not of a national park, but of a national forest reserve. After reading the various report of the scientists sent to Appalachia, Secretary Wilson redirected the movement to some extent.¹²³ The decision

¹¹⁹ "Wilson's Report" In *Senate Document 84* p. 30.

¹²⁰ R.A. Pressey and R.W. Myers. "Hydrography of the Southern Appalachians" In *Senate Document 84* p. 139.

¹²¹ In hindsight, these hydrographers were right. Cheap power became a economic blessing. The Tennessee Valley Authority changed the state of affairs in Appalachia overnight. The utilization of water and coal powers provided Appalachians with the most extensive and cheapest power in the United States.

¹²² R.A. Pressey and R.W. Myers, "Hydrography of the Southern Appalachians" *Senate Document 84* p. 142.

¹²³ To some extent is a qualifier. Although the name ANPA suggests the desire to establish a national park,

to seek a reserve over a national park had repercussions for the movement and its supporters. The reserve would not “save the forests” in a primeval condition: on the contrary, the trees would be managed and harvested periodically. The reserve also reduced the capabilities of tourism to provide income to the region.

With the positive reception of the USDA study, S. 492 was amended by expanding its provisions. The new bill, S. 5228, appropriated ten million dollars for the purchase of four million acres. On April 26, 1902, before opening the floor to debate, Senator Pritchard made some opening remarks about the reserve. In response to inquiry about the residents of Southern Appalachia who would be affected by the establishment of the reserve, Pritchard responded that they numbered less than one thousand and that, under provisions in S.5228, residents would be allowed to stay as long as they did not interfere with the management and regulation of the forest reserve.¹²⁴ Pritchard continued “the Appalachian Forest Reserve as proposed in the pending measure is about 150 miles in length and of varying breadth.”¹²⁵ The borders of the proposed park were quite different from the ANPA’s proposal. First of all, the borders as defined by S.5228 were to include lands in many states instead of North Carolina and Tennessee alone. Also, the details of the borders were to be left up to the Secretary of Agriculture: he was to buy lands that could be purchased in large tracts at a reasonable rate. There were no criterion for these details; the Secretary had full discretion. Since the lands did not have to be contiguous, the Secretary of Agriculture was to buy land as it became available, not

much of the rhetoric of the group was to the contrary. The inclusion of the application of practical forestry and the notion that the “reserve” could make a profit speaks to the desire for a forest reserve. Anyhow, the ANPA changed to the Appalachian National Forest Reserve Association shortly after the USDA declaration.

¹²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902) p. 4712.

¹²⁵ *Ibid* p. 6430.

all at once. After introductory remarks, debate was postponed for several weeks because of the absence of key Senators, whose speeches were to be heard before the bill was brought to a vote.

In June of 1902, some of the members of the Committee on Forest Reservations and Protection of Game spoke on behalf of the pending bill. Senator Depew (NY) stated “as a member of that committee, I was deeply impressed with the testimony presented. The results of the investigation were so convincing and satisfactory that legislation seemed to the committee to be imperative.”¹²⁶ The committee members began debate with much optimism. Appalachian conservation “under wise ownership, preservation, and administration by the Government.” Senator Depew continued, “will give employment, property, industries, and homes to multitudes for all time.”¹²⁷

Dissention began when Senators charged that purchasing private property for conservation was a drastic departure from prior forest policy. Senator Simmons countered with the example of the Blackfoot Indians. The federal government had spent a million and a half dollars to purchase lands to add to the Flathead Forest Reserve in Montana. Senator Simmons claimed this was a precedent for this new type of conservation, to some extent. When pushed, Senator Burton admitted “this is substantially a new policy.”¹²⁸

On June 24, 1902, a very heated debate between Senator Spooner (WI) and Senator Burton (KS) ensued. Senator Spooner questioned the reasoning behind allowing timber extraction in an area ravaged by deforestation. Spooner stated “if the destruction of timber causes these immense floods, why is the Secretary of Agriculture given

¹²⁶ Ibid p. 6429.

¹²⁷ Ibid p. 6431.

authority to destroy this timber?"¹²⁹ Spooner also challenged the freedom which was granted to the Secretary of Agriculture: "is the authority given in the bill to sell timber restrained in any way?"¹³⁰ Burton said it was not. Burton attempted to justify the removal of what he referred to as "developed timber." He stated that mature timber could be removed from a forest ecosystem without harm; this removal would consequently also allow the reserve to make money.¹³¹ Senator Nelson (MN) jumped in the debate. He stated that cultivating lands was a better way to regulate high levels of precipitation than was leaving lands in a "wild state."¹³²

Spooner also critiqued the claim that conservation would provide substantial water powers to the region. Spooner asked an important qualifier: if the federal government would provide or lease any of these power plants? Burton was forced to admit that no federal revenue would be gained from water powers. However, Burton quickly pointed out that most of the proposed power sites were downstream from the highland areas to be conserved. Thus, power sites would be protected by insuring regular flow from the highland drainage systems. The guaranteeing of these powers would be a service to the states, not a means of producing federal revenue. Thus, some non-regional support may have been lost.

Senator Bailey (TX) made a statement which was quite indicative of the last day of debate: "I think the bill is a bad one, and I think there will be no end to the policy which it will inaugurate."¹³³ Somehow, the bill passed the Senate floor in 1902;

¹²⁸ Ibid p. 7286.

¹²⁹ Ibid p. 6431.

¹³⁰ Ibid p. 7284.

¹³¹ Ibid p. 7284.

¹³² Ibid p. 7285. Senator Nelson was clearly speaking from experiences in the Midwest. Mountain cultivation induces much different effects than does cultivating the Great Plains.

¹³³ Ibid p. 7287.

however, the bill faced sterner opposition in the House. Speaker of the House “Uncle” Joseph Cannon led the charge with his banner slogan “not one cent for scenery.”¹³⁴ The House of Representatives voted not to follow the advice of the USDA or follow in the footsteps of the Senate; the ANPA proposal failed.

Although the S.5228 failed on the House floor, the Progressive conservation movement was not a complete failure. The roots of the national park movement of the 1920s lay in the first years of the twentieth century. The information compiled on Appalachian ecology was also important in contributing to the youthful identity of Appalachia as a region.

¹³⁴ Ronald Eller. *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers* p. 112.

Conclusion

Failure, Success, and the Long Term

The Progressive conservationists in Southern Appalachia came very close to realizing their goals in 1902. The Senate, even in the face of such dissent as Spenner and Bailey hurled, passed S. 5228. The House was one of the only, but more importantly, the final, word of opposition to conservation. The labors of the ANPA and its forerunners would remain unrealized until 1911.

Ronald Eller, whose work in Appalachian studies is renowned, names Cannon's staunch opposition as the primary reason for failure.¹³⁵ Representative Cannon, or "Uncle" Joe as he is more affectionately known as, was a dictator of sorts in the House. As Speaker he controlled the floor and could have easily muffled House members voting against his will. Progressive era Congressional politics were highly partisan, and Cannon may have killed this bill in its tracks.

A May 6, 1897 speech by Senator John Wilson brings to light another idea. The formation of conserved lands involves the relocation of the inhabitants within the boundaries of these conserved lands: "and now to deprive them, by mere Executive order, of their rights and property will work the gravest hardship to individuals and bankruptcy to whole communities."¹³⁶ Provisions within the bill allowed residents to stay, but to be sure not all local interests favored conservation. The entry of the Bureau of Forestry would alter the daily lives of thousands. For loggers and farmers, conservation would alter a way of life that had been a means of existence since European settlement.

¹³⁵ Ibid p. 112.

¹³⁶ John Wilson, "Speech by Senator John Wilson Protesting the Cleveland Forest Reservation." May 6, 1897 Printed in *Conservation in the United States*.

However, the outcry of a few farmers and loggers would not supersede the interests of the entire Southeast.

Daniel Pierce suggests that organizational problems within the ANPA stopped the group short of success. “Despite the early enthusiasm of the participants in this meeting [November 1899 meeting of ANPA in Asheville] the movement for an Appalachian national park quickly ran out of steam.”¹³⁷ This suggests that the ANPA and its support were a “flash in the pan” phenomenon. Selections from the *Asheville Citizen* support such a claim. Immediately following the formation of the ANPA, the *Citizen* printed numerous articles about the progress of the park movement.¹³⁸ After a two-month in-depth coverage of the movement, the *Citizen* essentially dropped the story. The rise of the women’s suffrage movement took precedence over the Appalachian park movement, and the *Citizen*’s public support fell by the wayside.¹³⁹

Although the movement was Asheville-based, the support for the movement was hardly limited to Asheville. The USDA took the ANPA under its wing and seemed to wholeheartedly believe in the cause. Thus, Pierce’s claim that the movement failed to gain substantial support outside of Appalachia is problematic.¹⁴⁰ *Senate Document 84* disproved this claim with the numerous extracts from local, regional, national, and scientific periodicals.

¹³⁷ Daniel Smith Pierce. *Boosters, Bureaucrats, Politicians, and Philanthropists: Coalition Building in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. (Ann Arbor: Bell and Howell. PhD diss., 1995) p. 13.

¹³⁸ “Appalachian National Park” *Asheville Citizen*. November 23, 1899; December 19, 1899; December 21, 1899; December 28, 1899; January 5, 1900; January 12, 1900; January 13, 1900; January 17, 1900; January 19, 1900; January 24, 1900; January 27, 1900

¹³⁹ This assertion is drawn from the concentration of articles on the women’s suffrage movement in the early months of 1900. The increase in articles pertaining to the suffrage movement seems to correlate with the decrease in articles about the park movement.

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Smith Pierce. *Boosters, Bureaucrats, Politicians, and Philanthropists: Coalition Building in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. p. 13

The most plausible explanation seems to also remain the most overlooked. however. The initial costs of creating a forest reserve in the East stopped the passage of legislation; although Secretary Wilson found that the lands were available at a reasonable rate, these initial costs, as a new facet to forest conservation, were more than Congress was willing to incur. Lands such as Yellowstone and Yosemite were already under federal ownership prior to the implementation of management and regulation. After all, Joseph Cannon's objection, "not one cent or scenery," expressed a financial concern. Thus, Cannon's statement may have been less about opposing conservation on principle, and more about the frugality of Congress.

Michael Frome asserts that either way, the failure of the ANPA's proposal was for the better. The Smoky Mountains, Frome believes, were destined to fulfill a role as a national park.¹⁴¹ Thus, successful establishment of a forest reserve would have only partially fulfilled the role of the land; the failure of the ANPA's proposal was, in effect, a delay awaiting the successful passage of national park legislation.

Whichever explanation one subscribes to, the ANPA proposal met its demise in 1902. After a serious inquiry into the necessity and utility of an Appalachian national forest reserve, Congress chose not to act in accordance with the USDA and its many sub-components. Thus, historians have not paid close attention to the Progressive conservation movement in Appalachia.¹⁴² However, one must remember that the ANPA induced national legislative debate, and the federal government conducted a very detailed study about the region of Southern Appalachia. Since the ANPA proposal progressed to

¹⁴¹ Michael Frome. *Strangers in High Places* p. 177.

¹⁴² See Introduction for historiographical analysis.

a Congressional vote, the ANPA also got the “foot in the door” for the future preservationists of the 1920s.

The USDA study also had important repercussions for Southern Appalachia as a whole. Since Appalachia is not a political unit, people had not previously regarded it as an entity with a common set of concerns. However, common grievances unite the region, and the USDA study was one of several documents that were important in identifying the region as an underdeveloped region. This precursory federal identification of Appalachia as an impoverished region eventually led to the creation of programs and agencies, such as the Appalachian Regional Commission and Tennessee Valley Authority, to bolster Appalachia’s economy and peoples.

After the House defeated the ANPA’s proposal, the association continued its work as the Appalachian National Forest Reserve Association until 1905, when, after some internal strife and financial troubles, the group transferred its membership to the American Forestry Association. Frome states that “for the six years of its existence the Appalachian National Park Association waged an energetic campaign.”¹⁴³ The group ended, however, with no tangible successes and little hope or enthusiasm for future successes.

The work of the ANPA and the USDA did eventually bear fruit. In March of 1911, Congress passed the Weeks Bill, which provided for the conservation of forests above the watersheds of navigable waterways. The Bureau of Forestry designated several Appalachian sites, including the areas surrounding Mount Mitchell, the Yadkin River, the Nantahala River, and Mount Pisgah. By 1916, after some additional land dealings with George Vanderbilt’s widow, Congress created the first eastern national

forest, Pisgah National Forest.¹⁴⁴ Many subsequent actions followed, and currently, Southern Appalachian forests are under protection as national parks, Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah, and national forests, Pisgah; Nantahala; Cherokee; Unaka; George Washington; Jefferson; Chattahoochee; and Monongohela.¹⁴⁵

How the country progressed from the environmental degradation described in Chapter One to an much more environmentally conscious society with millions of acres of conserved lands is an amazing story. Environmentalism has progressed from small local groups such as the ANPA to a First World united front concerned with issues like biodiversity and sustainable development? The roots of modern environmentalism are essentially in the Progressive conservation movement.

Although contemporary Appalachia has thousands of acres of preserved forests, the battle to conserve and preserve these lands was hard fought. The modern environmental movement owes much to the work of the Progressive conservationists. Historians have been quick to acknowledge the efforts of high level federal officials such as Gifford Pinchot, James Wilson, and Bernard Fernow, but the members of groups like the Appalachian Mountain Club and Appalachian National Park Association also contributed to the preservation of America's lands.

If conservation was born out of concern for deforestation, then it is also possible that the ANPA and the USDA are responsible for the first major work on the modern notion of deforestation, a term which is present in *Senate Document 84* in numerous places.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps the ANPA's work was part of the germination period of modern

¹⁴³ Michael Frome, *Strangers in High Places* p. 175.

¹⁴⁴ Ronald Eller. *Miners, Mill Hands, and Mountaineers* p. 112.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid p. 114.

¹⁴⁶ David Cushman Coyle, *Conservation: An American Study of Conflict and Accomplishment* p. 3.

environmental campaigns. The infancy of the modern environmental movement is important in understanding the relationship of the movement to society and government. The ANPA, as a political pressure group, is the forerunner of the thousands of environmental non-governmental organizations that currently exist.

Maybe, the world can learn something from the Progressive conservationists. The current struggle to conserve the world's last remaining "wild places" pits environmental interests against developmental interests. The industrial changes that much of the Third World is currently experiencing is not dissimilar to the industrial changes of Progressive era America. The domestic environmental interests of Third World movements, can thus, be analogous to the Progressive conservation movement. Comparisons can perhaps be useful in successfully campaigning for conservation.

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