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EDITORIAL

The often tortuous journey of research program efforts in the national parks begun by George Wright some fifty years ago has been chronicled by many—from nearly every major point of view. The initial document, Fauna No. 1 of the Series, by George Wright, Joe Dixon and Ben Thompson remains perhaps the most impressive work, laying the foundation for things to come. Over recent years, whenever someone, for one reason or another, would request additional information about the history of scientific research in the national parks, those of us old enough to remember would again photocopy Lowell Sumner's 1967 "...A History." No other document I know of so poignantly describes the ups and downs of an agency's research effort. Sumner's paper has never been "published," however, until this issue of FORUM beginning on page 3.

The 1960s were full of hope and anticipation for research in the Service. The sixties began with only about four field scientists in active pursuit of "truth" in the parks; Mission 66 was in full swing and great things were happening to those park facilities that had been neglected during the war years. Howard Stagner, fresh from a stint on the Mission 66 Task Force (which planned and guided that effort), became disappointed that resources research, management and interpretation had not been recognized by the Mission 66 team as a need equal to the facilities update program (or any need at all, for that matter).

Stagner, a geologist, took to the pen in the early 1960s to produce his "Get the Facts..." paper (beginning on page 28) which fell on sympathetic ears in Secretary Udall's office, and this was at least partly responsible for two Interior actions: a contract with the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council to study the Service's research program efforts; and the appointment by Secretary Udall of the Advisory Committee on Wildlife Management in the National Parks. The reports of these two committees have since become well known to many and many of their recommendations have been adopted as official policy.

Early recognition of the work begun by George Wright and his coworkers was given by Director Horace M. Albright in a paper published in the June 1933 issue of The Scientific Monthly. The AAAS has kindly given permission to FORUM to reprint Albright's long out-of-print paper, appearing (sans photos) on pages 39-47.

At the time in 1963 when the report of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Wildlife Management in the National Parks (the "Leopold Report") emerged, there was of course a multitude of reactions: consternation through glee! The bureaucracy moved with its usual "glacial dignity" and finally "accepted" the principles embodied in the report. There was (and there remains) a continuing point of disagreement in the major principle espoused by the "Leopold Report":

As a primary goal, we would recommend that the biotic associations within each park be maintained, or where necessary recreated, as nearly as possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man.

Those of us who assisted in "implementing" the Leopold Report realized from the start that two major flaws existed in the above quote--IF the statement would have to stand on its own: first, the uncomfortable connotation that white man was the first to see whatever condition there was to see (most all races had, after all, seen these areas at the same or prior time); and second, the statement as written implies that an ecological condition can (and should) be frozen in time. To counteract such interpretations, we (the bureaucracy) came up with similar words that, to us, expressed what the whole report really said:

The goal is to maintain, or where necessary recreate, as nearly as possible, those ecological conditions that would now prevail were it not for the impact of modern civilization.

A better expression might have been possible, but that was it. The "Leopold Committee" members were approached with this new (perhaps upstart) rewording, and the reply was "of course that's what we meant." But it didn't get chiselled in stone.

Aside from being a lesson to those who do chisel something in stone (to be damn careful about what the string of words will really mean to readers), the "primary goal" as stated in the Leopold Report haunts those who now conscientiously attempt to follow "policy." A fitting discussion involving this and related matters is contained in David Graber's paper beginning on page 48.

No doubt other documents bearing importantly on the history of scientific research in the national parks will come to light as time and interest continues. One such was brought to attention recently by GWS member Bob Stottlemyer: "Ecological Conditions in National Forests and in National Parks" by Charles C. Adams, eminent ecologist of the early 1900s, (Scientific Monthly XX [1925]:570-593). Reading this is reminiscent of reading Fauna 1! Bob has promised us a review of this 60-year old article, which reads as if it had been written in 1984, for our next FORUM.

...Bob Linn, Hancock, Michigan