

New Titles

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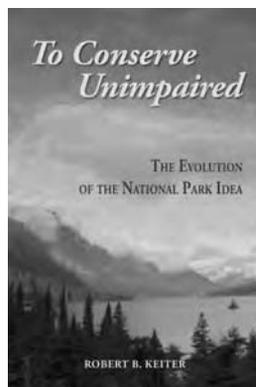
as national parks,... which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. (§ 1)

Inherent in this mandate is the long-standing struggle between conservation and public enjoyment; it is an internal conflict made greater by the dramatic increase in the use of national parks over the last century.

To Conserve Unimpaired details the major ideas that have shaped the American view of the national park. The book discusses several parks, using them as examples, then extends the argument to the national park system as a whole. It is a good book but a limited one—it neglects to address the influential roles, both positive and negative, that US national parks have played in the global effort to conserve protected areas. Perhaps this would be too much to expect from one book, but it would have been a powerful addition to this one. The chapters contain significant details about specific parks and key individuals, as well as arguments on the national park idea that are based on each park's needs and expectations. This approach leans toward the anecdotal and is frustrating in places. The author's previous work and experience skew his arguments toward a smaller geography than might have been desirable. In addition, there is a great deal of overlap between chapters, with some incidents and stories being repeated—and acknowledged as such by the author.

Keiter's decision to focus most of the book on individual parks and not on the whole system of parks is my biggest disappointment. The author states that individual park superintendents have great latitude in

shaping what happens in their parks, but it is the national park system, both empowered and constrained by the Organic Act of 1916, that is the institution of most importance—and of greatest interest. The system *in toto* is given attention only near the end of the book and in a way that is not well integrated with the rest. To explain the long-term success of individual parks, the dialogue needs to be focused on system-wide policies. The US National Park Service has been taking important steps toward creating management objectives for its portfolio of protected areas. It has consulted broadly on how to address its responsibility for migratory animals that spend part of their lives in the parks. It is also now considering how certain animals and plants will move out of and into parks in response to climate change. And it is looking at important system-wide issues, such as lead pollution in and around all national parks.



There was a time when the conservation community treated national parks as if they were holy relics, to be revered by all but not touched. That was before we learned, through rough and tumble debate, that the US view of parks was not shared by many others in the world—or even in the United States, itself. Today, the US National Park Service is a part of the gritty fabric of life—like politics and even religion. It is a value-based institution whose long-term persistence requires measured accommodation and unflinching dedication.

This is the lesson from *To Conserve Unimpaired*: The work on parks is never done.

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NEW TITLES

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