Welcome!

- **Before you sit down**, please orient yourself on some of the key dates in the history of public lands by viewing the gallery walk posted on the walls of the meeting room.
- **After you sit down**, please review the handout placed on your chair and be prepared to discuss it with the group.
A Whole New Story: Re-examining Conservation's History

Paul Sanford and Hannah Malvin
The Wilderness Society
Traditional Public Lands Story
Expanded Public Lands History Narrative

Columbus

Jim Crow

Jackson

American pioneers
Overview of Presentation

- What do we mean by public lands?
- The story begins
- Attitudes of Early European Settlers
- Shifting Perceptions of Wilderness
- But for whom?
- Where to we go from here?
What do we mean by public lands?

- How do you define public lands?
  Public lands and waters are areas of land and water that today are owned collectively by American citizens and managed by government agencies.

- Why do federal public lands exist?
  - Recreation.
  - Extraction

- Who influenced the decision to retain them?

- Who benefitted from those decisions?
The Story Begins...
1864: YOSEMITE
GRANT ACT SIGNED

- President Lincoln grants Yosemite Valley to California as a public park.
- First federally protected land for public enjoyment
1787: U.S. Constitution

Article IV, Section 3, Paragraph 2:

“The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States...”
1803-1848
US Territorial Acquisitions

“Acquisition” of lands by purchase and treaty
1812: General Land Office established

- Creates a government agency and structure for distinguishing public from private land.
- Most settlers buy their land from the GLO.
Attitudes of Early European Settlers

Belief in:
• Racial and cultural superiority
• Divine destiny - settle the west to fulfill God’s will.
• Land is there for the taking.
• No need for set aside lands for public use.

Control through:
• Forced entry,
• Alteration/destruction of indigenous cultures.
• Domination.
• Elaborate justification of actions.

Wilderness seen as:
• Evil, chaotic, dark and sinister.
• Undeveloped land needed to controlled and converted to productive use.
• Settlement meant converting darkness to light, ordering chaos, converting evil into good.
1763: Proclamation Line

Britain’s Proclamation Line removes indigenous people from east of the Appalachian Divide and requires them to move west.
Indigenous children are taken from their families and not allowed to practice their culture, speak their language, or perform their ceremonies.
1830: Indian Removal Act

Legitimized the forceful removal of indigenous people from their lands in service of settling the land.
1838: Trail Of Tears

Cherokee nation was forced to migrate west to present-day Oklahoma; they faced hunger, disease, and deaths were numerous.
1850: Indian Reservations Established
1851: Dispossession Of Yosemite Valley
1862: Pacific Railway Act

- Land seized from indigenous people to build a transportation system for settlers.
- Railroads built by people of color using exploitive labor practices.
- “See America First” campaign begins to develop an appreciation for public lands.
1924: Indian Citizenship Act
1934: National Housing Act

“The premises herein described shall never be sold, conveyed, or demised to any person except of the Caucasian race.”
1968: Indian Civil Rights Act

Grants indigenous people the Bill of Rights. Previously discrimination was legal.
Shifting Perceptions of Wilderness

- What does “wilderness” mean to you?
- What has influenced your perceptions of wilderness?
- What do you think wilderness meant to the indigenous people who lived here before Europeans arrived?
Shifting Perceptions of Wilderness

Transcendentalism
- Commune with God and appreciate beauty.
- Facing the challenge of wilderness was a noble endeavor.

Preservation
- Wild spaces should be protected from human impact.
- Be closer to God, improve yourself, find a true home in wilderness.

Conservation
- Wilderness has resources that humans should be able to extract and use.
- Became a pillar of the Yale School and Forest Service.

Strenuous life
- Connection to nature fosters and encourages rugged individualism.
- Combats the ease of city life and dangers of industrialization.
1864: Yosemite Grant Act Signed
1872: Yellowstone Designated As The First National Park
Legislative Actions

• 1891 – Forest Reserves Act
  ▪ Creates forest reserves which later became National Forests.
  ▪ Shift away from disposal to retention.

• 1906 – Antiquities Act
  ▪ Allows government to designate National Monuments.
  ▪ Designates Mato Tipila (Devil’s Tower) as first National Monument (sacred to tribes).

• 1911 – Weeks Act
  ▪ Allows federal government to acquire land to protect watersheds.
  ▪ Made the acquired land part of the National Forests.
1905: Forest Service Established

Below are the authors of the Forest Use Book, a foundational document for the Forest Service.
1916: National Park Service Established
But for Whom?

• Who made the decision to start protecting public lands?
• What demographic group controlled the policymaking process in the following time periods?
  ▪ Before 1964?
  ▪ Before 1920?
• What groups were excluded from the process?
• Who were the intended beneficiaries of land protection decisions?
1619: Enslavement Of Africans Begins In Us
1848: Treaty Of Guadalupe De Hidalgo
1865: Jim Crow Laws
1920: 19th Amendment

Granting women the right to vote.
1924: Immigration Act

Restricting the immigration of anyone of Asian descent into the U.S.
“The premises herein described shall never be sold, conveyed, or demised to any person except of the Caucasian race.”
1935: Shenandoah National Park

Established by displacing poor white families.
1942: Japanese Internment Camps

Established on what are now public lands.
During WWII workers from Mexico are recruited to work in the US; When they arrive they are subjected to poor working conditions. After the war they are offered no viable pathway to citizenship.
1964: Civil Rights Act
1965: Voting Rights Act
2016: Stonewall National Monument Designation

The Stonewall Inn is the 1st National Monument site dedicated to LGBTQ history.
Progress in public lands

- Westward expansion and settlement (with land disposal)
- “Progress” and development
- Later:
  - Retention of lands for extraction and economic development
  - Preservation of land for recreation
  - Protection of “Wilderness”
Exclusionary factors

• Genocide
• Slavery
• Removal from land
• Assimilation
• Relocation and internment
• Legalized discrimination
• Inability to vote
• Inability to gain citizenship
• Inability to own property
• Inability to immigrate to US
Where do we go from here?

- How does this version of public lands history feel to you?
- How does this change the way you do your work?
- How can we expand our current visions, missions, and practices to be more inclusive and honest about our history related to power and privilege?
- How and where should we continue this conversation about the history of public lands?
Thank you

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