

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS: THE CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL
PERSPECTIVES, 1916-2016

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ABSTRACT

In 1916 the United States National Park Service (NPS) was founded to conserve the nation's natural and cultural landscapes as well as "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." While much historical analysis has been done by historians and the NPS on the agency's national history, these scholars have ignored how the NPS was shaped by and contributed to an international history of national parks. Thus, this thesis addresses this historiographical gap and institutional forgetfulness by examining the agency's Division of International Affairs (DIA). The DIA was established in 1961 by the NPS to foster international cooperation by building national parks overseas, which often advanced foreign policy containment initiatives in the developing world during the Cold War. Following the end of the Cold War, a significant decline in activity and staffing made it more difficult for the DIA to return to the pull of its influence just a decade or two earlier. In 1987 the DIA was renamed the Office of International Affairs (OIA) and has since suffered from many of its parent agency's larger issues including a decline in staffing, funding, and a host of other issues that have compromised the NPS's ability to meet its mission. As the NPS celebrates its centennial in 2016, I argue that examining the NPS's history of international work challenges the agency to consider its past in new ways in the hopes that it reconfigure its mission and future to best meet the needs of its audiences in a globally connected twenty-first century world.

DEDICATION

My brilliant and compassionate mother, to whom I owe everything:

You were the one who encouraged me to study history long before I knew it was a career path. I am indebted to you for introducing me to my life's passion and sacrificing everything to make the last six years and my entire life possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE CASE FOR INTERNATIONALIZING THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)

On May 13, 1918, United States Interior Secretary Franklin K. Lane penned a letter to first National Park Service (NPS) Director Stephen T. Mather that outlined policy guidelines for the newly-formed federal agency. Lane envisioned a trajectory for the NPS that expanded upon its founding document. The Organic Act of August 25, 1916 established the NPS to conserve America’s natural landscapes and historic sites “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 In his letter to Mather, Lane made several recommendations to ensure that the agency could effectively meet the Organic Act’s two-fold mission of conservation and public access. Among them, he suggested that Mather be aware of the forces shaping the national park system outside of the agency. Wrote Lane, “You should keep informed of park movements and park progress, municipal, county, and State, both at home and abroad, for the purpose of adapting, wherever practicable, the world’s best thought to the needs of the national parks.”² He specifically requested that Mather establish ties with Canada’s national park system “and assist in the solution of park problems of an international character.”³ Lane and Mather’s correspondence offers a window into a rich, albeit neglected, history of

¹ “An Act to Establish a National Park Service, and For Other Purposes: Approved August 26, 1916, (39 Stat. 535), U.S.C. Title 16, sec. 1,” in Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System: the Critical Documents* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 46.

² Letter of Franklin K. Lane to Stephen T. Mather, May 13, 1918; in Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System*, 51. Terence Young and Lary M. Dilsaver, “Collecting and Diffusing “the World’s Best Thought”: International Cooperation by the National Park Service,” *The George Wright Forum* 28 (2011): 271.

³ Letter of Franklin K. Lane to Stephen T. Mather, May 13, 1918; in Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System*, 51.

international considerations in the NPS during its nascent years. The frequency and intensity of the NPS's international engagement fluctuated since 1916, but its origins and history over the last century undeniably reveal more than just domestic concerns.

The NPS's origins date to a Progressive Era concern for conserving America's landscapes in the face of growing industrialization, human encroachment, and the perceived problem of a closed western frontier.⁴ Yellowstone National Park preceded the Organic Act by over forty years when it was established on March 1, 1872, but its creation as the world's first official "national park" was indicative of the concern for protecting endangered landscapes. Others like it such as Yosemite (1890) and Glacier (1910) National Parks similarly received federal protection, and legislation under the Antiquities Act of 1906 further authorized the federal government to protect historically or scientifically important resources. The Organic Act of 1916 consolidated these assets into the United States national park *system*, overseen by the Department of the Interior (DOI).⁵ The concern behind preserving these lands was more than just a conservationist one. It was also an attempt to make them available for public access, a struggle that historian Alfred Runte characterized as a paradox of preservation and use in the national parks.⁶ Historian Robin Winks, however, contests the idea of this "contradictory mandate" in a 1997 essay. Examining congressional conversations leading to the Organic Act, Winks shows that the placement of "leave" the

⁴ Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall, "Reinterpreting the creation myth: Yellowstone National Park," in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change*, ed. Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall (New York: Routledge, 2009), 24-25; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 11-12.

⁵ Lary Dilsaver, "Introduction: The National Park System," in *America's National Park System*, ed. Lary Dilsaver, 2.

⁶ Runte, *National Parks*, 171-173.

parks and monuments “unimpaired” prior to their purpose “for the enjoyment of future generations”, indicated two completely separate goals, with conservation being prioritized over access.⁷ While this debate has existed in the agency throughout its history, it is clear that conservation was a driving mission behind the establishment of the NPS.

National parks emerged out of more than just a conservationist mission in the United States, however. They were also an attempt to establish a wilderness-based heritage in a young nation perceived domestically and internationally to be devoid of a long cultural heritage like that of its European counterparts. Runte explains that, “Rather, America’s incentive for the national park idea lay in the persistence of a painfully felt desire for time-honored traditions in the United States.”⁸ As the idea of the modern nation-state arose in the West during the nineteenth century, national parks were seen as an essential marker of legitimacy and identity by the international community. Emerging from this climate of a growing U.S. federal government, the NPS’s natural and cultural sites served as implicit arguments about American power, diplomatic legitimacy, and heritage on the world stage. This shift is evident in Interior Secretary Lane’s letter to Mather when he described the NPS as the “world’s best thought,” a phrase that framed the NPS in global terms.

Despite being the “world’s best thought” since 1918, historians of the NPS typically resist an international perspective. The reason for this, in part, lies in the fact that much of their work focuses almost exclusively on the NPS origin story. The “invention” of a uniquely American national park “idea” is defined as a global model that was created in the United

⁷ Robin Winks, “The National Park Service Act of 1916: “A Contradictory Mandate”?,” *Denver University Law Review* 74, no. 3 (1996-1997): 575-624; “Robin Winks on the Evolution and Meaning of the Organic Act,” *The George Wright Forum* 24, no. 3 (2007): 17.

⁸ Runte, *National Parks*, 11-12.

States and spread worldwide. Descriptions of the NPS as the “world’s best thought” and the popularization of author Wallace Stegner’s phrase “America’s best idea” in the 1980s pervade how national parks have been conceptualized.⁹ The concept is obsessively explored in popular filmmaker Ken Burns’ 2009 documentary *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*. And, yet, Burns fails to critically engage with most of the NPS’s history. As film critic Mike Hale puts it in *The New York Times*, “after those early years . . . the story loses some of its urgency and focus.”¹⁰ The projected exceptionalism of American national parks poses more than just a historiographical problem. It also speaks volumes about how the NPS has furthered this exceptionalist identity among the audiences it has served throughout its history. “The history of the United States,” argues transnational historian Ian Tyrrell, “cannot be exceptional unless contrasted with other histories that conform to fixed patterns of historical development.”¹¹ Thus, the constructed exceptionalism of the national park idea has failed to engage with the global sphere from which it emerged.

Many scholars in recent decades, as I later show, have re-examined the NPS’s origins with overtly transnational perspectives. This is important when reconsidering the exceptionalist model often associated with Yellowstone and the subsequent consolidation of national parks and historic sites by the Organic Act. While these scholars succeeded in recasting the NPS origin story in an international light, this history has remained temporally

⁹ The origins of the phrase “America’s best idea” are unclear, but most scholars trace the phrase to author Wallace Stegner’s 1983 work: “The Best Idea We Ever Had,” *Marking the Sparrow’s Fall: The Making of the American West*, Page Stegner, ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998).

¹⁰ Ken Burns (director/producer) and Dayton Duncan (producer/writer), *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*. DVD. Produced by Florentine Films and WETA Washington, 2009; Mike Hale, “Ken Burns Goes Camping, and Has Photos,” *New York Times*, September 24, 2009, Accessed October 4, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/25/arts/television/25parks.html?_r=0.

¹¹ Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (Oct. 1991): 1034.

stagnant in the agency's early years. This is most evident in the vacuum of scholarship around the specific instances of international engagement by the NPS, particularly since the establishment of the NPS Division of International Affairs (DIA) in 1961.

Furthermore, this scholarship has focused almost exclusively on the natural heritage protected by the NPS at the expense of the NPS's historic sites. This imbalance in the literature is reflected in the agency's concerns with natural sites over its historic ones, despite the fact that the NPS played a leading role in shaping the history profession in the United States long before public history was professionalized in the 1970s.¹² As the historic preservation movement flourished in the U.S. in the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt transferred all historic sites and national monuments from the War Department to the NPS in 1933. Little known is that these NPS leaders who developed historic preservationist policies at home often consulted with European nations who already had similar programs in place.¹³ The NPS's legacy as a leader in historic and natural conservation at home is a testament to the agency's awareness and engagement with counterpart movements abroad.

This thesis recasts the history of the NPS in an international light. At critical junctures in its history, the NPS has turned to the international scene to meet the needs of the agency and the nation. As the NPS approaches its centennial in August 2016, it prepares to reflect on its past and envision its future for a "second century" of NPS work. A conversation absent

¹² Denise Meringolo, "A New Kind of Technician: In Search of the Culture of Public History," in *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), xiv-xv.

¹³ Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, "To Preserve the Nation's Past: The Growth of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service during the 1930s," *The Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring, 1987): 27-30. See also for a description of the historic preservation movement in the 1930s and later the 1960s: John Sprinkle, *Crafting Preservation Criteria: The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

from past commemorative celebrations, I argue that examining the NPS’s history of international work challenges the agency to consider its past in new ways in the hopes that it reconfigure its future to best meet the needs of its audiences. This is of the utmost importance, particularly in light of the 2014 “Imperiled Promise” report that assessed that the NPS’s ability to fully meet its mission has been compromised.

In 2014 several historians were commissioned by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and the NPS to assess the state of history programs within the agency. The report determined that the “agency’s ability to manage its sites “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” – let alone achieve its highest aspirations to become the nation’s largest history classroom – has been imperiled.”¹⁴ The report identified issues such as lack of interagency support for history programs, low funding levels, poor historical interpretation, and little inclusion of multiple historical perspectives. Concluded the report, “The more central *history* can be to the NPS’s missions and activities, the more *relevant* and *responsive* NPS can be to the needs of twenty-first century American society.” The agency has reached a period of stagnation that needs to be addressed if it is to survive into the next one hundred years. From the likes of “Imperiled Promise,” it is clear that several institutional challenges have made it difficult for the NPS to adapt to a perpetually shifting landscape of fluid national borders, multiethnic and multinational audiences, and a more interconnected globe than at any time in the NPS’s past.

By revisiting the NPS’s history of international engagement, I follow the trajectory of emerging scholarship that shows the NPS has always been globally connected. Throughout

¹⁴ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David Thelen, “Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service,” (Bloomington: Organization of American Historians, 2014): 6.

its history, NPS officials and later historians articulated the national park idea as a simultaneously unique and universal model. Scholars have debunked this paradoxical concept, as it fails to account for the individual development, history, and condition of nations. I further this conversation by extending an international perspective past the agency's origin story further into the twentieth century, on which I redirect focus to the NPS Office of International Affairs (OIA). Renamed several times since it was established in the 1961, the OIA is important to understanding how the NPS has defined and executed international engagement over the last fifty years. This legacy is very much with the OIA today, though I use this thesis as a call to action to rethink international engagement not as the high profile, foreign-policy laden development of national parks overseas. Rather, I propose that the OIA redirect its efforts to foster conversations about global perspectives in interpretation throughout the agency's various units. In the following four chapters, I attempt to provide the NPS with the tools it needs to work more effectively in a fluid twenty-first century global context.

First, in chapter one, I make the case for why international perspectives in the NPS are so vital to the agency's survival. This first chapter broadly examines how literature on the NPS has been shaped by and contributes to popular understandings of the NPS in exclusively nationalist terms. It highlights how recent contributions of transnational scholars who have re-examined the founding story of Yellowstone and the NPS help us understand the NPS from a new international perspective. Chapter two addresses the gaps in this historiography and delves into specific examples of international engagement by the NPS. It briefly recounts the NPS's involvement in the global sphere throughout its history, but focuses on the NPS's first office dedicated to international work, the Division of International Affairs (DIA).

Established at the height of the Cold War, the DIA is a powerful example of the NPS's growth at home and abroad in service of contemporary American foreign policy, particularly in developing nations. Although the DIA was renamed the Office of International Affairs (OIA) in the 1980s, it carries on many of the DIA's old goals. Chapter three examines the OIA from the 1980s to the present and assesses its work following decline in staffing and funds at the end of the Cold War. Finally, in chapter four, I propose solutions to the problem of redirecting international work within the NPS

When Interior Secretary Lane recommended that the NPS be aware of the work being done globally, he understood how important engagement was to the survival of the young agency. Lane's words continue to ring true today. As the NPS celebrates its centennial, now is the perfect time to reflect on its past. Rather than relying on an outdated and disengaged narrative of the universalism of the "park idea," the NPS can begin to more fully account for the diversity of its model and the audiences it serves.

The Case for International Perspectives: A Historiography

*"As President Kennedy commented, cooperation between conservation agencies and wholesome recreation are the elements of one national problem; the National Parks are not islands unto themselves."*¹⁵ - Conrad L. Wirth, NPS Director (1951 – 1964)

The term "national park" is popularly associated with natural landscapes. The *Oxford Dictionaries* in the United Kingdom and World English version define a national park as "an area of countryside, or occasionally sea or fresh water, protected by the state for the enjoyment of the general public or the preservation of wildlife."¹⁶ The American *Oxford*

¹⁵ Conrad L. Wirth, "Annual Report of the Commissioner National Park Service to the Secretary of the Interior," (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 360, <http://archive.org/stream/annualreportofdi5863nati#page/304/mode/2up>.

¹⁶ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. "national park," accessed October 31, 2015, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/national-park>.

Dictionaries definition, however, is more inclusive of historic areas and identifies a national park as “A scenic or historically important area of countryside protected by the federal government for the enjoyment of the general public or the preservation of wildlife.”¹⁷ In scholarly approaches, the sociologist Karen M. O’Neill defined national parks as “the keystone institutions of environmental conservation,” and the geographers Lary M. Dilsaver and William Wyckoff explain that “A national park is a political entity with a political *raison d’être*: environmental protection for inspirational recreation.”¹⁸ However, others are quick to point out that it is important to unpack the meaning of “national park” because it holds different associative cultural precepts throughout the world. Not all national park systems, such as that of the United Kingdom, are considered national parks under the terms of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).¹⁹ Any variation of these definitions point to both popular and academic associations of national parks with environmental and wildlife protection. Furthermore, historical parks remain peripheral to these definitions of national parks. This is reflected in the literature on the National Park

¹⁷ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “national park,” accessed October 31, 2015, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/national-park.

¹⁸ Karen M. O’Neill, “The International Politics of National Parks,” *Human Ecology* 24, no. 4 (December 1996): 521; Lary M. Dilsaver and William Wyckoff, “The Political Geography of National Parks,” *Pacific Historical Review* 74, no. 2 (May 2005): 237.

¹⁹ Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall, “Introduction,” in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change*, ed. Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall (New York: Routledge, 2009), 14-15. In 2008 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defined a protected area as “a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.” While national parks fall under the definition of “protected area,” Hall and Frost hesitate to use the term, as it does not hold the same cultural meanings associated with national parks. International Union for the Conservation of Nature, “Hope for a protected planet with protected areas,” accessed February 26, 2016, https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/pas_gpap/.

Service, where the consolidation of the NPS with natural and cultural landscapes is often a footnote in its history.

Some of the first scholarship on national parks and the NPS emerged in the 1970s amidst federal concern for environmental protection and the shift of environmental history from the left to mainstream academic history circles.²⁰ The foreground environmental historian Roderick Nash and his student Alfred Runte are some of the first scholars to examine the creation of national park spaces in the United States. In 1970 Nash argued that national parks first arose in the United States because of the nation's four ideal conditions. He identified them as: (1) America's swift westward expansion that sparked an urge to preserve the land; (2) "a democratic ideology"; (3) undeveloped land made valuable when the first two reasons "combined to produce a desire for its protection"; (4) and economic prowess. This idea was later adopted, writes Nash, as a model in other nations.²¹ By decade's end, Nash furthers this claim and situates his argument in a global context, and defines nature as a joint import and export. Nash posits that, "Thinking of nature as an actively traded commodity in an international market clarifies nature-appreciation and largely explains the world nature protection movement."²² Runte furthers this model of park exceptionalism in

²⁰ Andrew C. Isenberg, "Introduction: A New Environmental History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, ed. Andrew C. Isenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-5. Isenberg briefly recounts the historiography of U.S. environmental history, contesting the idea that environmental history arose strictly from the political concern for environmental protection in the 1970s. This perspective existed well into the nineteenth century, in which Isenberg points to the example of Frederick Jackson Turner, who in 1893 explained that "'American development' could be explained by the progressive transformations of the 'wilderness' to 'civilization.'"

²¹ Roderick Nash, "The American Invention of National Parks," *American Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (Fall 1970): 726-735.

²² Roderick Nash, "The Exporting and Importing of Nature: Nature Appreciation as a Commodity, 1850-1980," *Perspectives in American History* 12 (1979): 521.

the first comprehensive history of the NPS in 1979.²³ Like Nash, Runte describes national parks and the American national park system as derivatives of larger conditions that made the invention of national park idea exceptional to the United States. Nash and Runte helped to shape the notion that American national parks served as models that could be universally applied.

More recently, historians have critiqued the exceptionalism of the national park idea and the concept that it was implemented universally worldwide. The rise of transnational history in the 1990s has been an influential mechanism scholars have used to question the assumed centrality of the nation-state.²⁴ Transnational methodologies allow historians to discover otherwise undetected relationships as a means to highlight power imbalances rather than assuming reciprocal exchange among man-made national borders.²⁵ Historians' application of transnational perspectives to their study of U.S. national parks has influenced critical revision of the "invention" idea to understand the larger global context in which ideas of land use and conservation emerged.

Historian Ian Tyrrell, for instance, contests the idea that the NPS was the first in the world to invent the park idea. He argues that American conservationists were well-informed about nature-conservation overseas. Tyrrell shows that conceptions of national parks in the

²³ James Morton Turner, "Rethinking American Exceptionalism: Toward a Transnational History of National Parks, Wilderness, and Protected Areas," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, ed. Andrew C. Isenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 284.

²⁴ Some examples of historians who theorize on transnational history include: David Thelen, "Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 965-975; Pierre Yves Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ian Tyrrell, "Reflections on the transnational turn in United States history: theory & practice," *Journal of Global History* 4, no. 3 (November 2009): 464-465.

²⁵ Tyrrell, "Reflections on the transnational turn in United States history," 464-465.

U.S. arose alongside several simultaneous conservation initiatives around the world. Thus, the national park idea did not arise in a vacuum, as Nash and Runte had assumed. Tyrrell further challenges the universality of national parks. While Yellowstone may have been the world's first official national park, "the United States provided no model for global diffusion of the idea."²⁶ The world's first national park system was established in Sweden in 1909 based on German rather than American ideas of conservation, while Canada's national park system preceded the Organic Act by five years. Queensland, Australia in 1906, explains Tyrrell, established regulations that would establish national parks in the future.²⁷ Tyrrell unravels American national parks from an exceptionalist model to show that they were well-in fact established in a global moment.

Other scholars show that the American park idea was not universally applied. Stephen R. Mark explains that, though Yellowstone may have been the world's first national park, it emerged in a climate of "shared cultural perceptions" that drove nature conservation within a national context.²⁸ No singular model was adapted or used, and several scholars show how the park concept was adapted to meet different cultural constructs.²⁹ In Switzerland, for example, Patrick Kupper explains, unlike the United States, "nation building by preserving untamed nature did not seem meaningful." History through cultural heritage was celebrated

²⁶ Ian Tyrrell, "America's National Parks: The Transnational Creation of National Space in the Progressive Era," *Journal of American Studies* 46 (2012): 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

²⁸ Stephen R. Mark, "Framing the Views: How American national parks came to be," in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on development, histories and change*, ed. Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall (New York: Routledge, 2009), 87.

²⁹ C. Michael Hall and Warwick Frost, "Introduction," in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on development, histories and change*, ed. Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall (New York: Routledge, 2009), 11.

much more widely as an expression of national identity rather than Swiss wilderness. However, nature preservation became more meaningful in Switzerland and Europe at the turn of the twentieth century as a response to the closure of the world's lands in response to colonization. Thus, it was a way to "limit the sprawl of civilization."³⁰

Additionally, the emerging Western trend of building national parks throughout the twentieth century was perceived as a marker of civilization, industrial development, and democracy – identifiers of the modern nation-state. European historians Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper explain that conceptions of nature were intimately correlated with democracy. According to them, "Understanding parks as both agents and instruments of *civilizing* nature draws attention to their ambivalent role in conservation as a civilizing mission and alternative project of modernity." This "educative, 'civilizing' function" of national parks was extended to the Global South because of their supposed appeal.³¹ As Nash explains before, "A truly civilized society, the implicit argument ran, protected its natural as well as its cultural resources." The impulse to conserve meant there was a democratic, industrial civilization threatening the land.³² The civilizing mission behind national parks is particularly evident in the NPS's establishment of the DIA in 1961 as it provided technical assistance overseas to build national parks in several developing countries. These initiatives spoke volumes about how the NPS participated in larger

³⁰ Patrick Kupper, "Translating Yellowstone: Early European National Parks, *Weltnaturschutz*, and the Swiss Model," in *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*, ed. Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, Patrick Kupper (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 124-125.

³¹ Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper, "Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Parks," in *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*, ed. Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 3.

³² Nash, *The Exporting and Importing of Nature: Nature Appreciation as a Commodity, 1850-1980*, 544.

American neo-colonialist projects in the post-World War II period as the United States exercised its global influence. The NPS was closely tied to the American mission to institute a world favorable to democracy – by using national parks as a democratizing agent.

Together, these scholars' use of transnational history help us to redefine the NPS origin story and understand how national parks operate as transnational spaces. This scholarship complicates a simple narrative of decontextualized invention and exceptionalism and offers us a new entry point into the NPS's past. Reimagining the NPS as an open system within a larger network of relationships shows us that the NPS has never been immune to the transnational forces shaping it. These perspectives, however, have only begun to be applied to the national park concept, and there is more to do particularly with regard to the early years of the NPS as a federal system.

My intent in the following chapters is to focus on the agency's late-twentieth century history by specifically examining the DIA. Expanding upon geographers Lary Dilsaver and Terence Young's research on the DIA, I show that international cooperation in the NPS throughout the twentieth century was an attempt to respond to rapid global changes in transportation, communication, and urbanization in the post-World War II period.³³ How the NPS defined and executed international work at home and overseas is important to understanding the precedents for today's OIA. While the DIA was built on the premise that national parks were the "world's best thought," it was also well-aware that "National Parks are not islands unto themselves."

³³ Dilsaver and Young, "Collecting and Diffusing "the World's Best Thought": International Cooperation by the National Park Service."

CHAPTER 2

NPS DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (DIA): A HISTORY

Introduction

In March 1964 Myron D. Sutton, Chief Assistant of the NPS's newly formed Division of International Affairs, wrote to Eastman Kodak Company's Chuck A. Kinsley. Sutton inquired about the historic company's technological materials that could be used in overseas business projects. Kinsley, intrigued by Sutton's job title, wrote "John and I are a little curious as to what a Division of International Affairs is doing in the National Park Service. I thought our national parks were restricted to the United States and possessions."³⁴ Sutton explained that the DIA was created because, "Apart from the fact that friendship among nations is encouraged by interchange of knowledge about their heritage, more than 80 nations actually have national parks or equivalent reserves, and a great many of the new and developing nations want them."³⁵ He argued that the United States was the leader in national parks because it had nearly a century of experience in national park planning and management since the early days of Yellowstone. National parks were in demand, and the NPS was there to supply the expertise to build them.

The Division of International Cooperation was founded amidst major growth of NPS agential authority during the post-World War II period. Established by the NPS in 1961, the Division of International Cooperation (renamed the Division of International Affairs in 1964), was created to respond to international inquiries, teach and train international visitors

³⁴ Letter of Chuck A. Kinsley to Myron D. Sutton, March 16, 1964; in "L66 1-1-64 Pt. 1 Dec 1, 1965 WASO," Box 2170, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service, US National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter RG 79).

³⁵ Letter of Myron D. Sutton to Chuck A. Kinsley, March 26, 1964; in "L66 1-1-64 Pt. 1 Dec 1, 1965 WASO," Box 2170, RG 79.

about national park management in U.S. national parks, and provide technical assistance to nations who sought to build their own national park systems.³⁶ The DIA was found amidst the agency's unprecedented expansion during Mission 66 (1956 – 1966), a decade long, one billion dollar program to build and rebuild the national parks by the NPS's fiftieth anniversary in 1966. Its principal architect, NPS Director Conrad Wirth, linked the urgency of the NPS's rebranding initiative to the democratic and civic values of the United States because "To put the National Parks in shape is an investment in the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of Americans as individuals."³⁷ Arguably, Mission 66 was a development project that reshaped and redefined the American landscape to match the new postwar American image as the globe's political, cultural, and economic superpower. The DIA embraced the rhetoric behind Mission 66's democratic values to extend its authority overseas alongside the United States' power after World War II's end in 1945.

While the NPS had a history of informal international engagement before 1961, the desire to create an official division dedicated to overseas work was born of the backdrop of global Cold War politics and anxieties. The United States and the Soviet Union shaped geopolitical boundaries based on their opposing ideological views. As the Soviet Union absorbed the Eastern European bloc into its communist system of government, the U.S. sought to "contain" communism and prevent its further dissemination. These containment policies often took the form of economic incentives in the hopes that other countries look to the United States as a more attractive model than that of the Soviet Union's. This is evident

³⁶ The DIA was originally named and was known as the Division of International Cooperation until 1964. Unless otherwise noted, I uniformly refer to the organization as "DIA" throughout for clarity.

³⁷ "Mission 66: Special Presentation to President Eisenhower and the Cabinet by Director Conrad Wirth," January 27, 1956, in *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, Lary Dilsaver, ed., 194.

when President John F. Kennedy's administration passed the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to provide economic aid to emerging nations. It created the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which funded several DIA projects in nations that requested technical assistance from the NPS to establish national parks. This is significant because the NPS participated in the larger containment through development initiatives of the United States during the Cold War period. National parks were used to literally build up the landscapes of the developing world to reflect the democratic values infused by the United States as part of its "civilizing mission." All of the various iterations of international agencies within the NPS shared this in common. I show in chapter two that the NPS looked abroad to respond and adapt to changing conditions and attitudes within its agency as reflected in national and international spaces shaped by the Cold War. I also posit that Mission 66 was a development project at home that converged and shaped international preoccupations of the early 1960s that influenced international park projects. Understanding how the NPS participated in extending its authority overseas by shaping developing lands allows us to see that not only did the NPS shape international spaces, but that the origins of today's OIA are linked to international cooperation based on a colonial model rather than reciprocal, collaborative exchange.

NPS International Outreach: The Early Years

Since the early days of the NPS, the agency worked to learn from and engage with conservation-minded organizations overseas. As geographers Lary Dilsaver and Terence Young explain, the NPS's desire to work with its overseas counterparts extended even before it was established by the Organic Act. In 1911 Canada's Dominion Parks Branch became North America's first federally mandated national park *system*. As the American national

parks were as yet unconsolidated, Interior Department chief clerk Clement Ucker frequently sought advice from Canada's Parks Commissioner J.B. Harkin between 1911 and 1912 about creating the American system. In a similar fashion, the young NPS maintained contact with and researched the activities of like systems during the following two decades as it shaped its own system.³⁸

As the NPS became more entrenched in the federal government, it developed closer ties to the U.S. State Department to learn about national parks overseas. In 1940 the NPS, via the DOI, requested that the State Department ask American diplomats stationed in Central and South America to inquire about the existence of local national parks. Acting Interior Secretary E.K. Burlew asked that diplomats obtain information about national park legislation; "name, location and size" of existing parks, including available maps; names and locations of proposed parks; and any pamphlets that discussed national park programming available to visitors. Four years earlier, the DOI planned to conduct a similar study more geographically diverse in scope, but the outbreak of World War II made Burlew focus on Pan-American nations for the time being.³⁹ Consular and diplomatic officers in Paraguay, Colombia, Guatemala, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras submitted responses to the State Department, which forwarded them to the DOI.⁴⁰ American Consul General to Cuba Coert Du Bois documented that a representative of the American

³⁸ Dilsaver and Young, "Collecting and Diffusing "the World's Best Thought", 270-271; "Shaping the system" is a phrase that comes from historian Barry Mackintosh's history of the NPS, Barry Mackintosh, *National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, D.C.: Division of Publications, National Park Service, 1985).

³⁹ Letter of Acting Secretary of the Interior E. K. Burlew to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, April 22, 1940 in "0-30 Foreign Parks Land Division: Foreign Parks Miscellaneous," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁴⁰ Letter of Under Secretary of the Interior A.J. Wirtz to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, April 17, 1940 in "Foreign Parks: Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Guatemala," Box 2170, RG 79.

Consulate spoke with the Chief Engineer of the City of Havana and the Chief of the Bureau of Parks and Streets of the Cuban Department of Public Works to conduct their inquiry.

While they reported that there was no direct equivalent of the NPS in Cuba, public parks were managed by the Department of Public Works and the Cooperative Council of Education, Sanitation, and Welfare that provided land for recreational purposes.

The NPS continued this international inquiry throughout World War II. In November 1941 the DOI requested that the State Department nudge the American Embassy in London to issue a report that addressed the war's effect on the status of British natural reserves.⁴¹ The following July, the completed report described recreational life in Britain, the issues that open areas faced during the war, and characterized how public lands were managed by the British government.⁴² While the United Kingdom would not institute a national park system until the late 1940s, the NPS's interest in the British system and others indicated an American interest to understand how public lands and conservation efforts functioned outside of the United States.⁴³

Following World War II, the NPS absorbed the interests of more pressing American foreign policy concerns. The United States, for instance, emerged as the globe's superpower when Japan surrendered at war's end in August 1945. American foreign policy devised initiatives to pump money into emerging nations to institute democratic systems of

⁴¹ Letter of the U.S. Department of State to Interior Secretary, July 31, 1942 in "0-30 Foreign Parks Land Division: Foreign Parks Miscellaneous," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁴² "Parks and War-Time Recreation in Great Britain," in "0-30 Foreign Parks Land Division: Foreign Parks Miscellaneous," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁴³ National Parks: UK, "History of the National Parks," accessed November. 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/whatisanationalpark/history>. As part of postwar planning, the British Parliament passed legislation in 1949 to establish national parks in the United Kingdom. In 1951 ten parks were designated and officially established by decade's end.

government to further the U.S.'s political interests overseas. This is evident when the U.S. military occupied Japan from 1946 to 1952 to rebuild, demilitarize, and democratize the Japanese state. The NPS was asked by the American military to rebuild the Japanese national park system to help in this larger initiative. Instituted based on the Yellowstone model, Japan's National Parks Investigation Committee formed and established twelve national parks between 1934 and 1936.⁴⁴ The NPS became closely tied to the American mission to institute a world favorable to democracy by using national parks to serve an international democratization effort.

American federal officials linked the status of Japanese national parks to more than just a conservation issue, but to the pressing concern of building a democratic future Japan. The recommendation that the NPS work to rebuild Japan was suggested by Captain Walter D. Popham, who worked with the Arts and Monuments Division, popularly known as "the Monuments Men," of the U.S. military. In December 1946 Popham reported to NPS Director Newton B. Drury that more work needed to be done in the Japanese national park system because it "has taken quite a beating during and since the war, and we have been trying to bolster them up a bit."⁴⁵ Popham wrote to Drury that he would "appreciate if you could give a slight boost by memorializing the War Department to try and protect park and Scenic Values as a necessary part of rebuilding Japan."⁴⁶ Acting Interior Secretary Oscar L. Chapman explicitly articulated in February 1947 that rebuilding and preserving national

⁴⁴ Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall, "American Invention to International Concept: The Spread and Evolution of National Parks," in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspective on Development, Histories and Change* (New York: Routledge: 2009), 44.

⁴⁵ Letter of Captain Walter D. Popham to Newton B. Drury, December 27, 1947 in "Foreign Parks: Japan," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

parks in Japan was an important part of the trajectory of the Japanese state. The United States, explained Chapman, served as an example of the benefits of preserving national parks for the enjoyment of its people and “was among the things that made our nation great and are closely associated with the democratic way of life.”⁴⁷ Japanese parks likewise needed to be “greatly expanded if they are to be a moving force in aiding the Japanese to become a more democratic people.”⁴⁸

The project to rebuild Japanese national parks began in 1948 when the NPS assigned its Lands Division Assistant Chief Charles A. Richey to supervise the U.S. Army’s Civil Information and Education Division stationed in Japan.⁴⁹ Richey spent three months developing a plan for land administration, funding, and conservation.⁵⁰ Years later, U.S. and Japanese national parks officials maintained contact. President Naotake Sato of Japan’s National Parks Association thanked Director Wirth in 1953 for the time that the NPS invested in Japan. Sato assured Wirth that Japan would “continue our utmost efforts on this vital problem of mankind, and to eventually justify the expectation you repose in us.”⁵¹

The NPS’s presence in Japan is an important precedent to understanding how the NPS’s mission was used to advance U.S. domestic and foreign policy initiatives on the cusp of the Cold War. NPS historian Janet A. McDonnell, in her study of the national parks in the

⁴⁷ Letter of Acting Secretary of Interior Oscar L. Chapman to Secretary of Interior, February 25, 1947 in “Foreign Parks: Japan,” Box 2170, RG 79

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Letter of Captain Walter D. Popham to Newton B. Drury, December 27, 1947 in “Foreign Parks: Japan,” Box 2170, RG 79; Dilsaver and Young, “Collecting and Diffusing “the World’s Best Thought,”” 272.

⁵⁰ Dilsaver and Young, “Collecting and Diffusing “the World’s Best Thought,”” 272.

⁵¹ Letter of Japan’s National Parks Association President Naotake Sato to NPS Director Conrad Wirth, April 30, 1953 in “Foreign Parks: Japan,” Box 2170, RG 79.

interwar and World War II years, shows how the NPS came to work closely with the U.S. military during the war on the American home front. As the armed forces used national park sites for timber, mining, farming, as well as recreation, training, and other activities for the war effort, the NPS adjusted to these changes by employing the rhetoric that it “was one of the most potent agencies in imparting the fundamental principles of American democracy and in preparing the “national mind” to defend democracy.”⁵² The construction of this rhetoric would play an important role not only during the NPS’s time in Japan, but in its expansion in the immediate postwar period in the United States.

Expanding the NPS: Mission 66 as a Development, Democratization Effort

In 1953 *Harper’s Magazine* published the historian Bernard DeVoto’s editorial piece “Let’s Close the National Parks.” Making no effort to mask his discontent, DeVoto criticized Congress’s neglect of park sites in the United States. DeVoto documented several instances of the disservice being done to visitors in a larger system of deteriorating parks. In one example, he reported that:

Another enraged tourist reports that a guardrail collapsed when his little girl leaned against it and that she nearly fell into the gorge. The representative of a nature society sums up his observations. He has hardly seen a ranger since he reached the park.⁵³

DeVoto’s voice was part of a larger chorus of national criticisms of failing national parks.

That same year, *The New York Times* opined, “Congress should give close attention to the situation of the parks if it expects them to serve their great purpose.”⁵⁴ *The Washington Post*

⁵² Janet A. McDonnell, “World War II: Defending Park Values and Resources,” *The Public Historian* 29, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 20. See also: Janet A. McDonnell, ““Far-Reaching Effects: The United States Military and the National Parks during World War II,” *The George Wright Forum* 32, no. 1 (2015): 89-110.

⁵³ Bernard DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” *Harper’s Magazine*, October 1953 in *America’s National Park System*, Lary Dilsaver, ed., 183.

⁵⁴ “Decline of the Parks,” *New York Times (1923-Current Files)*, November 24, 1953, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/112739774?accountid=14270>.

agreed: “Congress ought to give a sympathetic ear, and the millions of citizens who make use of the National Parks every year would do well to let their wishes be known.”⁵⁵ But DeVoto went a step further with a bold proposal. He wrote that because “So much of the priceless heritage which the Service must safeguard for the United States is beginning to go to hell,” the NPS should close the national parks.⁵⁶

DeVoto’s tongue-in-cheek editorial highlighted a host of challenges facing the national parks in the mid-twentieth century. The war curtailed visitor rates, diverted attention away from the national parks, and stagnated funding for the NPS. During and after World War II, congressional funding for the NPS was at an all-time low. Congress appropriated \$26 million to the NPS in 1939 and \$32 million in 1955, but when adjusted for inflation, the funding levels of the 1950s were even lower than in the 1930s.⁵⁷ This neglect created national parks in bad shape with deteriorating landscapes, insufficient visitor accommodations in disrepair, low staff numbers, and poor interpretation at sites. These problems were compounded by an unprecedented surge in visitors to the national parks following the war. In 1941 national parks were visited by 21 million people.⁵⁸ This number doubled just over a decade later – one in four Americans, a total of 42 million, flocked to national parks in 1953.⁵⁹ This growth reflected several postwar conditions that made national

⁵⁵ “Mission 66,” *The Washington Post* (1954-1959), October 17, 1955, http://search.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/148640751/FAD715FC2A70402EPQ/5?accountid=14270.

⁵⁶ DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” *Harper’s Magazine*, October 1953 in *America’s National Park System*, Lary Dilsaver, ed., 186.

⁵⁷ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 4.

⁵⁸ “Mission 66 Proposal to Eisenhower Cabinet,” in *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*, Lary Dilsaver, ed., 194.

⁵⁹ “Decline of the Parks,” *New York Times* (1923-Current Files), Nov 24, 1953, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/112739774?accountid=14270>.

parks more attractive and more accessible than ever before. A booming economy, growth of the middle class, relaxation of wartime automobile and highway travel restrictions, large spikes in birth rates, and a surge in nationalism made national parks more desirable to Americans than ever before. However, the national parks were falling far behind and failed to reflect the rapidly changing conditions converging in the nation outside the NPS.

Appointed NPS Director in 1951, Conrad Wirth was determined to rectify the NPS's negative public image in the United States. In 1955 Wirth reported that the system received 50 million visitors and projected that by 1966, 80 million would flood the national parks. And yet, the system was only capable of accommodating 25 million. Earlier in 1955, Wirth organized a working group to assess the issues of the national parks and tailor effective solutions to solve them. While the financial particulars of the "Mission 66" initiative were undisclosed for several more months, Wirth previewed his vision for the NPS that he hoped would be achieved by the agency's fiftieth anniversary in 1966.⁶⁰ Later that September, NPS officials met in Tennessee at Great Smokey Mountain National Park to discuss the agency's future.⁶¹ By year's end, Wirth had circulated the goals of Mission 66 within the agency and national media outlets. It was designed to improve interpretation, make for better and more visitor accommodations, expand highway accessibility to the parks, construct housing for park employees, and "give the American people a park system adequate in all ways

⁶⁰ Sydney Gruson, Special to *The New York Times*, "U.S. PARK STUDY STRESSES NEEDS: Report on Expansion Plans Examined by Government Experts at Meeting," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, September 21, 1955, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/docview/113210357?accountid=14270>.

⁶¹ Sydney Gruson, Special to *The New York Times*, "U.S. PARK SERVICE PLANS EXPANSION: Conference to Study Details of Program – Overuse of Facilities Emphasized," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, September 20, 1955, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/113240360?accountid=14270>.

necessary for their enjoyment and inspiration.”⁶² In order for Mission 66 to be set into motion, however, Wirth would have to convince Congress that appropriating an unprecedented amount of money to the NPS was necessary and worthwhile.

On January 27, 1956, Wirth presented Mission 66 to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s administration as a moral imperative. Invoking Yellowstone’s legacy as the world’s first national park, Wirth reminded his audience that “National Parks are an American idea.”⁶³ National parks, to Wirth, were indispensable places of positive nationalism, democracy, and symbols of the United States writ large. Mission 66 cost over a billion dollars by the program’s end, but said Wirth, the national parks were priceless American assets. “To put the National Parks in shape,” he argued, “is an investment in the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of Americans as individuals... It is an investment in good citizenship.”⁶⁴ Most importantly, “Pride in their Government, love of the land, and faith in the American Tradition – these are the real products of our national parks.”⁶⁵ Wirth secured congressional ideological and financial support by reifying American democracy as national parks to begin the NPS’s unprecedented spatial and agential expansion to meet its mission. But more importantly, Mission 66 helped to make the NPS a powerful system that could accommodate, match, and shape the postwar American sense of place and nationhood.

The NPS’s domestic physical expansion conveyed symbolic meanings about the United States as it embarked on its own redefinition of the American state in the postwar

⁶² John B. Oakes, “Conservation: Ten-Year Park Plan,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), December 4, 1955, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/docview/113384782?accountid=14270>.

⁶³ “Mission 66 Special Presentation to President Eisenhower and the Cabinet by Director Conrad Wirth”; reproduced in Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Parks*, 193.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

period. To understand this point, we need to be reminded that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, national parks served as symbols of democracy and national legitimacy among the international community. National park spaces within the United States thus operated as implicit places of power of the growing nation-state and their own construction resembled larger processes related to nation-building. Geographers Lary Dilsaver and William Wyckoff explore this idea, wherein they argue that the establishment of national parks in the United States throughout NPS history was akin to the creation of modern nation-states. The delineation and settlement of national park boundaries in the name of the federal government, show Dilsaver and Wyckoff, was an example of land as a “contested terrain.”⁶⁶ This analysis extends most pointedly to the NPS in the Mission 66 years, as it literally designated and shaped the American landscape to reflect contemporary domestic politics and a renewed postwar nationalism. Mission 66, in essence, improved existing NPS spaces and carved out 70 new national parks to reflect and expand upon this rhetoric that serviced new definitions of American power and citizenship.⁶⁷ The NPS exerted its authority onto the American landscape; in fiscal year 1963 alone, the NPS had a net gain of nearly 50,000 acres of land and water, with growing numbers throughout the decade.⁶⁸ Shortly after 1966, the NPS acquired three million acres of land and built and rebuilt close to 3000 miles of roads.⁶⁹ Mission 66 helped facilitate the rebuilding of the American landscape

⁶⁶ Lary M. Dilsaver and William Wyckoff, “The Political Geography of National Parks,” *Pacific Historical Review* 74 (2005): 237-239.

⁶⁷ Carr, *Mission 66*, 10.

⁶⁹ David A. Adams, *Renewable Resource Policy: The Legal-Institutional Foundations* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993), 201.

to accommodate the NPS's own kind of civilizing mission at home during a period of rapidly changing national politics shaped by the Cold War.

Thus, Mission 66 is important to understanding the state of the NPS before it considered establishing the Division of International Cooperation in 1961. To adapt to the challenges of the postwar period, Wirth skillfully crafted his argument for renewed support from the United States in exchange for the indispensable democratic and civic values the NPS claimed to impart to American citizens. The agency's experience at home during this period of reinvention and nation-building re-established its legitimacy in powerful ways in the United States. This experience served as the basis for the NPS's self-inflected authority to extend these values overseas. Ultimately, this powerful nationalist and democratic rhetoric that the NPS employed to rebuild the nation during Mission 66 proved to be not just a powerful force at home. U.S. leaders depended looked to the NPS's rhetoric of democracy and civic morality in its containment policies overseas during the pressures and global anxieties of the Cold War period.

NPS Division of International Affairs (DIA)

The DIA was established by the NPS amidst Western attempts to foster global unity in response to the aftermath of the most devastating war in human history. These efforts, in part, took the form of several multinational organizations dedicated to forging international cooperation. Most notably, the United Nations (UN) was established in 1945 with four main goals: (1) to create "international peace and security; (2) establish "friendly relations" and "strengthen universal peace"; (3) "achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character"; (4) and create a sense

of community among nations to achieve the aforementioned goals.⁷⁰ Specifically, international organizations were instituted to address specific global issues, such as environmental and cultural conservation. British biologist Julian S. Huxley, for example, established the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 1945.⁷¹ In 1948 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) was established with the help of the United States.⁷² It quickly became the largest and most renowned international organization dedicated to protecting global areas by fostering a “transnational dialogue around protected areas through publications, sponsored exchanges, and a series of world conferences on the National Parks.”⁷³ UNESCO scholar Poul Duedahl writes that this overall fervor for global unity was an attempt to eschew Eurocentric views to adapt to the postcolonial period, but ultimately:

universalism and the notion of “one world” or a standardized “world civilization” came to overshadow the idea of cultural diversity as the foundation of postwar intergovernmental relations.⁷⁴

It is important to understand that the NPS’s considerations for international engagement stemmed from a similar concern for international unity in addition to worldwide political and governmental rebuilding in the wake of World War II.

⁷⁰ United Nations, “Chapter I: Purposes and Principles, Article I,” in *Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Court of Justice*, 1945, accessed April 3, 2016, www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/.

⁷¹ For a detailed analysis of UNESCO’s founding, see Christopher E.M. Pearson, *Designing UNESCO: Art, Architecture and International Politics at Mid-Century* (Surrey, England; Ashgate, 2010).

⁷² Peter H. Stott, “The World Heritage Convention and the National Park Service, 1962-1972,” *The George Wright Forum* 28, no. 3 (2011): 280.

⁷³ Turner, “Rethinking American Exceptionalism,” 292.

⁷⁴ Poul Duedahl, “Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1976,” *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (March 2011): 103.

The NPS's growth in visibility and authority during the Mission 66 years drew attention not just at home, but from international audiences as well. In his 1961 Annual Report, Wirth reported that the NPS received over a thousand overseas letters and about 600 requests for NPS assistance in 1960.⁷⁵ Two years later, as Mission 66 neared its completion, U.S. national parks received 2.5 million international visitors from 92 countries and over 2000 letters with queries on the NPS and its ability to perform technical assistance projects overseas.⁷⁶ The attention that the NPS received from the international stage sparked the interest of NPS officials in the early 1960s, and it began to peer over its national container with more curiosity than ever before.

Aware of the growing interest from overseas organizations, the NPS initiated conversations about establishing an international cooperative sub-division in May 1960. While the exact origin of this conversation remains unclear, it appears that Frank E. Masland, Jr. suggested that Wirth consider the NPS in an international light. Wirth was intrigued and agreed to give it some thought, but was concerned about budget constraints.⁷⁷ Later that June, Acting Director Hillory A. Tolson determined that establishing such a cooperative would require a \$400,000 budget for five years of operating costs.⁷⁸ By March 1961, Wirth expressed more support for international cooperation in the agency. He referenced Interior

⁷⁵Conrad L. Wirth, "Annual Report of the Director National Park Service to the Secretary of the Interior," (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 285, <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofdi5863nati>.

⁷⁶ Conrad Wirth, "Annual Report of the Director National Park Service to the Secretary of the Interior," (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 118, <https://archive.org/stream/annualreportofdi5863nati#page/118/mode/2up/>.

⁷⁷ Letter of Conrad Wirth to F.E. Masland, Jr., May 5, 1960, in "L66, 1-1-60, Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁷⁸ Letter of Hillory A. Tolson to Thomas F. Flynn, Jr., June 15, 1960 in "L66, 1-1-60, Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79.

Secretary Lane's May 1918 letter to Mather that argued for international cooperation as a vital part of the NPS mission. This precedent, in tandem with the foreign policy goals of the newly inaugurated Kennedy administration, armed Wirth with the rhetoric to consider the idea more seriously. Wirth envisioned this initiative and cited that "in the words of President Kennedy, we should make a beginning. I want the office to start on the basis of being something else expect a place to answer correspondence which comes to us." He assigned George C. Ruhle to establish the office immediately, for he felt that the NPS was "far behind," and he wanted the NPS to "reach a position of leadership as quickly as possible."⁷⁹

Wirth's sudden change in his attitude toward an international office is a bit strange considering his initial hesitation. The answer to this mystery perhaps lies in the April 1961 Mission 66 Frontiers Conference. 1961 marked Mission 66's halfway point, and the conference was organized by the NPS to assess its effectiveness thus far. The agency also used the conference to address critiques outside the agency that the NPS was overdeveloping the land at the expense of its conservation mission.⁸⁰ To assuage these concerns, Wirth outlined a new ideological vision for the final five years of Mission 66. While he praised the success of Mission 66 in meeting the program's larger goals to expand the agency to better meet its mission, Wirth's new course of action for Mission 66's final phase was collaborative conservation at the local, state, and federal levels.

Wirth explained that the NPS needed to better adapt to the changes of the decade. In his opening remarks, Wirth outlined his vision for the future of the NPS:

⁷⁹ Letter of Conrad Wirth to George C. Ruhle, Hillory Tolson, Thompson, Beard, Mar. 17, 1961 in "L66, 1-1-60, Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁸⁰ Carr, *Mission 66*, 300.

There is one great difference between MISSION 66 of five years ago and MISSION 66 of today. We were pioneers then. Now we have the company of many others who must adjust to the challenges of the 1960's – the great population growths and movement, technological progress at an unheard of rate, new scientific discoveries, and the consequent sociological advancement that reflects our national character in this small world.⁸¹

The NPS said Wirth, needed to work with the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and other to meet these challenges. He continued:

Our National Parks can never again be islands standing isolated and lofty on the face of the Nation. What happens in National Parks results from the same pressures and changes which shape every other reserve of scenic, recreational scientific, natural, and historic value.⁸²

This new rhetoric stemmed in part from the new Kennedy administration that sought for increased collaboration among federal agencies at home in service of a more pronounced foreign policy aimed overseas.

As the NPS continued to work on the logistics of its new office, the topic of the Division of International Cooperation made one of its first appearances at the First World Parks Congress in Seattle in 1962. From June 30 – July 7, 1962, the meeting was organized by the IUCN, and co-sponsored by the NPS, UNESCO, and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to broadly discuss issues in conservation worldwide. One hundred forty-five delegates from 63 countries attended the conference, delegates that would be fundamental in creating the World Heritage Convention of 1972.⁸³ In attendance were

⁸¹ Report of the National Park Service Mission 66 Frontiers Conference," 11, April 24-28, 1961, National Park Service; in "Miscellaneous, Conference Proceedings," Box 2780, RG 79.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Stott, "The World Heritage Convention and the National Park Service, 1962-1972," 280.

Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall and Wirth on behalf of the United States and the NPS, both who gave opening remarks at the Congress. In his keynote address, Udall identified that conservation agencies of the world needed to adapt the challenges of the period such as rapid changes in technology and a massive growth of population. To begin to address these issues, Udall argued that the delegates at the Congress needed to “establish here a Common Market of conservation knowledge which will enable us to achieve our highest goals and broadest purposes.”⁸⁴ While each nation had a different set of goals and perspectives, Udall explained that “we are bound together by the universal challenge to honor, dedicate, and maintain significant natural areas around the globe.”⁸⁵ Udall linked his claim of the universality of national parks to the U.S.’s leadership in the NPS’s new division dedicated to international work. He explained that its operations would increase in the coming years to both teach and learn from other nations. He warned that each nation should have some form of a national park because “each nation has pioneering work to do; each has something to teach – and much to learn.”⁸⁶ The DIA sought audiences to teach about its national park model as it linked its mission to larger foreign policy issues – primarily containment.

However, this was also a reciprocal relationship. The State Department, for example, recruited the NPS by way of its initiatives to teach people overseas, particularly in the Eastern bloc, about American values via national parks. The State Department requested that the NPS send informational pamphlets translated into French, German, Spanish, and Russian

⁸⁴ Alexander B. Adams, ed., *First World Conference on National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 3, <https://ia600308.us.archive.org/15/items/firstworldconfer00adam/firstworldconfer00adam.pdf>

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

describing some of its key parks. In December 1961 Assistant NPS Director Daniel D. Beard responded to a request from Frank G. Siscoe, Director of the State Department's Soviet and Eastern European Exchanges Staff, for a Russian-language copies of the pamphlet *Independence*. *Independence* described the history of Independence National Historical Park, and Beard noted a need for other pamphlets that explained key American historical sites such as Hyde Park and the Statue of Liberty.⁸⁷ Chosen for their symbols of American democracy and perceived exceptionalism, these sites served as propaganda tools in the Soviet Union and other locations that threatened American values. National park sites, particularly the ones cited here, served important purposes in the narrative of democratic traditions that the U.S. sought to impart overseas.

These types of materials circulated elsewhere as well. Thomas J. Mulvehill, Director of the U.S. Information Center "Amerika Haus" centered in Germany, toured around Germany throughout 1961 giving presentations on American national parks. In contact with the DOI and the NPS, Mulvehill received several dozen Kodachrome slides from DIA Chief George C. Ruhle. Mulvehill used these photographs to teach Germans of the type of conservation work that the NPS did. Furthermore, Mulvehill suggested to the DOI that it organize a "National Parks Tour" of sorts at a discounted rate for cultural exchange purposes.⁸⁸ While evidence suggests that a program specific to Germany was created, the

⁸⁷ Letter of Frank G. Siscoe to Conrad Wirth, Oct. 31, 1961 in "L66, 1-1-60 Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79; "Letter of Daniel D. Beard to Frank G. Siscoe, Dec. 1, 1961 in "L66, 1-1-60, "Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79.

⁸⁸ Letter of Thomas J. Mulvehill to Director of Information, Department of the Interior, June 15, 1961 in "L66, 1-1-60 Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79; Letter of George C. Ruhle to Thomas J. Mulvehill, Sep. 25, 1961 in "L66, 1-1-60, "Cooperation with Foreign Agencies," Box 2170, RG 79.

NPS developed similar programs that invited overseas professionals to the United States to learn about the NPS system.

Overseas officials visited national parks throughout NPS history, but not until the early Cold War years did the NPS take a more pronounced interest in organizing these visits. In 1950 Mervyn Cowie of the Royal National Parks of Kenya embarked on a two-month visit of U.S. parks, a trip planned extensively by the NPS and the State Department.⁸⁹ Beginning in 1965, the DIA established the International Seminar on the Administration of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves, which concluded in the early 1990s. Its first director Robert Milne remarked later that it ““trained almost every national park system director in the world.””⁹⁰ While the DIA worked in tandem with established park officials from around the world, it also defined international cooperation as connecting with future young leaders to interest them in building national parks in their respective nations.

The African Student Program

Among one of the DIA’s earliest initiatives was creating programs that trained international visitors national park management at U.S. national park sites. In March 1954 USAID and the DOI drafted a “pursuant” agreement to what became the African Student Program in 1961. Organized by the DIA, the program annually selected a handful of African students attending American universities to tour western U.S. national parks in the west and train them in park management. Under the terms of the agreement, USAID would reimburse the DOI for the money it disbursed to students for travel and other related expenses. This financial investment was particularly important to the U.S. government, particularly in 1960.

⁸⁹ Dilsaver and Young, “Collecting and Diffusing “the World’s Best Thought,”” 272.

⁹⁰ Stott, “The World Heritage Convention and the National Park Service, 1962-1972,” 282.

Internationally, 1960 was known as the “Year of Africa” because seventeen African nations became independent from various European colonial powers. Among other initiatives, the U.S. recruited USAID and the NPS to promote the success and morality of American democracy overseas to deter emerging African governments from aligning ideologically with the Soviet Union. Thus, the perceived impending threat of Communism informed the DOI’s creation of the African Student Program. The NPS, along with other federal agencies, participated in what they saw to be the biggest investment of all – the moral investment of African students and the future democratic trajectory of their respective nations. The DIA played an important role in teaching African students about the democracy and morality of the United States through a tour of U.S. national parks.

Frank Masland, who was the first to pitch the idea of the DIA, articulated that African students could not be introduced to the industrial and capitalistic might of the United States without also being exposed to the NPS. For Masland, “The two encompass those factors that have made American what it is – development of the material and the appreciation of the spiritual.” Just as Wirth had stressed the economic and spiritual value of the NPS throughout the Mission 66 years at home to garner federal support, so too did the NPS stress this value to overseas visitors. Masland continued that international students needed to come away from the national parks knowing that “economic benefits are a by-product of spiritual values.” By inviting African students to spend time in American lands, the DIA sought to convince these visitors of the applicability of the democratic values of American national parks in their respective native countries.⁹¹

⁹¹ Letter of Frank Masland to L.F. Cook, Jul. 21, 1961, in “66 1 -1 -62” Africa 12-31-63,” Box 2172, RG 79.

The DIA's attempt to emphasize the spiritual values of the national parks was an effort to counter Soviet anti-American propaganda that portrayed the United States as greedy and capitalistic. Masland argued that the NPS should play a role in crafting the American image "even where the curtain has dropped." He mused that this was a challenge, however, because "Students from these underdeveloped lands for some strange reason resent Western propaganda more than they do Soviet propaganda." Even so, he contended that a "National Park Service Foreign Student Summer Program" would not be "resented even by those most allergic to propaganda."⁹² The DIA participated in these initiatives because the NPS was just as concerned as other federal institutions with counteracting negative images of the United States. The NPS did so by ensuring that international visitors directly encountered American ideas and people within U.S. borders to emphasize the American rather than the Soviet system.

As Wirth orchestrated the rhetoric behind Mission 66 in 1956, he articulated to the federal government that national parks were an "investment in good citizenship." Likewise, the NPS chose to bring African students to specific parks that conveyed particular meanings of the U.S. The NPS selected natural parks situated exclusively in the western United States. The NPS first organized the national park tour to begin at Yellowstone, as it symbolized American supremacy as the world's first national park. The American West had long been seen as a space that conveyed American power. At the height of World War I, for example, the "See America First" campaign encouraged visitors to explore natural landscapes of the American West, such as Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, because they "reinforced the

⁹² Letter of Frank Masland to George C. Ruhle, Aug. 2, 1961, in "'66 1 -1 -62' Africa 12-31-63," Box 2172, RG 79.

central ideology” of the “physical proof” of a growing American empire.⁹³ Similarly, the NPS African Student Program fell within this tradition to teach students that the progress and morality of the U.S. were tied to the West.

While the program was designed to teach students about park management, NPS employees also exposed students to representative staples of American life. At the trip’s end, students wrote reports of their reactions to these parks, American life, and culture. Irabo Uzebu of Nigeria explained that many non-American students had written essays on the “American personality,” which he observed to be an overarching monolithic definition for all Americans. However, he noted that once he encountered the one and a half million visitors in Yellowstone, those generalizations could no longer stand up because “the American in Ohio is different from the American in New York, Massachusetts, Arizona, Mississippi, or California.” The NPS perceived the shift in Uzebu’s thinking as a success story because it debunked negative American stereotypes.

The African Student Program also introduced students to the contemporary American racial narrative, specifically that regarding Native Americans. Uzebu provided some of the most detailed information on his view of Native Americans in his account, in which he recalled that his visit to reservations “refutes the idea that there has been an attempt to exterminate the Indians as the Afrikaners and the Portuguese are doing to the Africans in South Africa and Angola respectively.” He also said that it “disproves the information that the Indians were forcibly pushed into arid, infertile and good-for-nothing uphills.” While he noted that there was a separation between whites and Native Americans, he reasoned that

⁹³ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 35.

assimilation would solve the issue of separation as well as “instill undiluted national feelings into the Indians.”⁹⁴ In much the same way that historian Mary Dudziak explained that the United States tried to shape a positive narrative of American race relations abroad to counter the images of the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement at home, so too did the NPS and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in these trips seek to show international visitors the perceived fallacy of a negative racial narrative at home.⁹⁵

In addition to shaping these students’ perceptions of the United States, the African Student Program also emphasized the moral, universal, and democratic applicability of national parks overseas. One student surmised from his 1962 trip that the four terms that best explained the national parks were its “relative importance to the society, its objectivity, its value, and its universality.” He later wondered about the extensive costs to manage the parks, but concluded that “the value of the national parks can never be computed in the terms of dollars.”⁹⁶ The NPS imposed upon students the idea that parks were invaluable and could be of use in nations other than the United States.

Students also reflected on the lessons that they would take with them to the developing nations of their continent. Morefe Obele of Nigeria wrote that the program in the American West not only taught him about the American landscape, but it also made him consider “the preservation of our wildlife for the benefit of posterity.” Uzebu echoed the program’s success and wrote that, “the impression I have formed about America [...] will be

⁹⁴ Ibid; Alois M. Bera, “African Students’ Program,” 1962, in “L66 From 1-1-62 Pt. 1 AFRICA 12-31-62,” Box 2172, RG 79.

⁹⁵ See Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁹⁶ Unknown, “African Students’ Program,” 1962, in “L66 From 1-1-62 Pt. 1 AFRICA 12-31-62,” Box 2172, RG 79.

of immense benefit to my people and the Americans with whom I shall come in contact in and outside this country.” The unknown student who documented the four pillars of national parks further he met a historian who explained Yellowstone’s history as one free from the greed of humankind. Rather, Yellowstone was “offered [...] as a place which will be used for the benefit of all the people.”⁹⁷ The NPS made a concerted effort to stress the universality of the national parks within American shores as model that could and should be replicated on a global scale.

How the NPS used its parks in service of the African Student Program is an interesting commentary on its place in the United States during the Cold War and the rise in racial tensions on the home front. While more research demands to be done on the implications of the African Student Program, particularly during the Civil Rights Movement, this shows that the NPS was very much implicated in crafting constructions of race and the United States through the national parks. Not only would the NPS participate in constructing an idealized American image at home, but it also actively participated in bring definitions of the United States overseas through technical assistance projects overseas.

NPS Leaves for Jordan with Twelve Men and USAID Dollars

A final example of the NPS’s involvement in overseas nation-building concerns Jordan. In 1965 the DIA and USAID began negotiations with the state of Jordan to develop several historic sites. Just a year shy from the completion of Mission 66, the NPS was almost completed with its own domestic-nation building project. At this point, the NPS began to directly propel the Mission 66 format abroad. Its claims of experience in park management,

⁹⁷ Ibid.; Alois M. Bera, “African Students’ Program,” 1962, in “L66 From 1-1-62 Pt. 1 AFRICA 12-31-62,” Box 2172, RG 79.

the inventor of the national park idea, and the world's leader substantiated its ability to develop places like Jordan. The NPS was also increasingly visible on the world stage, particularly after the First World Conference on National Parks was held in Seattle between June 30 and July 7, 1962. President Kennedy submitted a letter to all of the delegates in which he wrote, "Growth and development of national park and reserve programs throughout the world are important to the welfare of the people of every nation."⁹⁸ The NPS contended its authority overseas in its overseas projects.

On April 25, 1965, *The New York Times* reported that Jordan was the first nation in the Middle East to institute a system of national parks. Jordan set aside four parks designated as sites to promote tourism within its country, a large-scale project funded by USAID and advised by Joseph Jaeger Jr., a NPS park aide in Missouri.⁹⁹ Initial work in Jordan required building a system of roads that connected parks. The roads and the nation's system of national parks were attempts to invite nationals and overseas visitors to access a modernized Jordan.

The NPS sought to modernize Jordan through tourism development, but also through the infusion of the nation, democracy, and the government into Jordan's physical landscape. When Wirth presented his idea for Mission 66 to Eisenhower in 1956, he articulated the links between the nation and the government into deteriorating parks. Short of a decade later, USAID asserted in its agreement that, "The United States has a prime interest

⁹⁸ John F. Kennedy, "Letter to delegates of the First World Conference on National Parks," *First World Conference on National Parks*, ed. Alexander B. Adams (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1962), <https://archive.org/stream/firstworldconfer00adam#page/n5/mode/2up>.

⁹⁹ Nancy L. Ross, "Accent on Modern Tourism in Modern Jordan," *New York Times*, April 25, 1965, search.proquest.com/docview/11672710/abstract/C715F5905E4B4774PQ/1?accountid=14270.

in the character of the institution these countries build, and in the attitudes, skills, and well-being of their people, for these are the factors which will determine the nature of their developing societies.”¹⁰⁰ It was important to the USAID, through the assistance of the NPS, to shape that democratic narrative overseas. By being present for the physical buildup of historic sites in Jordan, the NPS as a representative of the U.S. government could actively construct Jordan in its image.

The NPS project in Jordan was modeled after its own rebuilding process during the Mission 66 years. USAID, the State Department, and the Jordanian government organized a program to develop six historic sites, as well as train Jordanian personnel to run these parks following American departure from Jordan in 1968. Qumran, the site of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the ancient cities of Petra and Jericho, the early Roman cities Samaria and Jarash, and several sites in the capital city of Amman were selected to be developed with the assistance of the twelve-man NPS personnel. To ensure that the project was properly led, the NPS set out to recruit a parks adviser to not only guide the project, but to serve as Director to the Jordanian government and provide training to Jordanians in best practices.¹⁰¹ Twelve team members, including the chief of party, supervisory archaeologist, ruins rehabilitation specialist, supervisor architect, and park planner were selected to travel to Jordan. The NPS also recruited an engineer, architectural draftsmen, supervisory work foreman, interpretive

¹⁰⁰ “Mobilizing U.S. Government Resources in Support of Foreign Assistance: A.I.D. Policy Statement,” Office of Technical Cooperation and Research, Office of Management Planning, Department of State, August 12, 1964 in “L66 1-1-64 Pt. 1 International Cooperation Yr. 12-31-65,” Box 2171, RG 79.

¹⁰¹ Letter of Assistant Director Theodor R. Swem to Washington Office and All Field Offices, May 6, 1966, in “L66 1-1-65 to December 31, 1965 JORDAN,” Box 2180, RG 79.

specialist, and an administrative assistant.¹⁰² These positions and the tasks behind them were reminiscent of NPS positions within the United States.

Jordanian officials were not only exposed to Americans through the NPS from an institutional standpoint, but from the context of familial life as well. NPS team members brought their wives and children with them to Jordan for the two-year project, where their children attended an American school in Amman.¹⁰³ Several historians have examined the postwar period through the lens of the family and the ways in which U.S. foreign policy used images of American family life to advance American ideals abroad. The nuclear family as the stronghold of American life and society served as a symbol of the best that America had to offer.¹⁰⁴ Director John Funari of the American embassy in Amman wrote to NPS Director George B. Hartzog towards the completion of the project in late 1968 and said, “I must also mention to you the very significant impact that the members of the Team, their wives, and children have made as Americans. Each in their own way and pursuing their own interests have demonstrated those values of American society of which we are most proud.”¹⁰⁵

The NPS “Team,” as it was known, contributed to the modernization of the Jordanian nation, most pointedly visible in its development of a Master Plan for Petra National Park. Released in June 1968, the Master Plan was a model in best practices in the “use,

¹⁰² Letter of Assistant Director of Cooperative Activities C.P. Montgomery to Director of Agency for International Development, June 1, 1966 in “L66 1-1-66 to 12-31-67 JORDAN,” Box 2180, RG 79.

¹⁰³ “Information for Potential Assignees to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (U.S. A.I.D. Project),” “Enclosure to Informational Memorandum of May 6, 1966, Subject: Park Adviser Sought for Government of Jordan,” in “L66 1-1-65 to December 31, 1965 JORDAN,” Box 2180, RG 79.

¹⁰⁴ Donna Alvah, *Unofficial Ambassadors: American Military Families Overseas and the Cold War, 1946-1965* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 2-3.

¹⁰⁵ Letter of John Funari to George B. Hartzog, November 21, 1968, in “L66-1-1-68 Pt. 1 Jordan,” Box 2180 RG 79.

development, interpretation, protection, and general administration” of Petra.¹⁰⁶ It offered solutions so that the Jordanian government could manage the park in the future, including restructuring park boundaries and resettling groups located in park areas. The Plan was structured almost exclusively based off of the Park Service model. The jurisdiction that the Park Service had in Jordan signaled the strength of the NPS overseas in how it asserted its authority in how the physical boundaries should be reshaped. The Mission 66 project that started more than a decade earlier left American shores to develop identical plans overseas.

The DIA’s work at the height of the Cold War made the NPS a more visible institution worldwide. The DIA was in fact the agency’s response to an unprecedented growth in visibility and urgency in the NPS mission. I have demonstrated how the DIA played an important role in foreign policy when it extended its mission overseas. It is an important story, particularly for imagining how the NPS can remain relevant in the future. During this period, the NPS redefined its authority in clever ways that allowed it to adapt to the challenges it faced within its own agency and the nation. While more research should apply a critical lens to this history, it demonstrates an important precedent to how the NPS redefined the purpose and necessity of its agency. That it is an untold story, however, creates challenges, and therefore I address the mystery of how this history became lost in institutional memory in the following section. In 1987, the DIA was renamed the Office of International Affairs (OIA). Through the 1980s and 1990s, the OIA deescalated much of its work due to decentralization within the agency and the federal government as well as lower funding levels. While the DIA defined international cooperation at the time of its founding as teaching initiatives about the supremacy of its agency, I discuss in the next two sections how

¹⁰⁶ *Master Plan for the Protection & Use of Petra National Park*, United States Agency for International Development, 1962, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pbaaa709.pdf.

the OIA can redefine its goals to be more inclusive of multiple perspectives and reciprocal collaboration among international visitors, groups, and various stakeholders.

CHAPTER 3

THE STATE OF THE NPS OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (OIA)

Introduction

The DIA was engaged in and led an international discourse about conservation throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This conversation, whether at global national parks conferences, on-the-ground NPS projects overseas, or training programs on U.S. soil, typically focused on environmental rather than historic preservation. This trend rings true today. Most of the international requests that today's NPS Office of International Affairs (OIA) receives are environmentally focused.¹⁰⁷ However, the work of the DIA throughout the last several decades has taken on more of a cultural bent. This is particularly evident in the DIA's participation in the World Heritage Convention on and off since 1972. The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, an NPS-led initiative, created a further climate of concern for cultural park sites important to American history. It also emerged in a similar impulse overseas to document forge a global heritage. While the concern for environmental conservation has tended to overshadow cultural heritage within the NPS and the DIA, it has flourished in other ways.

This section tells the story of the most recent decades of the NPS's international work. The DIA thrived in the post-World War II period, as it engaged with multiple organizations at home and overseas to meet the mission of the NPS. It was later renamed the Office of International Affairs (OIA) in 1987, which offered some more legitimacy to this NPS subgroup as it became more involved with larger policy issues addressed by USAID,

¹⁰⁷ Within the scope of this thesis, OIA refers to the period after 1987, while the DIA refers to pre-1987.

the Peace Corps, and private development projects overseas.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, it played an influential role in the World Heritage Convention, an international initiative dedicated to nominating and identifying natural and cultural markers significant to human history.

While the OIA was significant in creating the terms of the World Heritage Convention, it has also faced significant challenges in meeting its mission in the last twenty years. The OIA was racked by a slash in NPS funding throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. At its peak, the OIA staff consisted of over twenty employees; in 2015, OIA had just six members. Many of the problems within the agency at large are true of the OIA, but the agency's attention to international affairs is a low priority considering that the NPS already struggles to receive attention from shifting presidential administrations and congressional funding appropriations even for the agency to meet its mission domestically. The OIA's visibility and authority is a far cry from the DIA at the height of the Cold War.

Despite the decline in the OIA's resources and its influence, this section aims to understand how the DIA contributed to an international discourse of world heritage. It also examines the Office's organization, various programs, and ongoing projects. This is important to understanding how the OIA functions apart from as well as within the agency. By showing how the NPS has been influential in the world heritage conversation, I further my argument that the NPS has always been deeply involved in this conversation and that this level of activity is a precedent to redirecting the OIA's work as the agency approaches its centennial.

¹⁰⁸ Stott, "The World Heritage Convention and the National Park Service: The First Two Decades, 1972-1992," *The George Wright Forum* 29, no. 1 (2012): 149.

The World Heritage Convention and the Influence of the DIA

The NPS flourished in the years leading up to 1972. President Richard Nixon authorized in July 1970 that 1972 be designated as “National Parks Centennial Year” to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the world’s first national park, Yellowstone.¹⁰⁹ To coincide with Yellowstone’s centennial, the DOI’s National Parks Centennial Commission planned the Second World Conference on National Parks at Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park from September 18-26, 1972 with over ninety nations in attendance.¹¹⁰ The Conference’s theme, “National Parks—A Heritage for a Better World,” reflected a shared value of defining national parks as a system of values that spoke to the progress of nations and collectively, humanity as a whole. It spoke to the legacy of the First Conference a decade earlier in Seattle.

This overall attempt to forge a sense of collectivism existed not just in the conversation regarding national parks, but it related to cultural landscapes as well. A convergence towards a shared global heritage was also at the forefront in the adoption of the World Heritage Convention on November 16, 1972 at the United Nations General Conference in Paris. The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, or the World Heritage Convention, was an international effort “to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal

¹⁰⁹ Public Law 91-332, July 10, 1970 in “Centennial Annual Report,” “National Parks Centennial Commission, General Files, 1970-73,” “Alumni – Commission Annual Reports,” Box 1, RG 79.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, “National Parks Centennial Bulletin No. 5,” May 24, 1971 in “Bulletins, Directives, Press Releases,” “National Parks Centennial Commission, General Files, 1970-73,” “Alumni – Commission Annual Reports,” Box 1, RG 79.

value.”¹¹¹ The treaty defined both cultural and natural heritage, created the World Heritage Fund to finance preservation projects, and created the World Heritage List, which recognizes the official sites designated important to world heritage. Initially, World Heritage was set to be just a list that identified endangered sites in a type of “Red Cross” emergency designation. While this set the framework for the idea of the World Heritage in Danger List, the Convention was designed to do more than just identify sites in dire need of conservation. This shift was largely due to the American camp lobbying to expand the breadth of the World Heritage concept. Scholar Peter H. Stott shows that the NPS and the DIA were largely responsible for drafting the criteria for the UNESCO-led initiative of the World Heritage Convention. These ideas included the coinage of the term “World Heritage,” the idea for the World Heritage List, and highlighting the importance of protecting both natural and cultural sites considered by participating nations important to world heritage.¹¹² The U.S. delegation to the first World Heritage Convention was represented, among others, by DIA Chief Chester Brown.¹¹³ Thus, the World Heritage Convention was influenced heavily by the DOI and the work of DIA officials within the NPS. Its breadth of work was once again expanded outside of U.S. boundaries to work towards establishing criteria for a truly international collaboration of sites considered to transcend political and national boundaries.

Just as in the NPS, the debate concerning the perceived tension between cultural and natural heritage sites existed in the Convention’s nomination of sites. At the 1978 World

¹¹¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,” November 16, 1972, 1, accessed April 3, 1972, <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>.

¹¹² Peter H. Stott, “The World Heritage Convention and the National Park Service, 1962-1972,” *The George Wright Forum* 28, no. 3 (2011): 279.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 287.

Heritage Committee in Washington, the first sites were placed on the List. At the fourth meeting in Paris in 1980, there was an evident imbalance of natural and cultural properties on the List. In response, the U.S. delegation to the Convention pushed for an addendum to the Convention's *Operation Guidelines* to ensure an attempt at balancing the types of sites represented on the List.¹¹⁴ This balance has not always been maintained, however. As of 2015, there are over 1,031 properties represented on the List from 163 State Party members. Of those, 802 are cultural and 197 natural, with 32 properties considered “mixed” for encompassing qualities of both cultural and natural sites.¹¹⁵

The World Heritage Tentative List, a list of sites proposed for installment at the following year's Convention, is drafted by individual nations and later submitted at the Convention.¹¹⁶ While there were some changes in hands of power, the NPS through the DIA handled all matters related to the Convention, including vetting those sites nominated.

Today, the OIA works with the Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks of the DOI, the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, and the Federal Interagency Panel for World Heritage, and the State Department to complete the process of nominating sites to the Tentative List and later selecting nominations to the World Heritage Committee.¹¹⁷ The OIA is primarily responsible for tracking and producing reports on the status of the 23 current

¹¹⁴ Stott, “The World Heritage Convention and the National Park Service: The First Two Decades, 1972-1992,” 158.

¹¹⁵ UNESCO World Heritage Convention, “World Heritage List,” accessed March 7, 2016, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>. See here for a complete list of sites for each country, organized into cultural, natural, and mixed structures.

¹¹⁶ For more information on the application and nomination process, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/nominations/>.

¹¹⁷ National Park Service Office of International Affairs and the George Wright Society on behalf of the U.S. Department of the Interior, *World Heritage in the United States of America: The U.S. Tentative List 2008* (May 2008): 4.

World Heritage sites already inscribed on the U.S. List; preparing the nominations for U.S. proposals to the List; keeping tabs on the Tentative List; and representing the DOI at the annual World Heritage Convention.¹¹⁸ The OIA is further responsible for jointly drafting a Periodic Report with Canada to report to the Convention. Under the terms of the Convention, the NPS and Parks Canada are required to submit a joint report that comments on the status of World Heritage sites for the entirety of North America. This international effort not only assesses the state of individual sites, but it further shows the extent to which the region is following the Convention's guidelines.¹¹⁹

Many of the U.S World Heritage sites are NPS sites. The List includes Independence Hall, the Statue of Liberty, Mesa Verde National Park, Yellowstone, and Yosemite National Park, just to name a few. While the OIA does very high-profile work at the international level, it also remains quite aware of the status of NPS parks even at the local level in order to report to the Convention. Thus, the OIA's purpose is even more extensive than exclusively international cooperation. It is well entrenched at the local level in order to service international needs.

Several OIA initiatives exist to bring World Heritage sites to a more accessible level. To celebrate the Convention's fortieth anniversary in 2012, the OIA produced a "Passport Commemorative Series" pamphlet, modeled after the NPS's initiative to commemorate its centennial. It highlights various World Heritage sites in the United States, with a page

¹¹⁸ NPS Office of International Affairs, "What We Do," accessed December 30, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/orgs/1955/whatwedo.htm>.

¹¹⁹ NPS Office of International Affairs, "United States World Heritage Periodic Reporting," accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/internationalcooperation/united-states-world-heritage-periodic-reporting.htm>.

dedicated to each site. It operates as a passport in which each visitor can have their booklet stamped every time they visit a World Heritage site.¹²⁰ Similar to the technical assistance program begun at the beginning of the DIA's history is the World Heritage Fellows Program. Begun in 2009, the Program invites park managers from around the world to work and learn from different World Heritage sites within the United States. Since then, about twenty park managers have been trained through this initiative.¹²¹ The OIA asserts itself as global leader in conservation through its participation in World Heritage, but it also has its hands in other initiatives that seek to foster international cooperation.

International Technical Assistance

As I previously documented, the DIA established a precedent for international cooperation with other nations through technical assistance programs. In these exchanges, other nations typically contacted the NPS for assistance in developing national park systems, building interpretive programs, and a myriad other conservation-related projects. This tradition continues today in much the same way, though shifts in priorities in the agency have changed the types and amount of work chosen by the OIA.

The purpose of international technical assistance as outlined by the NPS is to offer mutually beneficial programs to the United States and participating nations in the pursuit of exchanging knowledge in conservation issues and to offer assistance in capacity-building. International activities are designed to "Enhance the National Park Service's ability to proactively confront challenges it faces in achieving its domestic mission through increased experience and professional growth of its employees generated through participation in

¹²⁰ National Park Service, *World Heritage Sites in the United States*, (Eastern National, 2012).

¹²¹ NPS Office of International Affairs, "World Heritage Fellows Program," Accessed January. 6, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/internationalcooperation/world-heritage-fellows-program.htm/>.

internationally-related activities.”¹²² The process by which specific projects are chosen rely on a variety of factors - namely, they must align with the NPS mission. According to the OIA strategic plan, the NPS must choose projects compatible with U.S. foreign policy and adhere to existing treaty organizations.

As explained by OIA Director of World Heritage programs Jonathan Putnam, the process by which these technical exchanges are designed vary. Typically, a nation or non-governmental organization approaches the NPS or the OIA directly with a proposal for a technical assistance project. Nations also contact USAID or the State Department, and the requests are later forwarded to the OIA. Relationships are also formed with stakeholders at various international conferences. The OIA makes every effort to meet as many requests as possible, but they exclusively take on projects in which nations are able to fund their own projects due to budget constraints within the agency. By 1992 the OIA received on average 300 to 400 requests, but its resources could only be allocated to about 40 or 50.¹²³ With the exception of projects orchestrated by the U.S. State Department, projects are the primary work of each nation rather than an exclusively NPS project.¹²⁴

The OIA serves as the intermediary between other countries and the NPS by servicing projects overseas. It is aware of how each park within the agency functions in order to properly recruit and assign NPS employees to technical assistance projects overseas. The projects vary, but a majority of them have been of an environmental rather than a cultural

¹²² NPS Office of International Affairs, “Guiding Principles of NPS International Technical Assistance,” accessed January 6, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/ITA%20Principles.htm>.

¹²³ Letter of Katrin R. Baker to Monique Miller, June 3, 1992, National Park Service Office of International Affairs Archives.

¹²⁴ Jonathan Putnam, phone conversation with author, September 17, 2015.

scope. This is due in part to the NPS's fame overseas for its origins as a natural conservation entity, but Jonathan Putnam also explains that many nations have cultural ministries that separate their affairs from environmental conservation and national parks.¹²⁵

There are many different sites that the OIA has sent staff to work on within the last several decades. A large part of the work that the OIA oversees the development of master plans for various national parks in technical assistance projects. For example, the NPS jointly created an exhibit plan with the Ministry of Environment of Bulgaria for the Bulgarian Vitosha National Park in 1993. Its purpose was to design an exhibit that gave visitors a step-by-step interpretive understanding of what it would be like to climb Vitosha Mountain. In the plan, the staff drafted several visual designs that highlighted how individual spaces could be used, designed text panels for the Visitor Center exhibit, and developed the plans for the Visitor Center's physical structure and layout.¹²⁶ In other projects, Master Plans tend to be more extensive than that of the project at Vitosha National Park. In 1970 the NPS jointly created a Master Plan with India as a proposal to completely develop Borivali National Park with USAID funds.¹²⁷

Most recently, the United States NPS entered into agreement with China to completely develop a Chinese national park system. In June 2015 Chinese officials of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), along with the Chicago-based environmental think tank Paulson Institute, announced that they would jointly embark on a

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ministry of Environment, Bulgaria and the U.S. National Park Service, "Vitosha National Park: Visitor Center Exhibit Plan," (Harpers Ferry Center, 1993), NPS Office of International Affairs Archive.

¹²⁷ Weldon W. Gratton, in cooperation with Borivali National Park, "Proposed Borivali National Park: Recommendations for the Master Plan," January 1970, NPS Office of International Affairs Archive.

three-year trial project to institute national park projects throughout nine provinces.¹²⁸ The OIA and the NDRC jointly signed a document in which they agreed to cooperate in exchange through “high level workshops, study tours, training seminars, and exchange visits.”¹²⁹ This serves as an example of how the OIA forges soft diplomacy with China, as the two nations vary ideologically in a contentious global political climate.

Sister Parks Program

Another attempt to exercise “soft diplomacy” between the United States and other nations is the Sister Parks Program. This initiative is an effort to forge partnerships between U.S. and overseas parks that have a particular focus and like missions. The OIA is directly involved in facilitating and creating these relationships on-the-ground, as well as funding these projects when money is available. Over thirty Sister Parks relationships exist today with about twenty nations, including the John Muir National Historic Site’s partnership with the John Muir house in Great Britain and the Grand Canyon’s partnership with Mount Yuntai National Nature Reserve in China.¹³⁰ In 2007 Rocky Mountain National Park signed an agreement with Tatra National Parks located in Poland and Slovakia, an agreement facilitated by the State Department and the U.S. Consulates in Krakow and Bratislava. Because these

¹²⁸ Edward Wong, “With U.S. as a Model, China Envisions Network of National Parks,” *The New York Times*, June 10, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/11/world/asia/china-envisions-network-of-national-parks-with-us-as-a-model.html>.

¹²⁹ National Park Service and the National Development and Reform Commission of the People’s Republic of China, “Statement of Cooperation Between the National Park Service of the United States of America and the National Development and Reform Commission of the People’s Republic of China On National Park Management,” NPS Office of International Affairs Archive.

¹³⁰ NPS Office of International Affairs, “Making Friends Across Borders: Exploring National Park Sisterpark Relationships,” accessed January 6, 2016, http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/sisterparks/maps/sister_map.html/; NPS Office of International Affairs, “The NPS Sister Park Initiative – Alphabetical List of Arrangements by Country,” accessed January 6, 2016, http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/sisterparks/Sister_List.htm/.

partner parks share similar concerns and serve as international reserves, they communicate to bridge these issues. Their communication is facilitated by technology, as well as by physically visiting one another's parks and attending joint national conferences, such as Slovakia's "Forest Management in Tatras: Preserving Protected Areas in the Era of Climate Change."¹³¹ These partnerships are direct examples of exchanges of information that benefit both American and counterpart parks overseas.

International Volunteers in Parks Program (IVIP)

Today, not only are NPS employees sent overseas to work on assigned projects, but those interested in park management and conservation around the world participate in the United States as well. The International Volunteers in Parks Program (IVIP) invites internationals to the United States in a mutually beneficial exchange. Volunteers work in parks to learn about park management, environmental, and historic preservation. Many applicants tend to be university students and about 100 participate every year, many of whom come from Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. They are assigned to various U.S. parks to assist on projects that suit their interests and the individual needs of the parks.¹³²

For example, Minutemen Missile National Historical Park in South Dakota sponsored Russian IVIP journalism student Egor Prokofiev in 2007 to help write interpretive panels regarding the history of intercontinental ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). During his time at the park, Prokofiev researched Russian-language sources to incorporate them into his research,

¹³¹ Ben Bobowski and Vaughn Baker, "Rocky Mountain National Park's Sister Park Relationship," *The George Wright Forum* 28, no. 3 (2011): 296-297.

¹³² NPS Office of International Affairs, "Experience America's Greatest Places – Become an International Volunteer," accessed January 5, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/internationalcooperation/ivip.htm>.

as well as offered interpretive talks to audiences.¹³³ Projects such as these are beneficial to the NPS because of the overlapping and intersection perspectives that they bring to these historic sites.

While the projects are drafted and international students are recruited, much of the responsibility falls with the volunteers to make their way to the United States. Volunteers are unpaid, as well as are responsible for obtaining a visa to legally work in the U.S. The inability to fund interested volunteers makes it difficult to attract more diverse audiences, which poses additional challenges to the agency's struggles in bringing in diverse American visitors.

The State of the OIA

The Office of International Affairs manages to facilitate many of the initiatives highlighted here, but it suffers from many of the same problems that its parent agency experiences – insufficient funds, lack of energy, low prioritization and visibility within the United States and in the agency, just to name a few. But the OIA is often even a lower priority within the agency. In 2014 it was allocated just under \$900,000 out of a \$2.5 billion NPS budget.¹³⁴ Putnam and OIA Chief Stephen Morris express concern for the Office's future in a 2011 article in which they write that budget constraints make it “unlikely that the NPS efforts in the international realm will see a return anytime soon to a level of engagement similar to the height of activities during the 1960s to 1980s period[.]”¹³⁵ While NPS Director

¹³³ National Park Service Office of International Affairs, *Quarterly Bulletin*, July-September 2007, NPS Office of International Affairs Archive.

¹³⁴ Emily Yehle, “National Parks: A team of 6 takes on the world,” *E&E News*, Greenwire, August 13, 2014, www.eenews.net/stories/1060004444.

¹³⁵ Stephen Morris and Jonathan Putnam, “Linking NPS to the World: The Role of the National Park Service Office of International Affairs,” *The George Wright Forum* 28, no. 3 (2011): 261.

Jon Jarvis has expressed renewed support for the OIA, others have expressed concern for the Office's future.¹³⁶ Brent A. Mitchell surmises that the benefits of international engagement and the NPS as a whole are "underappreciated" within the United States, which has contributed to its decline since the end of the Cold War.¹³⁷

The NPS has consistently made an effort to include international engagement in some part of its work to address domestic challenges within the agency. This is perhaps most evident in the 1992 Vail Agenda. In October 1991 the NPS used its 75th Anniversary Symposium in Vail, Colorado as a springboard to evaluate its work and set a new tone for the future. In the "Statement of Condition" issued in The Vail Agenda report, the NPS indicated that "the ability of the National Park Service to achieve the most fundamental aspects of its mission has been compromised. There is a wide and discouraging gap between the Service's potential and current state, and the Service has arrived at a crossroads in its history."¹³⁸ The report outlined problems such as lack of cooperation, low morale within the agency, lack of diverse audiences, and the poor quality of its historical interpretation. It also recommended that "The National Park Service should reinforce its role as a world leader in park affairs through agreements and actions which facilitate the exchange of information, development of environmental and cultural resource preservation strategies, and protection of critical world resources."¹³⁹ Almost twenty-five years later, this recommendation has not been

¹³⁶ Ibid., 260.

¹³⁷ Brent A. Mitchell, "Projecting America's Best Ideals: International Engagement and the National Park Service," *The George Wright Forum* 28, no. 1 (2011): 7.

¹³⁸ National Park Service, *National Parks for the 21st Century: The Vail Agenda* (Montpelier: Capital City Press, 1993), 12.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 19.

implemented in a way that restores the OIA to the same level of activity in the past. There has been no action on many of the recommendations outlined in the *Vail Agenda*. Decades following Vail, the 2014 “Imperiled Promise” mirrors many of the same issues and cites a dangerous precipice on which the NPS is struggling to meet its mission, particularly within the realm of its history parks.

This lack of action needs to be taken seriously. On the very first page of the call to action at Vail, authors assert explain that the NPS “in a global context” needed to serve as “a model that can teach valuable lessons to a world increasingly concerned with environmental degradation, threats to wilderness values, and rapid cultural and historical change.”¹⁴⁰ As I have shown throughout, international engagement has operated as part of the NPS’s mission. To neglect that is to fail the overall responsibility of the NPS to the United States and arguably to the global community in which it has invested so much time.

The programs that currently exist are excellent ways to work with other countries, and it would be wise to continue to invest in them. Some might ask, “What would reinvestment do that is different from previous attempts?” Historically, some of these attempts have not lived up to their ideals. A major missing component to making international work truly successful is the incorporation of international histories related to United States history at individual parks and sites. International exchange is certainly important to infusing new and different perspectives in different parks, and technical assistance projects allow the NPS to consider how it views its mission in new ways. Yet, I see it as a vital component that international histories are infused at the local level. The high-profile work that the OIA is certainly important, but this often leaves out a vital audience that is missing out on the great

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.

work that OIA does to work internationally. Perhaps this is the route for reinvention that the NPS needs to redefine international collaboration and allows us to help facilitate this dialogue. The parks that American visit at home need to be exposed to international perspectives and histories to better understand the complexity of the American past.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARD A RESPONSIBLE MODEL FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION: EYES TOWARDS A NEW CENTURY

Introduction

The NPS has traditionally used benchmark anniversaries as opportunities to reflect on its past, assess the state of its present, and offer new trajectories for the future. These examples are numerous including the inception of Mission 66, the decision to create the Division of International Affairs, and the 1991 conference in Vail, Colorado that assessed the state of the NPS at its seventy-fifth anniversary. The NPS's upcoming August 2016 centennial is no exception. Arguably, though, the stakes are even higher as the NPS stands to "prepar[e] for a second century."¹⁴¹ While this milestone is certainly a cause for celebration, the George Wright Society advised almost a decade ago that "What needs to be at the heart of the NPS Centennial is not celebration, but *cerebration*: a rigorous and deeply penetrating process of reflection on every aspect of the national park idea."¹⁴² This thesis has been a step towards looking critically at the global origins of this "idea"

The OIA, as I explored in the previous section, is experiencing many of the same issues of its parent agency that are currently being addressed as a nod towards a second century of NPS work. Their low level of visibility within the agency is troubling, since their work often appears to be peripheral to that of the NPS. The NPS, as I showed previously, has made little use of the OIA as a tool to advance its mission at home. While the OIA's ability to do work is always reflective of the agency's capabilities, the biggest threat to the OIA's

¹⁴¹ National Park Service, "A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement," http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/PDF/C2A_2015.pdf.

¹⁴² "The National Park Service Centennial Essay Series: An Introduction," *The George Wright Forum* 24, no. 1 (2007): 6.

existence is the NPS itself. It has been received little attention from NPS officials and local parks in the last several decades. But in order for the entire agency to not just survive, but thrive, all hands need to be on deck. The National Park Service cannot exist as effectively in the future without the OIA. OIA needs to redirect its role to better understand its history and reconsider how it defines international cooperation.

I envision the future of the NPS in this final section. I create a plan in which the OIA serves as a tool to chip success, longevity, and relevancy for the audiences it serves. In order to set the foundation for what my plan is, I discuss the recent emergence of international public history projects. I look at precedents of non-NPS public history projects to establish a set of frameworks for how international collaboration can be emphasized at the local level rather than at the high-profile stakes that the OIA has traditionally serviced. My plan is one that aims to accomplish a platform which the NPS's national historical parks can participate in the work of the OIA by infusing international perspectives at the park level. This, of course, cannot always be done in every place. But opportunities, I show, do exist to make this an important part of NPS work if it is to revamp its history work as elucidated in the 2014 "Imperiled Promise" report and increase the focus of cultural parks within the National Park Service.

International Engagement and Interpretation

In 2014 a joint report by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) on behalf of the NPS identified that the state of history education within the agency was "imperiled." The oft-quoted "Imperiled Promise" report highlighted the strengths and weaknesses that challenged the agency's ability to achieve its mission within its historical sites. In response, the commissioned OAH scholars recommended several initiatives in which the NPS could

more effectively enter into dialogue with its audiences, including emphasizing the “open-endedness of the past”; the NPS’s responsibility in shaping each landscape; and using parks as a connection to understanding resources and the past outside of park boundaries, just to name a few.¹⁴³ This is an important invitation in the report where the OIA could be used as a tool to respond to these issues. Emphasizing that national parks are part of larger networks influenced by global forces is an important step in the right direction, as “Imperiled Promise,” to adopt “transboundary approaches” to understanding the past. The OIA’s work in this regard overseas demonstrates the complex ties of the Office in its work of an international scope. Why not take more of an aggressive approach to use this experience towards not only engaging the public about a new kind of American past, but to mold American citizens into the civic leaders.¹⁴⁴

Cultural institutions outside of the NPS have made similar efforts to engage their audiences in civic conversations through public history work of an international scope. One case in point was the online exhibit *Identities: Understanding Islam in a Cross-Cultural Context*, jointly created between the Museum of History and Holocaust Education (MHHE) at Kennesaw State University in Georgia and the Ben M’sik Community Museum (BMCM) at Université Hassan II Mohammedia in Casablanca, Morocco. In 2009 these organizations received a grant from the Museums Connect program, an initiative funded by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by the American

¹⁴³ Whisnant, Miller, Nash, and Thelen, “Imperiled Promise,” 27-29.

¹⁴⁴ Whisnant, Miller, Nash, and Thelen, “Imperiled Promise,” 29. Here the report looks at using history as not an emphasis on “fixed” details, but in learning to perform history well and engaging in the critical skills needed to understand the past as a dynamic process. The hope is that doing history is a way to create civically conscious citizens.

Alliance of Museums to “sponsor projects that foster civic engagement in global communities and to facilitate cross-cultural professional development in the museum field.”¹⁴⁵ *Identities* was based on the 2008 oral history project that documented the voices of Muslims living in both northwestern Georgia and the Muslim community living in the multicultural Ben M’sik community in Morocco. The purpose of this goal was to foster understanding between traditionally misunderstood Muslim groups within these individual communities by “relying upon local voices instead of assumptions and stereotypes.”¹⁴⁶

The project, however, did much more than teach encourage cross-cultural exchange at the local and international level. Its goals also encompassed fostering an understanding of public history by immersing public history students at Kennesaw State in the project, as well as Moroccan museum professionals in how new media could be used to develop a relationship to their surrounding communities.¹⁴⁷ It also served as a way to challenge museum professionals both in Morocco and the United States to create and manage international projects.

While the participants in the *Identities* project stressed that the benefits of working cross-culturally helped to accomplish several different goals in civic engagement such as fostering cultural understanding and encouraging new modes of public history outreach, there was a clear imbalance of power between the MHHE and the BMCM. Julia Brock of the MHEE laments that the facilitation of the Museums Connect program means that the United

¹⁴⁵ Catherine Lewis, Jennifer Dickey, Samir El Azhar, and Julia Brock, “Exploring *Identities*: Public History in a Cross-Cultural Context,” *The Public Historian* 34, no. 4 (November 2012): 10. For more information on the Museums Connect program, see <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/global-partnerships/museumsconnect>.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

States has better and more access to resources, which can create an imbalance of power among participants. Brock explains that measures need to be taken in these kinds of transatlantic projects that distribute power fairly.¹⁴⁸

This imbalance of power inevitably crops up in discussions within the OIA's direct position in the federal government. As a representative of the United States government, its operations and goals mirror American foreign and domestic policies according to the shifting tide of each presidential administration. This is particularly true of the OIA's participation in World Heritage sites its technical assistance projects overseas. Many scholars have critiqued the efficacy of the concept of World Heritage, as it inevitably imposes a Western framework for understanding the past on the Global South. It also creates an unequal balance of power in which the lens through which non-Westerners gaze their own historic sites is not their own. I avoided using "cooperation" to describe earlier iterations of the OIA because this implies a reciprocal exchange between two or more parties. As I have shown, however, the aim of these projects sought cooperation rather than collaboration. In this vein, archaeologists Cornelia Kleinitz, Claudia Näser, and Stefan Altekamp warn that international cultural programs are "Strategies toward heritage under such globalised conditions [often] are often as violent as their colonial predecessors."¹⁴⁹ This imbalance of power is a risk and often a consequence of pushing forward these types of initiatives.

So, how can the National Park Service conduct internationally responsible work at home and overseas? The NPS is designed to foster some kind of positive nationalism within

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁹ Cornelia Kleinitz, Claudia Näser, and Stefan Altekamp, "Global Heritage: World Apart?," *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 9, no. 3 (December 2013): 358.

the American public, so any international interpretation at home could potentially be at the mercy of a nationalistic approach. The most pressing example at the moment lies in the recent announcement that the Manhattan Project National Historical Park (MPHP) is the newest addition to the NPS. On November 10, 2015, the Department of the Interior announced an agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to establish three sites at Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and the Hanford site in the state of Washington. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell stated that the park would not only tell the story of the Americans who worked on the Manhattan Project, but that “The park will also serve as a reminder that these actions and discoveries must be handled with care, for they can have world-changing consequences.”¹⁵⁰

The park’s website was launched in November 2015, but the interpretive plan remains to be seen. When I spoke with the staff members at the OIA, they immediately pointed out this particular project, citing that Japanese officials had pushed that the American narrative of the building of the atomic bomb be sensitive to the Japanese perspective. Twenty-one experts from both Japan and the United States convened in Washington, D.C. at a scholar’s forum to discuss this initiative in hopes of achieving some sort of consensus.¹⁵¹

This type of international conversation is vital to producing a responsible interpretation of the Manhattan Project, but this scenario also evokes a visceral fear within the cultural community due to the memory of the Smithsonian Museum’s 1995 exhibition of

¹⁵⁰ Office of the Department of the Interior, “Interior and Energy Departments Formally Establish the Manhattan National Historical Park,” November 10, 2015, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-and-energy-departments-formally-establish-manhattan-project-national>.

¹⁵¹ Ralph Vartabedian, “Goal of the Manhattan Project historical park is to ‘remember and learn from’ nation’s nuclear achievements,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-nuclear-bomb-park-20151116-story.html>.

the *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Perhaps the most contentious battle of the 1990s culture wars and the public history world, the *Enola Gay* controversy erupted when the American public saw the Smithsonian's interpretation on *Enola Gay* as insensitive to American World War II veterans and the public. Historian David Thelen speculated, "I wonder whether we might find greater understanding if we emphasized, not how historians differ from others in seeking firsthand accounts and evaluating them one against another, but how our methods parallel the ways in which people in everyday life prefer firsthand to secondary accounts and evaluate differing versions of the same events."¹⁵² The NPS, in its work with Japanese scholars to address the interpretation of the Manhattan Project, took a step towards acknowledging these very real concerns that these historical positions on interpretation would focus on others than just the United States.

Now that MPHP is officially under the auspices of the NPS, it remains to be seen if any further cooperation between the United States and Japan will continue as the official interpretation is developed at each park. The *Enola Gay* case presents an important precedent for what will become of MPHP. In order to support a narrative that is international in scope, the OIA should participate in establishing ties with Japan specifically related to this project. Much like the Museums Connect program between institutions in Morocco and the United States, the OIA would do well to consider an initiative that brings American and Japanese groups in dialogue. This could include beginning an oral history project; fostering trips between scholars through the OIA's IVIP program to bring Japanese citizens to these sites to

¹⁵² David Thelen, "History after the *Enola Gay* Controversy: An Introduction," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (December 1995): 1034.

jointly work on drafting the interpretation with the NPS; and creating opportunities that demonstrate the complexity of the Manhattan Project and its legacy in human history.

A Plan to Entrench the OIA More Firmly in the NPS

As I have shown throughout, the NPS's mission is one that has global origins. The agency has rhetorically made a commitment to engaging internationally, but much remains to be done to make the OIA more visible at all levels within the agency. In NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis's directive regarding the OIA, Jarvis explained that "As the Service moves into the second century, the successful management of park resources depends increasingly upon cooperation with partners outside of U.S. borders. International engagement improves the capability of the NPS to remain a global conservation and preservation leader."¹⁵³ If this sentiment is to be successfully put into practice, a new direction for the OIA needs to be put into place.

Others have offered solutions for increasing international work within the NPS. Brent A. Mitchell suggests that current initiatives such as World Heritage, the Sister Parks Program, and the IVIP program continue, but that these are not enough to foster the kind of engagement that the NPS should be looking to do to equip the agency to fulfill its mission. Among other initiatives, Mitchell proposes a Park Corps program in which the NPS responds to conservation emergencies overseas. Mitchell further explains that the OIA should emphasize "engagement over exceptionalism" in its dealing with international organizations.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ National Park Service, "Director's Order #56: International Activities," April 2, 2011, http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/DO_56.pdf, 2.

¹⁵⁴ Mitchell, "Projecting America's Best Ideals: International Engagement and the National Park Service," 12-13.

While these are good first step towards increasing the OIA's work, I argue that the OIA should consider restructuring its Office. Currently, the OIA has only a six-member staff, only one of which has a doctorate in history and whose role is related to cultural properties designated as World Heritage sites. Recruiting more individuals into the Office that have a background in history and public historical work could significantly shift the balance between environmental and cultural work being done both in the United States and overseas. Furthermore, a balance of historically-minded staff within the Office could ensure that its history in overseas development would be critically examined to best understand its past as a singular entity as well as a tool of the U.S. federal government. The upcoming centennial is sparking many studies on NPS history, and this is the perfect opportunity for this history to move outside the Office into the mainstream agency.

Some of the most important work that has been conducted by several iterations of an international office within the NPS has been done on overseas. While this precedent raised the visibility of the Office, the NPS, and worked as a measure of soft diplomacy on behalf of the United States, many of these initiatives have been high profile projects at the international level. Now is the time to more aggressively redirect these resources stateside. This is certainly not a recommendation that the OIA become insular or disengaged from its more overtly international responsibilities. However, international engagement can and should encompass more than a tangible overseas connection. The OIA needs to strengthen its relationships with individual cultural parks within the NPS to enhance the type of interpretation and engagement that is offered at each site. This is a direct response to "Imperiled Promise." Infusing international perspectives in American national parks is a way to emphasize transnational histories and how parks are shaped by larger forces outside of

park boundaries, such as in the case of MPHP. By becoming more involved with American parks, the OIA can entrench itself and raise its visibility within the agency. Both Stephen Morris and Jonathan Putnam expressed that their work in the OIA is often seen as superfluous and unnecessary to the larger mission of the agency, which explains much of the little interagency attention to its work. By providing more resources for international engagement to the OIA at the park level, the OIA for the time being, can argue for its survival more effectively.

International perspectives may not always function at every park, nor is this a call to create them indiscriminately. When possible, however, cultural parks within the agency should exercise efforts to develop programs that emphasize an outsider's perspective. This could include stories about immigration, the global impacts of American historical events, as well as the very history of the NPS in participating internationally. This is particularly true in the case of the recent nomination of MPHP. I see the OIA staff as being vital to this process, as it holds the key to creating relationships outside of the United States. I envision that MPHP create a partnership with the OIA who can offer access to more international volunteers, archival materials to enhance this narrative, and can be a way to understand the nation outside of the parks.

In service of these initiatives, the OIA should produce more funding to sustain the IVIP program. It not only serves as a way to teach students and professionals about park management in the United States, but also brings new perspectives to the individual parks that these volunteers are assigned to. This is a direct example of steps that can be taken to shift the power balance to foster responsible and reciprocal collaboration among differing parties. And, yet, presently the majority of volunteers come from Europe, Australia, and New

Zealand. To rebalance this structure, the OIA would do well to encourage volunteers from Latin America, Asia, and Africa to participate in these programs as way to create continental balance. One way of accomplishing this is to provide stipends and assistance with visa protocols to make it more feasible to participate, since the program does not pay students for their work.

In many anniversary celebrations within the NPS since the inception of an international affairs office, many initiatives have called for renewed international cooperation. However, much of this has often been related to continuing the high-profile work overseas such as World Heritage and sponsoring technical assistance programs through the State Department and USAID. None of these initiatives have looked to engage the OIA in this role domestically to enhance interpretation in cultural parks. This may be because the DIA was born of a highly national moment, a time when overseas projects did not encourage engagement so much as they exercised a circular exchange of networks in service of modeling American exceptionalism in the national park idea. The height of the Cold War significantly created an opportunity for the NPS to grow in power domestically as it gained legitimacy to chip and fashion the world with what was thought of as a universally applicable national park model. “What could be more American or democratic than the idea of the national parks?,” was the ideological impulse behind responding to international requests to build national parks around the globe.

While the intensity of these projects has significantly declined in the last several decades, the OIA still retains some of this exceptionalist legacy in its operations by framing projects as a potential American model and example for the world. Regularly inviting international scholars and volunteers to cultural parks in service of fostering an international

interpretation potentially disrupts this power dynamic and model, which perhaps helps to explain interagency hesitancy to regularly do this kind of work.

In recent years, international volunteers and scholars have assisted in interpretive models at cultural parks. This is a step in the right direction, but these initiatives need to occur more frequently. These precedents show that it is possible to foster collaboration at the park level without compromising the agency's place as a representative of American government. Hopefully, this sits well with the agency's centennial goal to combine the "mission across parks and programs and use their collective power to leverage resources and expand our contributions to society."¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this thesis, I showed that the National Park Service DIA was born of transnational, twentieth-century moment. What we learn from this perspective is that the NPS's history is much more complicated, nuanced, and exciting once historians and the NPS move away from the mythology of Yellowstone. Unraveling the NPS from the exceptionalism of the "national park idea," in my view, does not undermine its authority then and now. In fact, I contend that my examination of the NPS DIA uncovers the agency's influence in our collective national narrative. As the agency struggles for relevancy, fights for Congressional attention and funds, and tries to convince the American public of its necessity, looking inward at this type of history shows how it successfully crafted and strengthened its intellectual and agential authority in the past. If it wants to move forward, now is the time to look inward. In the footsteps of scholars Lary Dilsaver and Terence Young, whose 2011 article is the only such scholarly piece that examines the DIA's history,

¹⁵⁵ National Park Service, "A *Call to Action*: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement," <http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/>.

my primary goal through this project was to highlight the precedents for international engagement in the NPS. These findings can potentially help the agency envision a future in which it broadens the scope of its responsibility to shape globally and culturally aware citizens. In my view, incorporating transnational histories in national parks is one way to accomplish this goal. To understand what it means to be an American in the United States is one thing; it is wholly another to think about our place as Americans in the world. The NPS is an important place to initiate an open and honest dialogue with its visitors about these questions.

Secondly, my project also extends an invitation to the NPS and interdisciplinary scholars to engage with this history. Studies on the African Student Program, training programs in the United States, and technical assistance projects can help to push this project forward. We also need to understand how international understandings of national parks shaped the NPS within the United States. This inquiry can challenge the NPS to think about how it understood its mission domestically and internationally, in the past and today. It is my hope that these questions spark conversations within the agency about its place in the United States and in the world, as it is an important part of its institutional history and memory.

As I complete this thesis, the NPS centennial celebration and the 2016 U.S. presidential election are ongoing. Today's contentious political climate makes my case for an emphasis on U.S. history in an international context even more imperative. If we are to best invest in creating educated, engaged, and empathetic citizens through the study of the past, understanding the diversity of the national park model and the systems and people of the United States can only help move the NPS and American citizens forward in positive ways.

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