

In addition to the growing awareness of the ecological, environmental dimension of wilderness—which so thoroughly contradicts reliance on so-called “scenic attractiveness” as a standard of wilderness—I would also want to know whose standards of “attractiveness” the Forest Service is purporting to apply when they conclude that this area “* * * is less attractive as wilderness * * *.” There is good research evidence accumulating to support the fact that different people perceive wilderness in very different subjective ways.¹⁵ Managers of wilderness lands—such as the personnel of the Forest Service—have one set of standards of “attractiveness.” But they cannot claim any “professional” standards on this subject, nor can anyone else. Such a judgment is strictly subjective and my testimony that I happen to find lowland forest areas (such as those in the Whitewater Creek area) exceptionally attractive as a wilderness environment is as worthy of credence as is the Forest Service denial. As a student of forestry and as a student of wilderness policy I may state that the training of a forester in no way provides him with an especial gift for deciding what is or what is not attractive as wilderness. He has the same subjective “hang-up” as everyone else and his opinion is equally colored by his other value judgments (including those concerning the desirability of timber harvest). In sum, “attractiveness” is totally irrelevant to the determination of wilderness values precisely because there is no way to be objective about attractiveness. The Forest Service may say that this area is not attractive, I may say that it is especially so—but neither of us can demonstrate the point.

That being the case, what can we fall back to as a criterion for wilderness designation? What can this subcommittee use as a basis for its decisions? While we are a long way from achieving a systematic set of factors for such judgments, we do know enough to be relatively certain of some sound, objective guiding principles.

The principles I would emphasize are two: (1) that the area have self-contained ecological and environmental integrity, and (2) that it offer a variety of opportunities for wilderness experiences for the user and be of sufficient size and such a configuration as to protect such opportunities.

The first of the points is supported by the recent Darling-Eichhorn report on “Man and Nature in the National Parks.” That report states that “* * * the only absolute administrative principle can be to consider first the ecological health of a park so that it shall endure for posterity.”¹⁶ The same point is equally applicable to the wilderness areas of the National Forests.

The need to assure “ecological health” is also closely related to the growing recognition that our National Wilderness Preservation System ought to contain a viable sample of habitats. In the state of Oregon this objective has yet to be met with regard to wilderness reserves in the Cascade Range. While several major areas of bare mountain tops have been set aside, there is a very small acreage in the great Douglas fir forests and the true-fir-mountain hemlock forest type which is now legally assured of protection in a natural state. There was at one time, a relatively large wild area of these forest types included in the Three Sisters Primitive Area to the south of Mt. Jefferson. But in the mid-fifties, in connection with the administrative review of the primitive areas of the national forests, 53,000 acres of this area were amputated, removing most of the lower-elevation forests from what was subsequently named the Three Sisters Wilderness Area. Though now a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, the Three Sisters Wilderness Area has little forested lowland.

It was to preclude this sort of administrative re-definition that the Wilderness Act provided for Congressional action on each wilderness designation. The 53,000 acre area removed from the Three Sisters area has been put under timber management and is, for the most part, no longer of value as wilderness—its value as a wilderness resource has been destroyed.

While some initial roads and timber sales have been made in the west side portion of the Mt. Jefferson area, the option still exists for the Congress to redress the balance in resource use, giving these areas wilderness status by extending the boundary.

The second point, (2), that a wilderness should offer a variety of opportunities for wilderness experiences and be of sufficient size and configuration to protect

¹⁵ See, for example: “Wilderness Perception and Use: the Example of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area,” by Robert C. Lucas, in: *Natural Resources Journal*, January, 1964, pp. 394-411.

¹⁶ *Man and Nature in the National Parks*, by F. Fraser Darling and Noel D. Eichhorn, The Conservation Foundation, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1967, p. 31.