

Preserving nature, round two

RICHARD WEST SELLARS'S INFLUENTIAL 1997 BOOK

Preserving nature in the national parks: A history has been reissued. Called “a landmark in NPS historical treatises” by Robert C. Pavlik of the Yosemite Association, the new edition is updated with a new preface and epilogue that extend the story from the 1995 NPS reorganization, where it had ended, through the January 2009 change in presidential administration.

As most *Park Science* readers will remember, *Preserving nature* traces the clash of values between traditional scenery-and-tourism management and emerging ecological management concepts in America’s national parks. In the epilogue of the new edition, retired NPS historian Sellars contrasts shortsighted and long-term management of national parks.

Sellars analyzes a variety of resource concerns, policies, and initiatives that were in favor only for a brief time owing to the changing and sometimes contradictory influences of “a presidential administration, a new Congress, the tenure of [an NPS] director or secretary of the interior,” and others. He then describes the development and impact of the Natural Resource Challenge on national park management, concluding that although “it never achieved the funding and staffing levels needed for ecologically sound management of a national park system totaling more than eighty-four million acres, the Service has institutionalized a robust natural resource management program.” Finally, Sellars assesses the Challenge as “a farsighted program of proven quality, but one that needs political and bureaucratic stability and steadfast support to survive and remain effective.” The epilogue reminds us that perpetuating the Challenge or “some future similarly aggressive science-based endeavor depends most fundamentally on how much the American public values preserved national parks—landscapes kept intact both scenically and ecologically to the extent possible.”

Reference

Sellars, R. W. 2009. *Preserving nature in the national parks: A history; with a new preface and epilogue*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

