

Park Protection Saves Areas From Private Misuse

By CLAIRE COX
United Press International
New York (UPI)—The search for more wide open spaces for recreational activities has put new emphasis on an age-old government problem—how to hang on to the playgrounds already available.

The government, which began its development of parks and other recreation areas with establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, has found itself constantly fighting off efforts to encroach on its lands.

From its inception, the park service reports, it has been threatened from time to time with uses foreign to the basic concept of preservation and public enjoyment. These uses would have damaged or destroyed the features park establishment was designed to protect, the service said.

No sooner had Yellowstone been staked out as a public preserve "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" than efforts were made to reserve some of its most spectacular areas for private use and commercial exploitation. Even today the lakes, rivers and waterfalls in the park are sought for sources of cheap power and water and entrepreneurs want to establish sports centers in some areas.

Preserve Natural Sites

The Department of Interior has had to refuse to open Joshua Tree National Monument in California to commercial mining. Glacier National Park in Montana was kept in its natural state through successful opposition to construction of a dam. A tramway proposed for Mount Rainier's Paradise Valley slope in Washington was ruled out as a potential blot on the scenery.

Strenuous efforts have been made to erect a commercial television broadcasting tower on Scotts Bluff National Monument, an historic Nebraska landmark of pioneer days.

All told, the park service administers 192 areas consisting of nearly 26.5 million acres. These include parks, monuments, military sites, battlefields, memorials, cemeteries, one seashore site, parkways, national capital parks and the Chesapeake and Ohio canal.

The number of visitors to the park service establishments is well over 50 million a year.

The park service says it is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit of all. This dedication is interpreted to include holding on to what is available as well as seeking new territories to preserve.

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