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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 9, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JIM CANNON
JIM LYNN

FROM:

JIM CONNOR *je*

SUBJECT:

U.S. Parks

The attached article from the WASHINGTON POST of August 9, 1976 was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

"Status of our project?"

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney

Attachment

Article entitled:

"Beautiful U.S. Parks in Trouble"

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jim Cannon Jim Lyon

Status of our project?

Beautiful U.S. Parks in Trouble



THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

By Phillip A. McCombs
Washington Post Staff Writer

Shenandoah National Park—Lord, it is so beautiful here! It is so blue and blue and blue—the sky. We are so lucky to have these green enormous hazy mountains that stretch out endlessly into the heart of America, to have this rich dark earth, these trees stirring in the crisp morning breeze, with only the buzz of insects and some early morning chirping birds to break the stillness . . .

The national parks carry this sort of emotional charge for so many people. Robert R. Jacobsen, the intense and soft-spoken National Park Service ranger who is Shenandoah's administrator, gets a little glistening in his eyes when he talks about the parks.

"You know, I grew up in Wyoming in the Depression year and often the only vacation we could take would be sagebrushing. We'd get tents and go out camping—so I grew up tenting as a child in Grand Teton and Yellowstone. That's when I decided to be a ranger.

"My folks moved around a lot, too, and I never had a town I could go back to and call home—only the parks, I took my family back to Teton and Yellowstone just this January, and, you know, for me it was . . . it was an emotional experience. I was going home. I knew the roads—we don't change the roads in the National Park System. I knew the turns in the roads, and the hills. I knew where things were.

"Americans are very transient, peripatetic—they're wanderers and this has been of great concern to sociologists. I really believe that the Park Service is providing roots for this country. People can take their children and their grandchildren back to the parks, and I think that people find reassurance in this at a time when cities are changing, neighborhoods are changing . . ."

This is a story about what bad

See PARKS, A14, Col. 1

By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

Shenandoah Mountains loom through the morning haze.

.. R1

THE WASHINGTON POST

Monday, August 9, 1976

Parks in Trouble, Need More Funding

PARKS, From A1

shape the national parks are in because they lack funds and personnel, but first one must say how stunning and wonderful is this scene and how affecting, even during a short visit. It's not hard to see how it has affected Jacobsen's whole life.

This is being written on Blackrock, a short distance above Big Meadows Lodge near the midpoint of the Skyline Drive. Below, for scores of miles, the Shenandoah Valley stretches, dotted with little white farmhouses and crisscrossed with greenish fields. Though the air is crisp and clear in the morning, the far hills are all muted hues of green and dark blue. Just below are banks of sharply green trees, and closer, on the rock underfoot, an empty crumpled Pall Mall pack.

The question, in a way, is whether the Pall Mall pack spoiled the view. It didn't—for most, anyway—and two days of talks with campers and personnel here in the lodge areas and on the backcountry trails didn't disclose a single serious complaint.

People were enjoying themselves tremendously. Nearly every park facility seemed clean and well maintained—no trash lying around in disturbing quantity (just a wrapper here and there), the toilets flushed and the out-houses were pleasant and freshly painted. Park rangers seemed friendly and helpful with campers. One camper said he didn't want the rangers "looking over my shoulder all the time"—raising the question of whether something might be lost, as well as gained—by hiring more personnel

from rotting timbers and siding, failing electrical apparatus, and deteriorating roofs.

- Ground cover has almost vanished in some campgrounds and erosion is a problem: Backcountry trails have, in some cases, eroded and deteriorated to a "dangerous" point.

- Only a few of the water systems in the park use disinfection apparatus and sewage systems frequently don't meet Environmental Protection Agency standards. Septic tanks are seldom pumped and some are full of sludge.

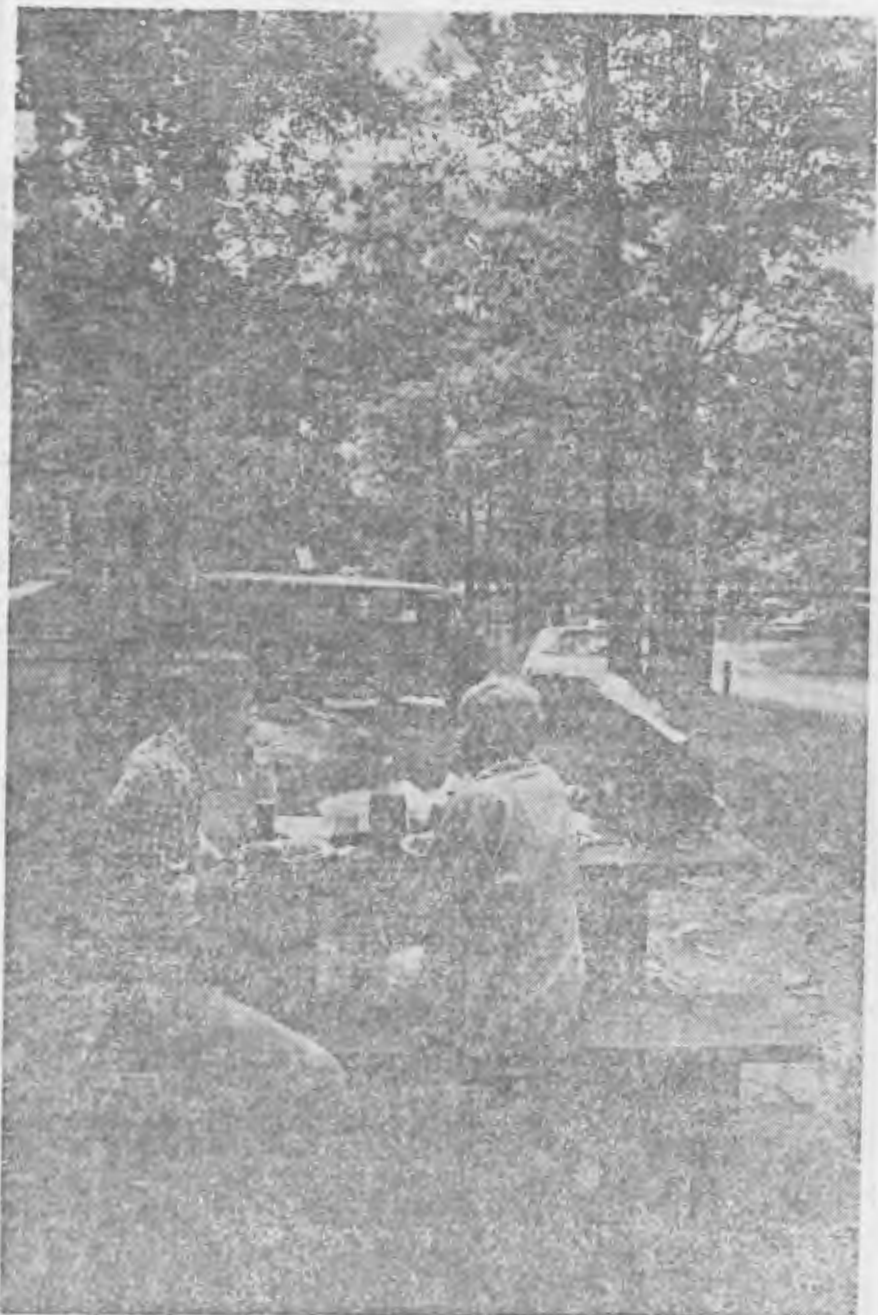
- Roads (including the Skyline Drive, which runs the length of the 105-mile-long mountain park) are not properly maintained, nor are related signs, culverts, shoulders, and guardwalls.

- Backcountry patrols are insufficient and poaching is a problem. Campground patrols stop at midnight, and there are "many complaints" about disturbances between midnight and dawn. "Crime continues to climb."

- Park concessions run by private business need review. "Rates for food and lodging are being controlled, but prices for groceries, souvenirs, etc., are questionable."

"These things indicate a disease that could strike if we don't get some relief," said Jacobsen. "We can feel the pinch, but we're not going under yet. . . ."

"You may not notice some of these things—you know, I just got back from visiting parks in the West and when I return here I'm always impressed by the tidiness of this park, but it's a tidiness due to the Eastern deciduous forest. You know leaves



By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

Al and Deb Sidell honeymoon at Big Meadows in Shenandoah National Park.

houses were pleasant and freshly painted. Park rangers seemed friendly and helpful with campers. One camper said he didn't want the rangers "looking over my shoulder all the time"—raising the question of whether something might be lost, as well as gained—by hiring more personnel.

If the eye can see much of beauty here, the story is also one of what the eye can't see. Jacobsen made it clear during an interview that if things aren't desperate yet, his park is in a sense living on borrowed time. Improvements made possible by vast sums that were poured into the park in the past are now disintegrating steadily—roads, trails, buildings, sanitary facilities.

At the same time, there is less police protection, fewer public services like guided nature hikes and information booths.

National Park officials in Washington say Shenandoah, with 2.6 million visitors last year and a \$2.5 million budget, is one of the 10 most-visited national parks in the country. Officials say Shenandoah provides "a good case study" of problems in all the nation's parks, so listen to Bob Jacobsen:

According to a report Jacobsen filed with the National Parks and Conservation Association, a private group, Shenandoah has 50 "man-years" of permanent help available and needs 128. It has 89 man-years of other than permanent, and needs 132. Its budget is \$2.5 million and should be \$4.3 million.

Jacobsen admitted that the overall situation might not be as bad as these figures imply, because the figures representing needed levels are ideals that can probably never be achieved. The report was written to "dramatize" the needs of the park, he said. "We can't say that the park is unsafe, but there are areas to improve. We can't say that the park is unmaintained, but again there can be improvements. . . ."

Among the problems:

- Most park buildings are more than 35 years old and some suffer

the pinch, but we're not going under yet. . . .

"You may not notice some of these things—you know, I just got back from visiting parks in the West and when I return here I'm always impressed by the tidiness of this park, but it's a tidiness due to the Eastern deciduous forest. You know, leaves and bushes and greenery can hide a lot. Our roadsides are mostly trimmed—it gives the appearance of good attention and (the greenery) screens some of the things that can't be hidden in other places like the West—litter, poor maintenance practices, roads that were built in the wrong places. A lot of the man-made problems of overuse tend to heal themselves so much faster in the forest."

There are 287 areas in the national park system, of which 37 are considered important enough to be designated National Parks. In the late 1950s, there was great interest in expanding and improving the system, and a large-scale development began that was known as "Mission '66"—for the 50th anniversary of the park system and the year in which the new development was to be completed.

It was completed, but by 1966 America had changed. The country was deep into the series of crises that drew so exhaustively on its spiritual and financial resources during the past decade. The country was plunged into an expensive war in Indochina. Within the Interior Department itself, of which the National Park Service is a part, priorities shifted drastically when the energy crisis hit in late 1973.

In addition, there was always inflation, growing worse as the years passed, and a dramatic increase in the number of new park areas that could only be staffed by taking personnel from established areas.

"You could see it about 10 years ago—the deterioration began," said Eugene Horstman Connally, editor of the National Parks and Conservation Association's magazine.

The association's program coordinator, Destry Jarvis, said his organization began "serious dialogues" about three years ago with the Office of



By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

Al and Deb Sidell honeymoon at Big Meadows in Shenandoah National Park.

Management and Budget about why park budgets and personnel levels were being held down. OMB is the administration agency that prepares the federal budget, allocating resources for the entire federal bureaucracy. While Congress has the final say, OMB has enormous influence.

"We were saying the parks were suffering from lack of funds and personnel," said Jarvis, "and finally OMB wrote and said, in effect, 'Prove it.'"

Jarvis' group proceeded to do that, conducting a lengthy survey of each national park and its problems. This led in turn to congressional hearings and the publication of "The Degradation of Our National Parks" by the House Committee on Governmental Operations.

This congressional report agrees with the association, stating that at a time when additional responsibilities have been imposed on the National Park Service, it has been provided with "insufficient resources" to meet them.

In the campsite near the lodge, people drive in and park where they want. The sites are close to one another. There are parking spaces, bathrooms. You can get ice and wood in a nearby building, take a shower, launder your clothes. It is \$3 a night.

A lot of people are from out of state. New York and New Jersey are heavily represented. People come very well equipped—with fancy tents and vans. Some people have signs with their names hanging in front of their vans—like "The Littles. Bel Air, Md."—as if the vans were yachts.

The atmosphere is so quiet and relaxing, it is hard to believe when you first get here. A man and a woman are standing in front of their van, kissing one another in a warm embrace. Then they lower the ventilator

hood on the van, get into it, and drive off.

The big wooden lodge room seems full of relaxed, white middle-class families. Many of the people seem to be overweight. Not a single black family in the dining room, nor, it would appear, in the park. However, there are black park rangers, busboys, cooks.

The trail just below the lodge drops for 1,000 feet down the western slopes of the mountain, and it can be followed a mile or so to Lewis Springs Falls.

Where there are switchbacks, the trail is badly eroded and the wood and rock supports have given way in places. It looks as if it would take a lot of work to repair, and that it could get worse fast. Otherwise, the trail is fine, and the falls are beautiful.

A German tourist says in a thick accent: "The parks are much bigger here than in Germany—and so much wilder. In Germany the parks have the trees—how do you say?—they are planted in rows."

A young man who works in the lodge said he liked to travel the back-country trails when he first got here but now he knows them all and it's boring.

He became interested in politics and was almost selected as a delegate to the Democratic National convention, he says. He is 20 years old. His father, he says, is a CIA man who works in a hollow mountain somewhere in Virginia. When there is nuclear war the President and other authorities will go into the hollow mountain to supervise the war.

"And here we are, sitting on this mountain," he says. "Sometimes I wonder . . . I'd like to go down into that hollow mountain and see what's there. Maybe I'd get an insight into the impending doom I feel."

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

August 13, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JIM CANNON

SUBJECT: Park Proposal



You asked about the status of the National Park Proposal:

Bob Hartmann has the speech material.

A summary of the main points of the proposal is ready (Tab A).

Legislation has been prepared and is now undergoing a final review by the Domestic Council and OMB staff.

OMB, after initially opposing the proposal on budgetary grounds, is now fully cooperating.

In sum, we will be ready to go as soon as Bob Hartmann has the opportunity to finish the speech.

DOUBLE THE NATION'S PARKLANDS
AND RECREATION AREAS

PROPOSAL: Establish a ten-year program to double America's heritage of national parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, urban parks, and historic sites, excepting Alaska.

OBJECTIVE: To double the nation's parklands, wildlife refuges and recreation areas. This new commitment will be a bicentennial gift that the American people will give to this and future generations of Americans.

BACKGROUND: Today's citizens have inherited vast and irreplaceable gifts of parks, historic sites, wildlife sanctuaries and recreation areas. The National Park Service's 287 units comprise 31.0 million acres of which 7.5 million acres are in Alaska. The Wildlife Refuge System's 378 units comprise 32.2 million acres of which 22.3 million acres are in Alaska. Yet with our nation's growth, these resources are often overcrowded and overused. At the same time many areas which would make superb parks, sanctuaries, or recreation areas are being lost forever because land values often make other uses more attractive in the short term.

The proposed initial commitment of \$1.5 billion over ten years would be a sound investment in America's priceless natural resources and avoid loss forever of an American heritage that cannot be replaced. It would mark again this nation's commitment to preserve the best of our vast and beautiful continent. It would expand permanently the natural treasures future generations of Americans will inherit before these resources are priced out of the public domain. This program does not include Alaska inasmuch as the Administration has already proposed to the Congress a major conservation initiative to protect in perpetuity 83 million acres of the public domain in that State. The President reiterates the need for Congress to act quickly on the Alaska proposals before the temporary protection afforded by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act expires in December 1978.

DESCRIPTION: Legislation will be submitted to establish a \$1.5 billion, ten-year program to:

- provide \$500 million to be used to acquire new parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas and historic sites.
- provide \$300 million to develop these new acquisitions into recreation and conservation resources ready to serve the public.
- provide \$200 million for one-shot grants to cities to upgrade present park areas in disrepair.

- provide \$100 million for upgrading and increased staffing of current system of national parks and wildlife refuges.
- provide \$400 million to develop parklands and refuges which are currently owned by the Federal government but are without the facilities needed to make them usable.

DOUBLE THE NATION'S PARKLANDS
AND RECREATION AREAS

DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS:

1. Acquisition of new parks, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and historic sites. (\$500 million immediate appropriation to remain available for ten years over and above other funds such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund).

Additions to the National Park System, \$200 million for parks, national rivers, recreation areas, and historic sites.

Additions to the National Wildlife Refuge System, \$200 million for the preservation of natural areas and habitat for migratory birds and endangered species.

Additions to the Wild and Scenic River System and the National Trails System, \$100 million. This includes a commitment to expedite the current and future studies on trails and rivers.

The National Park Service currently purchases approximately 60,000 acres annually utilizing approximately \$77 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. At this time, 559,608 additional acres and \$449,631,713 are required to acquire lands in Congressionally authorized park and recreation areas and historic sites of the National Park System. In addition, there are thousands of acres of spectacular areas that are suitable for inclusion in the National Park System.

The Fish and Wildlife Service currently acquires approximately 85,000 acres annually utilizing funds available from the Migratory Bird Conservation Account (\$19.5 million in '76) and the Land and

Water Conservation Fund (\$9.4 million in '76). At this time, approximately 5-million additional acres estimated at \$2.5 billion are necessary for the preservation of natural areas and habitat for migratory birds and endangered species.

2. Development of these new acquisitions into recreation and conservation resources ready to serve the public. (\$300 million immediate appropriation to remain available for ten years over and above existing development programs and funding for units already in the National Park and Wildlife Refuge Systems).

Such funds are generally to be used to implement park and refuge master plans, which include visitor facilities, road and trails, resource management tools, and such additional improvements as may be necessary for effective park and refuge management.

3. One-time grants to cities to upgrade present park areas in disrepair. (\$200 million for fiscal year 1977).

To be administered by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and apportioned among the major cities (utilizing the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas) on the basis of population and need with no city entitled to more than 3 percent. The President will ask the Congress for the necessary legislative authority to implement this new program well before the 1977 summer season.

4. Upgrading and increased staffing of current systems of national parks and wildlife refuges. (\$100 million for fiscal year 1977 and each year thereafter).

Upgrading -- \$80 million for rehabilitation of deteriorated facilities with \$60 million for national parks and \$20 million for wildlife refuges with preference to be given to those areas having significant public visitation.

Increased staffing -- \$20 million and approximately 1500 permanent positions with 1000 for national parks and 500 for wildlife refuges to bring the present field employment up to a level that will insure the protection of the natural resource and meet the increasing public demand.

5. Development of parklands and refuges currently in the Federal systems but without the necessary facilities for proper resource management or public use. (\$400 million immediate appropriation to remain available until expended).

National park units -- recently authorized areas at which little or no development has been provided -- \$300 million.

National wildlife refuges -- \$100 million.

The fiscal year '76 appropriation amounts to \$11.4 million for development of National Park units and \$500,000 for Wildlife Refuges.