

*In his memoir, In the Thick of It: My Life in the Sierra Club (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005; reprinted here with permission), former Sierra Club executive director Michael McCloskey offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how one of the leading environmental activist groups operates. In this excerpt, McCloskey, who served as executive director from 1969 to 1985, reflects on a critical time in the history of the organization and of the environmental movement—the late 1960s and early 1970s. For the organization, it was a difficult time of transition and transformation after its long-time executive director David Brower left in February 1969 following a dispute with the board of directors. McCloskey and the Club immediately faced unprecedented challenges in President Richard Nixon’s environmental policies and the first Earth Day while plotting a new course for the organization.*

# TAKING OVER

## AS ENVIRONMENTALISM TAKES OFF

**M**any observers in the media expected that the Sierra Club would collapse without [David] Brower. They had come to identify the Club so closely with him that they could not imagine the organization “making it” in his absence.

What ultimately saved us was the incredible growth in the Club’s membership. When I took over as acting executive director in February 1969, the Club had 79,000 members. By the end of 1971, we had 131,000. Our membership soared by 23 percent in 1969, by nearly 30 percent in 1970, and by 23 percent again in 1971. Even though revenues from book publishing collapsed for a while, revenues from membership more than doubled in these years, which kept us afloat.

The Club’s membership had been increasing throughout the 1960s, but it grew even more after Brower left. It is hard to know exactly why growth in the past had occurred. At that time, the Sierra Club did not have an organized program to solicit members. Most new members came in “over the transom”—that is, interested people wrote to us asking to join. Only a small share were solicited by existing members.

But there is no doubt that this new surge in our membership was caused in large measure by the explosion in media coverage of all things environmental in the months leading up to the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. This exploding coverage created a new market for environmentalism, and in this market, the Sierra Club was already a well-established brand. I did everything pos-

sible to keep our “brand name” before the public; we wanted to have a high profile and be mentioned in the press. We wanted to make news....

To fill the void caused by Brower’s departure, I decided that we should venerate our founder, John Muir, instead. At the bottom of our letterhead I put a quote from him that hinted at an ecological perspective: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” We began to celebrate Muir’s birthday each year and put photos of him on our walls. The officers welcomed these changes.

I worked with [Club President Phil] Berry and the executive committee to shift the Club’s program away from books and toward conservation. We started a weekly newsletter on conservation for our leaders around the country (the *National News Report*, or *NNR*). We connected our various offices by teletype machines to facilitate instant printed communication. We restyled the magazine, putting it on a regular schedule, providing more background in stories, and introducing color on a regular basis. We started a public-service advertising program to obtain free space in millions of issues of commercial magazines. In the books program, we changed the emphasis from coffee-table books to

**BY MICHAEL McCLOSKEY**

books that would be of use to activists, starting a new line of topical “battle books.”

Before long, I was no longer referred to as the chief of staff. And by the end of my first year in the job, I was no longer the “acting” executive director. I had been made the executive director. And it was just in time—because the Club was on the verge of being completely transformed.

Soon after the new board took over in 1969, it acted to quell doubts about its resolve. Acting unanimously, it proclaimed: “The Sierra Club will pursue conservation objectives without pause, with full determination, and with all of the resources at its command.” Berry and I were united in our determination that the Sierra Club was not going to retreat or shy away from controversy. We were going to seize the opportunity and meet rising public expectations.

We enmeshed ourselves in a whirlwind of activity whose breadth and pace was unlike anything before. In the first six weeks after I took over that May, the Club testified nineteen times before various committees of Congress on pending bills. We held press conferences, issued frequent statements to the press, and made speeches. Again and again, our members were urged to write to their legislators.

The Club’s Atlantic Chapter in New York invited me to its annual banquet to be introduced. Justice William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court was the guest speaker. I sat in the front row expecting a word of encouragement. After all, my first work for the Sierra Club, writing a brochure on the threatened Minam River valley of eastern Oregon, had been at his behest. He had helped conceive the idea of a field organizer in the Northwest, and I was the first to hold that job. I had known him on the Sierra Club’s board, and I had met with him once at the Double K dude ranch west of Yakima, Washington. Instead I listened to him warn the Sierra Club against “going soft” without Brower—knowing that I was now in charge and sitting in front of him. I felt let down, even insulted. His forebodings may have had more to do with the policies he anticipated from the Nixon administration, however, which had been in office only a few months.

When Richard Nixon was elected, some old hands in the conservation movement were filled with pessimism as they anticipated attacks on conservation. Stewart Brandborg of the Wilderness Society counseled us all to “circle the wagons” and hunker down defensively. He felt that the progress we had been making in the 1960s was about to end.

Nixon’s term certainly began inauspiciously. In late January, oil spewed from a broken drilling rig in the Santa Barbara channel, an area we had warned about earlier. Oil and other waste so polluted the Cuyahoga River in Ohio that it caught fire in June. Pipes were being stockpiled in Alaska to build a new oil line from the Prudhoe Bay petroleum discoveries, with little concern for the dangers posed by permafrost. And Alaska’s cheerleader for the new oil fields, Governor Walter Hickel, was to be Nixon’s new interior secretary.

But this was not what the public wanted to hear and see. Scenes of oil boiling up in the Santa Barbara channel alarmed them. When another blowout of an oil well occurred off Louisiana’s coast, Berry and I went out in a helicopter to see it firsthand and voice our concerns. When Chevron’s tankers ran aground in San Francisco Bay, we organized a picket line in front of the company’s offices, which were right across the street from ours; I simply



FROM *IN THE THICK OF IT: MY LIFE IN THE SIERRA CLUB*

*After the departure of his predecessor David Brower in 1969, Mike McCloskey was wearing three hats for the Sierra Club: conservation director, chief of staff, and acting executive director. While juggling all three positions, McCloskey worked quickly to eliminate substantial debt and rebuild a depleted staff while trying to keep the organization afloat.*

pointed out the window to show our picketers where to march.

Fearing that foxes were being enlisted to guard the henhouse, we organized a massive campaign against Hickel’s appointment as secretary of the interior. A detective we hired discovered that Hickel had oil holdings himself, giving him a direct conflict of interest, which columnist Drew Pearson quickly publicized. The confirmation fight in the Senate Interior Committee became so bruising that Hickel changed his stance and pledged to protect the environment. He changed so much that he lasted less than two years in the Nixon administration. In any case, the process of working over a nominee in this fashion became known as “Hickelizing.”

As the year progressed, we waged a spirited campaign against the National Timber Supply Bill, which I describe later in this chapter. We were also among the few groups to lend strong support to the enactment of the pathbreaking National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which committed the federal government to giving serious attention to the environment as a matter of policy. Even though I gave the lead testimony for the



*Some in the Sierra Club anticipated attacks on conservation after Richard Nixon's inauguration as president in January 1969. Yet his first term in office proved to be a watershed moment in the environmental movement: Passage of the National Environmental Policy and Clean Air Acts, celebration of the first Earth Day, creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the founding of the Natural Resources Defense Council occurred in 1970 alone.*

supporting groups before the Senate Interior Committee, I must confess that even I did not foresee the importance of its requirement that agencies document the impact of their proposals on the environment and inform the public of their findings. In future years, however, the Sierra Club would make repeated use of that provision in court.

In 1969 I also persuaded the Sierra Club to sue Walt Disney Productions and the Forest Service to stop them from developing a massive winter resort in the Sierra Nevada in what was then a wildlife refuge. In one of the first environmental lawsuits instigated as part of a coordinated campaign, we won a preliminary injunction against the project in July of that year. The case, filed by San Francisco attorney Lee Selna,<sup>1</sup> eventually reached the Supreme Court and liberalized the rules of standing, which determine who can bring suits. In a dissent, Justice Douglas also suggested that suits could be filed on behalf of nonhumans. In pursuit of this idea, the Club subsequently sued successfully on behalf of the palila, an endangered bird in Hawaii, in a case that established the precedent that habitat destruction was a kind of taking under the Endangered Species Act.<sup>2</sup>

Other lawsuits were filed on behalf of the Club that year, in Colorado, Maryland, and New York,<sup>3</sup> and plans were laid for

more—especially in Alaska. Over time, most met with success. For the first time, federal courts were willing to question what agencies were proposing.

They no longer seemed to be stymied by the “presumption of administrative regularity”—the presumption that agencies were operating properly and lawfully.

In the late 1960s, the California legislature also began to be receptive to our message. The Club's lobbyist in Sacramento, John Zierold, was very skillful and had good access to key legislators. The Club began to make breakthroughs in Sacramento before it did in Washington, D.C., and I occasionally went there to testify.

In 1969 negotiations were deadlocked between California and Nevada over how to set up an interstate compact to better protect the Lake Tahoe Basin. This was a key issue for the Club at the time. California wanted mechanisms in place that would allow it to be stricter than Nevada, and Zierold told me he was concerned that negotiations might collapse. In response, I suggested that California set up a commission of its own within the larger bi-state compact. Zierold put the suggestion forward and to my surprise, it was the idea that broke the impasse, and it was adopted for a number of years.



## EARTH DAY, 1970

The first Earth Day, in the spring of 1970, further galvanized the public mood. It was designed to send a message to the Nixon administration and others that the public now demanded a more enlightened approach to environmental affairs. With the encouragement of Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, graduate student Denis Hayes took the lead in coordinating the organizing effort, which included activities at campuses and in city centers all over the country. Campus organizers in particular planned demonstrations and teach-ins like those that had been held in the 1960s around other causes.

The Sierra Club wasn't sure it had much expertise when it came to mass demonstrations, and we did not particularly identify with the counterculture that was heavily involved in Earth Day organizing. We believed more in mastering the arts of political persuasion than in demonstrating to show our discontent.

We had a suspicion, nonetheless, that this event might be important, so we gave our local chapters leeway to participate and produced materials that would appeal to the Earth Day audience. We hastily stitched together a new book of hard-hitting essays, *Ecotactics*, for which I wrote the foreword.<sup>4</sup> It sold more than 400,000 copies. Some of our activists on college campuses, such as Doug Scott, then a graduate student at the University of Michigan, became leaders in Earth Day organizing.

A sense of rising expectations infused our work through the latter part of 1969. We felt that a strong tide was suddenly beginning to flow in our direction. January 1970 broke with a drumbeat of activities under way. While April 22 was to be Earth Day itself, events were planned every week through May. In February I attended a huge event in a field house at Ann Arbor, Michigan, where thousands of students applauded wildly for the most provocative speaker. Walter Reuther, the head of the United Auto Workers union, was actually booed because he sounded so tame.

Across the country, student demonstrators competed to devise stunts to attract attention. Cars were buried, polluters were trashed, and proenvironment banners were hung high from buildings. Crowds marched down Fifth Avenue in New York and gathered on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

I remember addressing a crowd of 3,000 as the keynoter at the University of Minnesota on Earth Day itself. I tried to get the students to think about how to make a difference over the long run, urging them to make a lifelong commitment to environmental work. While I was well received, I felt they might have liked a "fire breather" even more. When I participated in teach-ins, many students acted as if the Sierra Club could wave a magic wand to make all the bad things go away. They seemed to think achieving a healthy environment was simply a matter of having the will and taking a stand rather than entailing difficult and sustained effort over many years.

In mid-May, I gave my last Earth Day speech of that year at Tulane University. Suddenly, it was all over. The turnout there was sparse. Hostilities in Vietnam had intensified, the United States had invaded Cambodia, and students at Kent State University had been shot and killed by National Guardsmen. In light of these arresting events, students' attention turned back to the war.

But Earth Day proved to be more than simply a series of student demonstrations. Its effect was not fleeting. Somehow, almost

## MINERAL KING



### A Planned Recreation Development

FOREST SERVICE • U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • FEBRUARY 1969

*In February 1969, the U.S. Forest Service released its report supporting construction of a ski resort by the Walt Disney Company in the Mineral King Valley area of the Sequoia National Forest. The cover featured an artist's rendering of what the resort might look like. The Sierra Club succeeded in blocking the resort and the area was annexed into the Sequoia National Park in 1978.*

miraculously, Earth Day catalyzed the formation of a new movement—the environmental movement. Suddenly our concerns expanded across the entire spectrum of issues affecting the environment. Whereas we once had been solely focused on conserving nature, now we were also concerned with pollution, public health, population growth, land use, energy, transportation policy, and almost any other issue touching even remotely upon the environment. Almost overnight, our agenda grew a hundredfold.<sup>5</sup> The new environmental movement differed from the old conservation movement in its breadth, confidence, and holistic nature. It seemed more open to new ideas, evolved more quickly, and addressed human concerns more directly.

Not only did a new consensus emerge about the movement's agenda, a new philosophy and approach emerged almost overnight too. In short order, networks spread that enunciated a new basis for thinking about our habitat on this planet. While much of the thinking was sound, sometimes it stooped to trivia. I remember how amazed I was by the number of people who suddenly claimed to have all the answers. While I was struggling to keep up, others had just learned new norms and told me so in no uncertain terms. Recycling was important, and suddenly everybody was doing it. First we couldn't use colored paper napkins anymore; then that had been superseded and we couldn't use paper napkins at all—only cloth ones were acceptable.

And, finally, public opinion shifted with Earth Day. The huge amount of publicity that the media gave to Earth Day increased public support for environmental protection to a new level. Now



*The environmental movement and Earth Day organizers borrowed tactics from the civil rights and antiwar movements such as protests, teach-ins, and pickets, like this one in San Francisco in the early 1970s. For Mike McCloskey and the Sierra Club, the first Earth Day in 1970 was a defining moment. It galvanized the public mood and helped launch a national movement. As its executive director, McCloskey capitalized on the opportunity and transformed the organization into a national force in environmental politics and policymaking.*

a majority of the public felt that the pollution around them was serious and should get attention from the government. One observer declared: "A miracle of public opinion has been the unprecedented speed and urgency with which ecological issues have burst into American consciousness. Alarm about the environment sprang from nowhere to major proportions in a few short years."<sup>6</sup> While public opinion would fluctuate over the ensuing years, thereafter environmental protection always enjoyed majority support. We were now on the popular side of the issue.

To some extent, the new environmental movement became so dominant that it eclipsed the older conservation movement and the splits within it. The distinctions once so important, between the Pinchot and Muir wings (that is, the utilitarian and nonutilitarian wings), no longer seemed very important, though they didn't go away. Divisions emerged along new lines, however.

It soon became evident that the new ecology centers had a different analysis of the problem than did the Sierra Club. Indeed, our whole idea of how to work effectively was completely different. Some in the movement, particularly on college campuses, were not interested in using public policy to effect change. They regarded such approaches as "power strategies." Instead, they wanted to change the "inner person" and persuade people to choose simpler lifestyles and to consume less. Their mantra was "reduce, reuse, and recycle." While we felt society would benefit from such steps, we did not consider them sufficient. The pow-

erful who were polluting needed to be confronted with the power of government, not just with hit-or-miss voluntary action.

Most of the youthful protesters disappeared from public view in time. But a few continued to use direct-action techniques on issues related to nuclear testing and nuclear power. They organized in groups like the Clamshell Alliance, which used civil disobedience and other forms of protest to oppose a proposed nuclear plant at Seabrook, New Hampshire. The protesters typically addressed less tractable issues and operated through loose networks under consensus decision making. Most of us working on public policy, though, had little contact with them.

While David Brower had promised when he left the Sierra Club that he would not set up a "splinter group" that would compete with the Club, in the fall of 1969 he did just that. The group was called Friends of the Earth, and a few of the Club's former employees joined its staff. While many of its positions were similar to those of the Sierra Club, it tried to champion avant-garde issues as well, such as genetic engineering. Friends of the Earth enjoyed modest success in the United States and opened some offices abroad, but in due course Brower had a falling out with it too.

Many other new groups came into existence in the wake of Earth Day. Most notable was the Natural Resources Defense Council, with which the Club has subsequently been closely aligned on many issues.

## NEW DIRECTIONS

In the face of changing times and new competition, Phil Berry and I both decided that the Sierra Club should position itself as a strong player. We would take on all of the new issues, use all of the latest tools, and attract as much support as we could. We would work actively to flesh out our organization throughout the country. We would assume a high profile and take risks. In this new time, we would seek to become the best-known and most productive environmental group working on public policy.

Not all of the old-line conservation organizations reacted in this fashion. In fact, at first, none of the others did. Over time, the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society cloaked themselves in the mantle of environmentalism, but neither did it with the relish and commitment that we did; conservation issues remained their focus. Some groups, such as the Izaak Walton League, never embraced the new issues and thus never grew. Though many of the new groups came to assume important roles in the environmental movement, the Sierra Club, more than any other, became synonymous with aggressive, pragmatic environmentalism....

With the public demanding action, Congress also now began to embrace the environmental agenda. And not only did Congress begin to change with the times, so also did the administration of President Richard Nixon. Nixon feared that he would have to face Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine as his opponent in the 1972 election. Like Senator Henry Jackson [of Washington], Muskie was a champion of the environmental cause. For some years he had been trying, as the chairman of the Commerce Committee, to pass strong legislation to curb air and water pollution.

So that Muskie would not be the only candidate to benefit from identifying with this cause, Nixon decided to send a special message on the environment to Congress in February 1970. By the end of the year, he had set up the Environmental Protection Agency by executive order. He salted his administration with a number of Republicans who had real environmental credentials, such as Russell Train, the chairman of his Council on Environmental Quality, a man I had known from his years at the Conservation Foundation.<sup>7</sup>

The first sign that things were changing in Congress occurred in the House of Representatives in February 1970. Since late in the fall, it had become clear that the timber industry was soon going to make a major push to gain approval for its National Timber Supply Bill, legislation designed to facilitate ramping up timber sales in the national forests by earmarking their proceeds to support expansion of the timber sales program. We thought the existing program was already destroying too many roadless areas and were fearful that more areas would be lost to an enlarged program. In December 1969 I had written an article in *The New Republic* criticizing the legislation.<sup>8</sup> We cobbled together a coalition of eight groups to fight the bill, including the Wilderness Society, the National Audubon Society, Friends of the Earth, and Trout Unlimited. I put Brock Evans from our Northwest office in charge of our campaign; the coalition quickly accepted him as its leader, and all of the groups sent staff to the Hill to work on the campaign.

We enlisted the doughty Representative John Dingell, Democrat of Michigan, to head up our forces in Congress. He

provided space for us to set up an operations room in the Rayburn House Office Building. Teams lobbied every member of the House, reporting back on the inclination of each. Assignments were handed out to increase pressure in districts where it was needed. One hundred and fifty thousand letters and wires from concerned constituents poured into Congress within a few weeks.

When its proponents tried to bring the bill to the floor early in February, they had to withdraw it for lack of support. Finally, on February 23, they tried again, but their move was rejected by an overwhelming vote of 228 to 150. The bill was not even sent back to committee, because neither the Interior Committee chair nor the Agriculture Committee chair would support it. Despite pressure from the National Forest Products Association and the National Association of Home Builders, the Nixon administration withheld its support too. We began the new environmental era with a resounding victory.

The method by which we lobbied on the National Timber Supply Bill was typical of much of our efforts. We identified which members of Congress were committed to us, opposed to us, leaning our way, leaning against us, or undecided. We focused on moving those leaning our way into the committed column; moving the undecideds into leaning our way; and moving those leaning against us into the undecided column. These were the swing votes, and we concentrated on asking Club members in their districts to write to their representatives in Congress. Often our ranks there were thin, and our few members there heard from us often.

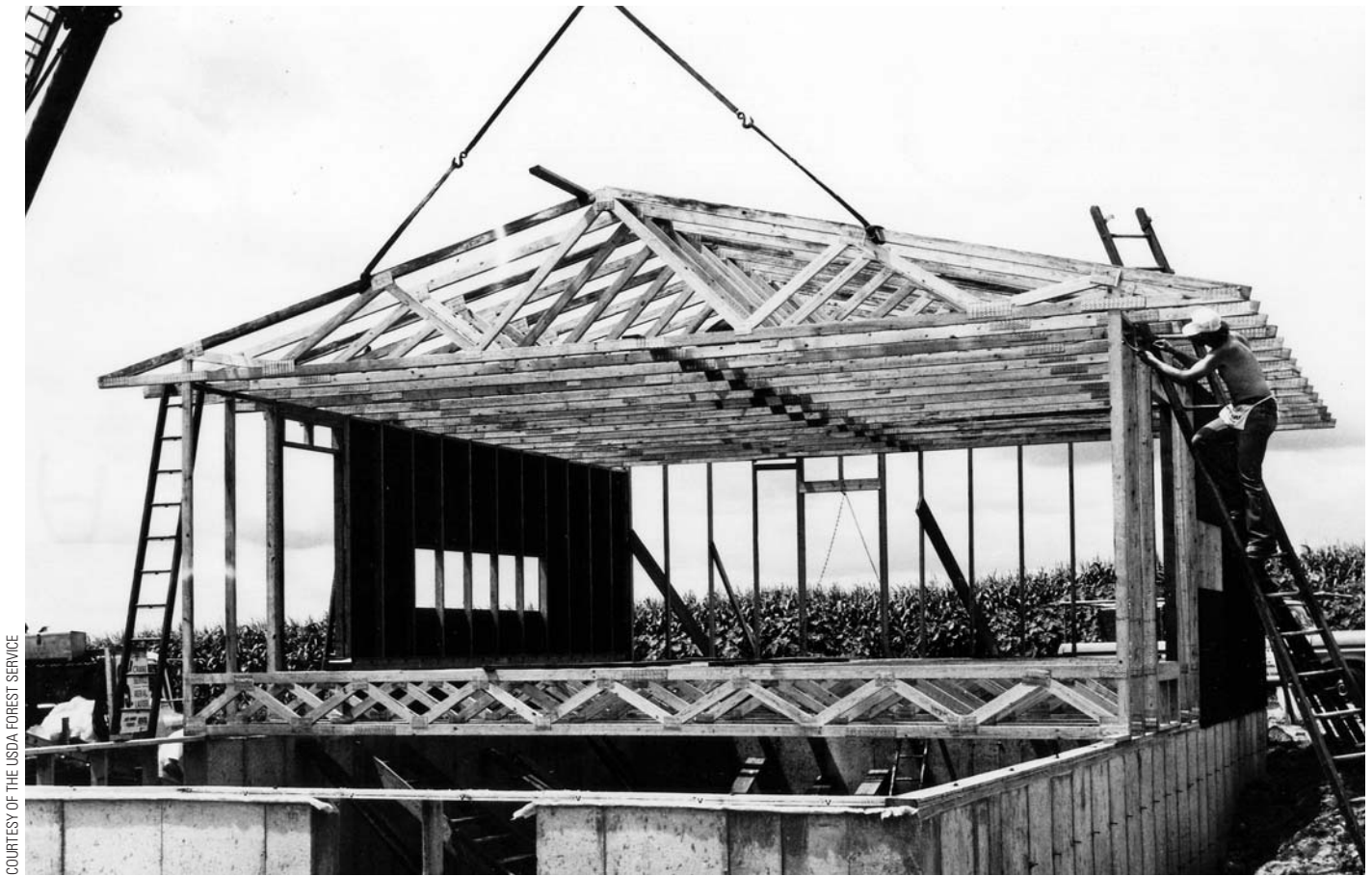
Following this fight, I thought we needed to divert the attention of the timber industry away from the national forests. So I had our forester, Gordon Robinson, work with Senator Lee Metcalf, a Democrat from Montana, to develop a bill that would impose a regulatory framework on private, industrial forest lands. I wanted to draw off some of the industry's energy into opposing this legislation, which they would bitterly resist.

In 1971 Metcalf introduced a bill that would have allowed logging only under state supervision and under plans drawn by professional foresters. This bill was basically a replay of one introduced in 1920 by Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas and championed by Forest Service founder Gifford Pinchot. While the bill did not go anywhere, field hearings were held on it, drawing industry opposition. I sent Robinson to testify at one in the South. This was our first effort to change the politics affecting national forest issues, with the industry at least on notice that they were no longer going to have a free hand in controlling the agenda on forest issues....

The campaign against the [civilian supersonic aircraft] SST gave the new environmental movement confidence that it could win not only on traditional issues but on the new "environmental" ones as well. The subject matter might be different and took time to master; new networks of expert advisors would need to be cultivated. But the mechanics of many of the ensuing environmental campaigns were the same.

The 91st Congress acted affirmatively to support the environmental agenda again and again. Among its conservation measures, it authorized three new national seashores or lakeshores, Gulf Islands (Mississippi), Sleeping Bear Dunes (Michigan), and Apostle Islands (Wisconsin); one new national park, Voyageurs, in Minnesota; and one new national monument, Florissant, in Colorado. Local Club activists had sought them all and persuaded





COURTESY OF THE USDA FOREST SERVICE

*After World War II, new residential construction became an important economic indicator. In 1970, with the economy faltering because of rising interest, unemployment, and inflation rates, Congress considered the National Timber Supply Bill as a way to stimulate the economy through new home construction. The bill would have increased timber harvests from national forests and possibly required road construction in roadless areas to meet demand. Opposition on those grounds from the Sierra Club and seven other groups led the Nixon administration to withdraw its support for the bill.*

their congressional delegations to push for them. They took me to see each of these treasures. I also took part in meetings at which Senator Jackson handed out assignments to environmental leaders to line up various senators' support for increasing the Land and Water Conservation Fund to \$300 million.

Congress also added a number of units to the National Wilderness Preservation System: Ventana Wilderness and Desolation Wilderness in California, and Mount Baldy in Arizona (all Forest Service units), as well as wilderness within twenty-three units of the system of national wildlife refuges.

By the end of the year, buoyed by the popular euphoria over environmental action, Muskie had succeeded in having Congress enact the strongest federal law ever passed to clean up the nation's air: the Clean Air Act of 1970. After having been stalled in prior Congresses, it was now passed with virtually no opposition. It required automakers to cut their emissions by 90 percent in five years, it obliged those who would build new sources of industrial pollution to use the best available control technology, it directed EPA to establish national standards for ambient air quality to protect health and property (none had been established by the states under the ineffectual 1967 Clean Air Act), and it directed the states to develop plans to implement the goals of the act. While arguments over it would continue for years, the Clean Air

Act of 1970 set the benchmark for what should happen across the land to protect our air. The Sierra Club, though not yet active on clean air issues, would join the cause in future years.

Arguments continued in 1970 over the construction of a pipeline to transport oil in Alaska across the North Slope. The U.S. Geological Survey pointed to the dangers of melting permafrost if a line full of hot oil were to be buried along the proposed route. Two injunctions barred the pipeline's way—one resulting from a case brought by the Wilderness Society, using the provision of the new National Environmental Policy Act calling for an environmental impact statement (EIS). No EIS had been prepared for the pipeline as such, nor were there answers yet about how to deal with the permafrost issue. The Sierra Club was not a party to that suit, though it had been preparing one of its own before the Wilderness Society, which did not have local chapter leaders to confer with, beat us to the courthouse door. . . .

The Sierra Club began to file more lawsuits in 1970 on a variety of issues. One contested long-term timber sales in southeast Alaska. Another helped in an effort to prevent a freeway from being built through Overton Park in Memphis, Tennessee. A third concerned DDT: as an outgrowth of a petition to the secretary of Agriculture to cancel the registration of DDT for use on crops, the Club joined in a lawsuit in which a federal judge

ordered the secretary to respond. (In the future, the Club would be part of further legal efforts to end the use of DDT.)

Part of the compromise permitting the Wilderness Act to go forward in the House of Representatives in 1963–64 was an agreement to conduct an in-depth study of the public land laws. Finally, in late June 1970, that report was released by the Public Land Law Review Commission. This commission had been at work since 1964 and was charged with helping to guide Congress in determining the future of public lands, particularly those under the purview of the BLM. Interior Committee Chairman Wayne Aspinall of Colorado was the political architect of this commission, and its work bore his imprint.

While the commission's massive report did call for retaining the bulk of these lands in federal ownership, it also called for replacing the concept of multiple use with the concept of "dominant use"—that is, frankly setting aside many areas for grazing, mining, or timbering as their principal use. Environmental concerns would get short shrift by law. There was much to trouble us otherwise in this report. I remember studying it and typing my notes in the back of a rented Volkswagen van as my wife drove us and our daughter Rosemary to a conference on that topic in Wyoming. Both Phil Berry and I wrote articles on the report for the *Sierra Club Bulletin*.<sup>9</sup> Over the next half dozen years, the future of BLM lands became a major concern of the Club.

The "Earth Day years" of 1969 and 1970 turned out quite differently than some expected. The Sierra Club did not fall apart despite David Brower's departure; in fact, it thrived. I did not turn into a caretaker but became a full-fledged executive director. Our cause did not go into decline but mushroomed and transformed itself into a new movement. And the government responded with alacrity, setting up new institutions and programs. This turnabout was simply breathtaking. And there was much more to come. □

Michael McCloskey served as the Sierra Club's executive director from 1969–1985 and as its chairman from 1985–1999 before retiring. He currently lives in Portland, Oregon, where he is involved in environmental issues on a more local basis.

## NOTES

1. This case was originally taken to Robert Jasperson of the Conservation Law Society, who referred it to others. That group had an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of environmental litigation, but it chose not to do so and is now largely forgotten.
2. See 639 F.2d. 495.
3. See Oscar Gray, *Cases and Statements on Environmental Law* (Washington, D.C.: BNA, 1970), for a review of earlier cases.
4. See *Ecotatics: The Sierra Club Handbook for Environmental Activists*, ed. John G. Mitchell (New York: Pocket Books, 1970), 11.
5. See my editorial in the June 1970 issue of the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, 2.
6. See H. Erskine, "The Polls, Pollution, and Its Costs," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (vol. 36): 120.
7. For his appraisal of the environmental accomplishments of the Nixon administration, see Russell E. Train, "The Environmental Record of the Nixon Administration," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Winter 1996, No. 1): 185–196. Also see his memoir, *Politics, Pollution, and Pandas* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2003).
8. Michael McCloskey, "Raiding the Forests," *The New Republic* (December 13, 1969): 10–11.
9. See Michael McCloskey, "The Public Land Law Review Commission Report," *Sierra Club Bulletin* (October 1970): 21–30. I wrote on this topic at greater length in a law review article, "The Environmental Implications of the Report of the Public Land Law Review Commission Report," *Land and Water Review* (Vol. VI, 1970): 351–368.

## Genetically Modified Forests

From Stone Age  
to Modern Biotechnology



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