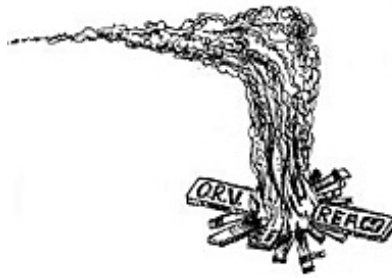




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# Around the Campfire with Uncle Dave Foreman



## Between the RAREs

At our last get-together around this campfire, I went through the heartbreak of the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation from 1971 to 1973. For many of us wilderfolk at the time, RARE wiped clean any lingering belief that wilderness clubs and the U. S. Forest Service were together in one conservation movement. For newcomers to the wilderness crusade such as me, we learned in a baptism of paper and bullshit that the Forest Service wasn't our friend, indeed that we were at odds over what was *good* on the National Forests and how they should be cared for. At that time, conservation groups such as The Wilderness Society (which hired me in early 1973 as their New Mexico consultant) and Sierra Club still backed "multiple-use/sustained-yield" on the National Forests. MUSY, as the acronym for the 1960 law setting it as the overarching guide to National Forest management, meant to the Forest Service building roads and logging along with livestock grazing, even though watershed, wildlife, recreation, and *wilderness* were all in the congressional scheme of "multiple-use." It wasn't until Earth First broke the ice in 1980 that citizen conservationists became willing to say multiple-use was a screen for logging and that sustained yield was a sham that had never been gained.



Jim Stewart (high school teacher) and Corry MacDonald (Sandia Lab engineer) of the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee working on the boundary for the Sandia Wilderness Area proposal, 1976. © Dave Foreman

Whether or not all wilderness lovers had their eyes popped open to the true relationship between the Forest Service and grassroots conservationists, I think the aftermath of RARE led to a flip-over in the sociology of the citizen conservation movement. I say sociology instead of political science because it was a paradigm shift in our *feeling* of whom our friends and allies were. It was a political shift, too, as we'll see in the rest of this Campfire, but for anyone trying to understand the sociology of conservation, RARE was a turning point, even if it has not been widely acknowledged as such before. This is why I entitle my forthcoming book (from which this Campfire is taken) *Conservation vs. Conservation*. Even more than in the past going back to John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, many of us truly saw two movements, both calling themselves "conservation," as foes over the stewardship of public lands and wildlife.

After being screwed by both the process and the paltry recommendations for wilderness by RARE, we conservationists went after our own "wildcat wilderness proposals" like, well, wildcats after bunnies. (After the Wilderness Act became law, Forest Service bigwigs were shocked when citizen conservationists dared to offer their own Wilderness Area proposals to members of Congress, instead of only commenting on Forest Service recommendations. They sneeringly called what we offered "wildcat wilderness proposals."[\[1\]](#)) After RARE, we herded our wildcats into two omnibus bills.

## Eastern Wilderness Areas Act

But for Minnesota's million-acre Boundary Waters Canoe Area—a world-class wilderness of Northwoods lakes and portages (and the only one at that time in the Lower 48 that still had wolves)—the 1964 Wilderness Act shielded only three little National Forest Wild Areas east of the Rockies.[\[2\]](#) Many in the Forest Service still grumbled that the designation of these areas as Wilderness was a mistake. Nonetheless, citizen conservationists in West Virginia and Alabama had gotten Wilderness bills dropped into the Congressional hopper by 1970; and wilderfolk in other Eastern states had drafted Wilderness Area proposals. The Forest Service came down flatly that there was no true Wilderness in the East: "To include [Eastern areas] would dilute the significance of the entire Wilderness System," snarled a 1971 position paper from the Forest Service's Division of Recreation in Washington, D.C. That summer, the Regional Foresters in Atlanta and Milwaukee came up with a separate and lesser Wildwood Heritage System for hiking areas in the Eastern National Forests.[\[3\]](#) The Roadless Area Inventory had found only three Eastern areas, one each in North Carolina, Florida, and Puerto Rico.[\[4\]](#)

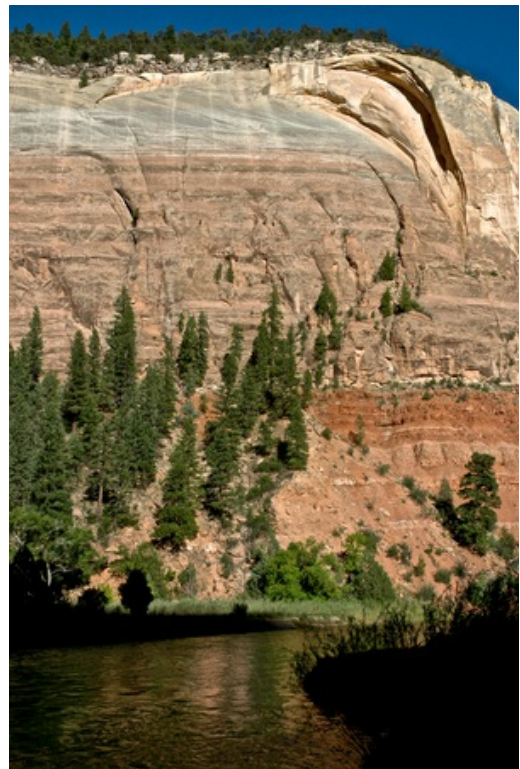
Spurred on by The Wilderness Society's Appalachian-loving Ernie Dickerman, who cut his teeth bushwhacking in the Smokies, conservationists in Eastern states did their own fieldwork on National Forest roadless areas of which they knew or had gone out and found. With Ernie's leadership they then put together an Eastern Wilderness Areas Bill. The Forest Service did its best to undercut The Wilderness Society and for a while even had some Sierra Club leaders thinking that a new stand-alone, lesser Eastern system would be better. We in TWS undertook a heavy-handed lobbying campaign with Sierra Club members to get them to gainsay the Forest Service's sleight-of-hand on Wilderness Areas. Dickerman hammered home that Easterners, such as Howard Zahniser of New York and Harvey Broome of Tennessee, wrote the definition of Wilderness in the Wilderness Act. "None of us who helped draft that definition were about to exclude the wildlands of the Appalachian Range from qualifying for the protection of the Wilderness Act," Ernie stormed.[\[5\]](#) Had the Sierra Club not come around, we were willing to go to war with our long-time partner.[\[6\]](#)

Senator James Buckley, Republican-Conservative of New York (William F. Buckley's brother), sponsored the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act with Senate Interior Committee Chairman Henry (Scoop) Jackson (D-WA) in January 1973.<sup>[7]</sup> When a Senate hearing was held in Washington, 150 grassroots conservationists showed up to speak for Wilderness. The mainstay for the 1964 Wilderness Act in the House, Representative John Saylor of Pennsylvania (another Republican), introduced the bill in the House. President Ford signed the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act on January 3, 1975. It designated fifteen Wilderness Areas and seventeen Wilderness Study Areas in the Eastern National Forests.<sup>[8]</sup> Congress and the people had spoken—telling the Forest Service that the Wilderness Act was written also for rewilded spots in the National Forests of the East. Like it or not, the Forest Service had been given a more sweeping and open yardstick for Wilderness.

## Endangered American Wilderness Act

“We was robbed.” In the West, conservationists rightly believed that RARE had been an underhanded play by the Forest Service to keep more Wilderness Areas from being set aside. Citizens geared up to fight timber sales in their most-loved roadless areas. Grassroots clubs asked their members of Congress to write Wilderness bills for lands not backed by the Forest Service. Senator Bob Packwood of Oregon, Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico, and Representative Manuel Lujan Jr. of New Mexico—all Republicans—introduced conservationists' bills.

Doug Scott, Northwest Representative of the Sierra Club, hatched the “Endangered American Wilderness Act,” which folded-in sundry western roadless areas that had not been picked by the Forest Service as New Wilderness Study Areas (NWSAs) in RARE.<sup>[9]</sup> This bill was a big organizing tool for The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, and state wilderness groups, and a means for teaching Congress about the downsides of RARE and the need for more Wilderness Areas. In New Mexico, Domenici and Lujan had sponsored stand-alone bills for the Sandia Mountains, Manzano Mountains, and Chama River Canyon. The Sandias and Chama helped tell the tale of what was wrong with RARE. Though the Sandia Mountains had nearly 40,000 acres of roadless land and was believed to be wilderness by Albuquerque hikers and climbers, the Forest Service was aghast at the thought of a Sandia Wilderness Area because it was so close to Albuquerque.



Chama Canyon Wilderness Area  
© Dave Foreman

They earnestly said the Sandias were disqualified because one could “experience” the sights and sounds of New Mexico’s biggest city from nearly anywhere in the mountains. As for the 50,000-acre Chama Canyon, the Forest Service hadn’t even inventoried it in RARE. They had utterly overlooked it. It was our foremost exhibit for the sloppiness of RARE. The New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee got hundreds of letters into New Mexico congressmen and some 300 Sandia Wilderness boosters to a hearing in Albuquerque called by Domenici and Lujan. With their backing, the Sandia Mountains and Chama Canyon, along with the Manzano Mountains, which the Forest Service okayed, went into the Endangered American Wilderness bill.

The bill was introduced in 1976 and passed in January 1978. It did three good things: It locked up some key Wilderness Areas that the Forest Service didn’t want, shoved the Forest Service into doing another and much more thorough roadless area inventory (RARE II), and helped build a strong citizen network for Wilderness, which would come into its own for RARE II, the Alaska Lands Act, and the new Bureau of Land Management wilderness review—all happening in the last few years of the 1970s. Whew. We were busy.

As for the Forest Service, new folks, such as many more women, were coming into the agency. Overall, they went along with the 1964 Wilderness Act and the thought of Wilderness



Areas on rewilded lands in the Eastern National Forests. They also nudged the old custom and culture of the Forest Service for good—and ill, as I came to understand later. But some old-timers, such as retired and retiring chiefs, regional foresters, and forest superintendents, were bitterly unhappy with the harm they thought conservation clubs and Congress had done to the integrity of the Wilderness System—and to the United States Forest Service.<sup>[10]</sup> They, too, saw it as Conservation vs. Conservation, methinks. Their (ab)use of RARE angered wildlovers and in a short time changed the sociological landscape of wilderness conservation.

In a forthcoming Campfire, I'll lay out the hope and then the unhappy letdown of RARE II—the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation.

Dave Foreman

Looking out my front window to the Sandia Mountains Wilderness Area



© Dave Foreman

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<sup>[1]</sup> See the last few Campfires for background.

<sup>[2]</sup> Linville Gorge, 7,575 acres, and Shining Rocks, 13,350 acres, both in North Carolina, and Great Gulf, 5,552 acres, in New Hampshire. *Search for Solitude* (USDA Forest Service, June 1970).

<sup>[3]</sup> Dennis M. Roth, *The Wilderness Movement and the National Forests: 1964-1980* (FS 391, USDA Forest Service, Washington, 1984), 39.

<sup>[4]</sup> Final Environmental Statement Roadless and Undeveloped Areas (USDA Forest Service, October 1973).

<sup>[5]</sup> Roth, *The Wilderness Movement and the National Forests: 1964-1980*, 43.

<sup>[6]</sup> Dave Brower was gone from the Club by then and there was a strong “wilderness purist” clique of Sierrans. There was also much overlap between the Society and the Club—I worked for The Wilderness Society and was wilderness chair and on the executive committee of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. See James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness* (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2012), for a top-flight exploration of the Sierra Club purists and the struggle between the two groups over what to do for Eastern wilderness.

<sup>[7]</sup> Many folks wrongly call the legislation the Eastern Wilderness Act. It is not a new Wilderness Act in any way. See Wilderness Society memo, February 7, 1977, from Raye-Page, “RE: There is NO Eastern Wilderness Act.” This document and some others will be posted on the Rewilding Website when my new book *Conservation vs. Conservation* comes out.

<sup>[8]</sup> Roth, *The Wilderness Movement and the National Forests: 1964-1980*, 36-46. Roth goes into the infighting between The Wilderness Society and weak-kneed Sierra Club very well, and shows how Ernie Dickerman and others at TWS finally got the other conservation clubs on board. See also *The Promise of Wilderness*. Jay Turner’s digging through Wilderness Society archives at the Denver Conservation Library hit pay-dirt, which he shares in his often eye-opening book.

<sup>[9]</sup> Scott had learned conservation campaigning while earlier working for The Wilderness Society and helping Dickerman on the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act.

<sup>[10]</sup> This I know because some made a point of telling me so and also from overhearing conversations at sundry gatherings.

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Pleistocene wildlife header graphic by Sergio de la Rosa Martinez

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