

WILDERNESS

WHO SAID?

“[the public lands represent] in sense, the breathing space of the nation?” *Richard M. Nixon*

The preservation of wild lands has many values. Preserving wilderness may someday be seen through eyes of historians as the most important contribution societies can make to the health of the global environment. Here are some of those values. TOGETHER, they show how rare and valuable our wild lands are.

Reservoirs of Biological Diversity: With habitats where rare and endangered plant and animal species can be sustained and maintained Wilderness plays a significant role in the overall health of ecosystems. Natural disturbances like flood or fire maintain natural processes. Few places are left where flood and fire is allowed in its natural cycle.

Scientific Value: Wilderness serves as a unique and irreplaceable living laboratory for medicinal and scientific research. As it does in Chiricahua National Monument it also protects geological resources.

Watersheds: Many wildernesses are the headwaters of our river systems, providing a source of clean water. The connection between our wilderness and our cities is most evident with water, our basic resource for a flourishing society.

Life Support Systems: A critical habitat for animal and plant life, wilderness maintains gene pools to provide diversity As we learn more about the greenhouse effect more people realize that humanity is part of an interconnected web and that survival of our own species may depend on the survival of natural spaces.

Historic and Cultural Values: Wilderness is a unique repository for artifacts and structures protected by laws like the Archeological Resources Protection Act. These features tell a story about the human relationship with wildlands.

Spiritual Values: These wild lands offer opportunities for reflection, for observation, for explorations of the ideas and experiences that can only be found in our wild areas. They have become a church of sorts.

Aesthetic Values: The sudden change from a hot sunny day to a powerful storm exploding in lightning and roaring thunder, the morning light beaming off cliffs and ridges, a glassy lake reflecting a peak. These are moments we cherish. Call it beauty. Humans are enchanted by nature. We become participants.

Recreation: People enjoy traveling in wilderness for the challenge or the pure joy of such and experience. Values such as self-reliance are particularly important. You are responsible for yourself. Your actions are of consequence.

Refuge: Wilderness serves as a haven from the pressure of our fast-paced industrial society. It is a place where we can seek relief.

Educational Values: Wilderness is a teacher. Wilderness areas are living classrooms from which knowledge about our world and ourselves are lessons waiting to be learned. The wild environments from which we created societies have affected our American values of freedom, ingenuity, and independence. Wilderness has been a part of America since its beginnings. For this reason, Americans have a special attraction to wilderness.