

The Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve, Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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The Chartered Purposes of the Preserve as given in the last NEWSLETTER can be summarized as: Conservation, Education and Research. While conservation was the first and is certainly the most conspicuous objective of the Preserve, it remains the most difficult objective to define. Mr. Almy Coggeshall, a member of the Preserve and just recently retired from the Board of Directors, has, in an editorial in the December 1977 ENVIRONMENT, a monthly publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, discussed some of the philosophies and attitudes associated with preservation. This is a most timely review, and I am most appreciative of Mr. Coggeshall's permission to reprint his editorial, which is appended.

Mr. Coggeshall identifies, as some of the motivations for wilderness preservation: 1) The desire to revere and preserve antiquities; 2) The transmission of values to future generations; 3) As symbols of permanence; 4) Atavistic goals; 5) Sanctuary; each of which can be pursued from a biocentric or anthropocentric thrust.

During the history of the Preserve, all of the above objectives have, at one time or another, influenced the management of the Preserve, yet at no time has a concise, operational definition been formulated of the Preserve's objective "To preserve the natural beauty of . . ."

The E. N. Huyck Preserve is not a wilderness. Lake Myosotis and Lincoln Pond are impoundments constructed by man; they are not natural, and "the lands around them" have been irreversibly altered by the past actions of man. I do not suggest that the above facts diminish the value of preserving the Preserve, but they must certainly be kept in mind when establishing management objectives.

Philosophers who previously labored in search of truth may now go in search of the natural. Natural appears to convey more meaning to the advertising executive and consumer than it does to the ecologist. The contrast has been made between that which is a product of man and that which is not; the implication being that man is not natural, and even if this is accepted by definition, is there anything which is not influenced by the actions of man? Likewise, if we put biocentrism in juxtaposition with anthropocentrism, we as stewards must choose between letting "nature take its course" or pursue "selfish human values". As with most situations, the extremes are neither fully obtainable nor desirable, for we cannot isolate the Preserve from, nor erase the past actions of man; neither can we, given the Preserve's chartered purpose, pursue commercial exploitation.

At the last Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, I proposed a management plan which would recognize the original 500 acres of the Preserve as a "reserve" in which there would be minimal manipulation of natural processes. This proposal was made because these lands had a long history of research and protection, albeit imperfect. These lands are also the most commonly visited and utilized by the public. The intensive public use requires certain management practices to minimize

damage or the possibility for injury to both the visitor and resident. I do not believe the concept of a "reserve" is in conflict with public access and utilization. The remainder of the Preserve I recommended be managed to facilitate research and educational opportunities.

Many agencies and programs offer advice and financial support for the commercial or recreational management of property. Neither educational nor research values appear in these readily available schemes.

Help may be on the way however, for President Carter, in his 1977 Environmental Message, called for the establishment of a NATIONAL HERITAGE PROGRAM. Mr. Cecil D. Andrus, Secretary of the Interior, has announced the establishment of such a program which will "provide a mechanism to pull together existing Federal efforts to preserve historic and natural places, make financial and technical assistance available to the States and to their local communities and interested groups.

"The Federal member of this partnership will be a new agency called the HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE" Andrus said. "This agency will incorporate natural and historic preservation activities now handled by the National Landmarks Program and the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service, with the recreation responsibilities of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Additionally, a new emphasis will be placed on the cooperative protection of natural resources."

"I am asking the Governors of all the States to join us by participating in Heritage Programs at the State level, with heavy emphasis on voluntary public participation through conservation groups, historical societies, community and cultural organizations and local governments. Thousands of such organizations are already in existence, most of them pursuing their own objectives on a local scale," Andrus said.

The Secretary indicated that he would recommend legislation to expand the duties of the existing Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to include Federal activities affecting natural resources. This body would be renamed the Council on Heritage Conservation and would advise the President and Congress on Federal policies affecting historic and natural resources in the United States. Further, he would recommend to the Congress, the creation of a National Register of Natural Areas, similar to the existing National Register of Historic Places. The intent, is to provide protection for natural areas parallel to that enjoyed by properties on the Historic Register. The emphasis will be on the protection of sites and other resources important to America's heritage, by means other than public acquisition. Secretary Andrus concluded his announcement with the expectation that "Through this new program we hope to identify and initiate protection for the majority of the nation's heritage resources within five years."

Bills, both under multiple sponsorship, are before the Senate and House of Representatives, which under the title of the NATURAL DIVERSITY PRESERVATION, would establish the above program objectives as a national goal and further these bills state that they "recognize the scientific, educational, and cultural importance of the preservation of natural diversity for purposes of scientific research, baseline data, and expanded educational opportunities."

Wilderness: Why Preserve It?

There is a common belief that the principal or governing reason to maintain wilderness areas is to afford a specialized form of recreational opportunity. It is my personal belief that the motivation which gives the wilderness preservation movement its strength and power is only incidentally related to recreation. A number of internally felt, but seldom articulated, reasons for wilderness preservation might be identified as follows:

The Desire to Revere and Preserve Antiquities: Anyone who has traveled abroad cannot help but be aware of the effort and expense that is applied to the historic monuments of the past.

When traveling in England, I began to inquire about the source of this seemingly universal desire to maintain and preserve these monuments. One perceptive Briton explained that in his belief this is related to man's desire to achieve immortality.

I perceive a tendency to identify land that has remained unchanged since the retreat of the glaciers to evoke the same response as do these other monuments to the past and thus evoke powerful desires to preserve it.

The Bequest Theory: There is a desire for people to transmit their values to future generations. They, therefore, wish to take unspoiled land which they have enjoyed and transmit it to their successors in the same form that they received it from their forebears.

A Symbol of Permanence: People fear change, particularly unknown change and, therefore, wish to es-



tablish some symbol of permanence of the enduring and of the everlasting. What can be more enduring than the eternal hills themselves; and if land set aside to remain wild can suddenly be altered by the hand of man, what reliable symbol of permanence can one then turn to.

Atavism: Many of the activities listed as "primitive and extensive outdoor recreation" are in fact reenactments of how man lived, obtained his food, fought, and moved himself and his goods about in a primitive time. The appeal of hunting and fishing is highly atavistic. The actual taking of fish or game is a small part of the total hunting or fishing experience. Rather, it appears as a response to some deep resonance, some reaching into the past towards man's most primitive origins. We discover other similar trends. The appeal of watching a fire is equally atavistic, for people have stared into the flames since time beyond reckoning. Walking, canoeing, camping, living outdoors, and seeking nature in any form are atavistic pursuits.

Natural Sanctuary: In a positive sense what is sought is land with enduring natural values where people go to truly recreate themselves from the rigors of an artificial and technical society.

The maintenance of wilderness areas is, therefore, looked upon as a sanctuary, as a place of refuge from an expanding technology and a mechanized culture.

Anthropocentricity vs. Biocentricity:

Anthropocentric means man-centered, or to manage for man's benefit. The whole thrust of land management in the past has been anthropocentric. Biocentricity means to manage for Nature's benefit or by Nature's agents. This term was introduced by John Hendee of the US Forest Service. It is Hendee's contention that biocentricity should prevail over anthropocentricity in wilderness areas.

To adopt biocentric management is an act of humility, to acknowledge the imperfections in man's knowledge and to admit that all too frequently his actions are based on short-range goals, and that seemingly beneficial innovations are later discovered to contain hidden worms. Biocentric wilderness management is one where man is content to enter, to observe, and to learn and to appreciate, but not to tinker, not to improve, not to enhance, not to develop, nor to exploit in any commercial sense.

There is a current trend to disparage the words "preservation" and "preservationist." The preservation of wilderness areas bears a similarity to the preservation of historic buildings, of historic sites, and of unique and irreplaceable areas. There appear to be valid human needs to bind ourselves to our past. Preservation for preservation's sake is respectable.

An old Eastern proverb states: "If a person shall find himself with bread in both hands, he should exchange one loaf for a handful of flowers — for the bread will feed the body, but the flowers will sustain the soul."

by Almy Coggeshall