

Wilderness Quotations

Wilderness Legislation

“In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.”

—*The Wilderness Act*, PL 88-577, section 2(a), 1964

“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

—*The Wilderness Act*, PL 88-577, section 2(c), 1964

“Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of the Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing or aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.”

—*The Wilderness Act*, PL 88-577, section 4(c), 1964

“The Congress finds that—in the more populous eastern half of the United States there is an urgent need to identify, study, designate, and preserve areas for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System . . . therefore, the Congress finds and declares that it is in the national interest that these areas be promptly designated as wilderness in order to preserve such areas as an enduring resource of wilderness which shall be managed to promote and perpetuate the wilderness character of the land.”

—*The Eastern Wilderness Areas Act*, PL 93-622, 1975

Howard Zahniser (primary author of the Wilderness Act)

“I believe that at least in the present phase of our civilization we have a profound, a fundamental need for areas of wilderness—a need that is not only recreational and spiritual but also education and scientific, and withal essential to a true understanding of ourselves, our culture, our own natures, and our place in all nature.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, winter-spring, 1956-1957, no. 59

“. . . There is a need in our planning to secure the preservation of some areas that are so managed as to be left unmanaged—areas that are undeveloped by man’s mechanical tools and in every way unmodified by his civilization.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, winter-spring, 1956-1957, no. 59

“Without the gadgets, the inventions, the contrivances whereby men have seemed to establish among themselves an independence of nature, without these distractions, to know wilderness is to know a profound humility, to recognize one’s littleness, to sense dependence and interdependence, indebtedness, and responsibility.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, winter-spring, 1956-1957, no. 59

“In the wilderness it is . . . possible to sense most keenly our human membership in the whole community of life on Earth.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, winter-spring, 1956-1957, no. 59

“We are a part of the wildness of the universe. That is our nature. Our noblest, happiest character develops with the influence of wildness. Away from it, we degenerate into the squalor of slums or the frustration of clinical couches. With the wilderness, we are at home.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, winter-spring, 1956-1957, no. 59

“The true wilderness experience is one, not of escaping, but of finding one’s self by seeking the wilderness.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, winter-spring, 1956-1957, no. 59

“We are not fighting a rear-guard action, we are facing a frontier. We are not slowing down a force that inevitably will destroy all the wilderness there is. We are generating another force, never to be wholly spent, that, renewed generation after generation, will be always effective in preserving wilderness. We are not fighting progress. We are making it. We are not dealing with a vanishing wilderness. We are working for a wilderness forever.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“Wilderness Forever,” *Voices For the Wilderness*,
Editor William Schwartz, 1969

“It is a bold thing for a human being who lives on the earth but a few score years at the most to presume upon the Eternal and covet perpetuity for any of his undertakings.

Yet we who concern ourselves with wilderness preservation are compelled to assume this boldness and with the courage of this peculiar undertaking of ours so to order our enterprise as to direct our efforts toward the perpetual”

—Howard Zahniser,
“Wilderness Forever,” *Voices For the Wilderness*,
Editor William Schwartz, 1969

“Yet if we are to anticipate a wilderness-forever future through a national sanction we must . . . take this difficult first step.

It is a step that is so difficult not because it goes so far but because it must be taken by so many. A whole nation steps forward, with purpose, in the enactment of such legislation, and it marches only when so many are ready to go that the others must move too. Nor in our great government do we disregard the reluctant ones. Rather, we persuade, we confer, we try to understand, we cooperate . . . If we are to gain the understanding and support of legislators—or the Congress—we must have the understanding and support of the people.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“Wilderness Forever,” in Brower, David,
Wilderness: America’s Living Heritage,
Proceedings to the 7th Wilderness Conference,
San Francisco, CA, Sierra Club, 1961

“The wilderness that has come to us from the eternity of the past we have the boldness to project into the eternity of the future.”

—Howard Zahniser, testimony in Wilderness Preservation System Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs (88th Congress, 2nd Session, May 1964)

“By very definition this wilderness is a need. The idea of wilderness as an area without man’s influence is man’s own concept. Its values are human values. Its preservation is a purpose that arises out of man’s own sense of his fundamental needs.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“The Need for Wilderness Areas,”
Extension of Remarks of Hon. Hubert H. Humphrey,
Congressional Record, June, 1, 1955

“We have a profound, a fundamental need for areas of wilderness—a need that is not only recreational but spiritual, educational, scientific, essential to a true understanding of ourselves, our culture, our own natures, and our place in all Nature. It is a need that any modern man may know, whether his residence is urban, suburban, or rural.”

—Howard Zahniser,
“Wildlands, A Part of Man’s Environment,”
in *A Place to Live, The Yearbook of Agriculture*, 1963
(Washington, DC: United States Department of
Agriculture, 1963)

Wilderness Perspectives

“Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men?”

—William Bradford,
*A Relation and Journal of the Beginning
and Proceedings of the English Plantation
Settled at Plimouth in New England*, 1622

“A wilderness-condition is . . . a condition of straits, wants, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers.”

—Thomas Brooks,
Golden Key, 1675

“Wilderness is a damp and dreary place where all manner of wild beasts dash about uncooked!”

—Anonymous,
17th century

“Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs, —
To the silent wilderness,
Where the soul need not repress
Its music.”

—Percy Bysshe Shelley,
“The Invitation,” 1820,
in *English Poetry II: from Collins to Fitzgerald*,
edited by Charles W. Eliot

“The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wilderness is the preservation of the World. Every tree sends its fibres forth in search of the Wild. The cities import it at any price. Men plough and sail for it. From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind.”

—Henry David Thoreau,
speech at Concord Lyceum, 23 April 1851.
Subsequently, in Thoreau’s essay “Walking,”
Atlantic Monthly, June 1862 (v.9 no. 56)
and in the collection of Thoreau essays entitled
EXCURSIONS, Houghton Mifflin, 1863

“We need the tonic of wildness—At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder-cloud, And the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander.”

—Henry David Thoreau,
Walden, 1854

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.”

—John Muir,
“Wild Wool,” 1875
reprinted in *Steep Trails*, 1918

“Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness. All other travel is mere dust and hotels and baggage and chatter.”

—John Muir,
Letter to his wife, July 1888,
The Life and Letters of John Muir, 1924

“In God’s wildness lies the hope of the world—the great fresh unblighted, unredeemed wilderness. The galling harness of civilization drops off, and the wounds heal ere we are aware.”

—John Muir,
“The Alaska Trip,”
John of the Mountains, 1938

“These mountain wildernesses may not be used by numbers of people in anywise commensurate with those who will through the highways, but their individual service will be immeasurably greater. And as time goes on interest in outdoor America widens and deepens, their use will surely increase. It is not a matter of providing one type of recreation to the exclusion of the other. We need both, and we can have both.”

—William Greeley,
Chief of U.S. Forest Service,
Sunset Magazine, December, 1927

“Every prophet has to come from civilization, but every prophet has to go into the wilderness. He must have a strong impression of a complex society and all that it has to give, and then he must serve periods of isolation and meditation. This is the process by which psychic dynamite is made.”

—Winston Churchill,
Sunday Chronicle,
November, 8, 1931

“We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth, as ‘wild.’ Only to the white man was nature a ‘wilderness’ and only to him was the land ‘infested’ with ‘wild’ animals and ‘savage’ people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it ‘wild’ for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the ‘Wild West’ began.

—Chief Luther Standing Bear,
“Indian Wisdom,” 1933,
in *The Great New Wilderness Debate*,
edited by J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson

“In order to escape the whims of politics . . . [wilderness] areas . . . should be set aside by Act of Congress, . . . This would give them as close an approximation to permanence as could be realized in a world of shifting desires.”

—Bob Marshall,
“Suggested Program for Preservation
of Wilderness Areas,”
Memorandum to Secretary Ickes, April, 1934

“. . . wilderness (the environment of solitude) is a natural mental resource having the same basic relationship to man’s ultimate thought and culture as coal, timber, and other physical resources have to his material needs.”

—“The Wilderness Society Platform,”
The Living Wilderness 1, no. 1 (September 1935): 2

“This country has been swinging the hammer of development so long and so hard that it has forgotten the anvil of wilderness which gave value and significance to its labors. The momentum of our blows is so unprecedented that the remaining remnant of wilderness will be pounded into road-dust long before we find out its values.”

—Aldo Leopold,
“Why the Wilderness Society?”
The Living Wilderness 1, no. 1 (1935):6

“The most glorious value of the wilderness is that in it a person may be completely disassociated from the mechanical and dated age of the twentieth century, and bury himself in the timeless oblivion of nature. Its enjoyment depends on a very delicate psychological adjustment . . . You have got to be immersed in a region where you know that mechanization is really absent, and where you are thrown entirely on the glorious necessity of depending on your own powers.”

—Bob Marshall,
“The Wilderness on Trial,”
Outdoor America, March 1938

“It is imperative to maintain portions of the wilderness untouched so that a tree will rot where it falls, a waterfall will pour its curve without generating electricity, a trumpeter swan may float on uncontaminated water—and moderns may at least see what their ancestors knew in their nerves and blood.”

—Bernard De Voto,
Fortune, June 1947

“But all conservation of wilderness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when enough have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish.”

—Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac, 1949

“Wilderness is two things: fact and feeling. It is a fund of knowledge and a spring of influence. It is the ultimate source of health—terrestrial and human.”

—Benton MacKaye,
“Dam Site vs. Norm Site,” *Scientific Monthly*, 1950

“How much wilderness do the wilderness-lovers want? Ask those who would mine and dig and cut and dam in such sanctuary spots as these. The answer is easy: Enough so that there will be in the years ahead a little relief, a little quiet, a little relaxation, for any of our increasing millions who need and want it.”

—Wallace Stegner,
This Is Dinosaur, 1955

“The wilderness proper serves all park visitors. Those who penetrate it gain its fullest rewards. But, it is the part of a National Park that is not intensively used that makes a park, and the undeveloped wilderness beyond the roads furnishes the setting and the background. Take away the background, and the park atmosphere of the whole disappears, and with it a very large part of the pleasure of those whose only contact with the wilderness is experienced as they look outward over it from the roadside.”

—National Park Service,
The National Park Wilderness, 1957

Wilderness Values

“The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond our reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need . . .”

—Edward Abbey,
Desert Solitaire, 1968

“A man could be a lover and defender of the wilderness without ever in his lifetime leaving the boundaries of asphalt, powerlines and right-angled surfaces. We need wilderness whether or not we ever set foot in it. We need a refuge even though we may never need to go there. I may never in my life get to Alaska, for example, but I am grateful that it's there. We need the possibility of escape as surely as we need hope; without it life of the cities would drive all men into crime or drugs or psychoanalysis.”

—Edward Abbey,
Desert Solitaire, 1968

“Wilderness is an anchor to windward. Knowing it is there, we can also know that we are still a rich nation, tending our resources as we should—not a people in despair searching every last nook and cranny of our land for a board of lumber, a barrel of oil, a blade of grass, or a tank of water.”

—Clinton P. Anderson,
U.S. Senator,
American Forests, July 1963

“People drawn to the woods do not go there for what has come to be known as recreation. Why should anything once created need to be recreated? Why should humans, who did not and could not create themselves, assume that they can re-create themselves? By recreation we mean no such thing, but only distraction from what we ought to be paying attention to: the probably effects of our behavior.”

—Wendell Berry,
The Unforeseen Wilderness, 1971

“As long as we insist on relating to it strictly on our own terms—as strange to us or subject to us – the wilderness is alien, threatening, fearful. We have no choice then but to become its exploiters, and to lose, in consequence, our place in it. It is only when, by humility, generosity, and courage, we make ourselves able to relate to it on its terms that it ceases to be alien. Then it begins to be familiar to us. We begin to see that it is at least partly beneficent. We see that we belong to it, and have our place in it.

But if it has become familiar, if we have begun to feel at home in it, that is not because it has become comfortable or predictable or in any way prejudiced in our favor. (It is prejudiced in favor of life, leaving it up to us to qualify if we can.) It has not even become less fearful. But the nature of our fear has changed. We no longer fear it as we fear an enemy or as we fear malevolence. Now we fear it as we fear the unknown. Our fear has ceased to be the sort that accompanies

hate and contempt and ignorance; it has begun to be the fear that accompanies awe, that comes with the understanding or our smallness in the presence of wonder, that teaches us to be respectful and careful.”

—Wendell Berry,
The Unforeseen Wilderness, 1971

“It is a wilderness that is beautiful, dangerous, abundant, oblivious of us, mysterious, never to be conquered or controlled or second-guessed, or known more than a little. It is a wilderness that for most of us most of the time is kept out of sight, camouflaged, by the edifices and the busyness and the bothers of human society.”

—Wendell Berry,
“An Entrance to the Woods,” in *Recollected Essays*,
1965-1980, 1987

Passing the Wilderness Act “took time because the meaning of wilderness had not yet achieved the public understanding it now has – in large part because of the battle for the Wilderness Act.”

—David Brower,
“Wilderness and the Constant Advocate,”
Sierra Club Bulletin 49, no. 6 (September 1964): 3

“Wilderness is the bank for genetic variability of the earth.”

—David Brower,
quoted in *Encounters with the Archdruid*,
John McPhee, 1971

“Natural wilderness is a factor for world stability, not some remote place inimical to the human being. It is strange that it has been so long a place of fear to many men and so something to hate and destroy. Wilderness is not remote or indifferent but an active agent in maintaining a habitable world, though the co-operation is unconscious.”

—Frank Fraser Darling,
Wilderness and Plenty, 1971

“In scenery you see more than you can absorb. In wilderness you absorb more than you can see.”

—Tom Detrich

“Discovery is adventure. There is an eagerness, touched at times with tenseness, as man moves ahead into the unknown. Walking the wilderness is indeed like living. The horizon drops away, bringing new sights, sounds, and smells from the earth. When one moves through the forest, his sense of discovery is quickened. Man is back in the environment from which he emerged to build factories, churches, and schools. He is primitive again, matching his wits against the earth and sky. He is free of the restraints of society and free of its safeguards too.”

—William O. Douglas,
Of Men and Mountains, 1950

“We must provide enough wilderness areas so that, no matter how dense our population, man—though apartment-born—may attend the great school of the outdoors, and come to know the joy of walking the woods, alone and unafraid. Once he experiences that joy, he will be restless to return over and over again.... If that is to happen, the places where the goldthread, monkey flower, spring beauty, or starflower flourish in sphagnum moss must be made as sacred as any of our shrines.

—William O. Douglas,
Of Men and Mountains, 1950

“Wilderness has noise as when great winds make treetops roar, setting up the cadence of a pounding surf. Wilderness noise is also the murmur of brooks, the chatter of squirrels, the scolding of camp robbers. Wilderness noise is the sequence of birdcalls just before dawn, the ecstatic music of the whippoorwill at dusk, and the deep quiet of a darkened forest. The noise of wilderness is varied; it has no monotony; it is the music of the earth of which man is an integral part whether he knows it or not. The healing effects of wilderness are well known. Cares slough off; the conscious springs that create tension are relaxed; man comes to an understanding of his relation to the earth from which he came and to which he returns.

—William O. Douglas,
A Wilderness Bill of Rights, 1965

“When all the dangerous cliffs are fenced off, all the trees that might fall on people are cut down, all of the insects that bite are poisoned . . . and all of the grizzlies are dead because they are occasionally dangerous, the wilderness will not be made safe. Rather, the safety will have destroyed the wilderness.”

—Roger Yorke Edwards,
Canadian environmentalist

“Our vision of a wild America has become rooted in a vision of ourselves. Our National Parks, preserves, monuments, forests, and wildlife refuges speak of gratitude and hope, renewal and redemption.”

—Kim Heacox,
Visions of a Wild America: Pioneers of Preservation, 1996

“Perhaps then, wilderness will become something as humane as it is natural, as much within us as it is around us.”

—Kim Heacox,
Visions of a Wild America: Pioneers of Preservation, 1996

“If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it.”

—President Lyndon B. Johnson,
upon signing the Wilderness Act, 1964

“The wilderness says to me that the potential of earth and life is eternal, built into basic reality from the beginning. This wilderness thus becomes a symbol of renewal, the downs and the ups, the cycles of forever, the majesty of the universe, the dignity of life and the role of death in the resurrection of life.”

—Darwin Lambert,
Administrative History of Shenandoah National Park,
1979, p. 420

“Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization.”

—Aldo Leopold,
“Wilderness,” *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949

“Mechanized recreation already has seized nine-tenths of the woods and mountains; a decent respect for minorities should dedicate the other tenth to wilderness.”

—Aldo Leopold,
“Wilderness,” *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949

“Wilderness Areas are first of all a series of sanctuaries for the primitive arts of wilderness travel, especially canoeing and packing.”

—Aldo Leopold,
“Wilderness,” *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949

“Wilderness, then, assumes unexpected importance as a laboratory for the study of land-health In many cases we literally do not know how good a performance to expect of healthy land unless we have a wild area for comparison with sick ones.”

—Aldo Leopold,
“Wilderness,” *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949

“Our remnants of wilderness will yield bigger values to the nation’s character and health than they will to its pocketbook, and to destroy them will be to admit that the latter are the only values that interest us.”

—Aldo Leopold,
“A Plea for Wilderness Hunting Grounds,” 1925,
in *Aldo Leopold’s Southwest*,
David E. Brown and Neil B. Carmony, 1995

“In wilderness I sense the miracle of life, and behind it our scientific accomplishments fade to trivia.”

—Charles A. Lindbergh,
Life, 22 December 1967

“Wilderness itself is the basis of all our civilization. I wonder if we have enough reverence for life to concede to wilderness the right to live on?”

—Mardy Murie,
“The Need for Wilderness,”
*Minus 31 and the Wind Blowing: Nine Reflections
About Living on the Land*, 1980

“The wilderness holds answers to questions man has not yet learned to ask.”

—Nancy Newhall,
quoted in *Encounters with the Archdruid*,
John McPhee, 1971

“Wilderness to the people of America is a spiritual necessity, an antidote to the high pressure of modern life, a means of regaining serenity and equilibrium.”

—Sigurd Olson,
“We Need Wilderness,”
National Parks Magazine, January-March, 1946

“I have found that people go to the wilderness for many things, but the most important of these is perspective. They may think they go for fishing or the scenery or companionship, but in reality it is something deeper. They go to the wilderness for the good of their souls.”

—Sigurd Olson,
“We Need Wilderness,”
National Parks Magazine, January-March, 1946

“I believe this need of wilderness is inherent in most of us, even those seemingly farthest removed from it by civilized living. The cities may cover it up, make us forget temporarily: but deep underneath is an inherent urge for naturalness...”

—Sigurd Olson,
“We Need Wilderness,”
National Parks Magazine, January-March, 1946

“How often we speak of the great silences of the wilderness and of the importance of preserving them and the wonder and peace to be found there. When I think of them, I see the lakes and rivers of the North, the muskegs and expanses of tundra, the barren lands beyond all roads. I see the mountain ranges of the West and the high, rolling ridges of the Appalachians, I picture the deserts of the Southwest and their brilliant panoramas of color, the impenetrable swamplands of the South. They will always be there and their beauty may not change, but should their silences be broken, they will never be the same.”

—Sigurd Olson,
Listening Point, 1958

“As I sat there on the rock I realized that, in spite of the closeness of civilization and the changes that hemmed it in, this remnant of the old wilderness would speak to me of silence and solitude, of belonging and wonder and beauty. Though the point was only a small part of the vastness . . . , from it I could survey the whole. While it would be mine for only a short time, this . . . would grow into my life and into the lives of all who shared it with me.”

—Sigurd Olson,
Listening Point, 1958

“Freedom of the wilderness means many things to different people. If you really want to enjoy it, you must recognize your responsibilities as adult humans living in a world with others . . . Freedom gives no one license to change a heritage that belongs to the ages.”

—Sigurd Olson,
Reflections from the North Country, 1976

“Wilderness can be appreciated only by contrast, and solitude understood only when we have been without it. We cannot separate ourselves from society, comradeship, sharing, and love. Unless we can contribute something from wilderness experience, derive some solace or peace to share with others, then the real purpose is defeated.”

—Sigurd Olson,
Reflections from the North Country, 1976

“One highly encouraging aspect of the wilderness problem is the realization that as a nation we are approaching cultural maturity. No young nation ever worries overmuch about the intangible assets of wilderness as long as its great battle is to subdue wilderness and carve out cities and roads and farms from the wild.”

—Sigurd Olson,
Reflections from the North Country, 1976

“Wilderness management is 80-90 percent education and information and 10 percent regulation.”

—Max Peterson,
Chief of the U.S. Forest Service (1979-1987)

“In addition, there is a composite value in wilderness recreation that cannot be reproduced anywhere short of an authentically rugged and big tract of undeveloped country. It derives from all the activities and experiences one enjoys or doesn’t enjoy—camping, primitive travel, exhaustion, incomparable solitude, miserable weather—in a setting big enough for their simultaneous happenings with elbowroom.”

—John Saylor, Senator from Pennsylvania, 1962

“We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds—because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in 10 years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there—important, that is, simply as idea.”

—Wallace Stegner,
“Wilderness Letter,”
written to the Outdoor Recreation
Resources Review Commission, 1962,
subsequently in *The Sound of Mountain Water*, 1969

“We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.”

—Wallace Stegner,
“Wilderness Letter,” written to the Outdoor
Recreation Resources Review Commission, 1962,
subsequently in *The Sound of Mountain Water*, 1969

“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clean air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste.”

—Wallace Stegner,
“Wilderness Letter,” written to the Outdoor
Recreation Resources Review Commission, 1962,
subsequently in *The Sound of Mountain Water*, 1969

“Opponents of wilderness areas often act as if these resources were being thrown away. This is simply silly. The natural resources in wilderness do not disappear. Any future generation that decides that natural resources are more important than wilderness areas is free to change the law.”

—Lester C. Thurow,
The Zero-Sum Society, 1980

“To some extent wilderness is a link with our heritage of the frontier—an opportunity for a discovery or renewal of something already within us. You might call it an aloneness, a detachment from normal cares and responsibilities, or a renewed feeling of one’s place in nature.”

—U.S.DA. Forest Service,
National Forest Wilderness and Primitive Areas, 1973

