

“Creative Conservation:” The Environmental Legacy of Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson 1963-1969

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LBJ Expands the National Park Service

Overview Providing Context for Educators

The United States National Park Service is over 100 years old. It was formally created in 1916 under President Woodrow Wilson, although National Parks themselves go back even farther in the country’s history. Abraham Lincoln approved the creation of Yosemite as a state park in California in 1864. Congress passed legislation creating Yellowstone as the nation’s first National Park in 1872 during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant.

Teddy Roosevelt is often referred to as the “Conservation President.” He created the National Forest Service, and put more land under federal protection, whether as National Park, National Forest, Wildlife Refuge, or National Monument than any other President. He signed into law the Antiquities Act, which safeguarded early Native American ruins and antiquities.

During his New Deal, President Franklin Roosevelt, mobilized his Civilian Conservation Corps to work in national parks to build and repair roads, bridges, plant trees, and make improvements. He oversaw transfer of federally owned and operated national cemeteries, monuments, and historic sites to the administration of the National Park Service. Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy all added acres to our National Parks.

President Johnson’s “Great Society”

President Johnson introduced ideas relevant to the “Great Society” at the University of Michigan commencement on May 22, 1964, calling on the government and citizens to renew man’s contact with nature, reminding those in the audience that, “we have prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful.” The idea of “quality of life” was a key theme in Johnson’s vision for a “Great Society.”

Although racial equality and the elimination of poverty were the primary goals of the program, Johnson felt that environmentalism, especially where it concerned pollution and degradation of the natural and urban environments should be included in the goals of a better America envisioned by the “Great Society.” President Johnson felt that all Americans should be able to spend time in nature and appreciate our nation’s beauty. Therefore, he wanted to create more parks and wildlife areas, closer to cities for the use of ALL citizens.

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LBJ’S Contributions to the NPS

Arguably, the President who did the most to protect and promote the preservation of our environment was Lyndon Baines Johnson, President of the United States from 1963-1969. His enormously positive environmental legacy is often overshadowed by his unparalleled accomplishments in Civil Rights legislation and the contentious issues surrounding the Vietnam War.

Lyndon Johnson grew up in the beautiful Hill Country of Texas. Certainly, that experience as well as his wife, Lady Bird, played significant roles in encouraging his enormous efforts toward improving conservation of natural resources, preservation of those resources and wildlife, and our historic buildings in America as a whole. No place has LBJ’s environmental impact been felt more keenly than in the expansion of the National Park Service that took place during his Presidency.

President Johnson was greatly encouraged in his conservation efforts by his Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, also a valued member of the Kennedy administration. Udall, a native of Arizona, greatly appreciated the country’s natural beauty. He said of his work with President Johnson, “ [it] sort of developed and evolved and grew and gained strength as we began to have some successes, as the country responded and as the country prodded us too--because it works both ways. In an oral history, Udall said of Johnson’s additions to the Park Service, “the Johnson Administration was a high-water mark in many ways. “

The President and Lady Bird both felt that beauty and nature were an important part of life and should be available to everyone. Therefore, the creation and expansion of the National Parks were a natural part of his efforts to improve the lives of all Americans, especially the urban poor. The Johnsons both believed that parks and nature areas should be within easy reach of cities, where most American lived.

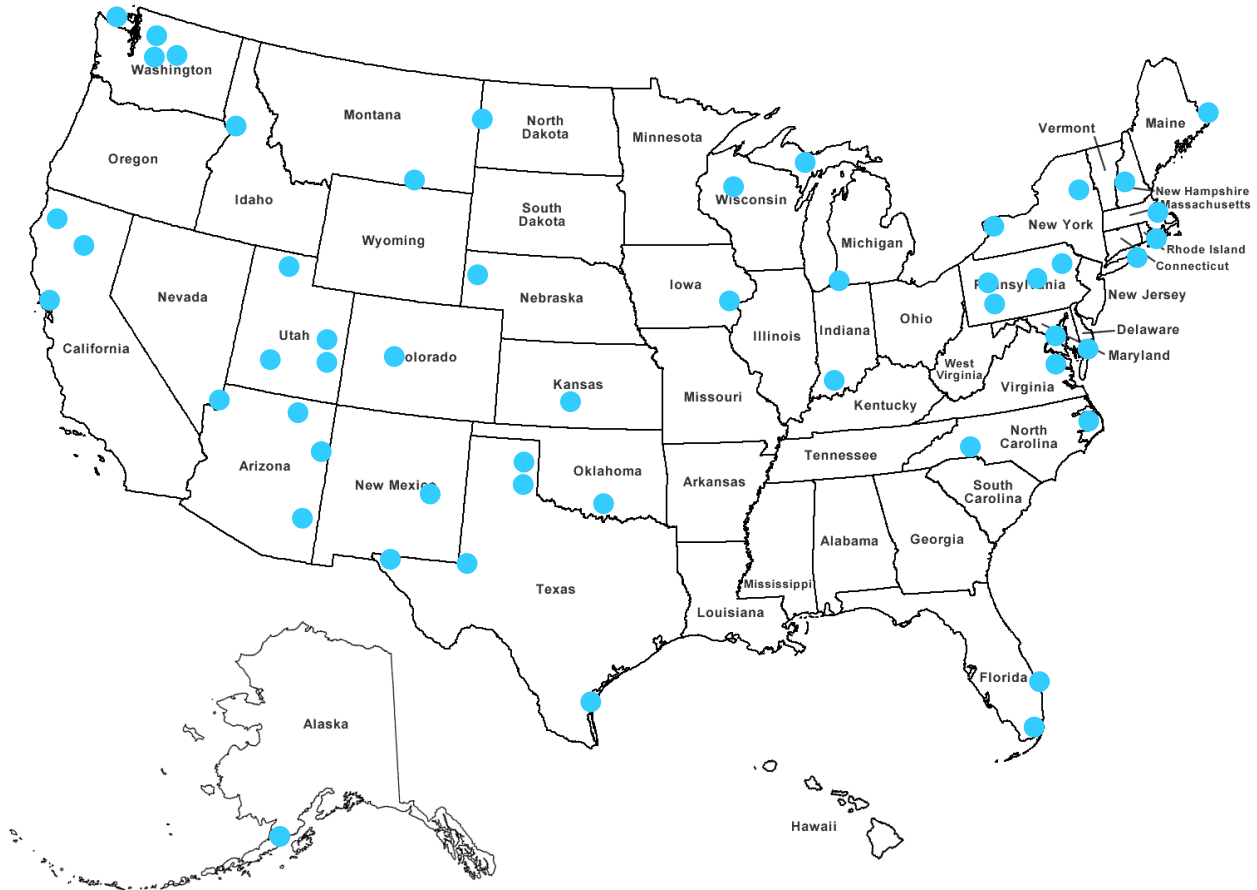
The President said in his State of the Union, on January 4, 1965.

“For over three centuries the beauty of America has sustained our spirit and has enlarged our vision. We must act now to protect this heritage. In a fruitful new partnership with the States and the cities the next decade should be a conservation milestone. We must make a massive effort to save the countryside and to establish—as a green legacy for tomorrow—more large and small parks, more seashores and open spaces than have been created during any other period in our national history.”

During his administration over 50 new parks were added to the park system and many existing ones were expanded.

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Additions to the National Parks During LBJ’s Administration



Map copied from NPOS website, “Lyndon B. Johnson and the Environment,” accessed October 24, 2019.
<https://www.nps.gov/lyjo/planyourvisit/upload/environmentcs2.pdf>

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List of Parks Created and Expanded Created During LBJ’s Administration

Agate Fossil Bed National Monument	Lake Chelan NRA
Alibates Flint Quarries	Lake Mead NRA
Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS	Mar-A-Lago NHS
Amistad NRA	Marble Canyon NM
Arbuckle NRA	National Visitor Center
Arches NM	Nez Perce NHP
Assateague Island NS	North Cascades NP
Bighorn Canyon NRA	Padre Island NS
Biscayne NM	Pecos NM
Canyonlands	Pictured Rocks NL
Cape Lookout NS	Redwood National Park
Capitol Reef NM	Roger Williams
Carl Sandburg Home NHS	Roosevelt Campobello Int Park
Chamizal N Memorial	Ross Lake NRA
Chamizal National Memorial	Saint-Gaudens NHS
Curecanti NRA	San Juan Island NHP
Delaware Water Gap NRA	Sanford NRA
Eisenhower NHS	Saugus Iron Works NHS
Fire Island NS	Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural NHS
Fort Bowie NHS	Whiskeytown -Shasta-Trinity NRA
Fort Larned NHS	Wolf Trap Farm
Fort Union Trading Post NHS	
George Rogers Clark NHS	
Golden Spike NHS	
Guadalupe Mountains NP	
Herbert Hoover NHS	
Hubbell Trading Post NHS	
Ice Age National Scientific Reserve	
Indiana Dunes NL	
John F. Kennedy NHS	
John Muir NHS	
Johnstown Flood N Monument	

Legend

NM National Monument

NS National Seashore

NHS National Historic Site

NP National Park

NRA National Recreation Area

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Activity: Write about your experience at a National Park.

This could be a group activity, project on a chosen National Park, or an extra credit project

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Activity:

Use the interactive map of the National Park System, provided by National Geographic, at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/02/160212-presidents-national-monuments-parks-history-photos/>, to learn where the parks are located and which ones are closest to you. Discuss the different types of parks within the System and what the appeals of each.

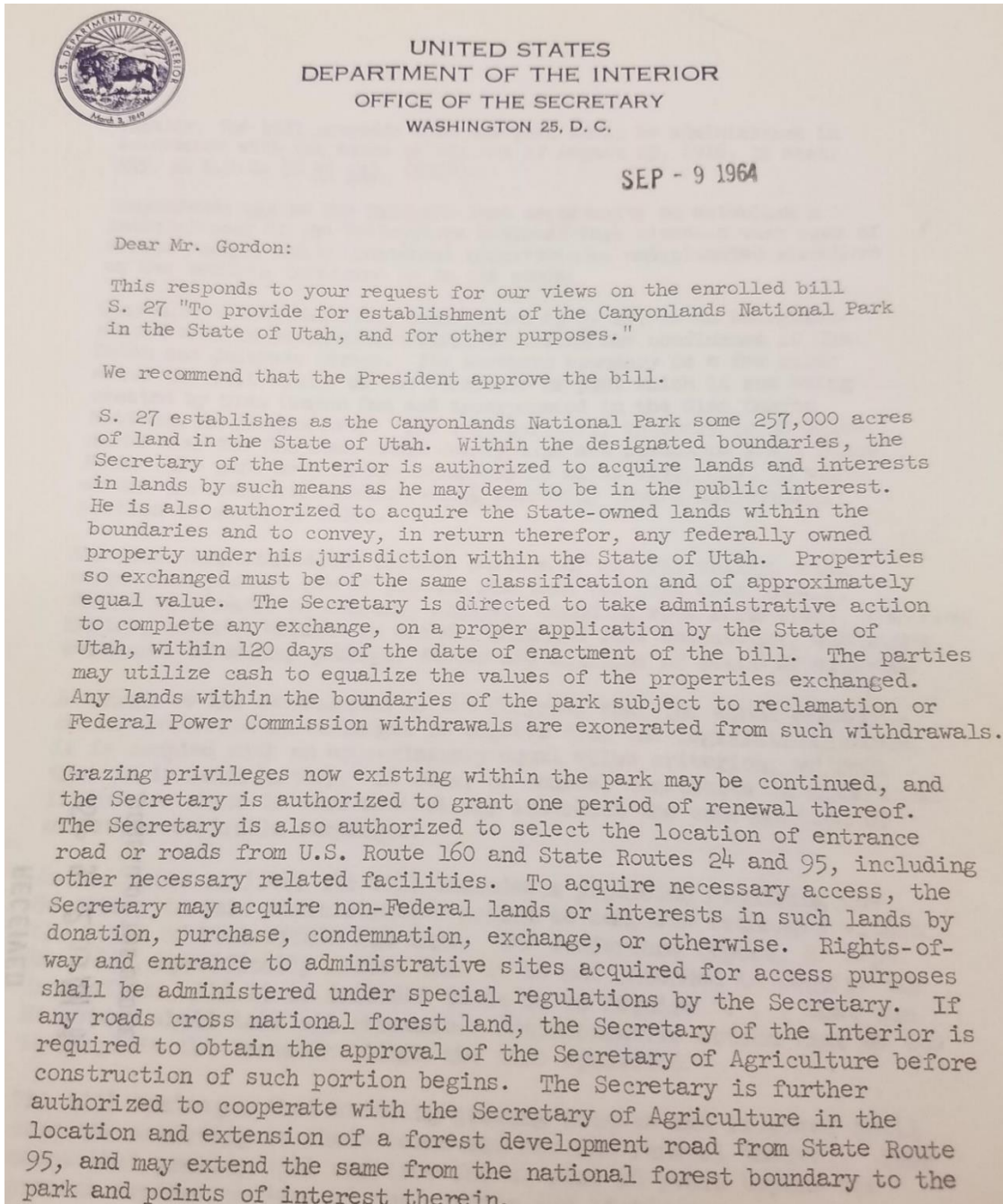


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Activity:

Examine the following primary source document, with a small group, from the LBJ Library. Analyze and discuss its importance as a possible piece of legislation and as a addition to the NPS as a whole. What impact do you think it has on us today, if any? Use the Analyze a Written Document Worksheet by Natironal Archives if needed located at:

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/document-novice>



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Finally, the bill provides that the park shall be administered in accordance with the terms of the Act of August 25, 1916, 39 Stat. 535, 16 U.S.C. §1 et seq. (1958).

Canyonlands may be the Nation's last opportunity to establish a national park of the Yellowstone National Park class--a vast area of scenic wonders and recreational opportunities unduplicated elsewhere on the American Continent or in the world.

Canyonlands National Park, established by S. 27, is an hourglass-shaped area in southeastern Utah, including the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers. Its southern boundary is a few miles above the tail waters of the reservoir or pool which is now being created by Glen Canyon Dam and incorporated in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Its most northerly boundary is 30 miles north near the San Juan-Grand County line and Deadhorse Point State Park. The park area is approximately 20 miles wide, east to west, at the northern and southern ends, narrowing toward the central portion to about 10 miles.

The park constitutes the central portion of an arid valley, much wider from plateau rim to plateau rim than the park area itself, filled with mazes of canyons, gigantic standing rock formations, towering buttes, natural bridges or arches, balanced rock formations, and other evidences of mighty geologic forces and millions of years of erosion.

Although we had recommended to the Congress that the equal classification criterion in exchanges be deleted from the legislation, since it is coupled with an approximately equal value criterion, we feel that it is satisfactory. It does, of course, constitute an artificial limitation which in some measure may interdict the consummation of otherwise desirable exchanges.

As indicated earlier, the bill includes a provision requiring the Secretary to take administrative action to complete exchanges within the State of Utah within 120 days. The conference report, H. Rept. No. 1881, specifically states that it is not intended to require the impossible. All it is intended to do is to require ". . . that the Secretary shall take all reasonable administrative action that he can to complete the transfer within the time specified."

The bill envisages that existing grazing permits and licenses shall continue according to their terms and for one renewal thereof. This means that grazing will continue for at most 10 years beyond the present expiration date of the permits and licenses.

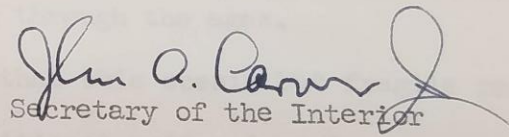
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It is to be noted the bill makes no provision for the continuing application of the mining and mineral leasing laws within the park. Under the original bill, S. 27, the mining and mineral leasing laws would have continued to apply to lands within the park subject to general regulation by the Secretary for a period of 25 years.

We believe that approval by the President of the bill will constitute the realization of an outstanding national park opportunity. A signing statement for the President is attached.

Sincerely yours,

Assistant


Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Kermit Gordon
Director, Bureau of the Budget
Washington, D.C.

Enclosure

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TEKS 113.16. Social Studies, Grade 5, Adopted 2018

Knowledge and Skills

(5) History. The student understands important issues, events, and individuals in the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the significance of issues and events of the 20th century such as industrialization, urbanization, the Great Depression, the world wars, the civil rights movement, and military actions;

(C) identify the accomplishments and contributions of individuals and groups such as Lyndon B. Johnson and Steward Udall in the areas of civil rights, women's rights, military actions, and politics.

(8) Geography. The student understands how people adapt to and modify their environment. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how and why people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States such as the use of human resources to meet basic needs; and

(B) analyze the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in the United States.

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

(A) identify past and present leaders in the national government, including the president and various members of Congress, and their political parties; and

(B) identify leadership qualities of national leaders, past and present such as LBJ.

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TEKS 113.17. Social Studies, Grade 6, Adopted 2018

Knowledge and skills.

(2) History. The student understands the influences of individuals and groups from various cultures on various historical and contemporary societies. The student is expected to:

(A) identify and describe the historical influence of individuals, such as Lyndon B. Johnson and Steward Udall on contemporary society; and

(B) describe the social, political, economic, and cultural contributions of individuals such as Lyndon Baines Johnson and Steward Udall

(4) Geography. The student understands how geographic factors influence the economic development and political relationships of societies. The student is expected to:

(B) identify geographic factors such as location, physical features, transportation corridors and barriers, and distribution of natural resources that influence a society’s political relationship such as designation of national parks and monuments.

(11) Citizenship. The student understands that the nature of citizenship varies among societies. The student is expected to:

(B) explain how opportunities for citizens to participate in and influence the political process vary among various contemporary societies such as the United States.

(12) Citizenship. The student understands the relationship among individual rights, responsibilities, duties, and freedoms in societies with representative governments. The student is expected to:

(A) identify and explain the duty of civic participation in societies with representative governments, such as a President or cabinet officer; and

(B) explain relationships among right, responsibilities, and duties in societies with representative governments, such as that of the President and cabinet officers.

(14) Culture. The student understands that all societies have basic institutions in common even though the characteristics of these institutions may differ. The student is expected to:

(A) compare characteristics of institutions in various contemporary society, such as the National Park Service; and

(B) analyze the efforts and Activity institutions use to sustain themselves over time, such as the National Park Service.

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TEKS 113.17. Social Studies, Grade 6, Continued

(17) Culture. The student understands the relationship among religion, philosophy, and culture. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the relationship among religious ideas, philosophical ideas and cultures, such as preservation and conservation.

(19) Social studies skills. The student applies critical thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including technology. The student is expected to:

(C) organize and interpret information from outlines, report, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps; and

(D) identify points of view about an issue or current topic.

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113.19 Social Studies, Grade 7, Adopted 2018

Knowledge and skills.

(1) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in Texas history. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the major era in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including Texas in the Civil Rights Era; and Contemporary Texas; and

(7) History. The student understands how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas during the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries. The student is expected to:

(D) describe and compare the civil right and equal rights movements of various groups in Texas in the 20th century and identify key leaders in these movements such as Lyndon B. Johnson.

(12) Economics. The student understands the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world. The student is expected to:

(C) analyze the impact of significant industries in Texas such as tourism to national parks on local, national, and international markets.

(17) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the leadership qualities of elected and appointed leader of Texas, past and present, including Texans who have been president of the United States, such as Lyndon B. Johnson.

(20) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including technology. The student is expected to:

(C) organize and interpret information from outlines, report, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps, such as those of NPS parks in Texas;

(E) support a point of view on a social studies issue, such as establishment of national parks in Texas.

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113.19 Social Studies, Grade 7, Continued

(21) Social studies skills. The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The student is expected to:

(A) create and interpret thematic maps, graphs, and charts representing various aspects of Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, including establishment of national parks, and

(B) analyze and interpret geographic distributions and patterns in Texas of national parks during the 19th, 20th, and 21st. centuries.

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113.41 United States History Studies Since 1877, Adopted 2018

Knowledge and skills.

(5) History. The student understands the effects of reform and third-party movements in the early 20th century. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the impact of Progressive Era reforms, including the establishment of National Parks and the NPS;

(9) History. The student understands the impact of the American civil rights movement.

(D) identify the roles of significant leader who supported various rights movements, including President Lyndon B. Johnson.

(14) Geography. The student understands the relationship between population growth and the physical environment. The student is expected to:

(B) identify the roles of governmental entities and private citizens in managing the environment such as the establishment of the National Park System, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Endangered Species Act.

(18) Government. The student understands changes over time in the role of government. The student is expected to:

(B) explain constitutional issues raised by federal government policy changes during times of significant events, including the 1960s and LBJ’s Great Society and the expansion of the National Park System.

(23) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

(A) evaluate the contributions of significant political and social leaders in the United States such as Lyndon Baines Johnson and Stewart Udall

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Suggestions for Additional Resources on National Parks:

Check out <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/> for additional educator resources and access to the Ken Burns film about the National Parks, “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea.”