

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
High School

Wilderness Hero #3
John F. Kennedy



President John F. Kennedy; 35th U.S. President
(No copyright indicated)

Common Core Standard Connections

Standards addressed will vary depending on how the teacher chooses to approach the lesson and/or activities.

Instructions for the teacher:

Rarely, if ever, is one individual responsible for the hard work and vision involved in bringing about wilderness legislation, specific wilderness designation, or wilderness management. The 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, was an important player in the ultimate success of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (signed into law the year after his untimely death). John F. Kennedy is the focus of this Wilderness Hero spotlight.

To help students get to know this amazing wilderness hero, choose one or more of the following:

- Photocopy and hand out *Wilderness Hero Sheet #3* to each student.

- Based on the information found there, have them write a short news article about John F. Kennedy and his role in the story of designated wilderness.
- From the list of *wilderness quotes* found within *Wilderness Hero Sheet #3*, have students select one or more, copy the quote, and then interpret what the quote(s) means to them.
- Use the handout as the basis of a short mini-lesson about John F. Kennedy and wilderness.
- Have students research John F. Kennedy's presidency and from their findings create a timeline showing important events taking place during President Kennedy's administration (January 1961 - November 1963).
 - This was a time of significant national and world events (Cuban Missile Crisis, civil rights movement, early Viet Nam War involvement, financial challenges, etc.).
 - Students should add narrative to show how, even during this challenging period, the President continued to speak about and encourage passage of the proposed Wilderness Act (which did pass the Senate April 1961 and again in April 1963 but not the house until after his death).
- Have students write, film, edit and share a podcast about John F. Kennedy and his thoughts about wilderness.
 - Use quotes intermixed with wilderness images and appropriate music to get the Wilderness Hero message across.
- Create posters featuring images of President Kennedy intermixed with wilderness images (see Wilderness.net) and favorite wilderness quotations.
- Create a *Wilderness Hero* classroom display or post on class website.
 - Have students create illustrations, maps, descriptive words, etc. that tell the story of John F. Kennedy.
- Have students study and then place their copy of *Wilderness Hero #3* in their Wilderness Investigations Folder.

Wilderness Hero #3
John F. Kennedy
1917 – 1963
35th President of the United States



President Kennedy with young son at their beloved coastal retreat
(Public Domain)

Introduction to a Hero

John F. Kennedy became the 35th President of the United States January 20, 1961. From his childhood days until his death John Kennedy loved being in outdoor settings. He especially loved the ocean, sailing, and playing family football games at his family's home on the coast near Brookline, Massachusetts. It is, therefore, not surprising that he would, as a Congressman and as President, support wilderness preservation. Even during difficult times of national and international crisis, President Kennedy was unfailing in his support for what would become the Wilderness Act of 1964 and those who worked to accomplish this visionary task.

Here are some basic biographic details about John F. Kennedy. For more information speak with parents, teachers, librarians, and others. They can help you find even more about his interesting life.

- Born: May 29, 1917 (Brookline, Massachusetts)
- Moved to New York City when he was 10

- Participated in many sports including tennis, basketball, football and golf
- John loved to read as a young person (a love that continued into adulthood)
 - He wrote *Profiles in Courage* which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1957
- Graduated from Harvard in 1940
- A Navy hero during World War II (He gained a reputation for leadership when saving most of his crew after their boat was rammed by a Japanese war ship.)
- Three terms in the House of Representatives
- Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1952
- Married to Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953
- Became 35th President of the United States on January 20, 1961
- Most well known for his work establishing the Peace Corps, his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis, his attempts to avoid escalation of the Vietnam conflict, his support of civil rights legislation, and his support for expanding government protection to parks and forests AND to establish federally designated wilderness.
 - He was a supporter of the Wilderness Bill (a predecessor of the Wilderness Act) while in the Senate.
- The Wilderness Act passed the Senate for the last time in April of 1963 and was supported throughout the process by President Kennedy.
 - The House of Representatives passed the bill after President Kennedy's death.
 - President Lyndon Johnson (who was the Vice-President in the Kennedy Administration) signed the Wilderness Act into law September 3, 1964 less than one year after John Kennedy died.
- Assassinated November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas while traveling in a motorcade with his wife and other political leaders.

Wilderness quotes from President Kennedy

John F. Kennedy valued the wild landscapes of the United States. He spoke on conservation topics both before and during his presidency. Many believe that the Wilderness Act of 1964 would have never moved towards passage had he not been in support of it and those who worked tirelessly to create it. Stewart Udall, Interior Secretary in the Kennedy administration said about Kennedy and wilderness: "When the wilderness bill got off the ground... two persons I would single out are President John F. Kennedy and Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico... Kennedy put it (the Wilderness Act) in, and that electrified the country."

Here are a few quotes from John F. Kennedy that speak of wilderness and nature:

- “It is our task in our generation, to hand down unblemished to those who come after us, as was handed down to those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours.” (Remarks to the National Wildlife Federation; March 3, 1961)
- “Our already overcrowded national parks and recreation areas will have twice as many visitors 10 years from now as they do today. If we do not plan today for the future growth of these and other great natural assets—not only parks and forests but wildlife and wilderness preserves, and water projects of all kinds—our children and their children will be poorer in every sense of the word.” (From his State of the Union Address; January 14, 1963)
- “The history of America is more, than that of most nations, the history of man confronted by nature... From the beginning Americans had a lively awareness of land and the wilderness.” (From the Introduction to Stewart Udall’s *The Quiet Crisis*; 1963)
- “In the field of conservation, every day that is lost is a valuable opportunity wasted.” (University of North Dakota; September 1963)



Secretary of the Interior Stewart Lee Udall and
President John F. Kennedy at the White House in 1961
(Public Domain)

- “We must reaffirm our dedication to the sound practices of conservation which can be defined as the wise use of our natural environment.” (Message to Congress, March 1962)

