

Wilderness

In: The Forest Protection or Custodial Management Era, 1910-1933

Robert Marshall, founder of the Wilderness Society and author of the recreation portion of the *National Plan for American Forestry* (the Copeland Report), worked for the Forest Service in the mid-1930's. He proposed that the Forest Service inventory large unroaded areas that might be suitable for wildernesses or primitive area designation. Shortly before his untimely death in 1939, Marshall and several others made a tour of the western national forests, performing this inventory and making recommendations to regional foresters to greatly increase the number of wilderness and primitive areas.

ROBERT MARSHALL

Adapted from Terry West's Centennial Mini-Histories of the Forest Service (1992)

Robert Marshall (1901-1939) was the son of Louis Marshall, one of the Nation's most prominent constitutional lawyers, social reformers, and defenders of the Adirondack State Park in New York. As a young man, Robert Marshall spent his summers at Lower Saranac Lake at this family's estate. His first book, *High Peaks of the Adirondacks*, was published in 1922. His love of nature and exploration influenced his college studies in forestry. Marshall received his B.S. degree from the Syracuse School of Forestry in 1924, then a Masters of Forestry from Harvard in 1925, and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1930.

Bob Marshall worked for the Forest Service from 1925 to 1928 at the Northern Rocky Mountain Forest Experiment Station at Missoula, Montana. After leaving the Forest Service to earn his doctorate, he again joined the Forest Service in 1932-33, working on the recreation portion of the *National Plan for American Forestry* (1933). In that report, Marshall foresaw the need to place 10 percent of all U.S. forest lands into recreation areas—ranging from large parks to wilderness areas to roadside campsites. In the same year, he became the Director of Forestry for the Office of Indian Affairs, where he supported roadless areas on reservations.

In 1937, Bob Marshall returned to the Forest Service as Chief of a new Division of Recreation and Lands in the Washington Office. In his short tenure at the Washington Office he drafted the "U Regulations" which replaced the "L-20 Regulations" for primitive areas and wildernesses. These regulations gave greater protection to wilderness areas by banning timbering, road construction, summer homes, and even motorboats and aircraft. Marshall checked recreational development plans for the national forests to see if they included access for lower income groups—a very real concern during the Depression years of the 1930's. He also thought that protection should be granted to large areas over 200,000 acres—that they should be reclassified as primitive areas. In late 1938, he and others made a trip through the western national forests to map and propose millions of acres of national forest lands for primitive or wilderness status.

Marshall was an eccentric and maverick who was famed at the time for both his vigorous 40-mile hikes and radical political opinions. Marshall was famous for his hiking speed—once walking 70 miles in a 24-hour period to make connections for a trip—while at other times easily outdistancing his companions on trips into the

mountains. Bob Marshall was a leading writer on the social management of American forests, both public and private, combining conservation with social theory. He, along with Gifford Pinchot, George P. Ahern, and three others, signed a letter in 1930 that recommended increased Federal and State regulation over private forests and transfer of private lands to public ownership and control. For the next 15 years, this issue would be raised by various Forest Service Chiefs, but Congress would not approve.

A prolific writer, Marshall published a number of articles and pamphlets, as well as several books, including: *The People's Forests* (1933), *Arctic Village* (1933), and *Arctic Wilderness* (1956). Marshall was the principle founder and financial supporter of the Wilderness Society in 1935. Unable to endure the diplomacy of working within the bureaucracy, he had planned to resign just before his unexpected fatal heart attack in 1939. The following year, the Forest Service reclassified and renamed three primitive areas in Montana as the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

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