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Old or new, these are MUST READ (or must watch) pieces of media. Books, video, radio and other media featured here are items we consider essential to your knowledge about our forests, our environment, and the humans who influence each of them. Stay informed about the environment. And tell us about "Must Knows" you find.

The Enduring Wilderness: Protecting Our Natural Heritage through the Wilderness Act

by Doug Scott

Fulcrum Publishing, 2004, 184 pages

Review by Peg Griffith

In the United States of America, 107 million acres of land are designated as Wilderness. Though that is less than five percent of this country's total land mass, it is still impressive in one very significant way: No other country before ours had ever done such a thing. No other nation had set aside some portion of its geography—and yes, its resources—saying, "This should be preserved forever, for all future generations." The Wilderness Act of 1964 did just that. The journey was neither easy nor short. This book chronicles both the struggle and the citizens who willed the Wilderness Act into law.

More astounding than the fact that the U.S. is the first country with designated wilderness is how long it took us to get there: John Muir began calling for preservation in the late 1800s, yet it took 64 years and an act of Congress to make it happen. Why? Ironically, the very organizations most Americans think would work to save the wilderness fought it—not just timber men and miners, but the U.S. Forest Service and the Parks Department as well. Humans like to manage nature. Somehow, we think we know better than Mother Nature herself.

But this is not just a story of environmentalists versus industrialists. The author describes the need for wilderness as fundamental to the shape of this country and its citizenry: "...not merely as a quarry of raw materials but as the very fabric of a distinctive American culture." The rise of the great individual American character was shaped by the raw wilderness.

Author Wallace Stegner takes the discussion to a spiritual level: "We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never to 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."

Some of the people who fought the battle for natural purity and a wellspring of spiritual healing are familiar names: John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Bob Marshall. But others may be new to the reader: Howard Zahniser, for one, who literally wrote the Wilderness Act of 1964.

It's a compelling story, and one that hasn't ended. Today, land continues to be added to the designated Wilderness system. Georgia has Wilderness areas in the northern mountains, on the Atlantic coast, and on the southern border. Those areas are: Big Frog Wilderness, Blackbeard Island Wilderness, Blood Mountain Wilderness, Brasstown Wilderness, Cohutta Wilderness, Cumberland Island Wilderness, Ellicott Rock Wilderness, Mark Trail Wilderness, Okefenokee Wilderness, Raven Cliffs Wilderness, Rich Mountain Wilderness, Southern Nantahala Wilderness, Tray Mountain Wilderness, and Wolf Island Wilderness. (For more information about each area, [click here.](#))

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