
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Radio Address on Conservation

[37: Conservation]
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RADIO ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
ON CONSERVATION WEEK AND CONSERVATION;
MARCH 31, 1930.

Beginning to-morrow, New York State will observe conservation week for the eighth consecutive year for the instruction of the public in the importance of the conservation of our natural resources.

This date has been selected because it marks the resumption of outdoor activities. Winter is behind us and our thoughts are turning to the open country and the pleasures it holds for us. The ice is off of the streams, - or ought to be, the trout are curious as to the new varieties of bait and lures that the anglers have prepared for them, and the anglers are hopeful that these devices will insure them full creels. The trout season opens on the first Saturday in April and is an important day in conservation week. Some of the forest fire towers are manned during this week and for the ensuing six months the observers, the eyes of the state's forest fire protective system, will be on the alert to spot and report threatening smoke. Activities are resumed in the state's forest tree nurseries, and the shipment of trees to make new plantations in the state's program of reforestation begins. Throughout the state's system of parks and public camp sites preparations begin for the millions of tourists and vacationists that will flock to them two months hence, not alone from this state but from all over the country. It is quite appropriate that the birthday of John Burroughs whose life was largely devoted to teaching the lesson of conservation should fall in conservation week.

Real conservation of our natural resources as a function of state government is only about twenty years old, although some attempts at it were made sixty years ago. When the country was settled, there appeared to be no need of conserving the forests, the fish, the game or the waters. Within the boundaries of what is now New York state, practically all that was not water was virgin forest, - 29,000,000 acres of it. Game was abundant in the forests and fish in the streams and rivers. As far as natural resources were concerned, the early settlers really suffered from an embarrassment of riches. Conservation was distinctly not one of their

problems. The forests not only were cut to supply the settlers with lumber and wood, but they were burned to clear land for planting and settlement. Fish and game were the common food, "Dutchers' meat" was a rarity. Two centuries of unrestricted and prodigal use failed to reduce this great natural wealth enough to warn the people that it was not inexhaustible.

One of the first to sound a note of warning was Governor DeWitt Clinton. In 1821, when the population of the state was a million and a half and increasing rapidly, he foresaw the need of more intelligent use of the forests if the economic welfare of the state were to be maintained. In a message to the Legislature he called attention to the fact that we were cutting our forests with no policy of replacement and pointed out the need of such a policy. It took the state sixty years to catch up with Governor Clinton's understanding of the situation and then in 1885 there was established a state forestry department. Fifteen years later the state began in a small way a policy of forest replacement by planting 5,000 trees in the forest preserve. From that small beginning we have progressed steadily until there have been planted over 200,000,000 trees from stock raised in the state nurseries and are now planting more than 25,000,000 each year. I am a firm believer in reforestation as a profitable means of utilizing idle, non-agricultural land and have planted from 8,000 to 10,000 trees a year since 1912 on my farm at Hyde Park.

Sixty years ago the state took its first step in the conservation of wild life by organizing a Fisheries Commission consisting of Horatio Seymour, Seth Green and Robert B. Roosevelt. A few years later a few game protectors were added to this Commission and there was built up gradually a Fisheries, Game and Forest Commission. In 1909 the state took over the work of protecting the forests in the forest preserve counties from fire and today has a forest fire protective system covering more than 16,000,000 acres and including all the large forested areas in the state.

Conservation grows as the people realize the need of it. Thirty years ago, the Palisades of the Hudson, those rugged cliffs of sheer rock that form one of the most striking scenic features of

the lower Hudson, were being converted into trap rock at a rate that insured their speedy destruction. The movement to save the Palisades resulted in the establishment of the Palisades Inter-state Park by New York and New Jersey, with 45,000 acres of mountains, woods and lakes and containing some of the wildest and most rugged scenery to be found in the eastern United States. This great park within less than an hour's ride of New York city, has repaid its cost many times over in the healthful recreation it has afforded the people of New York city during the hot months.

Niagara Falls, America's greatest cataract, Mecca of brides and grooms for nearly a century, was fitted into ^{the} state's conservation policy in 1909 when the State Reservation at Niagara was established to preserve the scenic beauties of the Falls.

The State Forest Preserve was established in 1885 and ten years later its integrity for all time was insured when the people wrote into the state constitution the provisions that it should be "forever kept as wild forest land." The Adirondack and Catskill parks which contain the bulk of the Forest Preserve were established in 1892. Together, they include, roughly, 4,000,000 acres, about half of which is owned by the state. All state owned land within the Forest Preserve counties belongs to the forest preserve whether inside or outside of the parks. The Adirondack park is the largest state park in the United States and is larger than any of the National parks except the Yellowstone. Within the boundaries of these great parks are the state's highest mountains, and the forests on their slopes protect the sources of the state's principal rivers. The forests on the upper slopes of these mountains are state owned which precludes their being cut and insures the continuance of the protection of the upper waters of the rivers.

It is as a great hunting ground and playground that the Forest Preserve is best known to the public. These great areas with a total acreage larger than some of our neighboring states provide safe and sanitary camping grounds for hundreds of thousands of vacationists every summer who seek the big woods to live close to

nature. States all over the eastern half of the country contribute their quotas of campers from late June to early September. This development of forest conservation was started ten years ago as part of the forest fire protective system. Stone fire places were built at attractive places along highways and trails that hunters and campers might have places to build their camp fires without endangering the surrounding forests. The popularity of these public camp sites was immediate and the demand for accommodations at them increased tremendously from year to year. Today many of them will accommodate a population equal to a good sized village. An abundant supply of pure water, carefully guarded against pollution, is the prime essential at all of these sites, and a forest ranger is in charge of each to see that the camps are kept sanitary and that the regulations regarding fires are obeyed. The Forest Reserve is the home of the state's big game and yields from 7,000 to 10,000 deer each fall with a few hundred bears thrown in for good measure.

In 1911, New York state coordinated its various conservation activities. The Conservation Commission was created and took over the functions of the Forest, Fish and Game Commission and the Water Supply Commission, and since then all conservation work has headed up in this body now known as the Conservation Department. New functions have been added from time to time as conditions required. In 1909 the state took over the remarkable collection of mineral springs whose medicinal waters had made Saratoga Springs famous as a health resort. The springs under private ownership had been pumped for carbonic acid gas to such an extent that many of them had ceased to flow. Under state ownership the pumping for gas was stopped, many of the wells were capped and a scientific study was made to ascertain the amount of water that the wells and springs could be depended to produce without impairment. In 1915 the Saratoga Reservation was placed under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission and administered as a division of that body. Water from the restored springs was supplied free to the public at its source and mineral water baths and hydrotherapeutic treatments were given. Patronage of the baths increased

from 10,000 in 1915 to 100,000 in 1927. This year a survey of the reservation has been made by a commission to prepare a plan for a broader and more scientific use of the waters with a view to making it a cure centre under strict medical direction. This commission was assisted by eminent medical specialists of this country and Europe and reported a plan under which the drinking of the waters and the taking of the baths will be regulated by competent medical authorities to suit the needs of the individual patient.

Seven years ago the state undertook the development of a unified system of state parks, the purpose of which was to preserve and protect places of scenic and historic interest and also provide adequate recreational areas near large centers of population throughout the state. This movement was initiated in 1923 with the organization of the State Council of Parks and upon the reorganization and consolidation of the state government in 1927, was made part of the work of the Conservation Department, as the Division of Parks. Today, New York state has a system of state parks extending from the eastern end of Long Island to Niagara Falls. In the development of a state park program, the anticipated growth of the state ^{was} taken into consideration and especially of the larger cities; and the need of great parking areas serving the metropolitan districts, the enormous increase in motor cars, and the further conservation needs of the state.

The state is divided into eleven districts, or regions, each under the immediate direction of a park commission. These regions in order are:

Niagara, which includes the State Reservation at Niagara, with an approximate acreage of 621 acres.

Allegany, including the Allegany State Park, Cuba Lake Reservation and Lake Erie State Park, with nearly 68,000 acres.

Genesee, including Letchworth Park, Genesee Region Park and parkway, with a little more than 5,000 acres.

Finger Lakes Region, including ten parks and reservations covering over 4,000 acres.

Central New York Region, including ten parks with a total area of over 4,000 acres.

The Forest. Preserve Region which includes the great Adirondack and Catskill Parks and seventeen other parks, reservations and places of historic interest. This region covers more than 2,000,000 acres and includes the Saratoga Springs Reservation, the Bennington Battlefield Park, the St. Lawrence Reservation, Lake George Battleground Park, Crown Point Reservation, Lester Park, Stark's Knob, the old Senate House at Kingston, the Saratoga battle monument, the Saratoga battlefield, John Boyd Thacher Park, Sir William Johnson mansion, the Herkimer home, Guy Park house, Schuyler mansion, Ft. Gralo and the cottage on Mt. McGregor where General Grant spent his last days.

The Taconic region containing Taconic State Park, Taconic parkway, Roaring Brook State Park, the Clinton house at Poughkeepsie and Taghkanic Lake State Park, with an aggregate area of 8,500 acres.

The Palisades region contains the Palisades Interstate Parks, Washington's headquarters at Newburgh, Temple Hill, Knox headquarters at Newburgh and the Stony Point Reservation, with an aggregate area of over 47,000 acres.

The Westchester region includes Philipse Manor Hall, five water front parks and inland reservations and parkways, with a total area of nearly 17,000 acres.

The Long Island region contains twenty-two parks and parkways and fills an important place in the state's park system in, providing recreational facilities for the great Metropolitan district. Developments in this district have gone forward as rapidly as possible, but it has not been possible to make adequate provision for all the people who wish to use these parks. The attendance at these parks during the summer runs into millions. Picnicking is permitted at all the Long Island state parks; camping at Fire Island, Hither Hills, Heckscher and Wildwood. There are playgrounds at Jones Beach, North Valley Stream, Valley Stream,

Hempstead Lake, Belmont Lake, Fire Island, Heckscher, Sunken Meadow and Wildwood parks. There is surf bathing at Jones Beach, Fire Island and Hither Hills, sound bathing at Wildwood, Sunken Meadow and Hither Hills, bay bathing at Jones Beach, Fire Island and Heckscher and fresh water bathing at Valley Stream. At Valley Stream, Fire Island, Belmont Lake, Sunken Meadow and Heckscher, boating is one of the attractions.

The total area included in the Long Island region at the present time is over 10,000 acres and during the months of July and August, it provides healthful enjoyment for a larger number of people than any equal area in the state's park system.

The Erie region includes Grand Island State Park, Buckhorn Island and four inland parks, with a total area of about 1,500 acres.

To the tourists interested in the early history of the country, New York's state system of parks supplies a wealth of interesting material. History can be studied on the ground where it was made. The Hudson and Champlain valleys have many places made famous in the struggle of the American colonies for their independence, and in the earlier war between England and France. Stony Point, captured by "Mad Anthony" Wayne, West Point, a strong American post and the scene of Benedict Arnold's treason in the American Revolution and now the site of the United States Military Academy, Washington's headquarters at Newburgh, the old Senate House at Kingston and numerous other historic spots are easily accessible to tourists in the Hudson valley below Albany.

Going north from Albany, one can follow the trail over which General Knox transported the cannon captured at Ticonderoga to Boston to be used against the British. At Bemis Heights, the highway passes through the Saratoga battlefield where was fought the battle that frustrated the campaign to divide the colonies and brought to their support troops and money from France. On this field

the lines of the opposing forces are marked and a number of the military works have been restored. Six miles north of the battlefield is the Schuylers monument which marks the place where General Burgoyne surrendered.

Just south of Lake George, along side the highway is Bloody Pond and the Lake George battlefield with their memories of the French and Indian War. At Crown Point, the ruins of old Fort St. Frederic and Fort Amherst are grim reminders of the struggles between England and France and King George and his American colonies. The state park at Crown Point at the western terminal of the new interstate bridge between New York and Vermont, contains a little more than 100 acres and recreation facilities have been added to the historic attractions.

In the conservation of our natural resources, the intelligent cooperation of the public is of great importance. The laws that are made for the protection of the state's wild life are based upon biological knowledge and if strictly enforced, can be depended upon to prevent the extermination of any species. Knowledge of these laws by the public and cooperation with the duly constituted authorities to prevent violations of these laws tends steadily to raise the standard of wild life conservation.

Everyone can assist in protecting the forests from fire by being careful with fire and smoking materials themselves when in the woods or passing along the highways through the woods, by urging care with fire on the part of others and by promptly reporting fires or violations of fire regulations to the nearest forest ranger.

Not everyone can participate in the tree planting activities of the state, but there are still many thousands who have land not good enough for raising agricultural crops that is suited to growing trees and could be made profitable by reforestation. Forests are valuable not only as a source of timber supply, but they protect the head waters of our rivers and streams, they prevent the too rapid run-off of rain and melting snow and tend to equalize the

flow of streams. They return to the land more than they take from it and maintain its fertility. On the watersheds that supply drinking water, they are an effective aid against pollution. They are essential to maintaining a supply of wild life, - birds, beasts, and fish, - furnishing homes for the wild birds and beasts and insuring a constant supply of water for the streams.

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CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AS A FUNCTION OF STATE GOVERNMENT

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