

Conservatives in the Everglades: Sun Belt Environmentalism and the Creation of Everglades National Park

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AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II, SEVERAL SOUTHERN STATES SOUGHT to sustain the economic growth they had experienced during the war. Many focused on building up their manufacturing, high-tech, and resource extraction industries. At the same time, tourism was poised to become an industry in the postwar South, especially in coastal states that could take advantage of the South's climate, natural beauty, and undeveloped natural areas. These two economic forces seemed destined to clash: many of the South's heavy and extractive industries defiled the environment, while tourism was often dependent on pristine environments.¹

The South's postwar economic development also entailed changes in the identity, or at least the public image, of the South. The region's racist past, its backward reputation, its past hostility to the values of

¹ James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936–1980* (Baton Rouge, 1982); Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938–1980* (New York, 1991); James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877–1984* (Lexington, Ky., 1984); Raymond A. Mohl, ed., *Searching for the Sunbelt: Historical Perspectives on a Region* (Knoxville, 1990); Carl Abbott, *The New Urban America: Growth and Politics in Sunbelt Cities* (Chapel Hill, 1981). Tourism in the Sun Belt South has been explored by few historians; especially relevant to this article are Andrew W. Kahrl, "Sunbelt by the Sea: Governing Race and Nature in a Twentieth-Century Coastal Metropolis," *Journal of Urban History*, 38 (May 2012), 488–508; and Andrew W. Kahrl, "The Sunbelt's Sandy Foundation: Coastal Development and the Making of the Modern South," *Southern Cultures*, 20 (Fall 2014), 24–42. See also Andrew W. Kahrl, *The Land Was Ours: African American Beaches from Jim Crow to the Sunbelt South* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012); Harvey H. Jackson III, *The Rise and Decline of the Redneck Riviera: An Insider's History of the Florida-Alabama Coast* (Athens, Ga., 2011); and Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 2005). I wish to thank the *Journal's* anonymous reviewers for their valuable criticisms of this work. Portions were presented at the 2012 Florida Conference of Historians annual meeting, the 2013 Georgia Association of Historians annual conference, and the 2013 Dimensions of Political Ecology conference. Elna Green and Jennifer Gray read portions of this paper. Research at the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries, conducted in 2009, was made possible by the Cecilia L. Johnson Grant for Visiting Graduate Scholars.

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middle-class capitalism, and its legacy of secession were not generally compatible with the desires of business investors. This conflict was even more pronounced in the case of tourism, an economic activity that relied on the public's perceptions of place.²

Although the region's wartime economic growth was subsidized by the federal government, the rise of the Sun Belt South was inextricably and perhaps ironically linked to the emergence of modern conservatism.³ This political movement, devoted to tradition, the free market, and individual rights, was particularly attractive to many white southerners who confronted diverse economic, social, and cultural changes during and after World War II. In Florida, a third emergent force shaped the state's economic growth and political climate after the war: modern environmentalism.⁴ Environmentalism and ecological ideas about nature, along with conservative ideas about individual

² On southern identity see C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1960); W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941); James C. Cobb, *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (Athens, Ga., 1999); and James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York, 2005). Landscape and identity have played a major role in many histories of the South, most notably in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (New York, 1929), yet southern environmental historians have made few explicit connections between their works and southern identity. Also see A. Cash Koeniger, "Climate and Southern Distinctiveness," *Journal of Southern History*, 54 (February 1988), 21–44; and Paul S. Sutter, "What Gullies Mean: Georgia's 'Little Grand Canyon' and Southern Environmental History," *Journal of Southern History*, 76 (August 2010), 579–616.

³ Works on the emergence of modern conservatism in the Sun Belt include Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, 2005); Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism: Phoenix and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia, 2013); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, 2001); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, 2006); Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, 2007); Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, eds., *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism* (New York, 2010); Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (New Haven, 2008); and Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932–1968* (Chapel Hill, 2001). For a more complete analysis of the literature on modern conservatism, see Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History*, 98 (December 2011), 723–43.

⁴ Although modern conservatism has been widely studied by historians of the South, especially in the context of the civil rights movement, environmentalism has largely been seen by historians as a national development centered in northern liberal urban areas or as a movement tied to the development and protection of the West. Even the field of southern environmental history, which has blossomed in recent years, has not examined environmental politics in the South and remains dominated by a few topics. Befitting the South's experience, agro-environmental history has loomed large. See Mart A. Stewart, "What Nature Suffers to Groe": *Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680–1920* (Athens, Ga., 1996); Mark D. Hersey, *My Work Is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (Athens, Ga., 2011); Pete Daniel, *Toxic Drift: Pesticides and Health in the Post–World War II South* (Baton Rouge, 2005); Lynn A. Nelson, *Pharsalia: An Environmental Biography of a Southern Plantation, 1780–1880* (Athens, Ga., 2007); and Drew A. Swanson, *Remaking Wormsloe Plantation: The Environmental History of a Lowcountry Landscape* (Athens, Ga., 2012). Environmental histories of the Civil War and of water in the South have received a great deal of recent focus. See Megan

property rights and the role of the state, proved to be central to the state's development.⁵

The creation of Everglades National Park (ENP) in 1947 was deeply influenced by both environmentalism and conservatism and illustrates the diversity of conservative attitudes in the South toward nature.⁶ Florida politicians saw the park as a centerpiece of the postwar tourism industry. This industry was predicated on the state's natural values: its climate, its beauty, its beaches, and its diverse and exotic

Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens, Ga., 2012); Brian Allen Drake, ed., *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War* (Athens, Ga., 2015); Steven Noll and David Tegeer, *Ditch of Dreams: The Cross Florida Barge Canal and the Struggle for Florida's Future* (Gainesville, Fla., 2009); Christopher J. Manganiello, *Southern Water, Southern Power: How the Politics of Cheap Energy and Water Scarcity Shaped a Region* (Chapel Hill, 2015); and Craig E. Colten, *Southern Waters: The Limits to Abundance* (Baton Rouge, 2014). Southern environmental history, like environmental history generally, has been dominated by studies of mountains and forests. See Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Gainesville, Fla., 2000); Donald Edward Davis, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians* (Athens, Ga., 2000); Timothy Silver, *Mount Mitchell and the Black Mountains: An Environmental History of the Highest Peaks in Eastern America* (Chapel Hill, 2003); Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville, 2000); and Kathryn Newfont, *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina* (Athens, Ga., 2012). This focus on mountains and forests obscures much of the South's landscapes and identity. Swamps have played a vital role in southern history; see Megan Kate Nelson, *Trembling Earth: A Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp* (Athens, Ga., 2005); Roy T. Sawyer, *America's Wetland: An Environmental and Cultural History of Tidewater Virginia and North Carolina* (Charlottesville, 2010); and Jack Temple Kirby, *Poquosin: A Study of Rural Landscape and Society* (Chapel Hill, 1995). Review essays assessing the field of southern environmental history include Paul S. Sutter, "Introduction," in Paul S. Sutter and Christopher J. Manganiello, eds., *Environmental History and the American South: A Reader* (Athens, Ga., 2009); Otis L. Graham, "Again the Backward Region?: Environmental History in and of the American South," *Southern Cultures*, 6 (Summer 2000), 50–72; Mart A. Stewart, "Southern Environmental History," in John B. Boles, ed., *A Companion to the American South* (Malden, Mass., 2002), 409–23; and Christopher Morris, "A More Southern Environmental History," *Journal of Southern History*, 75 (August 2009), 581–98.

⁵Conservative attitudes toward nature have been particularly conflicted and contradictory, but few scholars have examined them. James Morton Turner examines the sagebrush rebellion and the so-called wise use movement in "The Specter of Environmentalism": Wilderness, Environmental Politics, and the Evolution of the New Right," *Journal of American History*, 96 (June 2009), 123–48. See also Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer, *Green Backlash: The History and Politics of Environmental Opposition in the U.S.* (Boulder, Colo., 1997); and David Helvarg, *The War Against the Greens: The Wise-Use Movement, the New Right, and Anti-Environmental Violence* (San Francisco, 1994). On the diversity of conservative thinking toward the environment, see J. Brooks Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist: Russell E. Train and the Emergence of American Environmentalism* (Baton Rouge, 2006); J. Brooks Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (Albuquerque, 2000); and Brian Allen Drake, *Loving Nature, Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics before Reagan* (Seattle, 2013).

⁶Two recent comprehensive histories of the Everglades examine the creation of the ENP and assert the importance of pro-business attitudes toward the park: Michael Grunwald, *The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise* (New York, 2006), esp. 206–15; and Jack E. Davis, *An Everglades Providence: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the American Environmental Century* (Athens, Ga., 2009), esp. 327–43, 366–75, 381–87. The park was authorized by the federal government in 1934 but was not actually established until 1947.

flora and fauna. The key political figure in the fight for the park was Spessard L. Holland, a titan of Florida politics who parlayed his successful gubernatorial term during World War II into a twenty-five-year career in the U.S. Senate. In many ways, Holland was a typical mid-twentieth-century southern politician: he was pro-business and pro-segregation, and he supported states' rights. Holland typically sought to limit the power of the federal government, yet he vigorously supported the creation of an enormous national park in his state.

Holland's enlightened utilitarianism toward the preservation of the Everglades was composed of three ideas. The first was that economic benefits could be extracted from the Everglades. Second, Holland understood that environmental ideas, specifically an appreciation of diverse and exotic flora and fauna, were becoming increasingly important to Americans. Holland thought that the creation of the ENP would reorient the state's economy around tourism and advertise Florida tourism more broadly. Finally, and perhaps most important, the park would aid in the transformation of Florida's identity. The creation of a wilderness park dedicated to protecting biology would signal that Florida was at the forefront of environmental and scientific thinking. The park would demonstrate that Florida was no longer a backwater state from a backward region tainted by the legacy of slavery and secession. Rather, Florida was a modern, scientific state, eager to cater to the desires of American tourists.

The belief that the ENP could facilitate the construction of a new identity for Florida was a crucial facet of Holland's Sun Belt environmentalism and illustrates the dynamic and forward-thinking aspects of southern identity after World War II. Historians of the South have long connected the landscape to the region's identity. Likewise, historians of national parks have connected the parks to American nationalism and America's cultural identity.⁷ A national park was to some extent an obvious way to redefine Florida. The ENP, though, was radically different from all other parks managed by the National Park Service (NPS). While other parks protected geological monuments and catered to tourism, this park protected biology and habitats. The rationale for the preservation of the Everglades was consistent with the proto-environmental impulses seen in the United States in the 1930s. In this decade, the science of ecology, a biocentric concern for

⁷ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln, Neb., 1979); Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, 1997); Chris J. Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape, 1870-1903* (Albuquerque, 1999).

flora and fauna, and an incipient wilderness movement dramatically altered how conservationists saw the natural world. These ideas became central to modern environmentalism in the 1970s, but all were central to the ENP in the 1930s and 1940s.⁸ As some recent works of southern environmental history have shown, the South, despite its backward reputation, was often at the forefront of environmental thinking in the United States.⁹ The attempt to protect this swamp as a national park signaled that a focus on science, the protection of the environment, and perhaps even ecological views of the natural world could be central to Florida's identity in post-World War II America.

Not all conservatives agreed with Holland's efforts to protect the Everglades; many Everglades landowners fought the park's creation in the 1940s and 1950s. They saw the park as a threat to their efforts to profit from exploratory oil drilling. Led by the McDougal-Axelson family, these landowners attacked the park's rationale and touted the economic growth that the oil industry could bring to Florida.

⁸ On Progressive-era conservation and preservation, see Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959); John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (New York, 1975); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, 1967); Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Boston, 1981); Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, D.C., 2001); and Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (New York, 2005). On modern environmentalism, see Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York, 1987); Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (rev. ed.; Washington, D.C., 2003); Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C., 1993); Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?: Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Belmont, Calif., 1997); and Adam Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation* (New York, 2013). On the proto-environmentalism of the interwar period, see Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York, 2008); Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle, 2002); Sarah T. Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (New York, 2007); Randal S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence, Kans., 2001); Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*; Albert G. Way, *Conserving Southern Longleaf: Herbert Stoddard and the Rise of Ecological Land Management* (Athens, Ga., 2011); Donald Worster, *The Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York, 1979); Thomas R. Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife* (Princeton, 1988); Lisa Mighetto, *Wild Animals and American Environmental Ethics* (Tucson, 1991); and Paul S. Sutter, "Terra Incognita: The Neglected History of Interwar Environmental Thought and Politics," *Reviews in American History*, 29 (June 2001), 289-97. Works that examine the emergence of environmentalism in the context of the immediate post-World War II period include Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque, 1994); and Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York, 2001).

⁹ For examples, see Davis, *Everglades Providence*; Way, *Conserving Southern Longleaf*; and Hersey, *My Work Is That of Conservation*.

These arguments failed to convince politicians to halt the park's creation, but landowners did gain concessions once they began arguing that the federal government was violating their property rights. Their attack on the federal government and their focus on property rights place these landowners at the center of conservative thinking. Although ideas about race played an indisputable role in the emergence of modern conservatism in the South, ideas about the environment and opposition to the environmental regulatory state were key factors in these landowners' ideology. Illustrating the power of these ideas, the McDougal-Axelsons, who had long been active in the Democratic Party, became Republicans in the 1950s due to the Republican Party's opposition to Democratic federal land policies.

This article first examines the reasons for Spessard Holland's support for the park's creation before moving to his actions as governor. Most important, Holland helped create a wildlife refuge in the Everglades that precluded the national park and placed limits on oil exploration. Next, the article turns to the McDougal-Axelsons, who opposed the park's creation and expansion. They sought to profit from oil exploration in the Everglades and argued that the park's creation, and hence the federal government, was violating their mineral rights.

Much of the change in Florida during and after World War II was shepherded at the state and federal levels by Spessard Holland. Holland was a native Floridian and one of the state's most important politicians in the twentieth century. Born in Bartow, Florida, in 1892, he received a bachelor's degree from Emory College (now University) and a law degree from the University of Florida. After serving in World War I, he returned to Bartow to establish a law practice and shortly thereafter became involved in state politics. Holland served as governor of Florida between 1941 and 1945, and during his term he worked closely with the federal government to place both military and industrial facilities in the state. In 1946 Holland won a U.S. Senate seat and served Florida for four terms. He chose not to run for reelection in 1970 and died in 1971.¹⁰

Holland's political ideology was consistent with that of other conservative politicians in the Sun Belt South. He promoted states' rights and advocated limited government; he was generally pro-business; and he was extremely successful in bringing federal pork to his state.

¹⁰ See the biographical note for the online finding aid (<http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/pkyonge/Holland.htm>) prepared by John R. Nemmers, Spessard L. Holland Papers (Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.; hereinafter cited as UF); hereinafter cited as Holland Papers (UF).

Like many southern politicians after World War II, Holland supported federal intervention in his state when it created economic growth without imperiling the social and racial order. For example, Holland championed the creation and expansion of the space program in Florida. Like the ENP, this science-dependent federal spending initiative spurred economic growth in Florida and bolstered the state's modern image without directly affecting the social order. Also, like most Florida politicians, Holland strongly opposed the civil rights movement, and he was staunchly anticommunist and anti-labor.¹¹

Throughout his political career, Holland pursued the creation of Everglades National Park. Upon his election as governor, Holland immediately restarted the fight for the park, which had been moribund since 1937. He attracted new allies to the park fight, including Miami *Herald* editor John D. Pennekamp, National Audubon Society president John H. Baker, and Holland's gubernatorial successor Millard F. Caldwell. Holland also worked to overcome a variety of obstacles to the park's creation, the most important of which was exploratory oil drilling in the Everglades. As senator, Holland proposed the strategy that led to the park's creation in 1947 and negotiated the first purchase of private lands on behalf of the federal government. He played a pivotal role in finalizing the park's boundaries in 1958 and, throughout his Senate tenure, fought for federal appropriations for both land purchases and the construction of tourist facilities.¹²

Holland built on the efforts of Ernest F. Coe, a New England transplant to Miami who had been promoting the park since 1928. Coe had made substantive progress toward the park's creation, but by 1937 he had alienated many of his allies and angered Governor Frederick P. Cone, who opposed the park.¹³ Coe, who wanted to

¹¹ Despite Holland's importance to Florida politics, little has been written on his career. See Jon S. Evans, "Weathering the Storm: Florida Politics During the Administration of Spessard L. Holland in World War II" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 2011); Jon Evans, "The Origins of Tallahassee's Racial Disturbance Plan: Segregation, Racial Tensions, and Violence During World War II," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 79 (Winter 2001), 346-64; and David R. Colburn and Richard K. Scher, *Florida's Gubernatorial Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Tallahassee, 1980). On Florida politics in this era, also see David R. Colburn and Lance deHaven-Smith, *Government in the Sunshine State: Florida Since Statehood* (Gainesville, Fla., 1998), esp. 43-117; and V. O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949), 82-105.

¹² Gilbert Leach Report, February 2, 1947, Box 26, Series 576 (Caldwell), Records of the Office of the Governor, Record Group 102 (State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, Fla.; hereinafter cited as FSA), hereinafter cited as Caldwell Papers; Spessard Holland to John Baker, June 21, 1948, Box 174, Holland Papers (UF); Spessard Holland to John Pennekamp, February 19, 1957, Box 359, Holland Papers (UF).

¹³ Chris Wilhelm, "Prophet of the Glades: Ernest Coe and the Fight for Everglades National Park" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 2010); Davis, *Everglades Providence*, 326-43; Grunwald, *Swamp*, 206-9.

ensure that the next governor understood the park's benefits, ramped up his propaganda efforts during the 1940 gubernatorial campaign. Although Coe believed in the biocentric value of the Everglades, his publicity efforts, particularly in 1940, focused on the park's economic benefits. In a mailing sent to all the candidates, Coe noted that the federal government would "expend millions of dollars in developing" the park. He argued that more than 500,000 visitors would enter the park annually, and that tourists "would travel the entire length of the State to reach the park." Gasoline tax revenues alone would exceed \$1 million a year. These were "worthless lands," but with federal spending they would be transformed into a park "unique and outstanding among the other great national parks of the nation."¹⁴ Holland bought into the park's economic appeal. As a candidate for governor he announced that he regarded the park "as the best financial investment the State has now in sight."¹⁵

Holland always saw the park as an economic venture, but he also understood that the park's appeal was based on the Everglades's biological uniqueness. On occasion, he touted these values. In 1946, at a meeting of the Everglades National Park Commission, Holland explained that the reason the Everglades was "so desirable as a park is that it has so many things which can't be found anywhere else in the United States and some nowhere else in the world. Such things as the great white heron, the roseate spoonbill; such things as swim in the water, the manatee; such things as the crocodile." For emphasis Holland added that "they are well worth preserving."¹⁶ Holland particularly understood that birdlife in the Everglades had great biological and anthropocentric value. Birding would be a major activity in the new park, attracting millions of tourists to Florida. Holland and Audubon Society president John Baker ensured that Audubon wardens could protect birds on private lands before the park's creation; they lobbied the NPS during the formulation of the ENP master plan to ensure opportunities for birders; and they worked together to acquire the

¹⁴ Ernest Coe, "Attached to letters to candidates for nomination for Governor of Florida," March 21, 1940, Box 95, Holland Papers (UF). Holland's insistence that these lands were "worthless" and therefore suitable for national park status supports Alfred Runte's worthless land thesis. See Runte, *National Parks*; and the contributions to "The National Parks: A Forum on the 'Worthless Lands' Thesis," *Journal of Forest History*, 27 (July 1983), 130-45.

¹⁵ Spessard Holland, quoted by Ernest Coe in Chamber of Commerce speech, June 14, 1940, Box 95, Holland Papers (UF).

¹⁶ Everglades National Park Commission executive meeting, October 21, 1946, EVER19433, Ernest Coe Papers (Everglades National Park Archives, South Florida Collections Management Center, Homestead, Fla.).

private lands needed for the park's creation.¹⁷ Yet Holland did not believe that the Everglades's biota had inherent worth and did not seek to protect it for its own sake. Rather, that biota was a foundation for a tourism empire. Holland believed that the park was a "business proposition, one under which the people of the state, by investing a little additional money, can go far toward making a reality."¹⁸

At the most basic level, the park would attract driving tourists and hence increase state revenues through the collection of gasoline taxes. Holland explained to a state commission that there was no other "project now pending or being discussed or thought of in this state [that] begins to compare in potentials to the state as a whole with the Everglades National Park. It will bring in many tens of thousands of additional tourists who wouldn't come except for the park." The park would create "many millions of additional dollars in tax revenues" and was "just about the biggest single business proposition now pending." Holland also touted the increased federal spending that would accompany the park's development. The National Park Service would spend "an amazing amount of money to make it [the ENP] such that it can be visited," Holland contended. "They will have to do many expensive things, it will be a long and most expensive matter to develop the park."¹⁹

These economic arguments had particular resonance in the context of the post-World War II South. Southern governors since the end of Reconstruction lured businesses to their states by cultivating an image of their states as friendly to business. Often this approach embraced a low-wage and non-unionized workforce and a deregulated business climate, but it also involved claims of harmonious race relations, sectional reconciliation, and modern values. The advocacy for the ENP was thus consistent with the traditional boosterism of New South governors.²⁰

¹⁷ See, for example, John Baker to Spessard Holland, June 4, 1948, and Holland to Baker, June 21, 1948, Box 174, Holland Papers (UF). On ornithology and birding in America, see Mark Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology After Audubon* (Princeton, 2000).

¹⁸ Everglades National Park Commission executive meeting, October 21, 1946 (quotations), EVER19433, Coe Papers. Holland's correspondence on the park was generally concerned with practical issues concerning the park's creation. He seldom articulated his reasons for supporting the park and rarely discussed the park's intangible benefits in detail. Even his speech at the park's dedication was primarily concerned with practicalities. See Everglades National Park Dedication, December 6, 1947, EVER22724a, Coe Papers.

¹⁹ Everglades National Park Commission executive meeting, October 21, 1946, EVER19433, Coe Papers.

²⁰ Reiko Hillyer's *Designing Dixie: Tourism, Memory, and Urban Space in the New South* (Charlottesville, 2015) examines how New South boosters used tourism to both reconstruct the South's postbellum identity and bring economic growth to the region. Sun Belt boosters like Holland employed tourism in a similar fashion. On boosterism in the New South,

Then, in World War II, the federal government ramped up its role as an economic force. As governor during the war, Holland worked closely with the federal government to place training facilities, military bases, and manufacturing enterprises in Florida.²¹ As the war began to wind down, southern governors like Holland looked for ways to build on their states' wartime economic growth. Ernest Coe in particular argued that tourism in the Everglades could facilitate the achievement of that goal. After the war, he wrote in 1943, the United States was sure to embark on "a big nation wide scale of new construction and reconstruction," and the South especially would be "in for development" to bring it up to northern standards. The ENP, he argued, should benefit from these new federal funds.²²

Everglades National Park would also create enthusiasm and revenue for Florida's broader tourism industry. Coe explained that the park would stand "as a perpetual advertisement of a tropical fairyland."²³ In a 1947 speech to the Florida State Retailers Association, John Pennekamp pointed to the increased publicity the park had generated. Not only was Pennekamp's Miami *Herald* closely following the park's progress, but also national publications like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *National Geographic* were reporting on the park's status. According to Pennekamp, the Florida Citrus Commission had spent \$2 million on advertising, and the Florida State Advertising Commission had spent another \$500,000, yet "they failed to achieve, by direct purchase, even a fraction of the attention which the creation of this Park has accomplished."²⁴ Moreover, Everglades tourists would have to travel the length of the state to reach the park and would stop at other attractions along the way. Holland argued that the ENP would "bring tremendous revenues to hotels, restaurants, [and] people in private business"

see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1930* (Baton Rouge, 1951); Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York, 1986); and Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1945-1980* (Baton Rouge, 1995).

²¹ Evans, "Weathering the Storm."

²² Ernest Coe to the Everglades National Park Association, January 10, 1943, Box 915, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79 (National Archives at College Park, College Park, Md.); hereinafter cited as NPS Records.

²³ Ernest Coe, "Attached to letters to candidates for nomination for Governor of Florida," March 21, 1940, Box 95, Holland Papers (UF).

²⁴ John Pennekamp, speech at the Florida State Retailers Association, October 29, 1947, Box 1, John D. Pennekamp Papers (UF). For national media coverage, see, for example, Theodore Pratt, "Papa of the Everglades National Park," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 9, 1947, pp. 32-33, 46, 49-50; John O'Reilly, "South Florida's Amazing Everglades," *National Geographic Magazine*, 77 (January 1940), 115-42; and Daniel B. Beard, "Wildlife of Everglades National Park," *National Geographic Magazine*, 95 (January 1949), 83-116.

throughout the state. These tourists “will see new things, they will come back, they will stay and invest their money here and help build our state to even greater heights.”²⁵

Everglades National Park would bring more than tangible economic benefits to the state, however. As important cultural touchstones, national parks produce diverse intangible benefits for the areas in which they are established. They can reorient local economies around tourism, prompt the creation of additional tourist attractions, and redefine the cultural identities of states and localities. In fact, the meanings of national parks and their roles in promoting a specific brand of nationalistic tourism were key components of American tourism between 1890 and 1940.²⁶ Everglades National Park, its advocates insisted, could aid in the redefinition of Florida as a national, and even international, tourist attraction by drawing on the cultural meanings and significance of national parks. The park’s creation would thus greatly facilitate the emergence of what Florida historian Gary R. Mormino has labeled the state’s “modern identity as a tourist empire.” Many supporters thought that Everglades National Park would have a transformative effect on Florida, similar to the actual effect that the opening of Disney World in 1971 had.²⁷

Holland’s belief that Florida could be the primary tourist destination in postwar America was not far-fetched. By 1944 there was already a long tradition of travel, both to Florida and to other southern states, connected to the region’s climate and natural environment. Certainly, the health tourism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was dependent on the South’s climate and environment.²⁸ In the 1890s and the first decade of the 1900s, the proliferation of both Henry M. Flagler’s and Henry B. Plant’s railroads and hotels brought affluent tourists into Florida. Miami and Miami Beach became major attractions in the 1920s, and even during the Great Depression and World War II, Florida managed to attract large numbers of tourists. Governor Holland

²⁵ Everglades National Park Commission executive meeting, October 21, 1946, EVER19433, Coe Papers.

²⁶ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, D.C., 2001); Runte, *National Parks*; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in National Parks*.

²⁷ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams*, 2 (quotation); Tim Hollis, *Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun* (Jackson, Miss., 1999); Tracy J. Revels, *Sunshine Paradise: A History of Florida Tourism* (Gainesville, Fla., 2011).

²⁸ Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa, 2005); George M. Barbour, *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers: Containing Practical Information . . .* (New York, 1881); Way, *Conserving Southern Longleaf*, 19–55; Stewart, “*What Nature Suffers to Groe*,” 216–24. Much of the literature on tourism in the United States has focused on the West. See Hal K. Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence, Kans., 2000); and Shaffer, *See America First*.

promoted tourism during the war and lobbied the federal government to ease travel restrictions and gasoline rationing in Florida for the benefit of the industry. Despite the restrictions, the war probably spurred more tourism to Florida than it prevented. Many military men and women who were stationed in the state during the war later returned to Florida as tourists. Holland looked to build on that tradition and thought the creation of a national park would enhance Florida's reputation throughout the nation as a tourist destination.²⁹

The biological focus of the ENP impacted the park's relationship with Florida's identity. The cultural meanings of national parks had always been tied to their geological features, yet most of the ENP was flat and just above sea level. In a sharp break with the history of the National Park Service, the ENP's cultural significance would reflect the park's biological rationales for preservation.³⁰ The birds, alligators, sawgrass prairies, and mangrove forests of the Everglades became the park's monuments. This biological wonderland was redefined as one of America's cultural gems. This redefinition, in turn, situated Florida at the forefront of American scientific trends. Its natural areas were not dismal swamps full of danger and decay but were diverse and exotic biological treasure troves.³¹ Through the ENP, as well as other federal

²⁹ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams*, 76–122; Mark Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise: A Chronicle of Man and the Land in Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1998), 37–60; Steven Noll, "Steamboats, Cypress, and Tourism: An Ecological History of the Ocklawaha Valley in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 83 (Summer 2004), 6–23; Paul S. George, "Passage to the New Eden: Tourism in Miami from Flagler through Everest G. Sewell," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 59 (April 1981), 440–63; David Nelson, "When Modern Tourism Was Born: Florida at the World Fairs and on the World Stage in the 1930s," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 88 (Spring 2010), 435–68; Ben F. Rogers, "Florida in World War II: Tourists and Citrus," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 39 (July 1960), 34–41; Gary R. Mormino, "Midas Returns: Miami Goes to War, 1941–1945," *Tequesta*, no. 57 (1997), 5–52; Michael Dawson, "'Travel Strengthens America?': Tourism Promotion in the United States During the Second World War," *Journal of Tourism History*, 3 (November 2011), 217–36; Evans, "Weathering the Storm," 143–50.

³⁰ Although tourism and the needs of tourists had been central to the NPS, this focus on tourism was challenged by wildlife biologists in the 1930s. Runte, *National Parks*, 65; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 201. Other works on postwar national park tourism include John C. Miles, *Wilderness in National Parks: Playground or Preserve* (Seattle, 2009); David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks* (Seattle, 2006); and Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst, Mass., 2007).

³¹ Although it may seem odd that a wetland wilderness would attract tourists, the ENP's actual economic benefits have been substantial. Since 1965, the park has typically received around a million tourists a year. In 2014 the ENP saw 1,110,900 visitors who spent \$104,477,000 in Florida. Park visitation statistics for all NPS sites can be found at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats>. The specific statistics for Everglades National Park in 2014 are from Catherine Cullinane Thomas, Christopher Huber, and Lynne Koontz, *2014 National Park Visitor Spending Effects: Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States, and the Nation* (Fort Collins, Colo., 2015), 18, 28. On the broader changing attitudes toward wetlands in the United States, see Ann Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands* (Washington, D.C., 1997); and Joseph V. Siry, *Marshes of the Ocean Shore: Development of an Ecological Ethic* (College Station, Tex., 1984).

projects like the space program, Florida restyled its image to be a center of postwar American scientific and cultural developments.³²

Holland's actions further illustrate his views toward environmental preservation, economic growth, and federal intervention in Florida state affairs. One of his most important and revealing efforts in this regard was the creation of the Everglades National Wildlife Refuge in 1944. The refuge was a precursor to the ENP that protected the biota while permitting exploratory oil drilling to continue in the area. The refuge's creation signaled Florida's commitment to the ENP and set a deadline for exploratory drilling. Although Holland primarily saw the ENP as an economic venture, he understood that, as NPS wildlife biologist and future park superintendent Daniel B. Beard put it, "the biota is the park."³³ Holland believed that ecological ideas, or at least an appreciation of flora and fauna, were gaining popularity in the United States and that tourists would pay money to see the Everglades's biological wonders. His pragmatic and economic support for ecological preservation foreshadowed the later emergence of the ecotourism industry but also neatly fit into his conservative pro-business ideology.³⁴

Between 1941 and 1943, Holland worked to establish the ENP but also allowed exploratory oil drilling to continue in the Everglades. Holland believed that little to no oil would be found in the Everglades, and he believed that the potential economic benefits of oil drilling in the area were far outweighed by the economic benefits of a national park. Yet he also wanted to respect the rights of property owners and wanted to give oil companies a chance to prove him wrong. In March 1941 Holland met with NPS officials to discuss the park's creation. He noted that "one of the difficulties facing the establishment of the proposed park was" the oil issue. As a compromise, Holland asked the NPS to accept for the park the private and state-owned lands in the Everglades with mineral rights reserved for the original owners. This solution would move forward with the park's creation, appease private landowners, and allow for exploratory drilling. This proposal was immediately rejected by the NPS, as oil reservations on park lands were anathema. As Holland learned from NPS director Newton B. Drury, national parks required lands "where natural conditions are to remain

³² On the space program in Florida, see Sallie Middleton, "Space Rush: Local Impact of Federal Aerospace Programs on Brevard and Surrounding Counties," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 87 (Fall 2008), 258–89; and William Barnaby Faherty, *Florida's Space Coast: The Impact of NASA on the Sunshine State* (Gainesville, Fla., 2002).

³³ Daniel Beard, memorandum for regional biologist, May 12, 1942, Box 920, NPS Records.

³⁴ On ecotourism see Martha Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* (Washington, D.C., 1999).

inviolable." The NPS suggested an alternative. Lands with mineral reservations could be turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which could protect the Everglades biota while oil exploration continued.³⁵

A wildlife preserve had little appeal for Holland, who was primarily concerned with economic benefits. According to the governor, "a wildlife refuge tends to keep people out instead of bringing them in." Instead Holland bided his time. The governor and park supporters assumed exploratory drilling would eventually cease when oil companies failed to strike. Indeed, many oil companies withdrew from the Everglades, concluding that oil was not present. D. Graham Copeland, who represented the Collier estate, one of the largest landowners in Florida, stated in 1941 that the Gulf Oil Company had expended \$269,000 "in its investigations and had dropped the matter." Likewise, "the Sun Oil Company had made similar investigations somewhat further north with like result."³⁶

The hope that speculative drilling would soon run its course was crushed in November 1943 when the Humble Oil Company (a subsidiary of Standard Oil) announced it had discovered oil outside the park area at the Sunniland oil fields. This announcement caused much excitement among landowners and consternation among park advocates, and it effectively forced Holland to renew his push for the park. Whereas Florida tourism through the ENP would be subsidized by federal spending, this oil discovery was subsidized by the state of Florida. In 1939 Florida announced a \$50,000 award for the first productive well in the state. In 1943 Humble won this prize, yet the Sunniland wells only ever produced small amounts of low-quality oil and did not convince geologists, other experts, or Spessard Holland that oil existed in abundance in the Everglades. These inconvenient facts about the Sunniland well were ignored by landowners, and the discovery led to a frenzy of oil leases, land sales, and exploratory drilling in Florida. In December 1943 Newton Drury explained to Holland that he was "somewhat apprehensive over possible damage to park values . . . as a result of the accelerated [oil] exploratory program." Drury urged Holland to create the park as soon as possible to avoid damaging the area's biological value.³⁷

³⁵ Meeting minutes "Relative to the proposed Everglades National Park," March 10, 1941, Box 905, NPS Records.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Newton Drury to Spessard Holland, December 2, 1943 (quotation), Box 35, Series 406 (Holland), Records of the Office of the Governor, Record Group 102 (FSA), hereinafter cited as Holland Papers (FSA); Herman Gunter, "Brief Data on the Drilling for Oil in Florida," July 9, 1947, Box 35, J. Hardin Peterson Papers (UF); Dudley J. Hughes, *Oil in the Deep South: A History of the Oil Business in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, 1859-1945* (Jackson, Miss., 1993), 179-80, 238-43.

In a series of meetings between December 20, 1943, and January 2, 1944, Holland, NPS officials, and other concerned parties made a concerted push for the park's creation. Three different strategies were discussed at these meetings. The first reflected Holland's desire to monetize the Everglades's biota and his reluctance to end exploratory oil drilling. Holland proposed to "set aside fee simple, without the reservation of mineral rights, several key areas of several thousand acres in order to establish protection for the bird rookeries, feeding grounds and other important biological features." These key areas could be protected while oil drilling continued in the rest of the Everglades. This park would only protect bird rookeries, the most scenically valuable and hence economically valuable, sections of the Everglades. This proposal did not attempt to protect the larger ecosystems but rather separated these rookeries from the rest of the Everglades to cash in on their value as tourism attractions. Holland thought this key area proposal would lead to a larger national park later, after the frenzy regarding oil subsided. He stated that this park "would increase State interest in the final establishment of the park as more knowledge was gained about the existence of oil."³⁸

The NPS rejected this proposal, for both practical and ecological reasons. Although the park service, like Holland, was often much more concerned with catering to tourism than it was with protecting biota or ecosystems, the NPS's perspective on the ENP largely bucked this trend. This park's creation and eventual management were perhaps the clearest expression of the ideas of a group of NPS wildlife biologists in the 1930s. Led by George M. Wright, these biologists challenged the NPS's single-minded focus on tourism and argued that park management should seek to protect park flora and fauna. Although their influence was waning by the late 1930s, these wildlife biologists and their allies played a large role in the fight for the ENP. They conducted surveys of the Everglades flora and fauna, engaged in negotiations over boundaries, and kept in close contact with Coe, Holland, and other park allies in Florida. A wildlife biologist, Daniel Beard, even served as the park's first superintendent.³⁹ NPS employee

³⁸ Ray Vinten, "Memorandum for the Director," January 5, 1944, Box 900, NPS Records.

³⁹ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, esp. 91–148. Also see George M. Wright, Joseph S. Dixon, and Ben H. Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: A Preliminary Survey of Faunal Relations in National Parks* (Washington, D.C., 1933); James A. Pritchard, *Preserving Yellowstone's Natural Conditions: Science and the Perception of Nature* (Lincoln, Neb., 1999); Thomas R. Dunlap, "Wildlife, Science, and the National Parks, 1920–1940," *Pacific Historical Review*, 59 (May 1990), 187–202; Craig L. Shafer, "Conservation Biology Trailblazers: George Wright, Ben Thompson, and Joseph Dixon," *Conservation Biology*, 15 (April 2001), 332–44; and *George Wright Forum*, the journal of the George Wright Society.

Ray Vinten, who was influenced by these wildlife biologists and worked closely with pro-park officials in Florida, investigated Holland's proposal. The plan would fail to protect the broader Everglades and its "wildlife values" and would even fail to protect bird rookeries. Vinten concluded that "small key areas can not be established," as rookeries, feeding grounds, and roosts changed from year to year, often "from five to seven and possibly ten miles from the original site." Furthermore, those key areas would not qualify as a national park; rather, they would be only a series of national monuments.⁴⁰

The NPS offered a counterproposal: break the entire park area into six units and acquire these units one by one free from any mineral reservations. The NPS could protect these areas and then after a period of years, when "a major portion of the remainder of the area" was delivered to the NPS free from all mineral reservations, establish the park.⁴¹ Just as Holland's proposal was unacceptable to the NPS, this proposal was unacceptable to Holland. Not only did the NPS scheme fail to accommodate oil drilling, but it also failed to deliver the economic benefits of park tourism. If this plan were enacted, the park's economic benefits would be delayed for decades until the majority of park lands could be acquired. Holland wrote that deeding lands without mineral reservations was completely unacceptable "to the general public." He thought that "the size of the first unit of approximately 200,000 acres, which would be required to be conveyed . . . without oil reservations of any kind would preclude our going further in the effort to" create the park.⁴²

With these proposals both unworkable, the only remaining option was the previously discussed creation of a wildlife preserve. Under this plan, the state could deed all its Everglades lands to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which would protect the "natural values" of the Everglades while exploratory oil drilling continued.⁴³ In August 1944 Holland concluded that this strategy represented the best chance for the park's creation. He had one objection: he wanted to make the authorizing legislation "entirely definite that the whole purpose thereof would be to move towards the establishment of the park." Holland insisted that if those lands deeded to the Fish and Wildlife Service had not been used for the creation of a national park within ten years, they would revert to state ownership. Holland did not desire

⁴⁰ Ray Vinten, "Memorandum for the Director," January 5, 1944, Box 900, NPS Records.

⁴¹ Newton Drury to Spessard Holland, February 15, 1944, Box 900, NPS Records.

⁴² Spessard Holland to J. Hardin Peterson, August 10, 1944, Box 900, NPS Records.

⁴³ Ray Vinten, "Memorandum for the Director," January 5, 1944, Box 900, NPS Records.

preservation for preservation's sake; he wanted to ensure that economic benefits for the state would result from the preservation of the Everglades.⁴⁴

On December 13, 1944, Holland and NPS officials met to hammer out the final details of this agreement. Most of the discussion centered on the refuge's—and hence the future park's—boundaries. Holland initially presented the NPS with a park map that outlined a much larger area than Holland had ever previously discussed with the service. Ray Vinten excitedly explained later to Newton Drury that these areas “included more land than we had hoped for.” According to Vinten, John H. Davis of the U.S. Geological Survey “explained that the larger area had some advantages over the retracted boundaries because wild fowl and animals range over considerable territory in feeding.”⁴⁵

Holland's 1944 boundary proposal reflected an honest and substantive attempt to protect the Everglades biota. Yet, to Holland, the primary purpose of the park was economic. He remained especially concerned about birding sites that would serve as tourist attractions. His boundary proposal specifically included the Florida Bay, an area that was covered with active oil leases, because “there were many rookeries in that area and thousands of birds nested and fed there, especially the [Roseate] Spoon Bill.” The NPS also suggested adjustments to the park's northern boundary, which Holland supported. These adjustments reflected an understanding of the Everglades's hydrology and ecology and a desire to protect the flow of water. Ray Vinten “emphasized the importance of these lands which included the drainage basin of the Shark River.” Holland's ally and Audubon Society president John Baker likewise pushed for the inclusion of this area and emphasized “the relationship of this drainage basin to the Shark River.”⁴⁶

The establishment of the Everglades National Wildlife Refuge protected the area's biota and signaled the state's commitment to the park while accommodating oil exploration. At the same time, it set a deadline for oil prospectors. Holland explicitly tied the requirement that the national park be established within ten years to oil drilling. He informed the NPS that “he thought the Trustees [of Florida's Internal Improvement Board] could work it out on the basis that leases would

⁴⁴ Spessard Holland to J. Hardin Peterson, August 10, 1944, Box 900, NPS Records.

⁴⁵ Ray Vinten, “Memorandum for the Director,” December 18, 1944 (first quotation), Box 900, NPS Records; “Conference Re: Everglades National Park,” December 13, 1944 (second quotation), Box 343, Holland Papers (UF).

⁴⁶ “Conference Re: Everglades National Park,” December 13, 1944 (first quotation), Box 343, Holland Papers (UF); Ray Vinten, “Memorandum for the Director,” December 16, 1944 (second and third quotations), Box 900, NPS Records.

not extend beyond that time [the ten-year period] except in the event of commercial production."⁴⁷

Holland worked to end oil exploration in other ways. He limited oil exploration on Model Land Company (MLC) lands in the Florida Bay, on which the state owned half the mineral rights. In 1943 oil companies were "requesting extension of exploration agreement up to ten years" on these MLC lands. Yet, according to Holland's secretary Ralph Davis, the governor "vigorously opposed this on grounds it would be detrimental to park. On Holland's recommendation, [a] provision was inserted in contract that there would be excluded all exploration and production for two years."⁴⁸ Newton Drury told Holland he was "in agreement with your desire to set a definite time limit for oil and gas explorations, and I believed that 12 or 18 months from January 1 of this year would be a fair time limitation."⁴⁹

Despite the Sunniland-fueled excitement concerning oil drilling, by 1947 no further oil discoveries had been made, and momentum to create the park had grown.⁵⁰ Since leaving for the U.S. Senate, Holland had been urging his gubernatorial successor, Millard Caldwell, to create the park. Holland believed that the Model Land Company was the key to the park's creation. Composed of the remnants of Henry Flagler's extensive Florida landholdings, the MLC was the largest private landowner in the park area. The company's leaders were close acquaintances and political allies of Spessard Holland's, and they had long sought to shape the park's creation. Holland thought that purchasing the MLC's lands and mineral rights would set a fair asking price for subsequent purchases. It would also signal to other private landowners that oil would not be found in the Everglades and that selling their lands to the NPS was a sound economic decision.⁵¹ Holland entered negotiations with the company on behalf of the state in 1946 to achieve this goal, but the parties were unable to come to an agreement.⁵²

After the creation of a skeletal national park on June 20, 1947, the MLC's lands were eventually acquired by the NPS in

⁴⁷ "Conference Re: Everglades National Park," December 13, 1944, Box 343, Holland Papers (UF).

⁴⁸ Ralph Davis to Harold Colee, February 26, 1943, Box 35, Holland Papers (FSA).

⁴⁹ Newton Drury to Spessard Holland, April 1, 1943, Box 35, Holland Papers (FSA).

⁵⁰ Between 1939 and 1947, 105 oil wells were dug in the state. Two of these wells were dug in the park area, and nine were near the park, yet by 1947 only the four wells drilled at the Sunniland field had produced any oil. The Sunniland wells, however, produced little oil. For example, in June 1947 they yielded 1,035.5 barrels. See "Oil Data from the Florida Geological Survey," July 9, 1947, Box 35, Peterson Papers.

⁵¹ August Burghard to Millard Caldwell, October 31, 1946, Box 25, Caldwell Papers.

⁵² Ray Vinten, Memorandum of Record, April 21, 1945, Box 900, NPS Records.

September 1948.⁵³ This was the first large block of land the NPS acquired, and the agency hoped it would set precedent for subsequent purchases. Yet the purchase of these lands was not in fee simple. Holland facilitated a compromise whereby the company would retain mineral rights until January 31, 1956. If oil was being produced "in commercial quantities," the company would retain those rights as long as production continued. Despite this provision, which was likely the first case of mineral rights inholdings in a national park, the mineral rights reservation had little practical effect on the park. The NPS would never allow any oil drilling in the park, and it was becoming increasingly evident to all involved that little to no oil actually existed in the Everglades.⁵⁴

After the park's creation in 1947, Holland continued to support the NPS's land acquisition efforts in the Everglades and the expansion of federal power in the state. The NPS tried to purchase lands at a fair market price, but when owners refused to sell, the NPS, with the support of Holland and the state of Florida, utilized the right of eminent domain. In 1948 Holland urged the park service that "the acquisition of lands be accomplished with all possible speed." In a conversation with John Baker regarding land purchases, Holland stated "that we should emphasize in every way the acquisition of the needed private lands."⁵⁵

Throughout his career, however, Holland more typically opposed federal intervention in Florida. He signed the Southern Manifesto, which decried "the Supreme Court's encroachment on the rights reserved to the States and to the people," and he opposed the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on states' rights grounds.⁵⁶ Holland's fight for the park and his attempts to curtail oil drilling in the Everglades appear exceptional when compared with the role he played

⁵³ The park was created via a complicated procedure that was predicated on the park boundary that Holland and the NPS laid out in 1944. In 1947 Florida gave the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) all school board lands within that 1944 boundary, all mineral rights to the state lands ceded to the DOI in 1944 (the state retained oil royalty rights), and \$2 million that Florida had appropriated for land acquisition in the park area. The DOI created the park, and then the NPS, rather than the state of Florida, used this money to acquire park lands within the 1944 boundary. That boundary was later altered multiple times but was largely finalized by 1958. See Fred Elliot to Thomas Allen, June 14, 1947, Box 26, Caldwell Papers; J. A. Krug to J. Hardin Peterson, April 20, 1949, Box 34, Peterson Papers; and 72 Stat. 280 (July 2, 1958), at 285.

⁵⁴ A. B. Manly to Spessard Holland, November 5, 1948 (quotation), Box 174, Holland Papers (UF). Also see Carl Hawkins to J. Hardin Peterson, February 23, 1949, Box 34, Peterson Papers.

⁵⁵ Spessard Holland to Newton Drury, June 4, 1948 (first quotation), and Spessard Holland to John Baker, June 21, 1948 (second quotation), both Box 174, Holland Papers (UF).

⁵⁶ "Declaration of Constitutional Principles," *Congressional Record*, 84 Cong., 2 Sess., March 12, 1956, at 4515-16 (quotation on 4516); *Cong. Rec.*, 88 Cong., 2 Sess., June 19, 1964, at 14511.

in the so-called tidelands controversy. An increase in offshore drilling at the end of World War II led to intensified conflict between the states and the federal government over the ownership of tidal lands and offshore waters. Holland, with Senator Guy Cordon of Oregon, led a "bipartisan effort to restore state title over offshore submerged lands." Holland introduced the Submerged Lands Act in the Senate, a bill that returned these offshore lands to the states and protected state oil royalties. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the bill in May 1953, declaring that he would "always resist federal encroachment upon rights and affairs of the States."⁵⁷ Holland's work for the ENP was extraordinary given his otherwise consistent desire to protect states' rights and to limit the power of the federal government.

Just as economic rationales were at the heart of Holland's support for the park, some Everglades landowners opposed the park for economic reasons. These landowners wanted to profit from oil drilling in the Everglades, and they argued that resource extraction, not tourism, would bring future economic growth to Florida. Landowners also argued that the federal government was violating their property rights. Such arguments rooted in individual rights placed these activists at the center of modern conservative thinking and resulted in concessions to Everglades landowners regarding their mineral rights. They created a number of landowner organizations devoted to fighting the park, and they often worked closely with the MLC, other large and small landowners, and Florida politicians who opposed the park, like Florida attorney general J. Tom Watson.

The dominant actors in this opposition were members of the McDougal-Axelson family. The head of the family was Daniel A. McDougal, known as D. A. McDougal. A lawyer and judge who had been involved in Oklahoma politics as a Democrat, D. A. McDougal struck oil in Oklahoma in 1908 and became a millionaire overnight. Although he played a large role in fighting the ENP, his wife, Myrtle Archer McDougal, had the more notable political career. Myrtle McDougal was extremely active in Progressive-era reform politics and in the Democratic Party. She "founded or headed over forty organizations," she spearheaded the creation of Oklahoma's Federation of Women's Clubs, she was a leading Oklahoma suffragist, and she held multiple positions in the Democratic Party in the early 1920s. Although

⁵⁷ Edward A. Fitzgerald, *The Seaweed Rebellion: Federal-State Conflicts over Offshore Energy Development* (Lanham, Md., 2001), 33 (first quotation); Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Statement Upon Signing the Submerged Lands Act," May 22, 1953 (second quotation), *American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9858>.

they spent most of their lives in Oklahoma, D. A. was originally from Tennessee, while Myrtle was born in Mississippi and had lived in Savannah, Georgia. In the early 1920s the family purchased a house in Miami and became heavily invested in Everglades real estate during the Florida land boom of the 1920s.⁵⁸

The couple had three daughters, but the one most involved in the family's affairs was Mary Carmack McDougal, who, like her mother, was involved in reform and in the Democratic Party. Mary McDougal was also an author and a poet, most noteworthy for her novel and play *Life Begins*, which was in turn the basis of the 1932 "forgotten American film classic" of the same name. In 1923 Mary McDougal met Ivar Axelson, an economist, whom she soon married. In Miami they also invested in Everglades real estate during the 1920s boom. By the end of the boom, the family owned a controlling stake in the Chevelier land company and large sections of Cape Sable.⁵⁹

Although they later, in the 1940s, opposed the park's creation, the McDougal-Axelsons, like most Everglades landowners, supported the park in the 1930s for economic reasons. The bust of the Florida land boom in the late 1920s and the onset of the Great Depression meant that the family's real estate investments were now practically worthless. Throughout the Depression, many Americans looked to the federal government for relief and economic recovery; these Everglades landowners saw the creation of a national park as a form of federal aid that would allow them to recoup some money from their failed investments. In 1934 Ivar Axelson wrote a promotional memorandum supporting the park's creation that touted the region's biological qualities and its value as a tourist attraction. Axelson noted that his family owned "a complete or controlling interest in more than 200,000 acres" of Everglades land. He boasted that he could "deliver this land at a nominal price."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Marilyn Hoder-Salmon, "Myrtle Archer McDougal: Leader of Oklahoma's 'Timid Sisters,'" *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 60 (Fall 1982), 332-43; Ruthanne Vogel, "Daniel A. McDougal," *Reclaiming the Everglades: South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934* (Everglades Digital Library, Florida International University, Miami, Fla.), <http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/mcdougal.htm>.

⁵⁹ Marilyn Hoder-Salmon, "The Intimate Agony of Mary McDougal Axelson's *Life Begins*," *American Studies*, 18 (Fall 1977), 55-69 (quotation on 55); Ruthanne Vogel, "Mary McDougal Axelson," *Reclaiming the Everglades*, <http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/axelsonm.htm>; Ruthanne Vogel, "Ivar Axelson," *Reclaiming the Everglades*, <http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/axelsoni.htm>.

⁶⁰ Ivar Axelson, "Memorandum on Tropic Everglades National Park," March 5, 1934, Box 40, Mary McDougal Axelson Papers (Special Collections, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Fla.; hereinafter cited as UM). On the Florida land boom of the 1920s, see David Nolan, *Fifty Feet in Paradise: The Booming of Florida* (San Diego, 1984); Eric Jarvis, "'Secrecy Has No Excuse': The Florida Land Boom, Tourism, and the 1926 Smallpox Epidemic in Tampa and

When the economy recovered during World War II, however, landowners changed their tune as they perceived the possibility of profiting from their Everglades lands. The war had not only boosted Florida's economy and real estate market, but also stimulated tremendous demand for new domestic oil sources. Despite little evidence that oil existed in the area, landowners with connections to the oil industry like J. H. McCord and the McDougal-Axelons sought to drill for oil in the Everglades, which they saw as virgin territory ripe for exploration. No oil drilling had been undertaken in the state before 1926, but by 1938 seventy wells had been drilled in Florida. Only forty-five of these had been sunk below 1,000 feet, and none found oil. Landowners argued that the Everglades was geologically similar to oil fields in Louisiana and that further drilling would surely strike oil. Federal and state government actions also spurred drilling. World War II and Florida's \$50,000 prize for a successful well set off a speculative boom in oil leases and land sales in the Everglades. By the mid-1940s, many Everglades landowners now perceived their lands as valuable and urged that they be excluded from Everglades National Park.⁶¹

The McDougal-Axelons employed a number of strategies designed to exploit and profit from this speculative boom in oil exploration. None of their strategies actually required that oil be found in the Everglades, but the family nevertheless stood to profit handsomely if oil were found. The foundation of all their profits was the oil leases made to oil companies, who then conducted drilling in the Everglades. These leases and drilling activities reinforced the belief that oil did exist in the Everglades and drove land values up. In the 1920s and 1930s the family actually gave leases to oil companies on the condition that they drilled wells on these lands.⁶² These activities led to additional drilling, which in turn led to future oil leases and future drilling and drove up demand and prices for Everglades lands. Ultimately, to acquire these lands the federal government would have to pay these inflated values. In short, the longer the McDougal-Axelons delayed the park's creation, the more profit they could extract from oil companies, real estate investors, and the federal government.

Miami," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 89 (Winter 2011), 320–46; and Paul S. George, "Brokers, Binders, and Builders: Greater Miami's Boom of the Mid-1920s," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 65 (July 1986), 27–51.

⁶¹ Hughes, *Oil in the Deep South*, 127, 133, 238–43; Gerald D. Nash, *United States Oil Policy, 1890–1964: Business and Government in Twentieth Century America* (Pittsburgh, 1968). The landowners' insistence that their valuable lands be excluded from a national park is consistent with the worthless land thesis in Runte, *National Parks*.

⁶² D. A. McDougal, Statement at Hearing on H.R. 1254, February 1949, Box 41, Axelson Papers.

Oil leases and Everglades land sales were important sources of income for the McDougal-Axelsons. In 1961 Mary McDougal Axelson reminisced that “it is needless for me to tell you how much money the Chevelier owners have taken in since that time [1949] in oil rentals and sales.”⁶³ Land sales were even more profitable to the family. These sales were often prompted by news of oil leases, newspaper articles about oil, or the drilling of new oil wells. Mary McDougal Axelson wrote to her husband about a flurry of land sales in 1949 that was the result of “the new well in Collier county or the *Miami Life* stories or else rumors about other wells to be drilled.” She wrote, “wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could pull in some cash! . . . You know *me*—I *always* enjoy selling oil land.”⁶⁴ Yet these land sales were not in fee simple. Rather, the family sold surface lands (which they had long regarded as worthless) and only half of the mineral rights to buyers, while they retained the other half. This arrangement ensured them half the revenues from all oil leases, even on lands they had sold; and if oil ever were found, the family would profit enormously. Ivar Axelson wrote to prospective buyers in 1950 “offering lands in northern Monroe County near the location of the Forty Mile Bend discovery well to be drilled that year” for between ten and thirty-five dollars an acre. All these lands were under lease to various oil companies, and annual rentals were “from 10 to 50 cents an acre.” Yet these lands, like others he sold through the Jones Real Estate Company, only conveyed “50% oil, gas and mineral rights” to buyers, leaving the other 50 percent for the McDougal-Axelsons.⁶⁵

Landowners opposed the park for self-interested reasons, but to bolster their opposition they also crafted a number of arguments about what was best for the public. They argued that drilling for oil would bring untold economic benefits to the state of Florida. They connected oil drilling to national security during World War II and the Cold War. In the 1950s they argued that Everglades land should be excluded from the park and instead used for agriculture and for expanding urban development in Miami. Additionally, these landowners attacked the Everglades itself, arguing that this worthless swamp was unworthy of national park status and would never be a successful tourist attraction. None of these arguments, however, resonated with Florida’s business and political community, and none were particularly successful in

⁶³ Mary McDougal Axelson to Joel Hopkins, March 17, 1961, Box 19, Axelson Papers.

⁶⁴ Mary McDougal Axelson to Ivar Axelson, May 9, 1949, Box 41, Axelson Papers.

⁶⁵ Ivar Axelson mailing, n.d. [ca. 1950], Box 42 (first and second quotations); Jones Land Sales advertisement, n.d. [ca. 1954], Box 40 (third quotation), both in Axelson Papers.

swaying either U.S. officials or the Florida legislature. However, when landowners focused on their property rights, and on the government's violation of these rights, businessmen, legislators, and bureaucrats listened intently. These arguments about the positive rights of landowners were ultimately successful in changing federal policies concerning land acquisition and mineral rights in the Everglades. This focus on property rights dovetailed with conservative attitudes toward economics, rights, and the role of the government and with other conservative fights, especially the fight in the suburban South against the civil rights movement.⁶⁶

Although many of the public-interest arguments that Everglades landowners employed in the fight against the park had little immediate effect, these strategies were successfully deployed by industry groups and anti-environmentalists later in the twentieth century. For example, the McDougal-Axelsons connected the need for domestic oil supplies to foreign policy threats. At a 1949 Senate committee hearing, Ivar Axelson argued that "the danger of war with Soviet Russia require[s] that every effort be made to produce any oil that may underlie this park." Such outspoken anticommunism, put here to use by landowners in their fight against the park, was another component of the thinking and success of modern conservatives in this period.⁶⁷

Landowners also argued that the park infringed on urban growth in Miami and argued that the park placed the needs of nature ahead of the needs of humans. As part of the intended boundary expansion, the NPS sought to purchase a tract of land on the western coast of Florida that it called a "vital zone." This area was seen as vital to the protection of flora and fauna. Ivar Axelson turned this idea on its head and argued that this "vital zone" was "much more 'vital' to the rapid growing population in South Florida, especially in Metropolitan Miami, than to the birds. Human beings have 'ecological' needs as well as the birds. Let us think about them." Axelson believed that lands should

⁶⁶ Anti-civil rights activists argued that their property rights and individual freedoms were being violated by an aggressive, interventionist federal government. As Kevin Kruse writes, Georgians taking part in white flight from urban Atlanta "stressed individual rights over communal responsibilities, privatization over public welfare, and 'free enterprise' above everything else." See Kruse, *White Flight*, 8 (quotation); Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*; and Lassiter, *Silent Majority*. This same rhetoric, revolving around "more positive assertions of individual property rights and liberties," was later used by wise use activists in the 1980s. Turner, "'Specter of Environmentalism,'" 125.

⁶⁷ Ivar Axelson, Statement on H.R. 4029, n.d. [ca. 1949], Box 35, Peterson Papers (quotation); McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*. For another use of anticommunism by conservatives in Florida, see Reiko Hillyer, "Cold War Conquistadors: The St. Augustine Quadricentennial, Pan-Americanism, and the Civil Rights Movement in the Ancient City," *Journal of Southern History*, 81 (February 2015), 117-56.

be "free for development by private enterprise for use by human beings." Although Holland thought ecological ideas could be put to use as an engine of economic growth in Florida, Axelson's arguments reflected a disdain for the ecological ideas and biocentric ethics the park was built on. Similar attacks on the very basis of environmentalism were used by anti-environmentalists later in the twentieth century.⁶⁸

The McDougal-Axelsons openly mocked ecological notions and did not believe the area's flora and fauna had any inherent or anthropocentric value. Rather, they saw the Everglades as home to resources that needed to be commodified. Mary McDougal Axelson wrote that her father had believed that the family's Everglades land "was the richest land in the world, covered with wonderful timber and underlaid with millions of dollars worth of the most valuable minerals."⁶⁹ Nature was capital, and landowners had a right, and even a duty, to use that capital to increase their personal wealth.⁷⁰

At the same time, these conservatives attacked the Everglades itself. Although park advocates had successfully responded to negative ideas about the Everglades in the 1930s, landowners tried to use these notions to undermine Holland's economic rationale for preservation. In a flyer titled "The All Time Greatest Florida Boondoggle Yet," the McDougal-Axelsons argued that tourists visiting this "insectorium" would see little other than "millions of mosquitoes, gnats and swarms of sandflies." These insects would "greet the thousands of suckers expected to visit the park annually." Tourists would be "stung by poisonous rattler, coral and moccasin snakes infesting the park." Rather than bringing economic benefits to Florida, the park would be the "Everglades National Laughing Stock."⁷¹ J. Tom Watson, Florida's attorney general from 1941 to 1949, likewise attacked these economic rationales for preservation. In a 1947 radio address, Watson argued that the area "is so mucky and filled with undergrowth in parts of it that a bullfrog would butt his brains out trying to hop around, much less anyone trying to walk or ride through it." The Everglades "was so mosquito infested" and "so muck and water sogged that even hunters have found it impassible." Because the park was explicitly established as a wilderness, Watson noted, "there is no likelihood of any federal money

⁶⁸ Association for the Best Use of Florida Lands, "Will the US Government Respect the Request of the State of Florida," January 1956, Box 42, Axelson Papers.

⁶⁹ Mary McDougal Axelson to Joel Hopkins, March 17, 1961, Box 19, Axelson Papers.

⁷⁰ This definition of capital is taken from Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 6.

⁷¹ "The All Time Greatest Florida Boondoggle Yet," n.d. [ca. 1947], Box 75, Model Land Company Papers (UM); hereinafter cited as MLC Papers.

being appropriated by any Congress to build roads, waterways, or pedestrian routes though this permanent wilderness."⁷²

Perhaps the largest reason that these arguments failed to impact the larger debate over the park was that oil had not been found in the Everglades. Before a House committee in 1947, Ivar Axelson argued that "the large expenditures of oil companies in this area is sufficient evidence that the area has large oil potentialities." Eight years later, in 1954, oil had still not been found, and Axelson could only claim that "the lands seized [by the federal government] are considered very favorably as to oil possibilities and for the most part are now under lease to major oil companies."⁷³ Landowners could only ever talk about oil as something that would perhaps exist at some indefinite point in the future. Park tourism, in contrast, was seen as a sure investment in Florida's economy.

Although these arguments about national security, urban growth, and the nature of the Everglades failed to turn officials against the park, landowners were able to gain concessions from the federal government when they focused on their property rights. Future NPS superintendent Arthur E. Demaray summed up the landowners' position when he remarked that their "opposition was not seemingly aimed at the park, but was based upon the theory that the private landowners should be allowed to retain their oil rights, free from any threat of condemnation of such rights."⁷⁴ At a 1949 Senate hearing, D. A. McDougal testified that these issues were so important because "the property rights of the individual citizen are involved." Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the family lobbied state and federal politicians, testified at multiple congressional hearings, and utilized their personal connections to Florida and Oklahoma congressmen to fight against the park. Their continual refrain was that the federal government was violating their sacrosanct property rights.⁷⁵

The flip side to these landowners' positive arguments about rights was their attack on the federal government's actions. At a Senate hearing on oil drilling, D. A. McDougal stated that "the power to condemn and take the property of a citizen without his consent and

⁷² J. Tom Watson, radio address, July 14, 1947, Box 35, Peterson Papers.

⁷³ Ivar Axelson, Statement on H.R. 3378, July 14, 1947 (first quotation), Box 75, MLC Papers; Ivar Axelson to Hugh Butler, March 27, 1954 (second quotation), Box 112, MLC Papers.

⁷⁴ Arthur Demaray to secretary of the Department of the Interior, July 22, 1947, Box 900, NPS Records.

⁷⁵ D. A. McDougal, Statement before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, August 12, 1949 (quotation), Box 41, Axelson Papers; Ivar Axelson to Orme Lewis, November 30, 1953, Box 42, Axelson Papers; Ivar Axelson, form letter to Everglades landowners, April 1949, Box 41, Axelson Papers.

against his will is an extraordinary and arbitrary power” that should only be used “in cases of public necessity.” Ivar Axelson lambasted the Department of the Interior, calling its efforts to expand the park’s boundaries in the 1950s a “serious violation of the will of Congress and of the understanding of land owners.” Such actions to expand the park were “without parallel, as far as we know, in the history of this country.” According to Axelson, “this secretarial order was issued in the most arbitrary fashion just prior to a hearing by our state officials on this matter and without consultation . . . and without a public hearing.” He argued that “the seizure of these lands” was “arbitrary and un-American, and we believe it to be illegal.” This was a “despotic act . . . lacking in common honesty.”⁷⁶

The property in question, though, was not the actual land in the Everglades but rather the minerals beneath these lands. Landowners had long conceded that their actual lands, which were covered in water, were worthless. They were willing to sell their lands but demanded retention of their mineral rights. This focus on mineral rights was a response to the ambiguity of the Everglades’s natural conditions. Wetlands are both land and water and, as such, often elude easy inclusion into social, cultural, and economic realms. Ann Vileisis, in *Discovering the Unknown Landscape*, examines how wetlands have often defied categorization as private property. According to Vileisis, “Traditionally, land has been considered as private property and water as public property.” Yet because wetlands are both land and water, they often exist in a sort of economic and legal limbo.⁷⁷

Public and private property rights regimes had both applied to the Everglades throughout American history. The federal Swamp Lands Act of 1850 and Everglades drainage efforts between the 1880s and 1920s tried to convert these public wetlands simultaneously to dry land and to private property. The Florida land boom during the 1920s was the apex of efforts to privatize these wetlands. When two disastrous hurricanes swept through South Florida in 1926 and 1928, the boom went bust, and landowners were faced with the fact they did not actually own any land but rather wetlands that were covered in water. A private property regime seemed dramatically unsuited to this wet and worthless

⁷⁶ D. A. McDougal, Statement before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, August 12, 1949 (first and second quotations), Box 41, Axelson Papers; Ivar Axelson to Hugh Butler, March 27, 1954 (third through eighth quotations), Box 112, MLC Papers.

⁷⁷ Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape*, 5–6 (quotation on 5); David C. Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York, 1989); Barbara Hurd, *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and Human Imagination* (Boston, 2001); Nelson, *Trembling Earth*.

landscape. The creation of a national park in the area would revert these private wetlands back to public property. The park's creation was not only an admission that drainage had failed but also a signal that these wetlands were not private property.⁷⁸

Landowners' emphasis on mineral rights was a way to salvage some value from their investment and was a solution to the conundrum of which property regime should be applied to the Everglades. In effect, landowners claimed the water and the water-covered land on their property should be converted to a public resource, but the land beneath the surface and the minerals bound in that subsurface land should be kept private. The fight for property rights in the ENP was not a simple fight against the government seizure of land but rather a more nuanced battle that reflected a particular view of the property in question. The aquatic and wetland nature of the Everglades itself affected how the Everglades was perceived and valued.⁷⁹

Beginning in the late 1940s, the McDougal-Axelsons and other landowners began to argue that their property rights were being violated by Everglades National Park and its expansion. In 1947 landowners led by Ivar Axelson formed an organization to "fight to save our oil rights." Its precise goals were to limit the park's boundaries and to secure "the reservation of oil, gas and mineral rights . . . for a period of at least (25) twenty five years and as long thereafter as oil, gas and minerals are produced." Oil rights became the singular focus of the McDougal-Axelsons, and the family continued to fight for this twenty-five-year reservation.⁸⁰

In 1948 this organization, now named the Everglades National Park Land Owners Association (ENPLOA), worked to recruit other landowners in the fight.⁸¹ After the park's creation in 1947, the Model Land Company joined the ENPLOA. The MLC was outraged that the National Park Service was demanding "that land owners in the Park area convey not only their surface rights, but their oil and mineral rights

⁷⁸ Swamp Lands Act, 9 Stat. 519 (September 28, 1850); David McCally, *The Everglades: An Environmental History* (Gainesville, Fla., 1999); Nelson Manfred Blake, *Land into Water—Water into Land: A History of Water Management in Florida* (Tallahassee, 1980); Matthew C. Godfrey and Theodore Catton, *River of Interests: Water Management in South Florida and the Everglades, 1948–2010* (Washington, D.C., 2011).

⁷⁹ On property rights regimes and their implications for use and protection, see Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162 (December 13, 1968), 1243–48; David Feeny et al., "The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later," *Human Ecology*, 18 (March 1990), 1–19; and Fikret Berkes et al., "The Benefits of the Commons," *Nature*, 340 (July 13, 1989), 91–93.

⁸⁰ Minutes of meeting of landowners of the Everglades Park Area, December 18, 1947, Box 40, Axelson Papers.

⁸¹ Ralph T. Folwell to Everglades landowners, April 2, 1948, Box 40, Axelson Papers.

as well." The MLC asked that "the present ownership of oil and mineral rights be not disturbed" and that landowners be allowed to retain these rights "for a period of say 25 years and as long thereafter as oil or minerals are produced in commercial quantities." Because this issue concerned the property rights of landowners, the MLC argued that this solution was not only fair but also "the traditional American way."⁸²

Smaller landowners also joined the fight for mineral rights. These individuals often used form letters and pre-scripted language to communicate their concerns to lawmakers. Gloria M. Laswell, a widowed owner of 220 acres of Everglades land, wrote to her representative to protest "the taking of my land and mineral and oil rights away."⁸³ Another small landowner, Ralph T. Folwell, wrote a similar letter, asking for "a reservation of mineral rights for 25 years and as long thereafter as oil and gas is produced." Folwell added that the reservation period was actually too short, because the Everglades "is a vast and virgin territory" and required "deep drilling."⁸⁴

Florida politician J. Tom Watson joined the fight for landowners' rights as well. Watson was "unalterably opposed to the giving of mineral rights to the government over the proposed National Park area." Watson sued the state in 1947 to prevent the transfer of state monies to the NPS for land acquisition in the park. He argued that the state "should not give away valuable oil rights in these lands over which lessees are paying large sums of money to get oil leases."⁸⁵

Senator Spessard Holland supported the federal government's acquisition of privately held lands in the Everglades, but at the same time, he was swayed by these arguments about the violation of landowners' property rights. Holland was unwilling to delay or shrink the park, but he did seek to protect these rights. Holland wrote to D. A. McDougal, "I fully agree with you that the property rights of individual citizens are more sacred than the policy of the Department of the Interior in national park matters." Holland proposed a compromise to "preserve the rights of land owners permanently," by giving them some kind of mineral reservation or oil royalty rights. Holland thought that "it should be possible to arrive at a reasonable adjustment of the mineral reservation problem," and he speculated that perhaps "private owners would be satisfied to be accorded the same kind of settlement of the oil question

⁸² Carl Hawkins to Edward Robertson, January 20, 1948, Box 75, MLC Papers.

⁸³ Gloria M. Laswell to William Dawson, April 2, 1948, Box 40, Axelson Papers.

⁸⁴ Ralph T. Folwell to John R. Murdock, February 21, 1949, Box 41, Axelson Papers.

⁸⁵ J. Tom Watson to the Internal Improvement Board Trustees, June 13, 1947 (first quotation), and J. Tom Watson statement, June 20, 1947 (second quotation), both Box 34, Peterson Papers.

that has been given to the State, that is, unlimited right to receive the proprietary royalties if and when oil is ever produced on the property.”⁸⁶

In fact, landowners received more protection for their mineral rights than Holland had suggested. Federal legislation passed in October 1949 allowed landowners in the park area to retain their mineral rights until 1958, or as long as oil was produced in commercial quantities. Landowners also retained the rights to oil royalties until 1985.⁸⁷ Yet Ivar Axelson thought that this nine-year period was “much too short” and that “a 20 year mineral reservation” was much more appropriate. The park area was “a virgin oil territory, and requires deep drilling.”⁸⁸ In a July 1949 ENPLOA mailing attacking the park, the McDougal-Axelsons wrote that “the land owners feel that in asking to be permitted to retain their mineral rights for 20 years, or at least to March 31, 1963, and for a reservation area of 64,000 acres around oil production, they are making fair and reasonable requests.”⁸⁹ Holland worked to compromise with the landowners, but in the end he was frustrated and dismayed by their stridency. He “felt that the attitude of some of the land owners was so unyielding as to make it rather difficult to approach any reasonable adjustment.”⁹⁰ Indeed, the McDougal-Axelsons and others continued to attack the government’s actions in the Everglades even after the compromise legislation had been passed. Their continued efforts earned them a second set of concessions from the federal government. In 1958, as the mineral rights period was expiring, Congress extended private ownership of the minerals beneath the lands to October 1967.⁹¹

The McDougal-Axelsons had once been solid Democrats. Mary McDougal Axelson had campaigned for Woodrow Wilson, while D. A. McDougal had been a Democratic judge and state representative in Oklahoma. However, as this fight over mineral rights dragged on, the family members found themselves more and more at home in the Republican Party. By the late 1940s, the family was working closely with the Republican Clubs of Greater Miami and of Dade County, both of which passed resolutions opposing the park’s expansion. By 1953 the family tried to take advantage of their Republican connections to influence the new Republican secretary of the interior, Douglas J. McKay. McKay represented the conservative wing of the Republican

⁸⁶ Spessard Holland to D. A. McDougal, April 9, 1948, Box 34, Peterson Papers.

⁸⁷ 63 Stat. 733 (October 10, 1949).

⁸⁸ Ivar Axelson to Everglades Park landowners, May 28, 1949, Box 29, Office of the President Records, 1926–2013 (UM).

⁸⁹ Everglades National Park Land Owners Association, July 1949, Box 41, Axelson Papers.

⁹⁰ Spessard Holland to D. A. McDougal, April 9, 1948, Box 34, Peterson Papers.

⁹¹ 72 Stat. 280 (July 2, 1958), at 285.

Party and is most notable to environmental historians for his support of the Echo Park Dam at Dinosaur National Monument. McKay, whose nickname was "Giveaway" McKay, supported opening more federal lands to drilling and timbering, much like Ronald Reagan's secretary of the interior James G. Watt. Ivar Axelson argued to McKay that the NPS "has given an extreme example of New Deal Bureaucracy and land grab methods entirely out of harmony with the spirit of Republican policy as stated in our National Republican Platform of 1952."⁹² Many southern Democrats moved to the Republican Party in the later twentieth century, mostly due to racial issues and to the passage of civil rights legislation. The McDougal-Axelons emphasized different reasons for realigning themselves with the Republican Party. Rather than race, issues surrounding government intervention in the economy and the use of eminent domain prompted their change in party loyalty.

Holland's and the McDougal-Axelons' different positions regarding the ENP illustrate the complexity of modern conservatism, especially regarding attitudes toward nature. The foundation of their conservatism was remarkably similar, and the bedrock of their opinion on politics, economics, and the environment was the same. Both were conservative: they supported limited government and saw individual rights as supreme. Holland and conservative landowners both sought economic growth, and both saw nature through a utilitarian lens.

Yet the divergent way that Holland and the McDougal-Axelons applied their conservative philosophies to the issue of the ENP led to conflict over the creation of the national park. Holland pragmatically found wriggle room within his own conservative ideology to support federal intervention in the Everglades. He accepted an increased federal presence in Florida because it would create economic benefits without imperiling the state's social and racial order. In contrast, the McDougal-Axelons employed their conservative ideology to fight for their own property rights.

Both groups sought economic growth, but while Holland sought a long-term strategy to benefit the entire state, the McDougal-Axelons narrowly sought to protect their own short-term profits. Holland and these landowners both saw the Everglades as an economic asset, and both viewed nature as a resource for the benefit of humans. Yet Holland accepted the fact that many Americans valued the Everglades's biota

⁹² Ivar Axelson to Douglas McKay, April 20, 1953, Box 42, Axelson Papers. On McKay, see Elmo Richardson, "The Interior Secretary as Conservation Villain: The Notorious Case of Douglas 'Giveaway' McKay," *Pacific Historical Review*, 41 (August 1972), 333-45. For the 1952 Republican Party platform, see *American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucs.edu/ws/?pid=25837>.

and would pay money to travel to the area's diverse ecosystems, while the McDougal-Axelsons openly mocked ecological notions and demanded that their personal economic needs take precedence over the preservation of nature.

The McDougal-Axelsons pursued strategies focused on their own self-interest; they wanted to protect their property rights. Yet Holland supported the park because he no doubt believed it would benefit his political career. Holland was the first in a long line of Florida politicians, many of whom have been conservative, who have cast themselves as defenders of the Everglades for political purposes. Just as Richard M. Nixon supported environmental issues for politically expedient reasons, it is likely that political calculations played a role in Holland's decision making.⁹³ South Florida was already the most populous region in the state at the time of Holland's 1940 gubernatorial campaign. He campaigned on promises to support tourism; his support for the park likely contributed to his popularity in South Florida and to his political dominance in statewide races.⁹⁴

Holland's pro-Everglades stance has been continued by subsequent conservative Florida governors who all have at the least paid lip service to the Everglades and have at best fought to protect and restore the region. These Republican governors did not all subscribe to an ecological view of the natural world—Rick Scott, the current governor, has reportedly gone so far as to ban the terms *climate change* and *global warming* in the state government—yet they have all understood that protecting the Everglades is important to the general public and that supporting the Everglades can have positive economic effects. Likewise, calls to expand oil drilling in the Everglades persist. In 2011 presidential hopeful Michele Bachmann stoked controversy when she proclaimed support for increased oil exploration in the Everglades. Rick Scott has found himself on both sides of this issue: he has both voiced support for increased drilling and pledged to protect the Everglades from oil drilling. Conservative attitudes toward nature, and especially toward the Everglades, remain conflicted.⁹⁵

⁹³ Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*.

⁹⁴ Evans, "Weathering the Storm," 57–59. Holland never lost a statewide election.

⁹⁵ Trip Gabriel, "Bachmann Takes Her Tea Party to Florida," *The Caucus* (a *New York Times* blog), August 29, 2011, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/bachmann-takes-her-tea-party-to-florida/>; Mary Ellen Klas, "Scott Clarifies Oil Drilling Support," *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times*, September 7, 2011, p. 1B; Tristram Korten, "In Florida, Officials Ban Term 'Climate Change,'" *Miami Herald*, March 8, 2015, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article12983720.html>.

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