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## Interior Secretary Zinke Invokes Teddy Roosevelt as Model, but His Public Land Policies Don't

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Public lands along the south fork of the Snake River in southeastern Idaho. BLM, CC BY

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's recommendations to shrink four national monuments and allow fossil fuel development activities on others is just the latest sign that this administration sees natural resource use and extraction as the highest priority for public lands.

I direct the Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University, named for former Idaho Governor and Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus, who died on August 24, 2017 at age 85. One major focus of our research is wise use of public lands and collaborative land use decisions through conversations that give everyone affected a chance to voice their concerns. These values, which Andrus championed, align with mainstream conservation thinking.

Controversies over public lands and natural resources date back more than a century, with policies emphasizing development under some administrations and conservation under others. So the Trump administration's focus on resource use is not new.

What I see as different this time is rhetoric that diverges completely from reality on the ground. We hear a lot about conservation and the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, but see proposals to cut public land budgets, promote oil and gas development next to protected areas and open more sage grouse habitat to mining. Some observers have labeled Zinke's conservation pledges "all hat and no cattle," recalling the old adage for people who pose as cowboys by dressing the part. Put another way, to these folks, Zinke so far is "all Roosevelt hat and no Roosevelt action."

### Cecil Andrus's conservation legacy

Cecil Andrus, who called himself "a lumberjack and a political accident," served four terms as governor of Idaho, from 1971-77 and 1987-95. He interrupted his second term to accept President Jimmy Carter's nomination as secretary of the interior. Like Zinke today, Andrus was an avid hunter and fisherman. He fully appreciated other conservation values, such as protecting parts of the public land estate for all Americans – not something we've seen thus far in Zinke's actions.

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Andrus led the Carter administration's effort to conserve large portions of Alaska in the 1970s – the largest such act in American history, and the catalyst for passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. This law created 104 million acres of parks and preserves, doubling the size of the U.S. national park system.



Then-Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus (right) greets President Jimmy Carter, Nov. 4, 1980. AP Photo/Harrity, File

Andrus was also centrally involved in protecting large swaths of Idaho, including the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the Boulder-White Cloud Wilderness. He left a legacy as a bipartisan problem solver who did not hesitate to use power in service of the public good. When he passed, we received condolences from many career employees at the Department of the Interior who worked with him.

In discussing “wise use” of resources, Andrus emphasized the “wise.” As he often said, “First you must make a living; then you must make a living that’s worthwhile.” This did not mean opposing all development, but rather what Andrus called a “prudent” approach.

“We developed America by giving away resources,” Andrus told President-elect Jimmy Carter when they met. “When we got to the Pacific Ocean, we looked back over our shoulders and said, ‘Oh, my God, look what we’ve done.’”

## Whose greatest good?

Conservationists, land managers and politicians have been debating how to reap the greatest value from public lands since the 1908-1913 battle over damming the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. Naturalist John Muir argued for protecting the scenic valley, which he compared to “the people’s churches and cathedrals.” But Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, carried the day, asserting that providing a new water supply for San Francisco would achieve “the greatest good for the greatest number.”

After Carter and Andrus left office in 1980, priorities swung sharply toward resource use under President Ronald Reagan and Interior Secretary James Watt III. Watt wanted to change the direction of public land policy, and did so with proposals that included more oil and gas leasing in wilderness areas and offshore and a proposed moratorium on new national parks. He resigned under pressure in 1983 after several tumultuous years.

Policies continued to oscillate under subsequent administrations, with Republicans favoring resource use and Democrats emphasizing conservation. As a candidate in 2016 Donald Trump did not say much about public lands, but seemed to provide cursory support for the idea that they should remain public and federally managed, rather than being transferred to state control or privatized as some advocates urged.



In August 2017 the Interior Department announced changes to federal sage grouse conservation plans to allow more energy development and livestock grazing on grouse habitat. DOI

## Rhetoric and reality

Ryan Zinke began his tenure at the Interior Department with pure symbolism: He rode to the agency's headquarters on horseback and professed to be a conservationist in the mold of Theodore Roosevelt. Then he took a different path.

Trump's directive to review 27 national monuments established by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama included seeking public comments, and the comments rained in – more than 1.4 million in total. But the Interior Department never issued an official summary or analysis of those comments. Environmentalists and tribes complained that Zinke gave them little time to present their views when he visited the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, one of four that Zinke proposes to shrink.

Cecil Andrus would have sought out the views of all affected interests, though of course it is extremely unlikely that he would ever have undertaken this kind of review in the first place. Late in the Clinton administration, environmentalists asked me to see whether Andrus would support designation of an Owyhee Canyonlands National Monument in southwestern Idaho. He replied that he would not because the proposal had not been vetted with all affected parties.

Interestingly, a recent Morning Consult/Politico survey found that respondents did not trust the Trump administration to make decisions on monuments, and instead thought the choices should rest with residents and local leaders in affected states. Presumably such an approach would have found broad support for monuments that were created with significant public involvement. This was true of almost all of the monuments under review, except possibly for Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, which many state officials contend President Clinton designated without consulting them. (There is, however, evidence to the contrary.)

Interior Secretary Zinke's recommendations to President Trump on national monuments.

## What next for public lands?

What can we expect next from the Trump administration? Some members of Congress, notably Utah Rep. Rod Bishop, continue to push for accelerated development on public lands – including coal, which is losing market share to cheaper and cleaner natural gas. Officials who would support reasoned and planned development of oil and gas instead confront renewed controversies over drilling near national parks and wilderness areas – an issue that was hotly debated during the Reagan administration.

Trump has yet to appoint leaders for the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This vacuum is creating uncertainty about policy directions, fueled by rumors about possible picks. Meanwhile, Zinke asserted this week that 30 percent of Interior Department employees were “not loyal to the flag.”

This confrontational approach would have been alien to Cecil Andrus. “We can joust and even fight at times, but it must be from a position of mutual respect,” he wrote in his 1994 memoir. “The West is too precious to be used as a scorched-earth, all or nothing battleground.”



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