

## National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

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### NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817) National Heritage Areas Administrative History Project



John Bradley  
August 9, 2016

Interview conducted by Antionette Condo  
Transcribed by Antoinette Condo  
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508 compliant version by Jessica Lamb

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My Narrative  
The Administrative History of the National Heritage Areas Coordinating Office

John Bradley  
August 9, 2016

Interview conducted and transcribed by  
Antoinette J. Condo

This transcript was reviewed by Antoinette J. Condo  
The narrator was asked to review the transcript but did not.

**John Bradley Interview: August 9, 2016**

My background was somewhat unique and that's why my perspective on everything might be a little bit different than a lot of other people. After university my first job was to put together an outdoor recreation plan for the state of Indiana. After a few months I was hired away to the state of Ohio to do short-and-long range outdoor recreation planning and to work on SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan), and at the same time teach at Ohio State University. From there I went to old BOR (Bureau of Recreation) in Ann Arbor, and then in Washington. There I had a chance to work on a variety of programs and I had a unique opportunity way back when to work with people such as Nat Reed and Buff Bolen and other people who were heavily involved in early conservation efforts within the Department of the Interior. Bob Eastman was my boss and basically wrote from sea to shining sea.

Then it became HCRS (Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service), and I was in charge of technical assistance. I left to work at a huge recreation and park agency in Colorado. Was hired back to work at the NPS and I was then lucky enough to work with Deny Galvin and Bill Spitzer. I had experience in all levels of government, local, state, and federal. It really changed my outlook as a NPS employee.

When I was in charge specifically with the nationwide SCORPS (State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans) out of Bill Spitzer's shop, I was asked by Deny to work on projects for him full time. After the Vail Symposium one of the recommendations was about the heritage areas and what the NPS should do, so Deny asked me to go to Denver and work with Mike Spratt and put together the bases for legislation and for where we should be going on this program.

Why all this came to be, basically the old ORRRC (Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission) reports which began in 1958. The ORRRC reports were the catalyst that did everything (in establishing NPS in the recreation business). They led to the establishment of BOR, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, SCORP, The Wilderness Act, rivers legislations, and trails legislation. Few people realize the ORRRC reports set up a landscape classification system. A Brent Olson 2010 article is a good analysis of the 58 volumes of ORRRC reports.

BOR led to HCRS in which the cultural functions were brought on board. The technical assistance programs were started by HCRS and then came with them to the NPS. In fact, all of this was the progenitor for heritage areas, their establishment and everything that goes along with them. ORRRC, BOR, HCRS and all the programs that they generated absolutely led to what was going to happen with heritage areas. Only one caveat with that broad-brush analysis and that is without a Deny Galvin I really believe that we would have nothing like we have today. Galvin was unique and worshipped in the NPS like no one I have ever seen in government. He firmly believed that when NPS absorbed HCRS there was a real plus, a real potential for the NPS to change, particularly in terms of its culture. People who were hired by the old BOR were not just people who were planners and knew about the resource. The grades were high, and consequently they could pull from a variety of other federal, state and local agencies people who would never have been hired by NPS. That culture continued with HCRS. That totally changed the NPS. If you go back to '78 or '79 I think the NPS had one female GS-13. The increase in diversity of sex, ethnicity, and talent really changed the NPS.

To focus on heritage areas, at this time with new ways of looking at conservation the ideas came that there were other things outside the NPS management that were worth preserving. Opportunities that allowed people to experience more than they are with parks, national monuments, national recreation areas. With that idea the whole NPS began to change. Many people did not like that change. Many people looked upon old BOR, HCRS people as ignorant jerks. Many NPS people thought that the work of the NPS stopped at their park boundary. Galvin back then had a lot of influence and his attitude was able to sway opinion.

**Public meetings to explain the heritage area proposal:** I went to all the meetings around the country (1991-2): New Orleans, San Francisco, Washington, Chicago, and Denver. They were all moderately successful. The ideas we were proposing were seen by many through the lens of how it would affect them. The average amount of people that we would have varied from 20 to 100. We had state people involved in wildlife areas and state parks. We had locals involved in park and recreation areas. We had cultural people. We tried to cover as many people as we could and bring a wide range of individuals and backgrounds. Most of the people liked the idea of heritage areas and what they could do when it was explained to them. A number of people said, "What you are talking about is stories that are the fabric that holds the history together."

Another positive comment, they saw there was a potential for expansion of public and private partnerships. At that time partnerships were not a big item on anybody's agenda, other than the old HCRS involvement in technical assistance programs by bringing in public and private partners. Generally, most attendees thought the whole potential was excellent. Some, of course, immediately said, "How much are we going to get?" Money is always an issue. How much is the NPS going to come up with to help? We deadpanned that and said, "You don't have to have the money to have potential for heritage areas across the country." It doesn't necessarily mean that the federal government has to chip in a whole great amount.

There were some people in NPS who thought heritage areas would get Congress off their backs and it would not cost them any money. Some NPS people who were at the meetings said, "Sure, lets have these but just not take any money from our existing budgets."

On the negative side I saw some people who said, "For God's sake don't get the feds involved. Nothing but problems come with federal involvement." Some people were interested in who was going to foot the bill. Of course, everybody wanted money, but people said, "Not from me." We had a number of private landowners. They were vehemently opposed to some aspects of the potential of this because right away the land rights groups said it was another attempt by the feds to take our land. We had to keep repeating that this was not a land grab. The state people, particularly, were very wary of federal control. It wasn't until they understood the partnership arrangement that would tie everything together that they came around.

Overall, I think the meetings were well received. Most said that they liked the idea, and we look forward to hearing more about it. Galvin attended several of the national meetings and was a very moderating influence. (Michael) Spratt and I were just the people doing the grunt work and listening and talking to people. Without Galvin there, thinking, pushing, prodding behind the

scenes, and in the scenes, as it were, within NPS and DOI, I don't think it would have gone further than it did.

**Reference to first four heritage areas:** Michael looked at the four earliest heritage areas closely (in preparing our proposal) I did not. Spratt was the person who really led the charge on that.

**Writing of the heritage partnership legislation:** Michael and I put together the framework of things like nomination of areas, beyond that I had no further involvement. After the report, after the meetings I moved to work on trail legislation and retired at the end of 1993.

Sam Stokes and Alan Turnbull took over working for Deny on heritage areas. He couldn't have picked finer people.

**NPS and heritage areas:** It brought a whole avenue of experience and knowledge and doing something outside of park areas that wasn't commonplace at all. If you go back and talk to old line superintendents before the '80s they will tell you, they didn't know anything that was happening outside of the parks. NPS looked at its crown jewels, and that was it. Deny was able to engender the spirit that started with ORRRC, BOR, HCRS and bringing in the cultural functions. The NPS people started realizing there was a world beyond the national parks, and formed the basis for interaction of agencies, people, situations, public/private relationships that we have today.

It's interesting how all these things are building blocks that help the NPS. I really believe had there not been the ORRRC report and BOR there never would have been nationwide trails legislation, and Wild and Scenic Rivers legislation, and the Wilderness Act. All those contributed to educating NPS internal people, who for the most part were just interested in the crown Jewels, that there was more outside national parks.

A set of brothers, Allen (former superintendent of Glacier, Lake Mead) and Brian O'Neal (former superintendent of Golden Gate), the two of them with their background were old BOR people who became what many people consider two of the best modern superintendents. They brought in everybody. They also pushed minority programs. That is something BOR and HCRS were tremendous advocates of.