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Sara M. Gregg, *Managing the Mountains: Land Use Planning, the New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) ISBN 978-0-300-14219-8.

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Introduction by Jacob Darwin Hamblin, Oregon State University

Throughout “Appalachia,” a vast mountain region stretching from northern Alabama to Quebec, it is easy to betray one’s outsider status. In many Southern parts, one might simply pronounce the third syllable in Appalachia with a long A, as in “name,” and it will be obvious to anyone that you are not *from* there. Instead, it is pronounced with a short A, as in “apple.” The opposite is true in some Northern parts. That syllable is one of a thousand indicators separating locals from even the most well-intentioned outsiders.

Outsiders have a long history of trying to change Appalachia, for better or for worse. In the second decade of the twentieth century, after the passage of the 1911 Weeks Act, the federal government began to reacquire private land throughout the region, with a view toward implementing Progressive-era ideas about best practices, efficiency, and resource conservation. Over time, federal legislation protected or regulated use of considerable stretches of land, including parts of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Green Mountains. New Deal enthusiasts of the 1930s took this further with conservation, recreation, and social programs. And yet the people who engineered these changes often did so from Washington, D.C., or elsewhere, creating federal landscapes with enormous impacts on local people while opening up long-standing disputes about local autonomy.

In *Managing the Mountains*, Sara M. Gregg takes us through this tumultuous and complicated history, demonstrating how these areas changed under new land use regimes. Many of them today wear the false appearance of being untouched by humans. In telling the story, Gregg showcases the goals of federal planners and the abilities of locals to influence the outcomes of policy. She focuses in particular on the mountains of Virginia and Vermont, two regions with distinct traditions and histories but with a number of geological and economic similarities. The differences in locals’ abilities to control outcomes were astonishingly sharp. How could it be that some major federal projects were halted by local resistance, as happened in Vermont, while elsewhere the people were virtually ignored, as when Virginians had to move against their will to make way for Shenandoah National Park?

Rather than focus on cultural differences, Gregg explores structural ones that determined how well local people were able to control outcomes. She sees the outstanding factor as the organization of political systems. The small township system of Vermont allowed locals routinely to influence outcomes in regional planning decisions, whereas the large, dispersed areas governed by counties in Virginia gave individuals only a tenuous connection to decision-making.

I invited **Geoffrey L. Buckley** to contribute to this roundtable because of his expertise in the history of mining in several Appalachian states. A professor of geography at Ohio University, he shares with Sara Gregg a sense of how local communities were either heeded or, more often, circumvented to favor the goals of

outsiders. In *Extracting Appalachia*, Buckley explores the industrial and cultural history of coal mining through the use of photographs originally printed in a company publication. He suggests that the company in question, Consolidation Coal, used the images to suggest consent in coal mining communities. By analyzing the photos, Buckley was able not only to show the company's intent but also to document environmental change over time.¹

Another commentator, independent scholar **Donald Edward Davis**, has explored the environmental dimensions of Southern Appalachia from a cultural perspective. Davis's sweeping approach includes not only widespread impacts of industrial logging and dam building in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also earlier profound events such as the introduction of diseases in the sixteenth century, alterations to Cherokee culture due to declines in fur animals in the eighteenth century, and the impacts of major plant diseases such as chestnut blight.²

Cheryl Morse, an Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of Vermont, writes about rural communities. I was particularly interested in her perspectives given her expertise on the region in Sara Gregg's book not typically associated with Appalachian studies, namely Vermont. Morse teaches Vermont Studies, and one of her projects is on therapeutic landscapes, which links perceptions of wilderness to the construction of identity in young people.³

Before turning to the first set of comments, I would like to pause here and thank all the roundtable participants for taking part. In addition, I would like to remind readers that as an open-access forum, *H-Environment Roundtable Reviews* is available to scholars and non-scholars alike, around the world, free of charge. Please circulate.

¹ Geoffrey L. Buckley, *Extracting Appalachia: Images of the Consolidation Coal Company, 1910 - 1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004)

² Donald Edward Davis, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000)

³ Morse previously published under the surname Dunkley. C. M. Dunkley, "A Therapeutic Taskcape: Theorizing Place-Making, Discipline, and Care at a Camp for Troubled Youth," *Health & Place* 15:1 (2009), 88-96.

Comments by Geoffrey L. Buckley, Ohio University

To students unacquainted with the history of America's public lands it often comes as a surprise to learn that many of our national forests and parks, particularly those in the East, were once occupied by private landowners and that the acquisition and subsequent management of these lands by federal authorities once sparked controversy. For small landholders in Appalachia – whose land rights have been challenged by speculators, mining companies, timber interests, and state and federal agencies for more than a century and a half – it is a story with a familiar ring to it. In *Managing the Mountains: Land Use Planning, the New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia*, Sara Gregg reminds us that our eastern national forests and parks were not created to protect the last remnants of a pristine wilderness that Euro-American immigrants somehow skipped over in their mad rush to settle a continent. Rather, they are – even to this day – contested spaces, where the tension between individual freedom, embodied by our long tradition of fee simple absolute landownership, and social purpose, expressed in our system of public lands, is played out.

In this thoroughly researched and carefully crafted study Gregg examines the transfer of land from private to public hands in the eastern mountains of the U.S. during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Focusing on two seemingly similar, but ultimately very distinct, sections of the Appalachian Mountains, western Virginia and Vermont, she explains how local, state, and federal governments – informed by the work of rural sociologists, agricultural economists, and land use planners – collaborated with conservationists and local boosters to create a “recreational escape” for urban Americans. Perhaps more important, she explores the extent to which rural Vermonters and Virginians were included in the planning process and, further, how these local residents responded to the government programs that would ultimately transform their mountain homes “from a landscape dotted with small subsistence farms into a patchwork of federal landscapes.” (p. 4)

In the first half of the book, Gregg recounts the struggles of mountain farmers during the 1920s and 1930s. Marginalized by an economic and political system that paid scant attention to their problems, Virginians adapted as best they could to the loss of the versatile chestnut tree, declining soil productivity, and the shrinking size of the region's farms. Although they benefitted from much stronger political and economic connections, Vermonters, too, were compelled to deal with numerous “rural” problems, most notably the abandonment of unprofitable farms, a deteriorating transportation infrastructure, and outmigration. In Part Two, Gregg focuses on the New Deal plans that led to the creation of the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont and the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. Confident that conservation and land use planning could be employed to return exhausted lands to productive use, state and federal authorities promoted these and other remedies with missionary zeal. Although the acquisition of private land for public purpose represented a significant shift in policy, both Vermonters and Virginians

expressed hope that these bold projects would improve the economic prospects of local communities. In the end, however, only Vermonters were invested with the power to negotiate the degree to which their state would be recast as a “vacationland.” In rural Virginia, local residents found themselves closed out of the planning process. Forced to relocate to make way for the park, some resorted to “firing the woods.” But they were the exceptions. Most simply faded from the scene, their lives and livelihoods all but lost to history in what would soon become the Shenandoah National Park.

Why were rural Virginians left out of the planning process during these critical years? Was it simply a case of political marginalization? Gregg offers us a valuable clue when she describes how government researchers and others differentiated between Virginia and Vermont when it came to farming strategies: “Whereas in Virginia local observers generally interpreted the self-sufficient practices of mountain farmers to be a maladjustment to contemporary conditions, many New Englanders portrayed the straitened farm economy as Yankee frugality, a laudable symbol of independence and self-reliance.” (p. 49) In other words, “practicality,” when exercised by sturdy Vermont farmers was viewed “as an asset,” but in the hills and hollows of Virginia it was taken as a “sign of backwardness.” What are we to make of such a distinction? Perhaps it suggests that while both Vermont and Virginia may be considered part of the Appalachian physiographic province, only Virginia is truly part of “Appalachia,” that socially constructed invention of the late nineteenth century. Why does this matter? In central and southern Appalachia, stereotyping mountain farmers as backward, lazy, and fatalistic has long served the needs of land speculators and industrialists, facilitating the transfer of property rights from small landholders to large corporations. In some sections, the scale of the land transfer has been breathtaking. In the mineral-rich central portion of the region, for example, a landmark study conducted by the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force (ALOTF) in 1984 discovered that three-quarters of the surface rights and nearly four-fifths of the mineral rights in an 80-county of six states – West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Alabama – was controlled by absentee landlords. For residents of Appalachia, relinquishing the rights to one’s land is, as the saying goes, as old as the hills.

Shenandoah National Park is a beautiful place. So too is the Green Mountain National Forest. By almost any measure they have lived up to the lofty goals that government planners set for them nearly 80 years ago. Indeed, few people today would argue that their establishment was a bad idea. What we learn from *Managing the Mountains*, however, is that there was a human cost associated with their creation. In Gregg’s capable hands those costs are enumerated and the sacrifices of mountain farmers who were forced to leave their homes recorded for all time.

Comments by Donald Edward Davis, Independent Scholar

Managing the Mountains is a well-documented account of the many federal land use activities that took place in Appalachia during the New Deal administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. By end of the 1930s, the federal government had acquired millions of acres of public lands in the Appalachia, making it the single largest landowner in the eastern United States. Both the southern and northern Appalachian regions are represented in the book, as the Blue Ridge Mountains of Central Virginia and the Green Mountains of Vermont are the primary focus of the narrative. There is much that is original in the analysis, since the author relies heavily on primary government documents, including records gleaned from the Resettlement Administration and other sources found in the National Archives. The work of rural sociologists and New Deal land use planners also receives considerable attention in the narrative, which—along with a considerable dose of environmental history—makes the book an informed interdisciplinary read.

Throughout the book, the author shows unusual sensitivity to the many problems facing rural mountaineers during the Depression and generally avoids blaming them for their plight. Gregg uncovers many commonalities between mountain residents living in Virginia and Vermont, especially in terms of their shared early 20th century land use practices, but does see important differences in how mountain residents confronted the federal land use programs of the New Deal. With regard to the forced removal of mountain residents for the creation of National Parks, for example, the author concludes that “Virginia residents of the Blue Ridge made an admirable case for remaining in their mountain homes, but without the sanction of local political organizations they failed to affect the planning process.” Vermonters, on the other hand, had more influence in that political arena as they were much more “integrated into the process of governing” (p. 211).

Vermont’s township system of governance, believes Gregg, gave residents more opportunities to democratically negotiate with federal agencies, allowing them to better influence the final political outcome. The county system of governance found in Virginia and across the southern Appalachians made it more likely that individuals living in the more urbanized county seats, and not necessarily those impacted by the creation of National Parks or National Forests, would be the beneficiaries of New Deal federal land use policies. In the southern Appalachians, National Parks and National Forest acquisitions, as Gregg notes, have historically occurred in more remote mountain areas, where political representation is at a minimum, if it exists at all.

This argument is certainly not new, and has been made by several noted Appalachianists, including David Whisnant, who was among the first to openly critique New Deal land use initiatives in the southern mountains. In *Modernizing the*

Mountaineer, Whisnant expertly documented how grassroots participation was considerably lacking, if not entirely absent, in Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) development programs during the first few decades of its operation.⁴ According to Whisnant, TVA was plagued by an inability to include the grassroots in policy formation throughout its early history, as nearly every program surveyed by outside observers, including the agency's early reservoir resettlement, agriculture, and electrification programs, failed on this score.

In *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*, historian Ronald Eller makes similar arguments about the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a federal agency that since the 1960s has poured billions of dollars into Appalachia in order to improve roads, highways, and the overall public infrastructure of the region.⁵ According to Eller, instead of working on poverty or unemployment in the hardest hit rural communities, the ARC chose instead to stimulate economic development by targeting regional "growth centers," that is, areas with the highest population densities such as county seats. In doing so, the agency performed a kind of economic development triage by only approving projects that were in, or near, major urban centers. Unemployment in the more remote mountain areas was to be solved later, *after* linking those areas with a network of highways to the region's growing metropolises.

While Gregg certainly points out flaws in New Deal land use policies and programs, the tone is more apologetic towards the federal government than is Whisnant's or Eller's. This is a subtle but important difference in the analysis found in *Managing the Mountains* and numerous other studies that have more overtly criticized federal initiatives in Appalachia. Perhaps this is partly because the objectives of New Deal land use programs under the author's scrutiny—the acquisition of millions of acres of denuded, overcut, and abused lands for long-term conservation and ecosystem health—were ultimately achieved, a desideratum that, in hindsight, is difficult, if not impossible, to argue against.

Moreover, much of the documentation in the book comes directly from government officials, land use planners, and elite politicians, leaving the voices of mountain residents conspicuously underrepresented. The over-use of official sources sometimes gives the impression that federal land use programs were a *fait accompli* that would ultimately result in a better life for all mountaineers. The book would therefore have greater historiographical balance if the author had utilized more oral histories of local farmers and cited more documents representing the perspective of the mountaineers themselves, especially individuals who were openly opposed to the New Deal programs. Gregg's approach is, not surprisingly, a more biocentric one, giving greater voice to the mountain landscape, and those attempting to acquire and

⁴ David E. Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia* (University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

⁵ Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

preserve it, than to those who had for generations, worked and played, lived and died, on mountain soils.

From my own perspective, the above shortcoming is the only flaw in an otherwise well-argued and erudite study of federal land use planning in Appalachia during the New Deal. For some readers, such as land use planners, the author's focus on large public spaces and the government's bold plans to institutionally acquire and manage them, will be viewed as a tremendous asset. The prose of the book is well-measured and eloquent, even when navigating readers through the alphabet soup that is often associated with New Deal federal programs and their acronyms. Although the book's end notes are extensive, there is no separate bibliography, which is regrettable given the numerous archival sources used by the author. The book will most certainly have a wide audience across numerous disciplines, including Appalachian studies, environmental studies, environmental history, human geography, and rural sociology. Land use planners and natural resource managers will also find the book interesting, if not professionally helpful, especially if they work in areas that are home to federal landscapes that adjoin smaller rural communities.

Comments by Cheryl Morse, University of Vermont

The other day as I was driving to work I heard an announcement for an upcoming program on the local public radio station: “Vermont Ideas That Didn’t Fly”. The announcer’s tone caught my attention as she laughed derisively and said something like, “A road over the highest peaks on Vermont?! We can all agree that was a very bad idea.” She was referring to the early 20th century failed federal proposal to build a roadway through the Green Mountains, similar to Skyline Drive in Virginia. Her comment made me wonder if she had ever visited the Blue Ridge Mountains and traveled over the Skyline Parkway and seen those stunning views. If she had, did she gaze upon the cascading mountains and say, “Well, this was a really bad idea”? Her comment made me reflect on the shifting nature of environmental values, as well as the processes that naturalize our values, rendering them invisible to us in the moment. I made the assumption that environmental and aesthetic concerns drove her opinion of the Green Mountain Parkway proposal, and thought she might be surprised to learn that the debate over the parkway centered on the role of the federal government in Vermont. Could she imagine justification for the parkway, even on environmental grounds? Did she know why such a “bad” idea rose to the level of the State Legislature and why it was so hotly debated on both sides? This “off-the-cuff” comment emphasized for me the importance of comparative historical research provided by environmental historians such as Sara Gregg.

I am grateful to Jacob Hamblin for inviting me into this conversation as it gave me the opportunity to return to Gregg’s book. I wrote a review of *Managing Mountains* a couple of years ago and this second reading prompted me to conduct a comparative analysis of my own perspective on the work.⁶ *Managing Mountains* traces the stories of two places— Blue Ridge Mountains communities of northwest Virginia and mountain communities of Vermont—and their entanglement with local, state, and federal actors who attempted to reform land use practices and promote social change through conservation initiatives in the 1920s.

These early 20th century reforms, Gregg contends, changed national culture, and laid the groundwork for the reforestation of the Appalachians. They transformed landscapes of subsistence hill farms into a patchwork of mostly forested federal lands, managed for multiple public goods. While Gregg thoroughly treats a number of federal initiatives, at the heart of this analysis are two proposals to build scenic roadways in remote and marginalized mountain regions. One road was built and became a popular destination in the national park system. The other proposal was rejected. Why? Rather than giving one variable the explanatory power, Gregg

⁶ Cheryl Morse, review of Sara M. Gregg, *Managing the Mountains: Land Use Planning, The New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia*, *Journal of Regional Science* 51:5 (2011), 1030-31.

carefully and in great detail shows how political geography, topography, economic conditions, outmigration, ecological change, ethnographic fieldwork, values and identity, academic training, natural disasters, and the machinations of politics each helped to shape these opposite outcomes.

The book is separated into two sections: Origins and Projects. In the first section Gregg describes the environmental, political, and culture contexts of each community, and closes with an overview of the ideas, individuals, and institutions that drove the conservation agenda at the national scale. The reader learns how Blue Ridge mountain people drew sustenance from the forests and narrow river valleys of the region, how population growth and ecological changes destabilized their food system, and how the system of strong county government coupled with the topography of the region marginalized their political participation. Gregg shows that Vermont held much in common with northwestern Virginia, but there were some crucial differences: "In many ways the Green Mountains share the topography of Southern Appalachia, and yet the culture of New England endowed this upcountry with a strikingly different social and political landscape, with strong political and economic connections to adjoining valley communities" (41). Vermont, with its strong local government, was better positioned to deliberate and resist federal initiatives. The third chapter on federal land use planning from 1900-1933 lays out the national land use planning and reform context, showing the connections between academic ideas, government policy, and the political tensions between the American East and West.

This section drew me in for a second time. I found myself fascinated by the "Hollow" culture and geography of the Blue Ridge and keen to learn more about how plans to create a park out of an agrarian landscape would impact the lives of local residents. As I am more familiar with Vermont, I was struck by how narratives of agricultural decline, outmigration, and the promise of renewal have recycled themselves in the 21st century. As I stated in my first review, I am still uneasy about referring to Vermont as part of "Appalachia", mainly because I don't believe many Vermonters, past or present, would self-identify that way. However, as a framing device to allow for historical comparison, it works very well.

The second section of the book provides close accounts of the births of Shenandoah National Park with its Skyline Drive, and the Green Mountain National Forest without its Green Mountain Parkway. Gregg traces both the political moves that were necessary to create the Shenandoah National Park, and the messy and drawn-out process of relocating families dislocated by the establishment of the Park. In the Vermont case she focuses on the piecemeal fashion in which Vermonters accepted some federal assistance and programs like flood relief and the Civilian Conservation Corps, and rejected others such as the Green Mountain Parkway. These chapters are rich in empirical evidence and draw from a wide variety of sources. Researchers and students working on questions having to do with either location, the development of Eastern public lands, rural reform and change, policy making, and a host of other topics will find a treasure chest of information here.

The final chapter, *Reforming Submarginal Lands, 1933-1938* is a difficult read because it attempts too much. The narrative moves between Virginia and Vermont and Washington, which I found dizzying. The chapter wraps up the story about the relocation of people out of the Shenandoah National Park, analyzes the Vermont Legislature's rejection of the federal submarginal lands program, and discusses the merging and re-merging of federal land programs under the Roosevelt Administration. Perhaps the Virginia and Vermont material could have been covered in their respective preceding chapters and this final chapter could have been a place for Gregg to distance herself from the details of each case study to elaborate on federal-state relations, and theorize more deeply the new federal mandate that Eastern forests serve the recreational and scenic needs of urban residents. She has so much material to work with and so much to say that the book could easily accommodate another chapter or two.

Gregg's pace slows in the Epilogue. It is a beautiful close to her work. Here she shows, very convincingly, that the Appalachian forests today are a vital part of American life, not so much as agrarian landscapes but as a playground. It was because these places were so marginal, she says, that they were "swept up in the nationalizing project of the expanding nation-state" (213). She writes, "The return of the Appalachian mountains to forest has occurred under a variety of management regimes, even in the parts of the region that remain in private hands. Nevertheless, the transition from farms to forest that was promoted beginning in the 1920s and 1930s by local, state, and federal officials has been the most important causal force in reordering the mountain landscape, creating a new, largely recreational, forest commons" (220). Often the eastern forest is described as having "returned" or "come back" from its deforestation. But, as Gregg suggests in this last sentence, it is a new forest and today's human encounters with the land are entirely different than those of the 1920s. People no longer dwell in the part of the Blue Ridge that is Shenandoah National Park, but many thousands have a brief aesthetic experience of it over hiking trails and a paved road. On Vermont's highest peaks we do not have cars speeding along the ridgelines, but we have chairlifts providing high-speed delivery of tourists to the many ski slopes carved into the mountainsides. After a second close read of Gregg's work I remain deeply impressed by the academic labor she invested in the project and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to learn from her analysis. As a geographer who attempts to "read" rural landscapes, I rely on the triangulation of multiple historical accounts to imagine the lives, values, and daily realities of those who fashioned the landscapes I encounter. I have been too harsh in my characterization of the public radio announcer. Her workplace was airing a program analyzing why some things didn't happen, and like Gregg's important book, it is providing a valuable opportunity to learn from the past and from critical reflections on the past.

Response by Sara M Gregg, University of Kansas

I would like to begin by thanking Jacob Hamblin for arranging this roundtable discussion on *Managing the Mountains*. I am grateful to have the opportunity to engage in this digital conversation through H-Environment, and it is to Jake's great credit that this roundtable series has been such an asset to the global community of environmental historians. I must also thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments, as they each bring significant personal insight into their appraisals of this book, and all can boast of a deep knowledge of the region as well as of the passion it inspires. This roundtable has been a long time in the making, and it is gratifying to have the opportunity to evaluate *Managing the Mountains* from the vantage point of a few years of distance.

The reviewers' praise for this book reinforces many of the reasons I found this research so engaging—the richness of the “hidden history” behind the beloved Appalachian national parks and forests.⁷ I set out on this project eager to understand how federal policy contributed to the transformation of a regional landscape, and, in a sense, to explore how good policy is created and implemented. As I described in the preface to *Managing the Mountains*, I was initially inspired to undertake this research because I was intrigued by the very different fate of the Resettlement Administration's submarginal lands initiatives in the mountains of Virginia and Vermont. My later discovery that the national park and national forest projects were also contested terrain provided an additional impetus to study the evolution of planning in these mountain regions. It was clear that the history of federal land acquisitions in these districts had been incompletely understood, and I became convinced that these histories of conservation and removal were an important part of the stories of these places, and of the evolving nation-state as a whole.

When I wrote *Managing the Mountains* my primary interest was in probing the long-term impacts of policy-making, and especially the unintended consequences of land use planning of the 1920s and 1930s. The planners and bureaucrats who devoted themselves to the reform projects of conservation and agricultural reform during these decades sought to uplift the abstracted Appalachian farmer from poverty and submarginal land, and to integrate him into the modernizing nation-state. My goal was to craft not simply a history of New Deal planning under Franklin Roosevelt, as Donald Davis suggests, but rather to demonstrate that the reforms of the 1930s had

⁷ Environmental historians have been probing this terrain for well over a decade, and important models for my research came from Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley, 2001) and Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

a considerable lineage dating back decades, and emerging from agricultural colleges and regional planning circles, as well as the federal government. As elsewhere, the process of policy formation in Appalachia was complex, nuanced, and deeply considered, even if local communities saw it as nothing but an unwanted bureaucratic intervention into their lives. As I explored in the third chapter, moreover, the land use planners and conservationists who had been central in formulating land policy were themselves farm boys who had identified early in their lives the hazards of making a living in agriculture. These men vowed never to be the pawns of drought, hail, and blight again—and to do everything in their power to help farmers improve their odds in the agricultural marketplace through innovations in research and conservation. This is an important point to reinforce, because it explains much about the people who were central to implementing agricultural reform during the New Deal.

I began the research for my dissertation expecting to uncover a clear causation that would explain the success of some federal projects alongside the apparent failure of others. Was the derailment of some projects attributable to administrative missteps, inadequate funding, local protest? As I delved deeper, however, I discovered that there were no clear and specific explanatory forces at play. More importantly, I also came to the realization that my perception of success and failure was no longer intact—in fact, those terms have very little utility once we consider the complex alterations of landscapes, communities, and politics that resulted from the conservation projects of the 1920s and 1930s. It is true, as reviewer Donald Davis observed, that some of “the objectives of New Deal land use programs under the author’s scrutiny—the acquisition of millions of acres of denuded, overcut, and abused lands for long-term conservation and ecosystem health—were ultimately achieved,” although rarely in the terms that these planners originally envisioned.

As the reviewers observed, and as I explained in the introduction to *Managing the Mountains*, I did not set out to tell the human story of the Appalachian dispossessed. Other books have done that, albeit incompletely, for both the Shenandoah National Park and for upcountry Vermont.⁸ The social history of the Appalachian region is a compelling piece of the American story, and yet it was not central to the evaluation of the development of the regional conservation and agricultural policies that were my subject. As the reviewers observe, most of my focus in the book was on the process of land use planning, and on examining those agents of change who envisioned a different future for the Appalachian Mountains. Although I spent the better part of a year weaving together a detailed story of the lives of the residents of the Blue Ridge hollows, reflected in part by my 2004 article in *Agricultural History*,

⁸ Kevin Dann, *Lewis Creek Lost and Found* (Hanover: Middlebury College Press, 2001); Katrina Powell, *The Anguish of Displacement: The Politics of Literacy in the Letters of Mountain Families in Shenandoah National Park* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Charles L. Perdue, Jr., and Nancy J. Martin-Perdue, “Appalachian Fables and Facts: A Case Study of the Shenandoah National Park Removals,” *Appalachian Journal* (Autumn/Winter 1979–80).

ultimately, the details of agricultural practice and the evidence of cultural practice fell away as the book evolved.⁹ My use of sources ultimately reflected the historical material that I found most evocative, and, consequently, these “government officials, land use planners, and elite politicians” told a different story than the people whose livelihoods were being challenged. I could not have gracefully woven a deep social history into this narrative, and I did not endeavor to do so, although I did look intently for local critiques of federal planning, and integrated these into the text wherever possible.

My focus in *Managing the Mountains* on federal and state policymaking means that this history stands largely outside the realm of Appalachian Studies, most of which takes a much more social and cultural approach to the region. Much of the scholarship on Appalachia has focused on the relationship between resource extraction and cultural decay, rather than on the region as a hybrid landscape that has been altered as a product of the negotiations between groups of resource users and their local environments. This latter perspective, a signature of environmental history, has been long overdue for the region, although Davis’s own *Where There are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians* (Georgia, 2003) provides a useful survey of the larger region.

In his review, Geoff Buckley references the cultural construction of the Appalachian “other” that began during the late nineteenth century, around the same time that the cult of Yankee thrift and perseverance also began to emerge in popular writing. Buckley suggests that the Appalachian stereotype proved influential in sidelining rural Virginians during the park planning process, and this was likely true at the national level. But I argued that the more telling reason why mountain people were left out of the discussions about the park had everything to do with political geography. As I explained in the first chapter of *Managing the Mountains*, the organization of the political process in Virginia, and especially the county-seat oriented regional governments, had long ignored both the presence and the needs of the people on the county fringes. These “mountaineers” fit the Appalachian type, to be sure, but they were also considered marginal to the political and economic processes that drove state politics and government. This was no small matter in Virginia during the 1920s and 1930s under the Democratic machine of Harry Flood Byrd. There were not simply economic, but also structural, reasons for these transfers of property rights and profits from the region to outside investors. With this observation aside, I concur with Buckley’s larger point—that the pattern of divestment of property rights in Appalachia is centuries old and expands far beyond the coal and timber-rich portions of the region.

Since the late nineteenth century, when the cultural construction of Southern Appalachia emerged, the region has generally been portrayed as Appalachia writ large. No northern volume accompanied the Bureau of Agricultural Economics’

⁹ Sara M. Gregg, “Uncovering the Subsistence Economy of the Twentieth-Century South: Blue Ridge Mountain Farms,” *Agricultural History* 78 (Fall 2004): 417-437.

1935 *Economic and Social Problems and Conditions in the Southern Appalachia*, nor would one have made much sense. The “problems and conditions” from Maryland to Quebec during the early twentieth century were much more reflective of distinct economic conditions and regional marketplaces than of a systemic economic and political malaise, as was portrayed as the case in southern sections of the range. Yet the longer I reflected on portrayals of Appalachia the more convinced I became that it was important to weave the North and South together. There are very clear geological connections within the region and remarkable continuity between the economic and social conditions that have abided there.

In her review Cheryl Morse questions the inclusion of Vermont in Appalachia, “mainly because I don’t believe many Vermonters, past or present, would self-identify that way.” Her observation is certainly true, and I could not agree more. As the daughter of Vermonters, with legions of relatives and friends in the state, I can state unequivocally that Vermont considers itself *sui generis*. Yet my rationale for including a segment of the northern section of the Appalachian range into my study went beyond what Morse suggests was its utility as “framing device to allow for historical comparison.” Instead, I determined that it was critically important to evaluate landscapes based not only upon their cultural construction, but also upon their ecological foundations. Forest composition aside, there is much in common in the northern and southern sections of the mountains. Yet Vermont has marketed itself since the early twentieth century as a pastoral paradise, and by doing so it has both defended and promoted the parts of its culture that were being systematically pushed out of the Virginia mountains. Other scholars have provided excellent studies of the cultural construction of the archetype of the Green Mountain State, and the “I am Vermont Strong” bumper stickers that have popped up like morels since Tropical Storm Irene indicate that historians many years into the future will have additional fodder for their analysis of the culture of the state.¹⁰ What is different about my approach in *Managing the Mountains* is how it illustrates that geography and political will—as well as regional pride—proved definitive in shaping the physical landscape of land use and land management over the past century.

The lack of political influence in Appalachia is well-trodden ground; since the 1970s many Appalachian scholars have explored the reasons for the region’s apparent vulnerability to the destructive powers of outside forces. Davis notes “In the southern Appalachians, National Parks and National Forest acquisitions... have historically occurred in more remote mountain areas, where political representation is at a minimum, if it exists at all.” Yet I must quibble with his assertion that this

¹⁰ Blake Harrison, *The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape* (Hanover, NH: University of Vermont Press, 2006); Dona Brown, *Inventing New England* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Paul M. Searls, *Two Vermonts: Geography and Identity, 1865-1910* (Hanover: University of New Hampshire Press, 2006).

“argument is certainly not new.” *Managing the Mountains* explores the process of displacement in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, but beyond that, by deploying a comparative approach it adds considerably to our understanding of how political systems and democratic participation have influenced historical outcomes. The juxtaposition of Virginia and Vermont, with their different structures of governance, adds a level of depth to our understanding of what has happened *in*, rather than *to*, Southern Appalachia by illustrating alternative paths of development. The differences between the political impact of mountain Virginians and upcountry Vermonters contrast significantly, which is an important part of this book. Moreover, what interested me in the story of the Shenandoah National Park, in particular, is that the “grassroots,” if one can refer to the hollow communities that way, were not only passed over in the first stages of park planning, but also largely ignored well into the 1930s. I found the level of abstraction when parks officials dealt with mountain residents to be intriguing, and it was only when the Division of Subsistence Homesteads entered the planning process that state and federal officials began to acknowledge the scope of the human dilemma in the Blue Ridge. Thereafter, the mountain residents were looked upon less as participants in a programmatic process and more as targets of an improvement program, akin to the mountain people in Whisnant’s *Modernizing the Mountaineer* and Eller’s *Uneven Ground* to whom Davis referred.

These excellent reviews also touch on some of the challenges I confronted as I wrote *Managing the Mountains*.

I wrestled for years with the question of how to manage two case studies with many overlapping features, but distinctive landscapes, cultures, and outcomes, and yet weave them together into a readable, coherent whole. In her review, Cheryl Morse observes the challenge of providing a truly comparative analysis of these distinct land use planning projects. She notes that the sixth chapter, “Reforming Submarginal Lands,” attempted to bridge the gaps between policy and practice, merging the ideas and implementation of the visions of reform in both states, with occasionally “dizzying” results. This was the most challenging chapter to write, because there was so much happening in these two places during the mid-1930s. In spite of the multiple narratives and divergent developments, I insisted on keeping the chapter as one, in part because I wanted to demonstrate the interconnections between the programs as they evolved—and this section, more than the rest of the book, lent itself to weaving the stories together. The complexity that resulted, with the mishmash of agencies, people, and programs, was my plan for this part of the book, as the pace and dynamism of New Deal planning was breathtaking for both the reformers and those whose lives they sought to change.

In *Managing the Mountains* I sought to capture this historical moment, with all of its complexity and tumult, and demonstrate the ways in which the nation reckoned with its future one ecosystem at a time. It is because land use policy has such determinative effects that it matters so much, even if the stories of its crafting often receive too little attention from historians. The palimpsest of the Appalachian

Mountains is one that has much to teach us as we look to frame new economic and conservation goals for the twenty-first century. I hope that this history of the planning ideals that precipitated decades of change in the Appalachian commons illustrates some of the value of agricultural and conservation policy not only to land use planners and policymakers, but also to the voters and advocates who help to guide the governments that represent their interests as well as those of their neighbors, both human and non-human.

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