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REPUBLICANS IN THE WILD: ISSUE REALIGNMENT
IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY ON PUBLIC LAND POLICY

AN HONORS THESIS

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for All College Honors
and Distinction
in the Department of Political Science
by
Stephanie Pinkalla

College of Saint Benedict/St. John's University

April 25, 2014

PROJECT TITLE: Republicans in the Wild: Issue Realignment in the Republican Party on Public Land Policy

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Claire Haeg, Associate Professor of Political Science

Dr. Matt Lindstrom, Professor of Political Science

Dr. Jean Lavigne, Professor of Environmental Studies

Dr. Scott Johnson, Chair, Political Science

Dr. Anthony Cunningham, Director, Honors Thesis Program

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the critical revision, assistance, and support from my thesis advisor, Dr. Claire Haeg, and readers, Dr. Matt Lindstrom and Dr. Jean Lavigne. Thank you. I'd also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Whitney Court for her mastery of American National Election Studies data, without which my research would have lacked important evidence. I am grateful that my interest in this topic was piqued by Jessica Goad at the Center for American Progress, and former research advisor Dr. Jessica O'Reilly. Thank you for imparting that the importance of research lies in that research being shared.

Abstract

The Republican Party is often seen as the bane of modern protective environmental policies, and is associated with opening public land in the West to private oil interests, endorsement of pipeline construction on federal lands, and permitting development of roads in wilderness areas. Throughout history, however, the Republican Party has not always worked for such brazen anti-environment causes, and some of America's most formative protective land policies emerged under Republican leadership. If this is the case, in what ways and by how much has the Republican Party realigned on protective public lands policy in the Republican electorate, in the government, and in the party organization with time? This investigation reviews the proportion of protective public lands policy stances and actions observed in these three levels of the Republican Party since the 1970s. It finds that the party as a whole demonstrates a distinct shift in policy action primarily motivated by the Republican elites within the Party organization, and suggests that Republicans have decreased their interest in protecting public lands and wilderness.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Terminology.....	3
Literature Review.....	5
Realignment Theory.....	5
Realignment Theory in the Electorate.....	7
Realignment Theory in Government.....	9
Realignment Theory in the Party.....	10
Summary.....	13
Public Land and Wilderness Policy.....	14
Methodology.....	22
Model.....	22
Research Question.....	23
Hypotheses.....	23
Method.....	24
Investigating the Republican Electorate.....	24
Investigating Republicans in Government.....	24
Investigating the Republican Party Organization.....	26
Findings and Analysis.....	26
The Republican Electorate.....	26
Republicans in Government.....	31
The Republican Party Organization.....	42
Conclusion.....	50
Limitations.....	53
References.....	55
Bibliography.....	61

Table of Figures

Figure 1a: The Sequence of Issue Evolution.....	13
Figure 1b: The Sequence of Issue Evolution and Public Lands.....	13
Table 1: Feeling Thermometer Toward Environmental Protectionists.....	28
Table 2: Federal Spending on Improving and Protecting the Environment.....	28
Table 3: Environmental Protection and Pollution.....	29
Table 4: Placement on Environmental Regulation Scale.....	30
Table 5: Key Protective Public Land and Wilderness Legislation in Congress.....	32
Table 6: Executive Orders of Republican Presidents 1968 to 2008.....	35
Figure 2: Percentage of Executive Orders Related to Pubic Land and Wilderness.....	36
Figure 3: Total Executive Orders Affecting Public Land and Wilderness.....	36

Introduction

Nearly one-third of the land area of the United States is owned by the federal government and managed by a gamut of governmental and bureaucratic authorities. In this technological age, where most Americans are living in urban areas and often removed from all other areas of land, these long-held public lands and wilderness are not always attention-getting. As a policy issue, public land surely has not drawn the same attention that other social conversations like abortion and equal rights do. Regardless, the American concept of open spaces, wilderness, and the human relationships to them has always been an attractive, idealized, and romantic one.

Roderick Nash's (1967) classic text *Wilderness and the American Mind* highlights two aspects of American's relationships to the land: that this has become a nation in which wilderness could be appreciated, pined for, and secondly, that land and wilderness were things to be tamed and assets to be managed. These two camps evolved in American dialogue even during the colonial period, in which much of the perceived wilderness was destroyed by resource-driven colonists. Two-hundred years later, expanded factions exist over the relationship of humans to nature, and these factions can be identified in and are articulated by the way political parties view public land issues. The Republicans of 2014 are not the same as the Republicans of 1914, and the civil rights battles of the past are not exactly the same as the civil rights battles today. Political parties are not static entities, and the American party system of today does not match the one 100 years or even 30 years ago. Though lawmakers, political leaders, and Americans retain traditional views on a variety of policy issues, opinions and actions have always reflected change.

Within parties, policies change as institutions develop. The Republican Party of today is often criticized by environmental groups and activists for its lack of regard for public and

protected lands. In February of 2014, at a meeting of the Republican National Committee, the party resolved to call upon Republican members of Congress and Republican governors to work to put public lands in the West in the hands of local authorities for drilling and mining leases (Republican National Committee 2014). The concern of environmental protectionists is that the release of these lands to non-government entities will result in their development or depletion, and cause the elimination of otherwise untrammelled lands and wildernesses from the American landscape. Republicans have not always been a villain of wild places, however. From Theodore Roosevelt to Richard Nixon, environmentally protective and conservative policies have been welcomed, even implemented, by Republican governing structures, such as the respective creation of the National Park Service and, thereafter, the Environmental Protection Agency.

This paper seeks to explain the patterns in conservative-backed protective lands policy, as well as the political circumstances that re-shaped the Party's approach to land and wilderness policy in three levels of the Party since the 1970s. No study has attempted to explain the Party on this issue for the time span framed by this paper,¹ and as conversations over public lands become more intense as part of the conversation on climate change and the environment, it is imperative to understand the circumstances leading to the perception of a conservative disregard for land.

In the development of the modern Republican Party, there has been traceable realignment within the party structure, which, on the specific issue of land and wilderness, suggests there has been a switch to move from prioritizing the protection and conservative use of public lands and wilderness to a culture that capitalizes on publicly held resources and serves as a contrast to preservationist Democrats. This investigation traces this presumed issue realignment and the influences at each level of the Party that caused the Republican shift on public lands policy.

¹ Gershtenson et. al (2006) analyze Republican and Democratic votes in Congress on environmental legislation from 1993 to 2001 using League of Conservation Voter scores, focusing on partisanship on environmental issues. They find congressional Democrats are significantly more likely to support environmental legislation than Republicans.

Terminology

The distinctions between “the environment,” “public lands,” “natural resources,” and “wilderness” are critical when it comes to this investigation, since these terms appear in policy with regard to their use and protection as a whole, but are arbitrary as individual concepts. Environmental policy action often incorporates declarations for federal public lands and wilderness,² though public land policy is not explicitly focused on environmental concerns. This paper seeks out environmental policy only as it related to conservation, preservation, and protection of physical landscapes owned and managed by the federal government through federal programming, policy, or designated actions of bureaucratic agencies like the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is important to note that, under the definition provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior, public lands would normally refer to federal public land areas, which are located almost exclusively in the western United States, and they do not necessarily contain what the government identifies as “wilderness areas,” or even areas merely open for public recreation. Wilderness is the highest protection that can be afforded to federal land and is defined through the 1964 Wilderness Act, which states:

[W]ilderness is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor and does not remain.... [These areas] of undeveloped Federal lands [must retain] primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation...to preserve its natural conditions. (The Wilderness Act of 1964)

Despite this definition, wilderness has come to mean many things to many people. For the sake of this investigation, it refers only to those protected lands as described by the aforementioned law under the categorization of federal public land. Regardless, some might suggest that

² All matters of interest, like national parks, national forests, state parks, state forests, public livestock grazing land, wildlife management areas, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas are Federal public lands.

recreation or research in wilderness or on any Federal lands is not protective.³ Federal lands increasingly contain wilderness, and are identified as “any land... owned by the United States... and administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management, without regard to how the United States acquired ownership” (Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976).

Additionally, not all of federal public lands are recreation areas, wilderness areas, National Forests, National Parks, or protected areas, but identifying how these lands are treated on the whole by Republican institutions in the United States is telling of how the party views the physical natural environment and its worth in the 21st century. In regard to natural resource and public land policy, there exists a division between the concept “conservation” and “preservation.” Conservation refers to the active but sustainable use of nature, while preservation describes the absolute protection of nature from human use. Though these two camps are greatly polarizing in land management, in this paper, actions under both labels will be considered protective of public lands, since despite the practice, both land management principles seek to protect lands in some capacity, rather than actively harm them.

The term “protective,” for this study, is defined as any actions, laws, executive orders, requests or desires expressed by any entities within the Republican Party in which the intention is to hold land, wilderness, or the environment in high regard, to prevent resource exploitation or development. In action, some enacted policies may have turned out to harm or degrade public lands. This paper does not seek to determine the quality of any outcomes of policies espoused by Republicans, but merely considers the intentions of such policies.

³ For the sake of this investigation, non-vehicular recreation is considered a protective action in comparison with expanded drilling, off-road vehicle permission, or development of resources, which are not protective because they inflict intended harm to the land, and plant and animal species.

The theory of realignment—the structural focus of this research—has taken many forms, all of them with working definitions respective to the authors that created them. A preliminary understanding of realignment, however, is the theory that partisan actors may shift in policy action or political stance over time as a result of other variables in regard to a particular issue or within an entire party.

Literature Review

Realignment Theory

A simple definition of realignment is a durable and measurable shift either in the balance of power between parties, in the voting electorate, or in parties' policy platforms. In order to offer a political understanding of realignment and the circumstances that could explain the anticipated shift(s) in party policies, classic realignment theories need to be measured against the perceived changes identified in historical literature that consider parties and issues at many levels, including those part of this analysis.

The basic theory of realignment was first proposed by V.O. Key (1955), whose theory of “critical elections” formed a basis for all other authors regarding electoral realignment. Key identified critical elections that “involve far wider movements and more durable shifts” in which a change occurs regarding which voters representing particular opinions comprise the electorate (198). In short, a shift in the electorate becomes long-lasting and redirects subsequent political activity. Realignment theorists at each level of analysis (the party in the electorate, in government, and the organization) consistently return to the notion that the partisan electorate drives the changes described as realignment in all levels.

Key in particular, as a prelude to many realignment authors, distinctly acknowledges the power of the electorate. He says the electorate acts “as the principal organ of governance through

elections” (1955, 3). In his powerful, though albeit outdated, case studies, Key considers the measureable realignment to focus on critical elections, which are those that transform the partisan landscape with a “sharp and durable electoral realignment between parties” (16). He examines what sparks the “sharp divisive” changes in the electorate that we consider realignment (17). Though it is easy to point to the electorate as the source of electoral realignment, Key leaves unanswered why and how members of the electorate change their minds to initiate policy change.

In Key’s wake, authors tend to have different explanations for how the electorate is able to influence the party in government and the party in organization, and an overwhelming majority of authors, after following a hierarchy of political influence, eventually assert that the power to change the electoral alignment of parties lies with political issues (Schattschneider 1975; Burnham 1970; Campbell and Trilling 1980; Clubb et al. 1980; Sundquist 1983; Carmines and Stimson 1989). These authors do not conflict with Key, but rather expand his argument in regard to more modern policies, and reiterate the common theme of the constituent influence. Specifically, Key, Burnham, and Carmines and Stimson agree that critical elections have their source in the electorate which causes the abrupt change parties might experience, though some authors would venture even further to suggest that issues themselves have a role.

The concept of issue evolution as described by Carmines and Stimson (1989) goes somewhat further than other realignment authors, since their investigation looks less at the institutional source of realignment and more at issues as policy in response to electoral demands. They suggest that stances on issues evolve from two things: after a “critical event” which causes an electorate-level shift, the party at all other levels evolves with the electorate, but only as a result of elite attitudes that awaken the electorate and reiterates a honed stance on an issue

through subsequent elections (61, 160-1). Though they use the case of race in the 1960's civil rights era, their theory could be applied to any social issue that has been in the public conversation for any number of years (27). The term "evolution" usually carries with it associations relating to the scientific discussion of evolution, but *ISSUE* evolution describes how the facts or circumstances surrounding a political issue change with time, forcing the arguments for or against an issue to develop in the context of the systems around them, and causing them to evolve with time and adapt as the political sphere will allow.

Sundquist (1983) also describes an evolutionary process of realignment that is dependent on its durability during the process and, afterward, cites V.O. Key to agree that the passage of time is essential to qualifying political change as realignment (5-9).

Carmines and Stimson (1989) take the lead in suggesting that the existing party structure fosters realignment, and claim evolution is ignited by "issue competition," cultivated by strategic politicians, external disruptions, issue-specific variations, internal contradictions on a side of the policy problem (5-8). These claims are unique to this pair of authors as the catalysts for what becomes the evolution of a particular issue, which can be measured as realignment.

These authors all recognize that no facet, no level, acts alone, and that the electorate, politicians, political institutions, and political parties at all three levels are all actors in the outcome of realignment behavior.

Realignment Theory in the Electorate

In the Republican electorate in particular, issues evolve through mechanisms resulting from turbulence in the political system, which, for purposes of public land policy, can include hurricanes, floods, wildfires, the results of oil and mining, construction of monuments, trails, or other events taking place on government-owned lands. In many instances, these are old issues

relating to land ownership and use that have transformed to fit the modern era. The external influences resulting from these shocks force existing groups, like the Republican electorate, to alter their views as situations arise. Fringe realignment theory relates partisan issue evolution to Darwinian ideas of natural selection, but like authors who focused on the electorate, they hold that some changes will need to happen gradually over time naturally. Some are forced to change abruptly or at a “critical moment,” usually occurring at the party elite/organization level, wherein an issue moves voters and evokes a strong emotional response matched by “new policy alignments among the mass electorate” (Carmines and Stimson 1989, 161).

Other realignment authors specifically consider the electorate and the evolution of issues within their scope of interest, and describe the mobilization of voters who may cause realignment to occur. These authors suggest that eliciting turnout at the party level is essential to creating an electorate that favors your positions, encouraging them to vote according to their policy preference, or ultimately, changing who comprises the electorate (Campbell and Trilling 1980, 71; Sundquist 1983, 13). Because these efforts are usually headed within a party organization at the government level, this branch of realignment theory complicates the point of origin for a shift in policy that may have mobilized formerly non-voters. If the party in government or in the organization wants to move on an issue or on the political spectrum, they need to mobilize those voters within their constituencies that would be supportive of the change. By changing the electorate, they can change the shape of the issue. Regardless of the means, these authors support the view that the electorate has the power to point the party in a new direction on policy issues.

Of course, other theories have equal footing in explaining the origins of realignment. Clubb et al. (1980) state that realignments are “initiated by shifts in the distribution of the popular vote in response to crisis conditions and widespread societal tension and dissatisfaction”

(30). This, coupled with similar theories in Burnham's *Critical Elections*, collectively describes a periodic relationship between parties and realignments that is predictable according to vote percentages and the cycle of "two-party politics" (Burnham 1970, 27-28; Clubb et al. 1980, 26-27). These authors have attempted to craft a more scientific, cyclical response to navigating what they see as a consistent series of partisan electoral realignments initiated by the electoral voice of voters after elections, rather than intermittent issue-specific realignments.

Realignment Theory in Government

Unfortunately, realignment theorists do little to address the obvious policy outcomes at the government level after an election. Theorists identify that voters in the electorate make their voiced most heard during an election, but when policies are being authored and debated, they are not as easily heard en masse by governing officials. The party in government (through Congress, the Presidency, and bureaucracy) has been altered slowly through critical elections, secular realignments, and cyclical patterns as identified by V.O. Key (1955). Other authors have supported Key's hypothesis regarding critical elections in response to changes at the government level, rather than from the electorate. Instead, realignment is a result of being forced, at the government level, to respond to things seen and heard in the electorate (Mayhew 2002). In particular, elections in the House of Representatives are the most telling when it comes to issue realignment, because House campaigns and elections are dominated by constantly changing national issues (24). While Mayhew points to the electorate as a catalyst, he suggests that the actual, realigning change does not occur until government officials make it so, thereby controlling the potential for realignment through action or inaction on policy (24-27).

Some authors go as far as to note that the power struggles between government divisions and party factions lead to efforts that activate a party's electorate, who, in result to the

tumultuous political environment, react and reset the framework for policy conversation (Schattschneider 1975, Bond and Fleisher 2000). Members of Congress in particular have a responsibility to be accountable to their constituencies, while also engaging in the power struggle between parties, which results in the development of policy dialogue on any issue. On the whole, realignment theorists looking at the role of governing structures continue to point back to the electorate as well electorate-specific theorists, reemphasizing the importance that partisan and nonpartisan constituencies have in setting the path and tone of political conversation in government.

Realignment Theory in the Party

Within the overarching level of the party organization, the concept of realigning elections is one widely noted by realignment authors. Most speculate that issue evolution and realignment is guided by the partisan electorate, which is primarily demonstrated through elections and their results. In an attempt to single out the party as a force for realignment, Campbell and Trilling (1980) note that, while changes seem to occur at the party organization level, these changes require a “significant distribution of party support” which, in turn, comes from the partisan electorate (29). Carmines and Stimson (1989) also acknowledge the power of the electorate in realigning the entire party over issues, but only as a result of cues made by party elites. Their model (Figure 1a) points to the electorate as the main catalyst in a chain of electoral responses that ultimately cause issue evolution.

Past attention-drawing cases of realignment at the party organization level have included topics such as race and segregation, labor, and other demographics which began with discontentment within the largest social group (Sundquist 1983, 299; Carmines and Stimson 1989). The catalyst, however, according to Sundquist, comes from the cleavage that evolves

within of the populace, and that a new issue must “be one powerful enough to polarize the community” (300).

While it is well-established among theorists that significant, stark realignment originates abruptly at the hands of voters, the parties are also constantly changing as identified within Burnham’s (1970) take on Key’s 1955 theory of critical elections. Since there are many variants to voter behavior over time, deviations to the otherwise predictable patterns of voter behavior cause phases of alignment to be un-identifiable and difficult to compartmentalize (Burnham 1970, 3-4). Unlike Key, Burnham incorporates the importance of the institutional party changes as an important factor in realignment. As parties switch between minority and majority power in Congress and within the Presidency, realignments are likely to follow while constituencies hone in on different issues elevated by the governmental status of the party, as Carmines and Stimson (1989) would suggest. The question left unanswered is whether or not the electorate drives the periodicity of realignments, or if, instead, the changes in the power-holding party in government solicit a subsequent response from the electorate.

Sundquist (1983) blames a decline in the homogeneity of groups, such as the Republican Party, over time, as a force that impels realignment, which could also influence the movement of the party’s stance and reveal systemic changes that were gradual according to later work by Key (1959). This is consistent with the findings of Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale (1980) who identified that, “shifts in partisan control of government and policy action are integral...to realignment” (12). In addition, Schattschneider’s (1975) book on semi-sovereignty suggests that realignment is based in competition at the party level, but, again, only as a result of voting (16). A “conflict-based” set-up between parties enables the possibility for realignment to occur, since

regardless of constituency response, head-to-head parties may force realignment of their own accord.

In an original perspective that counters authors on the source of party-level change initiators, Norpoth and Rusk (1982) suggest instead that partisan de-alignment, or distance from a party or issue, rather than realignment, drives party-level changes regarding issues stances. This theory of de-alignment is not repeated in the larger conversation on realignment theory at the party level, however, it provides a useful tool to consider how the Republican electorate's response might exclude those who have initially turned away from the party due to unsavory politics and the "very low entry of young voters to parties" (523). Within the lens of the party in the organization level, the party is, as all authors have suggested, influenced by the same electorate.

In the full realm of realignment work, one author who, for the most part, does not agree with the bulk of all realignment theorists at any level, or even the concept of realignment, is David Mayhew. Mayhew's (2002) empirical investigation pulls apart and discounts preexisting realignment theories on the basis that the term itself has been defined in many ways and every election is an opportunity for a realigning event, though no election perfectly fits his model. Mayhew especially criticizes Schattschneider for suggesting that issue substitution is the same as realignment, but in the end comes to the same conclusions (9). Mayhew takes to task the theories of Burnham (1975), Key (1955), and Schattschneider (1975), as he highlights fifteen empirical claims about what constitutes realignment and points out that no election fits all fifteen claims (Mayhew 2002,13-33). He suggests that, overall, realignment models are flawed, and that political parties change their preferences based on in-the-moment responses to a particular generation.

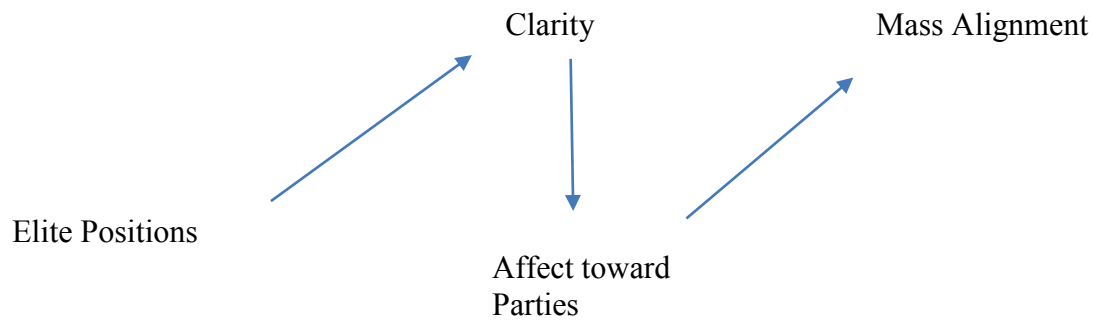


Figure 1a: The Sequence of Issue Evolution

Source: Reproduced from Carmines and Stimson (1989)

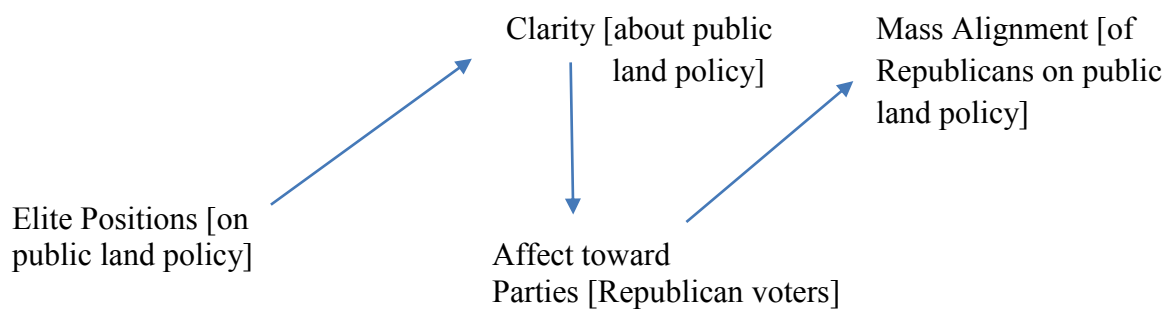


Figure 1b: The Sequence of Issue Evolution on Public Lands

Modified from Carmines and Stimson (1989)

Summary

According to scholars, the power of the electorate, both through “critical elections” and vocal constituencies, have the most power to realign dialogue on a political issue within a party and in Congress. Carmines and Stimson (1989) have the most inclusive explanation of specific issue realignment by attributing the motivation first to party elites, and then, the electorate. Little dissent exists within the realignment literature apart from Mayhew’s critique, though gaps

certainly do remain in the explanation of realignment. Unfortunately, most of the authors featuring analysis and case studies have examples as old as race and segregation, though policy realignment is arguably more prominent in the last thirty years on a number of social issues.

With so great a focus on the role of the electorate, and so few arguments that government or parties lead the way, the literature suggests that there is more work to be done in the field of realignment, especially now that polarization has become a key characteristic of parties and party in government. The way the people, the government, and parties approach issues is based on the directions given by their respective partisan electorate. We can identify this in the question of Republicans and public land policy.

Public Land and Wilderness Policy

The human relationship to wilderness is often described using the Biblical language of Genesis 1:26, where God declares that man will have “dominion” over all living things. In the American landscape, the colonial-era depletion of land and natural resources in New England forced people to develop a romantic appreciation for the limited wildness that was left (Nash 1967). Despite these affections for a wild nature free from human intrusion and manipulation, parts of the wilderness contained in landscape held by the federal government have been increasingly sold, cultivated, leased, and degraded as a result of development, mining, dumping, and over-harvesting of natural resources. Ideas about how public lands should be managed and utilized has been a point of political contention and become increasingly partisan over time.

Republican President Theodore Roosevelt has been credited with some of the most productive land conservation efforts during the early 1900s, and as an avid hunter and outdoor recreationist, his values for wilderness and public lands were reflected in policies associated with his administration and in the Republican Party that elected him (Turner 2012, 404). It is no secret

that parties evolve and change, however, and the first Roosevelt administration's principles to responsibly protect wilderness have not carried through with the same intentions through the development and evolution of the Republican Party.

As far back Roosevelt, Republicans have been associated with the conservative action and mindset that established the National Park System, the modern Bureau of Land Management, and many other land-conservative aspects of the bureaucracy. During the notable Hetch Hetchy controversy in California Forests, Roosevelt was reputed for saying, "forest reserves could be made as 'preserves for the wild forest creatures'" (Nash 1967). After a romantic period where Americans and politicians of the early 1900s acquiesced to the natural protections encouraged by Aldo Leopold, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir, changes were slowly in motion that would transform the federal lands debate over conservation and preservation.

Over the next sixty years, Republicans would begin to lose sight of the protective conservationist principles touted by Roosevelt. In the 1950s, President Herbert Hoover eliminated private oil leases on government land, but was also a catalyst in the construction of what became the Hoover Dam, seen to many environmentalists as the nation's greatest public lands catastrophe. By the 1960s, environmental organizations came to prominence that powered the environmental movement under Republican and Democratic leadership in the 1970s. By 1980, the absolute polarization of environmental policy fully emerged, as president Ronald Reagan set out to dismantle the protective legislation of the prior decade (Turner 2012).

In 1970, Republicans were seen as key to environmental protection efforts when President Richard Nixon initiated what would become the "environmental decade" by signing the National Environmental Policy Act on the first of that year. Under both Democratic and

Republican support, the National Environmental Policy Act, one of the most active and across-the-board policies to protect the environment and federal lands, was passed through both the House and Senate by only a voice vote. While this could indicate many things about the nature of the policy, one that is most clear is the support from both parties. Nixon also helped to establish the Environmental Protection Agency, among other bureaucratic entities, to consolidate and fortify political efforts to protect the environment. Congress passed sweeping belts of protective environmental legislation throughout the 1970s, with support from both sides of the aisle (Turner 2012, 128).

The historical account in James Morton Turner's (2009) critique of the 1982 House of Representative's Republican Study Committee report, "The Specter of Environmentalism," follows Republican environmental policy from the Nixon era through the presidency of George W. Bush. Turner unveils the character of Republican opposition to environmentalists that grew into full-force toward the end of the environmental decade of the 1970s, and the end of Nixon's tenure (123). The analysis points a finger at Democrats under Lyndon B. Johnson for "hitching the success of environmental reform to an expansion of the powers and responsibilities of the federal government," an action not followed by subsequent Republican presidents (Turner 2009, 125). Bipartisanship on issues of public land policy—even environmental policy in general—had already begun to erode in the 1960s, and was distinctly impacted by the polarization that facilitated avowal of the Democratic Party to protect public lands and the environment (Gershtenson et al. 2006, 68, 71).

It was when care for the environment was at the forefront of public thought in the 1970s, when the first Earth Day was celebrated across the country, that public support for protecting the environment, including public lands, began to lose bipartisan support in the electorate.

Unfortunately, this was the last time parties promoted such comprehensive bipartisan protective policies, as Republicans under Reagan backed away from environmental protections in the 1980s, and Democrats quietly maintained their support of protective public lands and environmental action while environmental activists took the stage.

It is clear that different factions in the Republican Party increasingly did not see eye-to-eye when it came to environmental politics and the American West, and as the “New Right” emerged, so emerged the dividing relationship between preservationists and their opponents (Turner 2009, 125).

The division between conservation and preservation is not as powerful as the decreasing partisan divide that has impacted the landscape of public land policy. With time, the gap between Democrats and Republicans support for protective environmental policies, like those that set out to designate public land as wilderness and restrict the ability to lease federal land to private exploration, has widened (Gershtenson et. al 2006).

An ongoing debate over the course of lands policy in the United States has included the struggle to differentiate between public and private land use interests of varying importance from the policy side (Caldwell and Schrader-Frechette 1993). The Sagebrush Rebellion, or opposition to the RARE II⁴ (Roadless Area Review and Evaluations II) policy among western conservatives in the 1970s, became an iconic attempt to repeal protective wilderness policy among the electorate (Cawley 1993; Turner 2012). The environmental decade was dominated by a swell of Democrats, and some Republicans, who enacted many environmentally protective policies, including many that set out to preserve and protect private lands. Though some efforts had promising bipartisan support, the energy behind these policies was held by Congressional

⁴ RARE I policies, a U.S. Forest Service invention of the 1960s and early 1970s, were loathed by environmentalists and protectionists for provisos that threatened wilderness designation and protection; these concerns were somewhat remediated by the introduction of RARE II policies (Turner 2012).

Democrats. After Reagan's election in 1979, Republican support for protective environmental policies began to disintegrate most clearly.

From the 1980s onward, the partisan response wilderness issues in particular, though lower on the scale of importance to Americans in elections and critical elections as described by realignment theorists, have been subject to polarization. The administration of President Ronald Reagan spurred a wave of Republican-based anti-environmental legislation. Reagan-era policies were radical a change from the environmental decade of the 1970s, so much so that issue realignment could not only be attributed to Presidency, though some authors suggest that the sharp turn was a result of Republican leaders who understood environmentally protective policies as encroaching on government authority (Cook and Polsky 2005).

Scholarship that focuses on government actions regarding environmental or public lands policy and Republicans suggests conflict, both between both parties and with Republicans in levels of government. Executive orders, which carry as much weight as a law passed by Congress, enable Presidential administrations to have significant influence over initiatives implemented in all policy areas, but especially public lands; in the case of a divided Congress, urgent action through executive order may become necessary for a president (Dodds 2011). Similarly, other authors highlight the discrepancies between the parties, and how the partisan divide over time illustrates the polarization that has developed on environmental issues (Dunlap and McCright 2008; MacDonnell and Bates 2010). In Congress in particular, the political power of opposition seems to force a division between Republicans and Democrats on every issue, but over time, who supports which side of an argument has shifted.

Within the Republican Party as an organization, protection for the environment has not been so prominently promoted as it had been in the Theodore Roosevelt administration.

Initiatives to bring wilderness into Republican dialogue have been championed by individual politicians, but never successfully by the Party, not even Nixon. While Republicans and Democrats have continued to diverge on environmental policy since 1970, their respective parties as “collections of regions, factions, and individuals” have experienced substantive shifts within themselves (Shipan and Lowry 2001, 247, 252).

Specifically within the Republican electorate, the literature suggests that when it comes to public lands and wilderness policy, the broader electorate does not trust Republicans when it comes to protective lands policy (Davis 2009). Authors explicitly writing about wilderness, public lands, and the Republican Party do not outwardly address these shifts and changes in who is supportive of policy as the party realigns. The word “realignment” never appears in public land literature, but the concept is intimated in explanations of how politicians have unexpectedly switched sides on an issue from previous political figureheads of the same persuasion.

The trends in the history of public lands policy in the literature confirm notions of issue realignment, but ultimately leave open the question of the driving force behind changes in political action specifically within the Republican Party. In the realm of Republican policy, published works focus on the trials of government and attempts and failures to pass legislation regarding public lands.

Realignment theory alone more frequently describes whole partisan realignments in all policy issues, rather than just one. Representatives in the House, for example, are more likely to focus on local issues pertaining directly to their constituents, but they are elected in light of a series of national issues that dominate the airwaves (Brady 1985, 28-29). This means that, when it comes to land and wilderness policy, a nationally publicized issue, like the Sagebrush Rebellion, would indicate to constituents how to vote in alignment with their party of choice, but

may not align with local public land of wilderness issues in their districts.

The concept of issue evolution as identified by Carmines and Stimson (1989) (initially applied to race) bears some similarity to the changes within the party on public land as an issue. Like Brady (1985), Carmines and Stimson (1989) show that issues that take center stage in the political realm, particularly Congress, gather more attention than they had previously, enabling governing officials or “elite actors” to frame any given policy issue within the Party structure, handing it down to the mass electorate (160).

The war in the American West over public land use and commodity interests from the 1960s to the 1980s depicts such Republican initiatives and tactics to support or reject policies based on unrelated policy (Cawley 1993, 93, 112). Specifically regarding the relationship between Presidential action, executive orders, and Congressional actions on environmental and public lands policies, members of Congress, notably from the Republican Party, have tried, usually unsuccessfully, to undermine presidential action to protect public lands since the first Roosevelt Administration through the Clinton Administration (Dodds 2011, 57-77). Presidential actions and responses to environmental policy in general have unsurprisingly varied within both parties and administrations, but Congress in particular has been the battleground over which public lands policy issues are mangled and battered, especially at the hands of recent Republican opponents (Dunlap and McCright 2008, 26-35).

Regionally, Republicans within the party were of differing mindsets, especially in the 1990s. In the conversation on the American west, Congress seemed to lead the interest in the issue when policies arose in the 1980s and 1990s after the Sagebrush Rebellion, though it is unclear to confirm in the literature alone whether the governing officials themselves were responsible for the direction and outcome of those conversations, or if party influences or

constituent voices played a factor in the policies that have emerged even in the past twenty years (Shepherd 2007).

The development of modern technologies and the continuation of old ones, especially in the fuel and energy industry, have had a significant impact on the relationship between both parties and American public lands. As climate change has more prominently entered political dialogue, Republicans have focused more on energy and resource development (Sponberg 2006, 568). The Republican voice in the debate over continued Bureau of Land Management sales and land grants to private entities, the concern over the routes and potential spillages relating to construction of oil pipelines, like the Keystone XL pipeline, and admission for development of roads in previously designated roadless areas has increasingly been land-negative and anti-protective.

Most recently, Republican commentary has been increasingly anti-protective. In 2013, the Republican response to President Barack Obama's Climate Action Plan was negative. The plan proposed increased protections for federally-owned lands. At the beginning of 2014, Republicans as an institution were arguably the least concerned with protective environmental policy, especially in light of their desire to release public lands to local government authorities for oil and gas development.⁵ A 2013 poll found 71% percent of Western voters opposed this measure, however, demonstrating unexplained changes within the Republican Party from the reign of Teddy Roosevelt, and even Richard Nixon (State of the Rockies 2013). The general progression of the Party's stance, according to the literature, has been one focused increasingly less on protection of public lands, and is demonstrated in the divide between parties and the findings of this analysis.

⁵ This excludes a bipartisan congressional act to create a new wilderness area in March of 2014 in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore that became P.L. 113-87, a measure held up for 8 months (after Senate approval nearly a year prior) by the House of Representatives under a Republican majority.

Methodology

Model

Since issue realignment is an abstract theory about the change in party stances on policy issues with poor means of measurement and confirmation, case selection requires a broad focus to include the three levels of analysis this study addresses. There is ambiguity regarding the response of Republicans to public lands policy, so this investigation must be twofold: this paper measures whether there has been a definable change in Republican response to public land and wilderness policy at all three levels of analysis, measured empirically through level-specific data from the Republican electorate, the Republican Party in government, both Congress and Presidency, and the Republican Party organization. This investigation then considers the measurable policy stance changes over time in response to realignment theory, especially the model of Carmines and Stimson (1989), attempts to determine which, among the three levels of analysis, has steered the issue evolution and realignment that Republicans have experienced in this policy area (Figure 1a, 1b).

There is no perfect tool to measure realignment: as Mayhew (2002) claims, its indeterminate definition and unquantifiable changes make realignment difficult to classify. Furthermore, realignment or issue evolution within a party on a particular policy issue is a minute window of investigation, and a broad spectrum of evidence is necessary to make a case for the perceived changes in the recent history of the Republican Party's opinions and actions to protect public lands. The political history of environmental policy, lands policy, and the Republican Party is not enough, so the qualitative background information from political history is an important component of putting together the story of Republicans and wilderness.

Campbell and Trilling (1980) suggest that democracy means voters control the government and its issues, so by compiling figures about Republican electorate support for protecting lands, in relation to policy response by governing structures, this paper should be able to create an image of a broad-based Republican response to changing opinions on public lands and wilderness since the 1970s. Carmines and Stimson (1989), and Sundquist (1983) argue that voters have the ability to explicitly redirect dialogue before and during elections by setting the conversation during campaigns and expressing concern about particular issues. These authors all account for the question of how the policy issues of the time period affect the propensity of an issue like public lands and wilderness protection to experience a change in party dialogue.

Research Question

How has the Republican Party changed its stance on protective public lands and wilderness policies since the 1970s within the Republican electorate, within the Republican Party in government, and the Republican Party organization? If issue realignment has occurred, does it correspond with the issue evolution model by authors Carmines and Stimson (1989)?

Hypotheses

- H₁ The Republican Party in the electorate has realigned since the 1970s to support increasingly more protective lands/wilderness policy.
- H₂ The Republican Party in the government has demonstrated a decrease in the number of actions to protect public lands since the 1970s.
- H₃ The Republican Party in the organization has demonstrated a decreased importance of messaging on protecting public lands since the 1970s.
- H₄ Issue evolution in the Republican Party on public land and wilderness policy is guided by the Republican Party organization (Carmines and Stimson 1989).

H₅ Null: There has been no change in the Republican Party's stance or action regarding public lands since the 1970s.

Method

Investigating the Republican Electorate

To understand the support (or lack thereof) for protecting public lands and wilderness within the Republican electorate, this investigation utilizes the results of independent public opinion polling information in the national electorate. Opinion surveys ask questions about a multitude of issues, though the focus will remain only on environmental policy or specific questions about public lands. To best represent the electorate, which is an important facet of the explanation of realignment theorists, this study relies heavily on qualitative accounts and descriptions of trends within the Republican Party.

The American National Election Studies survey (ANES) and the State of the Rockies Project collectively contain public opinion polling information over spans of years during the time frame of this analysis. Together, these can be used to create an image of what the Republican constituency felt about land use and protection since the 1970s. ANES polling questions regarding environmental protection were selected from their Cumulative Data Set by utilizing keywords relating to land, resources, and the environment. Additional polling from the State of the Rockies Project includes supplementary polling information from America's western states in recent years (2011-2013).

Investigating Republicans in Government

Congress

To measure the support of Republicans in Congress on protective public lands issues, this study includes key environmental legislation passed by Congress with roll call vote totals—eyes

and nays—from Republicans whose votes would have supported policy to protect or not protect public lands. Key legislation was determined by selecting the most noted policies identified during the literature review process. Each Congressional term was checked for additional legislation relating to lands as well, to provide a comprehensive view of Republican legislative support continuously from the ninety-first Congress forward. The Congressional Record from the Library of Congress, and the Vote View Project at the University of Georgia collectively contain this information for common access as far back as the thirty-fifth Congress. This study does not include failed legislation, bills that did not come out of committee, or ones merely passed a single body of the legislature, since the volume is far too large and non-descriptive.

The Presidency

To quantify support for public lands protection by Republican presidents, this assessment computes the number of executive orders made by Republican presidents that have affected public land, and highlights any initiatives that were implemented within those administrations that worked either for or against public land or wilderness protection. These are additionally measured in frequency over the total number of executive orders directed by each President and identified as a percentage. Executive orders that actively do not protect public lands are categorized and demonstrated as a percentage of total executive orders to contextualize the protective orders in those same presidencies. There are five Republican presidents that have held office from the 1970s onwards that collectively represent twenty-eight years of presidency over this near forty-year investigation.

Investigating the Republican Party Organization

Finally, to measure the anticipated change in support from the Republican Party Organization for protective public lands action, this inquiry analyzes the Republican Party's platforms from presidential election years, and tracks the language used to describe the party's stance on public lands and wilderness protection, if any, in the party platform. This qualitative analysis considers the positioning of land-related issues in the document, in addition to the nature and length of comments made referring to protection versus development or reallocation of such lands. Party platforms are made available after the respective party's convention preceding a general election.

Findings and Analysis

The Republican Electorate

The saliency of public land, wilderness, and natural resource issues to Republican voters dictates how those voters might demonstrate their support or lack thereof for action or potential legislation. These issues are not top priorities voters consider when they vote for a candidate for office, and generally, in the literature, salience is low for environmental causes (Shipan and Lowry 2001, 254). Changes in public opinion within the Republican constituency on federal land issues over time demonstrate the relationship public opinion has had to governmental and party action on these issues.

According to ANES data, support for protection of public lands and wilderness has wavered in the years of analysis (excluding years from 1970 to 1978, when no surveys included questions about feelings toward environmental protectionists). Self-identified Republican voters were asked to align themselves on a feeling thermometer from 0 to 97 degrees (0 being cold or not favoring, 97 being warm or favoring) toward people who want to protect the environment.

This measure could be considered the best tool to identify Republican voter attitudes toward politicians and Party elites who would perhaps want to protect the environment, including the protection and preservation of public land. From the late 1980s into the early 1990s, “warm feelings” or support toward environmental protectionists was at an all-time high, and near 70% of Republicans surveyed expressed such positive feelings before a continuing decline that began with the H.W. Bush Administration (Table 1).

The largest decrease in a “warm” feeling toward protectionists was in the early 1990s, from 73% in 1990 to a mere 45% in 1992. The percentage in subsequent years climbed and fell, surpassing the percentage from 1992 only once, in 1994, and only by 3%. In general, there was a rough decline in warm feelings in the 28-year period this question frames.

The percentage of Republican voters who wanted to see more money spent on “improving and protecting the environment” reflected similar patterns as data on feelings toward those protecting the environment (Table 2). At the end of the 1980s, support for increased federal spending was at an all-time high, with 60% of Republicans wanting more money spent on protection. This sharply declined around the same time support for protectionists did jumping from 60% in 1988 to 51% in 1990, then, 48% in 1992. This prompted a decline (with some fluctuations) in backing for increased spending until 2008, when support made the largest jump, doubling support from 24% in 2004 to 48% in 2008. Those Republicans who wanted to see a decrease in spending on improving and protecting the environment drastically increased 11% between 1992 and 1994, ultimately declining again by the 2000s. Though respondents expressed significant fluctuating opinions from 1984 to 2008, more Republican voters have always wanted to see increased spending on protecting the environment than those who want to see decreased spending.

Table 1. Feeling Thermometer Toward Environmental Protectionists

Question: There are many groups in America that try to get the government or the American people to see things more their way. We would like to get your feelings towards those who want to protect the environment. I have here a card on which there is something that looks like a thermometer. We call it a "feeling thermometer" because it measures your feelings towards groups. If you don't know too much about a group or don't feel particularly warm or cold toward them, then you should place them in the middle, at the 50 degree mark. If you have a warm feeling toward a group or feel favorably toward it, you would give it a score somewhere between 50 degrees and 100 degrees. On the other hand, if you don't feel very favorably toward some of these groups--if there are some you don't care for too much--then you would place them somewhere between 0 degrees and 50 degrees.

Year	1. Cold (0-32 degrees)	2. Neutral (33-64 degrees)	3. Warm (65-97 degrees)
1980	8%	37%	56%
1988	3%	29%	69%
1990	4%	23%	72%
1992	8%	47%	45%
1994	12%	41%	48%
1996	13%	57%	31%
2000	10%	53%	37%
2002	12%	50%	37%
2004	11%	47%	42%
2008	15%	47%	38%

Source: Computed with data collected in the ANES Cumulative Data File, 1948-2008

Table 2. Federal Spending on Improving and Protecting the Environment

Question: Should federal spending on improving and protecting the environment be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Year	1. Increased	2. Same	3. Decreased	8. Don't know
1984	26%	52%	8%	2%
1986	43%	49%	4%	3%
1988	60%	36%	2%	2%
1990	51%	42%	6%	1%
1992	48%	44%	6%	1%
1994	30%	51%	17%	2%
1996	29%	54%	17%	1%
2000	36%	45%	18%	2%
2002	24%	54%	12%	-
2008	49%	38%	13%	1%

Source: Computed with data collected in the ANES Cumulative Data File, 1948-2008

Some ANES questions were added to the survey significantly later in the time span covered by this study, but asked similarly useful questions about environmental protection and regulation. In the turning point in public opinion identified in the literature review that occurred among Republicans in the early 1990s, another shift was identified within the Republican electorate. According to data in Table 3, the percentage of Republicans who thought Democrats best handled environmental protection issues increased 5% from 1990 to 1994, and ramping up another 9% from 1994 to 1998. Though this table describes only a decade's worth of responses, the change in percentage of Republicans who identify that Democrats do a better job of handling environmental protection increases 14% in 8 years. This suggests increasing distrust among Republicans who identify that there is little recognition that their Party could or would address protective changes relating to the environment and public lands.

Table 3. Environmental Protection and Pollution

Question: Which party do you think would do a better job of handling the problem of pollution and protection of the environment?

Year	1. Better by Democrats	3. Same by both	5. Better by Republicans	8. Don't know	9. NA
1990	20%	57%	19%	3%	0.70%
1994	25%	50%	21%	3%	0.30%
1998	34%	48%	16%	1%	0.20%

Source: Computed with data collected in the ANES Cumulative Data File, 1948-2008

Regarding the importance of protecting the environment through government regulations on business, survey data illustrates some unusual findings anomalous to the study (Table 4). In 2000, an alteration was made to the way information was gathered, and for this particular survey question, respondents answered via phone to a series of branching questions not represented in the available ANES data. It is for this reason that 47% of Republican respondents would have identified with “NA” or “not applicable.” Despite the unsuitability of the 2000* data, the

significant leap in support for much tougher regulation between 1996 and 1998 is not able to be ignored. A grouping of respondents who wanted to see “somewhat tougher” to “much tougher” regulations increased from 21% in 1996 to 39% just two years later in 1998.

The aggregation of this data suggests that, though noteworthy fluctuations have occurred on part of a usually decreasing trend, in all scenarios, Republican opinions regarding environmental protectionists, federal spending on environmental protection, and protection for the environment itself, are more likely to support protection over the alternative.

Table 4. Placement on Environmental Regulation Scale

Question: Some people think we need much tougher government regulations on business in order to protect the environment. (Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1.) Others think that current regulations to protect the environment are already too much of a burden on business. (Suppose these people are at the other end of the scale, at point 7.) And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4,5 or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Year	1. Much tougher	2	3	4	5	6	7. Too much burden	9. Don't know	0. NA
1996	6%	10%	15%	22%	15%	13%	8%	14%	0.30%
1998	11%	13%	15%	23%	12%	9%	5%	13%	
2000*	5%	7%	9%	11%	6%	4%	3%	8%	47%

Source: Computed with data collected in the ANES Cumulative Data File, 1948-2008

Additional surveys have tried to provide a more detailed image that the ANES data depicts of the management and use of public lands and wilderness. In 2012, according to a National Wildlife Federation survey, 83% Republican hunters and anglers supported opening up access to previously inaccessible public lands for the sake of hunting and fishing, while 50% of Republicans prioritized the protection of public lands over developing energy resources on those lands (Carpenter 2012, 11-12). An impressive 73% of Republicans wanted to see restorations made to the Clean Water Act (24). In 2014, 64% of Republicans were opposed to selling off public lands to private holdings (State of the Rockies Project 2014).

This constituency elects the Republican governing officials to Congress and the Presidency that, as described below, are less protective than this survey data would suggest voters would like them to be. When considering different theories of realignment, this demonstrates that, at least on the issue of public lands and wilderness, measurable issue realignment as a result of an election does not appropriately describe the phenomenon of an electorate polling protectively on land issues, represented by public officials who, especially more recently, are not in line with them.

Republicans in Government

Congress

Republican votes on key public land, wilderness, environment, and natural resources legislation from the 1970s to 2009⁶ tell a story about Republican members of Congress that differs from the anti-environmentalist notions identified in the literature. Of seventeen crucial laws passed since 1970, the majority of House Republicans supported fourteen while Republicans in the Senate supported a different combination of fourteen (Table 5). Two laws jointly not supported by House and Senate Republicans were the *California Roadless Area Review Evaluation II* in 1984 and the *Water Quality Act of 1987*, followed closely by the nearly failed *Omnibus Public Land Management Act* in 2009. Generally, protective laws that were passed by Congress had significant support for passage, including the *National Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act* in 1971, the *Endangered Species Act* in 1973, and the *Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002*. This is not true of all laws to emerge that protect land and wilderness.

⁶ No key legislation has passed since 2009, with the exception of the passage and signage of a bill, P.L. 113-87, protecting over 32,000 acres of wilderness in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore that passed in March of 2014, just outside the attention of the time frame of this paper.

Table 5. Key Protective Public Land and Wilderness Legislation in Congress

Public Law	Title	Year	House Republican Yes Votes	House Republican No Votes	Senate Republican Yes Votes	Senate Republican No Votes
91-190	National Environmental Policy Act	1969	Voice Vote	Voice Vote	Voice Vote	Voice Vote
92-532	National Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act	1971	127	1	31	0
92-500	Clean Water Act	1972	100	61	37	0
93-205	Endangered Species Act	1973	171	9	37	0
94-83	National Environmental Policy Act Amendment	1975	127	0	Voice Vote	Voice Vote
94-588	National Forest Management Act	1976	107	5	35	0
94-579	Federal Land Policy Management Act	1976	61	50	26	11
95-237	Endangered American Wilderness Act	1978	124	12	33	3
95-495	Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act	1978	121	10	4	15
96-487	Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation	1980	157	0	29	11
98-425	California RARE II	1984	50	106	22	32
98-603	San Juan, CO Wilderness RARE II	1984	Voice Vote	Voice Vote	Voice Vote	Voice Vote
100-4	Water Quality Act	1987	42	123	16	29
101-549	Clean Air Act Amendments	1990	153	20	45	5
107-282	Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002	2002	222	0	50	0
110-114	Water Resources Development Act	2007	167	26	48	4
111-11	Omnibus Public Land Management Act	2009	38	136	21	20

Source: Congressional Record, U.S. Library of Congress

The *Federal Land Policy Management Act* in 1976 was passed by a slim majority on the Republican side, with just over 10 votes of difference between House Republicans voting in favor and Republicans voting against. This law, signed by Democratic President Jimmy Carter, became the spark for the Sagebrush Rebellion movement when it changed the regulations for use of public lands that “favored environmental preservation at the expense of commercial and resource development” (Foster 1983, 655). The Sagebrush Rebellion that arose was predominately supported by Republicans in the West, though Republicans in Congress were nearly divided in the House and Senate, with the majority of Republican members voting to pass the law. The actual application of the law was specific only to the West.

Differences between the ways Republicans have voted in the North and the South, East and West on public land legislation cannot be ignored in this analysis. Southern Republicans on the whole were less supportive of protective legislation over the past forty or so years in comparison to their counterparts from the northeast and does not follow the progression identified under the assumption of realignment. Unfortunately, outside of the Sagebrush Rebellion, little analysis exists to account for regional realignment.

Dominant from the 1980s to 1990s, the wise-use movement advocating for local and private land use promoted by some Republicans in the West aligned with a Southern Republican/New Right mentality of rights-based claims to property (Turner 2009,141). Republicans in the West, particularly then, were not only more attentive to public land and wilderness issues, but more supportive of releasing control of those lands into the hands of private ownership or local governing authorities (Foster 1983,656).

In the discussion on realignment, congressional Republicans have demonstrated a measureable change in support for land-protective action over the time scale of this analysis.

During the environmental decade in the 1970s, nine key laws that worked to protect land and designate wilderness were passed by Congress, more often than not with clear support by Republican representatives and senators (Table 5). After 1980, there is an identifiable trend that further legislative efforts were supported by fewer Republican members of Congress, despite variance between who held the majority of each political theater. Republican opposition to RARE II policies in 1984 (those with the most impact are noted in Table 5) highlighted a distinct shift in support from conservatives in Congress by numbers alone, contrasting with the large majorities of Republican support for protective policies in 1971, 1973, and 1975. The dip in support from the 1970s to 1980s could be attributed to actions taken by the Ronald Reagan administration soliciting a Party-wide movement against issues of environmental protection.

By the mid-2000s, the tide had changed again. Particularly in light of the track record of support for the *Omnibus Public Lands Management Act* in 2009, Republicans were not opposed to the protections being offered by the legislation, and, initially, favorably supported the law that would designate over 2 million acres of public land as wilderness and provided economic growth for those states and communities fortunate to benefit from increased tourism (Obama 2009). By the time the final vote came to the House with Senate amendments, support among Republican lawmakers had significantly dwindled. Even in their attempts to protect public land, Republicans in Congress failed to follow through with full support for protective legislation.

Despite ineffective attempts at protectivity, there has been a dearth of public land and wilderness legislation since 2009, including several years where Republicans held a majority in the House of the 112th and 113th Congresses (Table 5). Many pieces of legislation that have been introduced haven't made it successfully through both chambers due to a lack of bipartisan support. The lack of bipartisan support may be a result of other partisan factors, such as more

pressing electoral issues, like the economy, foreign affairs, and healthcare. Based on the record of support for prior key public land legislation, it is evident that Republican backing on land-protective policies has been deteriorating, and that the Party in Congress has been keeping protective legislation from being heard or moving forward, or prioritizing movement on contradictory policies looking to expand energy development of land leases. Through support unquestionably exists within the Republican Party to protect lands and designate wilderness, the instances are fewer and have less ardent backing than they did forty years ago.

The Presidency

Executive orders carry the full force of the law, and, like any other law initiated through legislation, are subject to judicial review. Many cite a constitutional basis for the President or a delegation of power by Congress. These orders are the most direct way for a President to assert policy changes within the frame of their power, meaning executive orders demonstrate the importance of such issues to the sitting President. The first section provides a breakdown of executive orders relating to the protection or misuse of public lands, natural resources, and wilderness within each Republican presidency since Nixon; the second section provides an analysis of the trends demonstrated by these presidents over time.

Table 6. Executive Orders of Republican Presidents 1968 to 2008

President	Term Length (Years)	Total Executive Orders	Orders that actively protected public land	Orders that actively did not protect public land	Percentage orders that actively protected land	Percentage orders that actively did not protect lands
Richard Nixon	5	346	9	2	2.6%	0.57%
Gerald Ford	4	169	2	2	1.2%	1.2%
Ronald Reagan	8	381	3	7	0.7%	1.8%
George H.W. Bush	4	166	6	2	3.6%	1.2%
George W. Bush	8	291	7	4	2.4%	1.4%

Source: Computed with data collected through the Executive Order Disposition Tables from The American Presidency Project

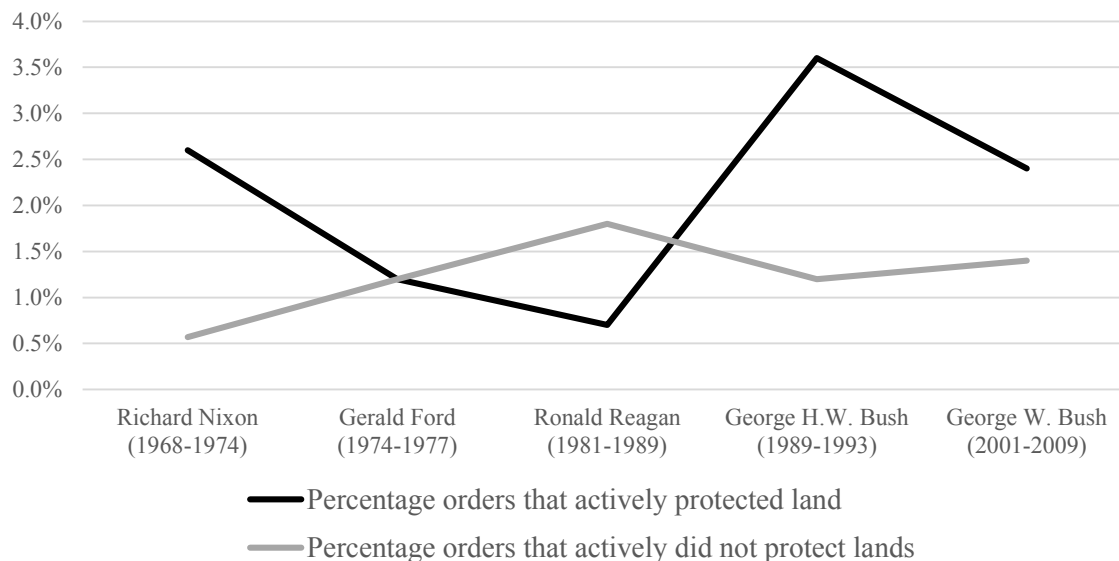


Figure 2. Percentage of Executive Orders Related to Public Land and Wilderness

Source: Computed from data collected through the Executive Order Disposition Tables from The American Presidency Project

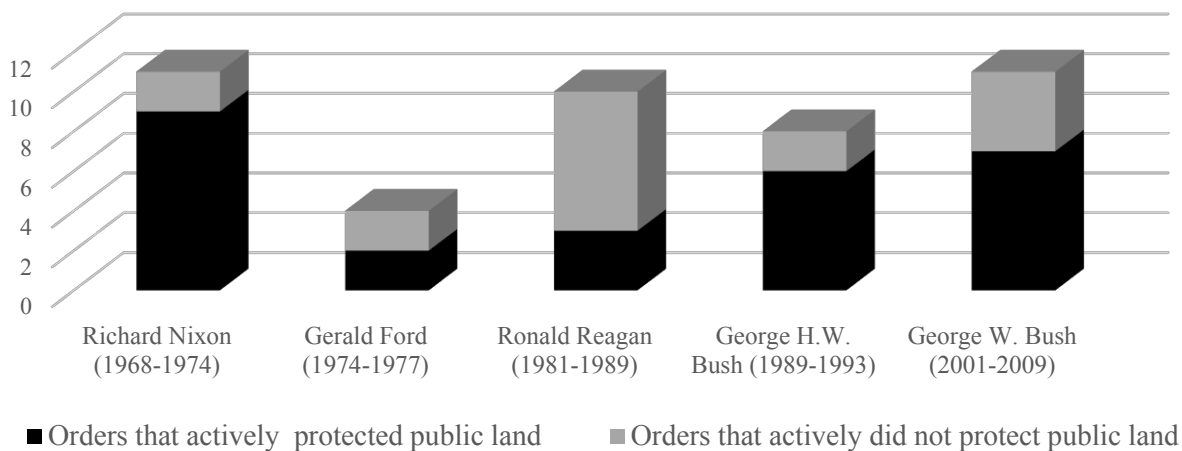


Figure 3. Total Executive Orders Related to Public Land and Wilderness

Source: Computed from data collected through the Executive Order Disposition Tables from The American Presidency Project

Executive Orders

President Richard Nixon, 1968-1974

While the Republican support for protective legislation in Congress demonstrates consistent backing of such policies, Republican presidents since Nixon have wavered in their support for protecting public lands and wilderness. In fact, it was Nixon who first began the progressive environmental cause upon establishing, in addition to the Environmental Protection Agency, the still-standing Environmental Quality Council (now the Council on Environmental Quality), and the Citizen's Advisory Council on Environmental Quality with Executive Order 11472 (U.S. President 1969). Though the title only implies environmental concerns that may or may not be related to lands, the council and advisory committee were charged with developing accountability for natural resource protection and conservation through ecologically responsible use.

Nixon also added more land to the Cherokee National Forest (U.S. President 1969, no. 11488), introduced safeguards for species found on federal lands (U.S. President 1972, no. 11643), eliminated the use of off-road vehicles on public lands (U.S. President 1972, no. 11644), and increased recreation use of public lands (U.S. President 1973, no. 11724). In related efforts, Nixon signed two executive orders concerning pollution on federal lands and in federally maintained facilities. The timely passage of the National Environmental Policy Act enabled Nixon to be the president who signed the legislation into law. Out of all Republican presidents since his terms in office, Nixon issued the most executive orders that actively protected public lands, making the second highest percentage of protective orders of the five presidents in this analysis. While his progressive actions could be anomalous of a Republican President, Nixon's actions cannot be disregarded, rather, they are a highlight of protective actions by Republicans.

President Gerald Ford, 1974-1977

Immediately following Nixon in Office, President Gerald Ford was quick to change the tone of support for presidential action regarding America's public lands. The only protective actions Ford took included "managing [federal] lands to protect animal resources," and amending a similar Nixon executive order to limit the use of chemicals on federal lands for the sake of decreasing the threat to plant and animal species discovered in those places (U.S. President 1976, no. 11870; 11917). Ford's actions that actively did not protect public lands included recovery efforts for Energy Research disasters but not prevention (U.S. President 1977, no. 11953).

In light of the anti-big government, local public land management rallying of the Sagebrush Rebellion at the end of the 1970s, it is unusual that Ford did not demonstrate his regard for sagebrush rebels or denounce them with the power of the executive order. Passage of the Federal Land Policy Management Act that coincided with the Rebellion left rebels feeling ostracized by Ford (though the policy ended up being a flop) (Cawley 1993, 39-41). Then presidential-hopeful Ronald Reagan was quick to identify himself as a Sagebrush Rebel, unlike Ford. The stark contrast between the progressive actions taken by Nixon and the immense inaction taken by Ford certainly demonstrate a significant realignment between these two Presidents if nothing else.

President Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989

President Ronald Reagan continued the trend begun by Ford with negligible active protection of lands and wilderness, and issued seven orders during his two terms that were harmful to protection of lands or rescinded previous protections. Reagan issued more than twice as many executive orders that did not protect public lands than ones that did. As the president in

this analysis who issued the most executive orders of any president during his presidency (381 orders), Reagan also had the highest percentage of any president for non-protective orders. Reagan eliminated six river basin commissions which had been previously charged with managing and promoting wise-use of water resources (U.S. President 1981, no. 12319). Reagan was responsible for some environmentally-conscious superfund implementation which, though environmentally focused on- and off federal-owned lands, worked to eliminate pollution and chemical leaching into land and waterways, but superfund efforts were generally unsuccessful at achieving their protective mission (U.S. President 1987, no. 12580).

In his attempts to work against protection of public lands and wilderness, Reagan revoked an order issued by President Jimmy Carter that had coordinated planning and review of Federal water and land resource projects in addition to several other orders established under the Nixon Administration (U.S. President 1982, no. 12322; 12553). Executive order 12467 made it easier for international organizations, such as foreign energy companies, to evade federal laws pertaining to the Colorado River, the Rio Grande, and the Tijuana River (Reagan 1984). Real property management efforts called for the management of public lands, which translated to developing infrastructure on federal land rather than restricting it (U.S. President 1985, no. 12512). In all, Reagan's efforts demonstrated a significant realignment specifically on the issue of public land.

President George H.W. Bush, 1989-1993

A self-described environmentalist, President George H.W. Bush (Bush Sr.) was associated with the passage of protective Congressional legislation like the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990, though critics focus on the force behind his actions and efforts apprehensively.

In an attempt that set-aside land for protective reasons, Bush Sr. protected cultural property for the Choctawhatchee tribe in the southeastern U.S. (U.S. President 1989, no. 12688). Bush established the President's Commission on Environmental Quality to tackle environmental problems faced after the Reagan administration including responsible natural resource management and developed a series of accolades through the President's Environment and Conservation Challenge Awards to commend those practicing conservation stewardship and environmental protection (U.S. President 1990, no. 12737; 12761). Bush Sr. delegated federal petroleum and shale reserve responsibilities previously entrusted to the Navy to the Department of Energy, a department that under Bush Sr. ultimately drew down petroleum reserves. This was one of few actions that specifically related to land use, though it was less-environmentally focused.

What little action could be perceived as harmful to public lands or wilderness was the President's Council on Rural America, which sought to improve economic development in rural areas, often associated with projects features on rural public lands (U.S. President 1990, no. 12720). Though he released the fewest total executive orders out of any president in this investigation, Bush Sr. issued the highest percentage of executive orders that actively worked to protect public lands and wilderness (Table 6).

President George W. Bush, 2001-2009

During the George W. Bush administration, positive and progressive protective action on lands and wilderness in the public eye overshadowed otherwise detrimental environmental and federal lands decisions. Though George W. Bush favorably enacted the Preserve America program, which sought to improve federal land stewardship and develop partnerships for the preservation and use of historic properties, and ordered the facilitation of "Hunting Heritage and

Wildlife Conservation” through ecologically-conscious wildlife and habitat management, the Bush presidency implemented actions both through executive orders and Congressional pressure to increase drilling on public lands and weaken environmental legislation responsible for protecting land and wilderness (U.S. President 2003, no. 13287; 2007, no. 13443).

Bush explicitly issued two orders to expedite permitting for the execution of energy-related projects and energy exploration in order to “increase energy production,” which, ultimately, led to an increase of traffic and use on federal lands where energy resources were abundant without caveats for protection of those lands (U.S. President 2003, no. 13302; 2004, no. 13337).

Overall, through executive orders alone, Bush issued a high number of land-protective orders, though their effects did not go as far as other non-protective actions he supported and initiated during his presidency.

Analysis

What was first initiated by Richard Nixon as a Republican fervency to tackle protectionists land, resource, and environmental causes ultimately has weakened save for the George H.W. Bush administration. With time, Republican Presidents have become noticeably averse to implementing executive orders that seek to protect public lands and expand wilderness designations (Figure 2). Though clearly not opposed to such action, Nixon developed a notable track record not matched in quality and quantity by any subsequent Republican presidencies (Figure 3). The trends themselves do not point to a specific catalyst, but are descriptive nonetheless.

The Republican Party Organization

Sections in Republican Party platforms that suggest a focus on public lands and natural resources slowly move progressively higher in the platforms with time, but rarely if ever make it even in the first half of each document. The presence of language referencing public lands, wilderness, and even natural resources use in the platforms has changed with time, most notably between 1976 and 1980, correlating with the dawn of the Reagan presidency.

Each platform makes a number of recommendations and suggestions for the following four years to come, and the platforms published between 1972 and 2012 all call for varying protections or usage of federally owned open lands. The following section relates the content of platforms during that time period, followed by analysis of changes over those forty years.

Republican Party Platforms

1972 Platform

Though written after the bulk of the Nixon presidency, the first platform in this analysis reflects the action or inaction of Nixon on issues relating to the environment and natural resources. Instead of looking forward to the next four years of the party, the 1972 platform focused heavily on past environmental successes like saving the Everglades and the Legacy of Parks program. In regard to the party's hopes for future policy action, seventeen different proposals were made relating to protection or manipulation of public lands, wilderness, and resources that sought to protect endangered wildlife, add 3.6 million acres in new wilderness areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and clean up waterways (Republican National Committee 1972). These actions were overshadowed by the primary focus of the "Natural Resources and Energy" section which included development of fossil fuels on federal lands, new energy resources on federal lands, allowing private enterprises to tap into shale

resources, and developing additional groundwater resources (Republican National Committee 1972). As a first point of analysis, the Republican Party provided some directly conflicting suggestions, but called for “ecological leadership” in the Party (Republican National Committee 1972).

1976 Platform

When the platform first begins with the section on lands and the environment, there is an evident desire to protect land in one of the opening lines: “The beauty of our land is our legacy to our children. It must be protected by us so that they can pass it on intact to their children” (Republican National Committee 1976). This is further expressed with a conservation focus that identifies the first piece as a directive, saying, “Consistent with our needs, conservation should remain our national policy” (Republican National Committee 1976). Unlike the previous platform in 1972, the platform of 1976 explicitly featured sections addressing these issues, chiefly “Rural Development” and “Environment and Natural Resources.” These were located earlier in the platform, indicating an increased importance from the prior proposal.

These suggestions are not met with substantial, concrete desires for implementation, however. At the same time, this platform is the first to explicitly identify the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as a source for petroleum. It calls for the opening of public lands to expansion and more rapid development of oil shale reserves, natural gas, and mineral exploration while suggesting clear-cutting as an effective method of timber harvest.

1980 Platform

To this point, the 1980 platform included the fewest mentions of public lands, wilderness, and natural resources in other sections of the platform, and the mentions found were primarily not protective or even conservationist of lands. When it did, the statements expressed the least

protective of the previous eight years. This was matched by a notion that enough had been done in the past and it was time to move forward to other policy issues:

[E]nvironmental legislation in the past decade reflected a bipartisan concern over the need to maintain a clean and healthful environment...the price paid has far exceeded the direct and necessary cost of designing and installing new control technology.
(Republican National Committee 1980)

The Party expressed concern that environmental protection is “cover for a no-growth policy and shrinking economy,” and called for further development of coal, oil, and tar sands, accelerating private investment and mining on public lands, pushing for multiple use lands, and eliminating disincentives for “exploitation of resources” on federal lands (Republican National Committee 1980). This most starkly contrasts what is known about the prior progressiveness of the Nixon presidency, and demonstrates a serious shift from caring about land for “our children” to a focus on the economic loss associated with environmental protection.

1984 Platform

The 1984 platform is the first in what became a dominant trend in utilizing the GOP’s affiliation with former president and conservationist Theodore Roosevelt as a basis for suggested decisions and policies in the next four years. In reality, the Roosevelt mention is used as subterfuge to avoid suggesting any concrete protective actions in the 1984 platform. Despite Roosevelt’s presence within the platform, public lands and wilderness received no mention in the 1984 document, though some environmental protections are generically referred to. The only section remotely related to federal lands is the “Environment” section of the platform, which referenced acid rain, toxic wastes, and wildlife species protection rather than specifications about federal land or wilderness (Republican National Committee 1984).

1988 Platform

The 1988 platform continued the practice of subjecting the sections pertaining to public lands and wilderness in the bottom half of the platform, further suggesting its lack of importance and salience in the scheme of the issues addressed by the party organization. The language of this platform falls back on past successes within the Republican Party, and again calls on the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt in the lengthy section on “Environmental Protection” buried at the bottom of the platform (Republican National Committee 1988). Surprisingly, this platform is most deliberate about actively not protecting public lands and suggests that public land, particularly in the American West, should no longer be controlled by government. A theme of ceding rights to states suggests that Republicans were looking toward deregulation and removal of protections that stood in place in 1988 for federal lands. Recommendations and solicitations in the platform do not outwardly call for environmental degradation however, and some weak language about environmental protection and conservation is present, but with the frequent caveat that such objectives must be achieved “without economic dislocation” (Republican National Committee 1988).

1992 Platform

The 1992 platform is the very first to have a section explicitly devoted to public lands as far back as 1972. In it, the party calls for “environmentally safeguarded” access to the Arctic Wildlife Refuge and the Outer Continental Shelf for petroleum exploration, and look toward public-private partnerships on federal lands to maximize their multiple-use goals (Republican National Committee 1992). In both a prideful and regretful approach, the platform highlights that “[the United States] spends more than any other country on environmental protection” (Republican National Committee 1992). Whether or not this is true, it is difficult to determine

whether including this information would have suggested that the U.S. spend no more, or that the country should uphold this tradition of environmental protection.

1996 Platform

For a second consecutive time, public lands was granted its own section in the platform, included in the bottom quarter of the document. The 1996 platform focuses heavily on Presidential candidate Bob Dole and policies he would potentially back as the Republican nominee. Focuses in 1996 include “environmentally-responsible energy extraction from public lands” and “environmentally-sound oil production” in, again, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Republican National Committee 1996). Though development-driven objectives were consistent throughout the platform, each was qualified with a response to be environmentally conscious of the impact of potential pollution, and responsive to the historical and environmental significance of wilderness.

2000 Platform

In a revival from the past, the Republican Party in 2000 called for the redirection of protecting and managing federal lands to the states, local, and tribal communities near them, diffusing responsibility to the local level. They again summoned the memory of Theodore Roosevelt and made a case for lands protection as a piece of American heritage. In this platform, the multiple-use lands concept is brought up once more, indicating a party-driven desire to conserve and manage lands responsibly while also ensuring economic capacities and market-based solutions through resources use and management. The only blatantly non-protective action proposed within this platform was the desire to improve federal oil and gas permit leasing on public lands, and, once again, seeking “environmentally responsible exploration” of oil reserves in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Republican National Committee 2000).

2004 Platform

Looking backward, the 2004 platform focused heavily on the successes of George W. Bush's first term while insubstantially updating ideas from the 2000 platform. In it, the Republican Party pushes to conduct exploratory drilling the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, in addition to supporting Bush efforts to increase protected area of wetland in the U.S. by 3 million acres (Republican National Committee 2004). In relation to the past several years the call for more acreage of protected wilderness is a significant step for Republicans approaching the continued George W. Bush presidency. The brief section mentioning these issues was in the last quarter of the platform. Ultimately, public land issues were of little importance to the party in 2004.

2008 Platform

Physically one of the shortest platforms in regard to the document space given to land, wilderness, resource, or even environmental issues, the 2008 party stance takes the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge demands a step further by opposing any efforts to permanently block access to oil reserves there. Additionally, this platform supports the accelerated exploration, drilling, and development of oil sources on federal lands in six states. In an anti-protectionist effort, the Party also articulates distrust of National Historic Area designation, which allows "widespread governmental control of citizen's lands" (Republican National Committee 2008).

2012 Platform

In 2012, platform language suggested that the environment was doing well and that actions to protect the environment in recent years have been ultimately successful. In a rare shift, public lands and energy appeared in the top half of the Republican Party Platform. This is also the first time hydraulic fracturing is included as a method of natural resource extraction, one not identified with any land or wilderness-protective measures by any party. The focus of plans

pertaining to the environment emphasizes the economic gain to be had via environmental protection, citing the Party's determination to: "Create jobs, spur economic growth, lower energy prices, and strengthen our energy industry" (Republican National Committee 2012). This signifies a clear difference from platforms of the 1970s and 1980s, a diverging trend over the past 40 years.

Analysis

The importance of public lands and wilderness as a policy issue indisputably took time to become salient to the party platform. This is reflected by the fact that 1992 was the first year that the platform contained a section that explicitly discussed public lands. Beginning with the 1972 Republican Party Platform of initiatives contained in sections regarding the environment and lands called for "ecological leadership," though the issue itself was buried at the very bottom of the platform document, suggesting its unimportance in light of other issues. Over time, those sections containing intimations or explicit directions on themes addressing public lands, wilderness, or resource management moved up in the scheme of the platform, returning again to the bottom with the 2012 platform.

In the years between 1972 and 2012, there were stark changes within the Republican Party Platform were dismal on issues relating to public land use and protection. With time, the party moved further from protection and increasingly emphasized the economic importance developing energy resources on American public lands. A key example of this progression is the development in attitudes toward use of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which first became relevant in the platform in 1976. Upon its first appearance, the party's stance on the wildlife refuge was that the energy resources expected to be contained there should be explored, but by 2012, continued congressional Republican attempts to open the federal land holding to

exploitation have been unsupported by an adequate number of Democrats or vetoed by sitting presidents.

The Republican Party's position on specific land protections also varied with administrations and is reflected in the platform. The 1972 platform determinedly asked for the new protection of 3.6 million acres of federal land under wilderness designation. The only other platforms that included any language about wilderness protection were in 2000 and 2004. In all other years, the Party expressed no intentions to increase the space of protected or wilderness-designated lands. In fact, in 1992, the Party first professed a desire to sell off public land holdings as a source of revenue for the government.

A constant theme is the economic well-being of the country, dependent on the proper use of public lands as identified by Republican elites. In most every platform, mixed into sections on lands, energy, and natural resource use is an extensive piece about costs and economic gains or losses by protective or explorative actions on federal lands. The economy dominated the motivation for actions toward or justification against protecting public lands.

A final uniting and unexplained theme is the recollection of these platforms to the legacy of late President Theodore Roosevelt. Four of the platforms, 1984, 1988, 2000, 2008 directly mention the name and conservation legacy of the 26th President. Conservationist principles identified by Roosevelt obviously bear a significance to the Party over the years, though rarely do any of the platforms identify conservationist or protectionist actions that would have aligned with Roosevelt's. Absolute use and ignorance for degradation became new Republican themes.

It is worth noting that the Republican Party, in these platforms, never expressed a direct desire to destroy public lands. Even actions seen as non-protective, like drilling, mining, and redistributing management power to local administrative levels were often accompanied by the

stipulation for a clause on responsible or ecologically sound policy. Still, it is clear that at the Party level, Republicans have demonstrated a decreased interest in protecting public lands.

Conclusion

The focus of the research question was to uncover which level of the Republican Party is leading the issue realignment, if any, on matters pertaining to the protection of public lands and wilderness. Though the answer is not explicitly clear, and is dependent on the fluctuations of different Presidential Administrations and successful Congressional majorities, evidence suggests that Republican elites within the Party, filtered by through the electorate, lead the realignment within the party on public land and wilderness policy (Figure 1b). In reflecting on the three hypotheses this investigation sought to support, evidence demonstrates that simply supporting or denying the hypotheses is complicated:

H₁ The Republican Party in the electorate has realigned since the 1970s to support increasingly more protective lands/wilderness policy.

The first hypothesis is not supported by the data regarding the Republican electorate. Republican voters have favored the protection of public land and wilderness designation when the Party otherwise would take no action, but with the time, Republican voters have actually demonstrated a decrease in concern or regard for the protection of the environment and public lands. The opinions portrayed through ANES data would indicate that the electorate is more likely to be supportive of land-protection measures compared to other levels in this analysis, but ultimately, Republican voters in the 1980s were more likely to support land-protective action than they were in 2008.

H₂ The Republican Party in the government has demonstrated a decrease in the number of actions to protect public lands since the 1970s.

Through actions by Republicans in Congress and the Presidency, the second hypothesis is supported by the data. There has been a continuous decrease in the number of laws passed through Congress that protect public land or set-aside wilderness, especially after the 1980s. Republican members of Congress voted less favorably on protective legislation with time, evidenced by a distinct shift in “yes” votes on protective legislation in the 1980s. Though there has been significant fluctuation among different presidential administrations, with the exception of George H.W. Bush, Republican presidents have implemented fewer, if any, executive orders with time as a percentage of all executive orders they have issued.

H₃ The Republican Party in the organization has demonstrated a decreased importance of messaging on protecting public lands since the 1970s.

Evidenced by language in party platforms, the third hypothesis is also supported. The rhetoric of the Party has demonstrated drastic differences between the early 1970s and 2012 in the national platform, including when and how public land, the environment, and conservation are addressed, if at all. With time, conservation and protection of public lands, after their first mention, decreased in relevance and importance, superseded by the economic incentives for resource development, exploration, and mining on public lands.

H₄ Issue evolution in the Republican Party on public land and wilderness policy is guided by the Republican Party organization (Carmines and Stimson 1989).

Determining the support for this hypothesis is difficult, since, it is both supported and unsupported throughout the time frame of this investigation. Ultimately, analysis does support the hypothesis with several caveats. Data looking at the electorate is limited do to restrictions on what is available from cumulative responses from ANES. Additionally, public land policy, which is not a primary focus of many voters, makes tracing public opinions and policy responses

difficult among a clouded policy arena. Throughout the 1970s, overwhelming electorate support for protective actions and positivity toward environmental protection corresponded with the many protective actions taken by Congress and the Presidency and the Party's intention to add more area to the National Wilderness Preservation System (it also aligned with Carmines and Stimson's model of issue evolution). These correlations disintegrated during the Reagan administration, when anti-protectionist policies from the Party, the Presidency, and from Congress did not represent the views of the electorate who maintained higher standards and expectations for environmental protection.

The changes in the electorate are preceded by language changes in the party platforms, suggesting that the model used previously in this study serves as a useful explanation of the issue evolution. Looking at the model of Carmines and Stimson (1989), it is evident that their model is supported by the phenomenon demonstrated by the data: elite cues caused electorate opinions to be formed, and the electorate, then, solicited further changes in the policy realm and even within the party by vocalizing opinions they formed on public lands issues.

H₅ Null: There has been no change in the Republican Party's stance or action regarding public lands since the 1970s.

The previous hypotheses were supported, negating the claim of the null hypothesis. At all three levels, the visible realignment demonstrated graphically and qualitatively through language that there were changes within the party over time regarding this policy issue.

In general, the Republican Party has noticeably changed its posture on federal land issues at the national level since the 1970s. In light of this analysis, it would be unjust to make the claim that Republicans as a whole do not care about protecting federal lands, particularly the Republican electorate, providing recreational opportunities and implementing ecologically-

conscious conservation efforts. It is clear that not all facets of the Party are at the same place on the spectrum of caring for wild places.

The lack of enthusiasm in the Republican Party to protect more wilderness and guard public lands from exploration, resource exploitation, or infrastructural development is disturbing to environmentalists, but as a party, Republicans are not directly ill-willed toward protecting federal lands. They have, to the chagrin of protectionists, become less protective with time, and the Republican constituency continues to express a desire to protect the environment that may fall on deaf ears at the party level. In Congress, Republicans have been supportive of protective public land and wilderness legislation, though there have been increasingly fewer protective laws since the 1970s. Republican Presidents continued to issue more protective executive orders than non-protective ones in the past two Republican presidential terms, and Republican voters increasingly expressed a desire to protect lands as wilderness and preserve the environment.

Limitations

While the intention of this paper was to investigate realignment in the Republican Party on public land and wilderness issues since the 1970s, it does not encapsulate the concurrent environmental policy battles over pollution, air, and water, which are relevant to correcting the view portrayed by environmentalists that Republicans are not protective.

Studies regarding realignment of the parties are prominent, but literature reviewing issue evolution and issue-specific realignment, the subject of this paper, are fewer. A more-comprehensive look at realignment on a myriad of social issues could reveal patterns about issue realignment within a specific party to contextualize the findings of this analysis. Additionally, realignment studies focus almost exclusively on the electorate and far less on the government, parties, and other institutions at the front of actual realignment.

This investigation was limited by time constraints, but a further investigation could include institutionally relevant information as far back as the Roosevelt Presidency to track more schematic changes in the Party over time, which would also reflect general policy and spectrum realignment rather than on a specific issues such as public lands.

Polling information that highlights only the concerns of Republican voters is inaccessible for many decades, but in the past five years has become increasingly commonplace. With more time and resources to utilize the limited information in local and regional polls on public land use, one could compile a more comprehensive patchwork of Republican voter opinions over time, and support missing 1970s and 1990s data with qualitative information.

Finally, bureaucratic actions to support or not support protective public lands policy could not be included because of the difficulty in ascertaining whether or not initiatives were induced by Republican leadership in other areas of government or conservatively-minded political appointees. Making any concrete observations retroactively in the bureaucracy is too difficult and relies too heavily on qualitative information. A future study could include the activity of bureaucratic agencies and the political appointees that run them affiliated with a political persuasion or party.

Nevertheless, the data within this analysis is useful to demonstrate the trends of issue realignment within the electorate, government, and organization that comprise the modern Republican Party on public land and wilderness policy. With qualitative and quantitative support, it is clear to identify changes in the Party stance on protecting wild places, and to point a finger at party elites in the GOP and Republican National Committee who initiate these changes, and lead to a less wild Republican Party.

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