




# The National Parks: America's Best Idea

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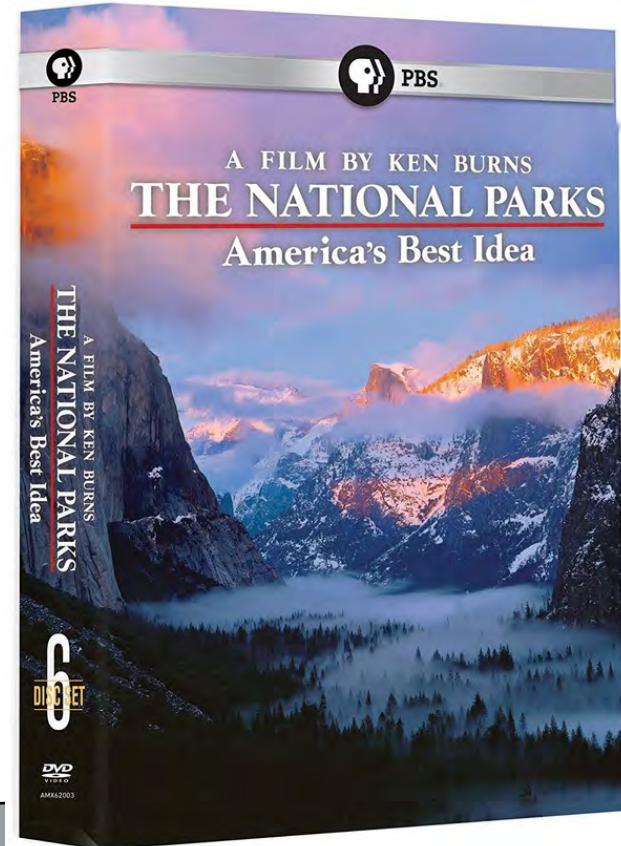


# Travel Courses at University of Maine-Farmington

- University of Maine-Farmington has a long history of study abroad programs, both short and long term
- Course focus varies, but sustainability is a common component
- This model can easily be to an “stateside” travel course
- Why travel within the US?
  - Similar potential for personal challenge and growth – but less intimidating for first time travelers
  - Cheaper? Well...sorta.

## The National Parks: American's Best Idea

- The National Park Service: a case study in historic, contemporary, and future sustainability
- Title is from a documentary by Ken Burns



## The National Parks: American's Best Idea

- The National Parks are captivating, ecologically diverse, and have a rich cultural history



## The National Parks: American's Best Idea

- The National Parks also embody many of the challenges facing conservation today



## Course Themes

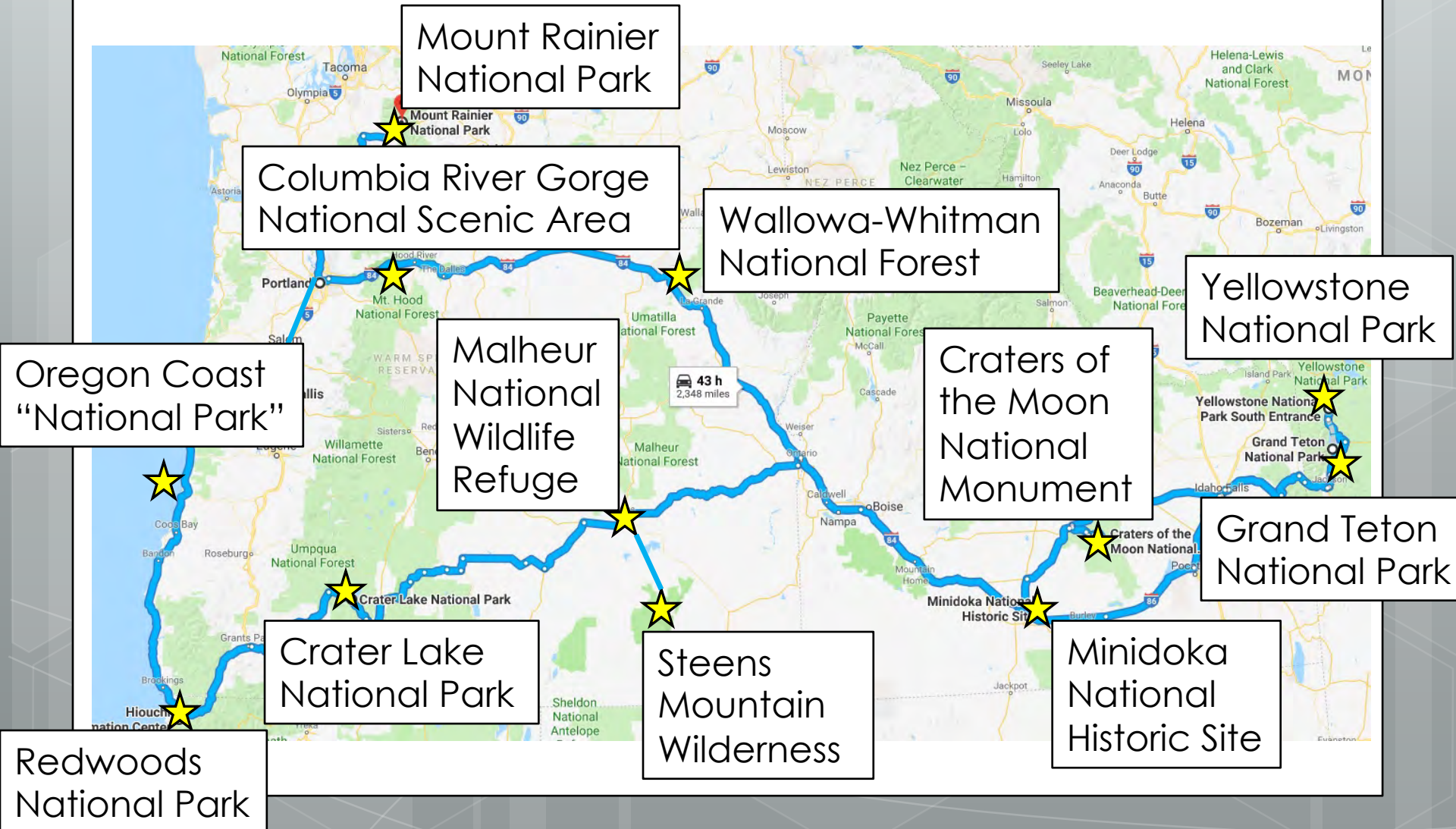
- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - What role does the National Park System (NPS) have in conserving wildlife and their habitats?
- Federal land use policies
  - How does NPS policy differ from other public lands policies?
  - What are the conservation outcomes of these differences?
- Balancing opposing stakeholder opinions
  - What are some of the conflicting opinions surrounding the NPS and other public lands? How are they resolved?
- Being a good citizen steward
  - How can a visitor reduce their impact on public lands?

# Course Schedule

- Scheduled immediately before fall semester
  - Allows students immediate access to summer break
  - Allows students to work for most of the summer
- Pre-trip planning and assignments
  - In person during spring semester, online during summer
  - Online delivery of readings and assignments
- Travel
  - Two weeks, 12 site visits
- Post-trip
  - Final assignment TBD – potentially, structured decision making exercise

# Locations

## Road Tripping Through America's Natural Wonders





# Oregon Coast National Park: The Almost National Park



# Themes and Questions

- Conserving Species and Ecosystems
  - What differences in the landscape and ecosystem would you predict seeing if a National Park had been established in this area?
- Federal Land Policy
  - Why do you think the proposal to establish Oregon Coast National Park failed?
  - What impact do you think a National Park would have had on the local economy?

# Redwoods National Park: Federal and State Land in Tandem



# Themes and Questions

- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - Review Roosevelt elk (*Cervus canadensis rooseveltii*) restoration program
  - Microplastics in coastal areas (lab)
- Federal land policies
  - How do the National Park Service and the State of California cooperate to jointly manage this area?
- Being a good citizen steward
  - Begin Leave-No-Trace training

Yellowstone

# Yellowstone National Park: Conservation Yin & Yang



# Themes and Questions

- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - Wolf reintroduction and trophic cascades
  - Yellowstone to Yukon initiative
  - Effect of increasing visitation
- Balancing opposing stakeholder opinions
  - Hunting wolves and grizzlies at the park boundaries
  - Culling the bison herd
  - The NPS water bottle ban

## Yellowstone National Park: Conservation Yin & Yang

### The howl and death of Yellowstone wolf 926F

*A researcher's mission to document the wild records the song of a famous Yellowstone canine.*

Jacob Job | ESSAY | Dec. 26, 2018 | [From the print edition](#)



926F, the alpha female of the Lamar Canyon Pack, stands at edge of the Lamar River during the winter of 2016.

Melissa DiNino

### Groups Challenge Law Allowing Wyoming To Stage Grizzly Bear Hunts

By Kurt Repanshek on February 21st, 2019

[Share / Save](#)

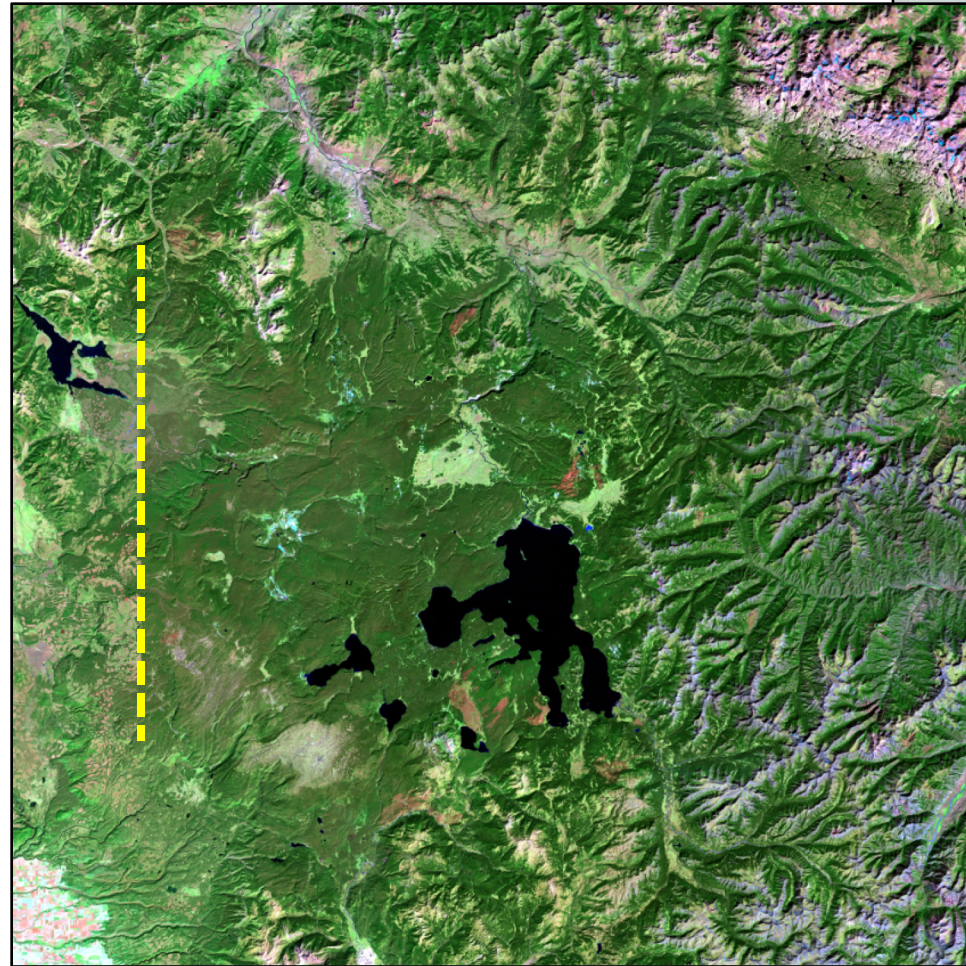


WILDLIFE

### The science behind Yellowstone's bison cull

*Some wildlife biologists say the cull makes sense — but not because bison can spread brucellosis.*

# Yellowstone

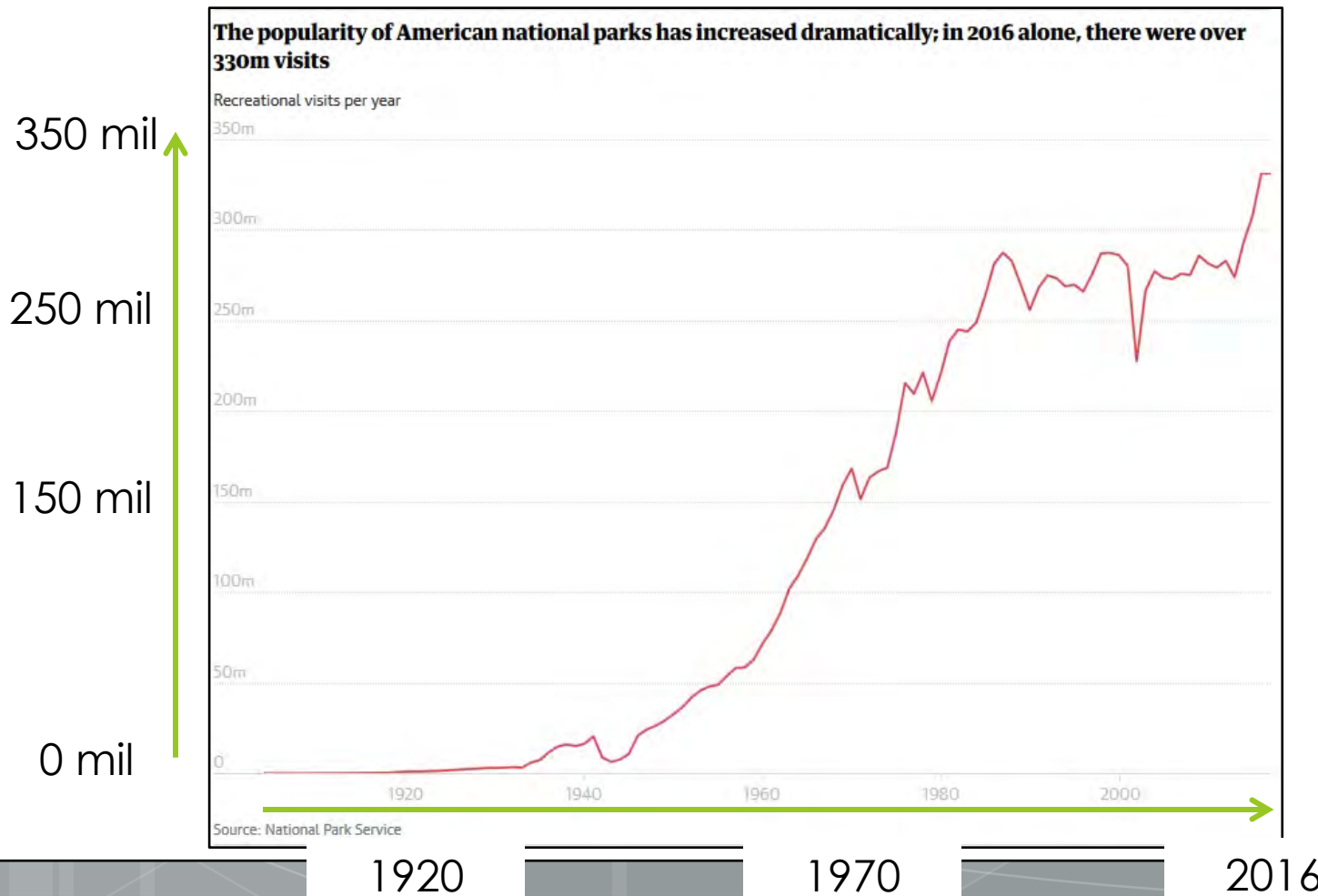




# Yellowstone National Park: Conservation Yin & Yang



## Visitation at the National Parks: Loving Our Parks to Death?



# Mount Rainier National Park





# Pikas and Climate Change: Intro to Structured Decision Making



# Themes and Questions

- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - Review of American fisher (*Pekania penanti*) reintroduction project
  - Cascade red fox (*Vulpes vulpes cascadensis*) scat surveys (lab)
  - Pika occupancy survey (lab)
  - White-nose syndrome and bats (lab)
  - Structured Decision Making (Final Project)



The Side Trips:  
Exploring Alternative Models of  
Federal Land Conservation &  
The Controversies That  
Surround Them

# Malheur National Wildlife Refuge





# The Bundy Takeover



# The Bundy Takeover



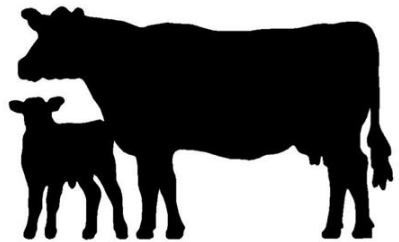
# The Steens Mountain Wilderness



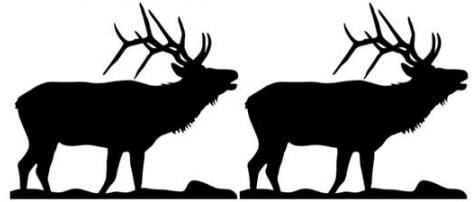
# GRAZING



1 of these:



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**Public lands livestock grazing displaces native wildlife through forage competition.**

# Steens

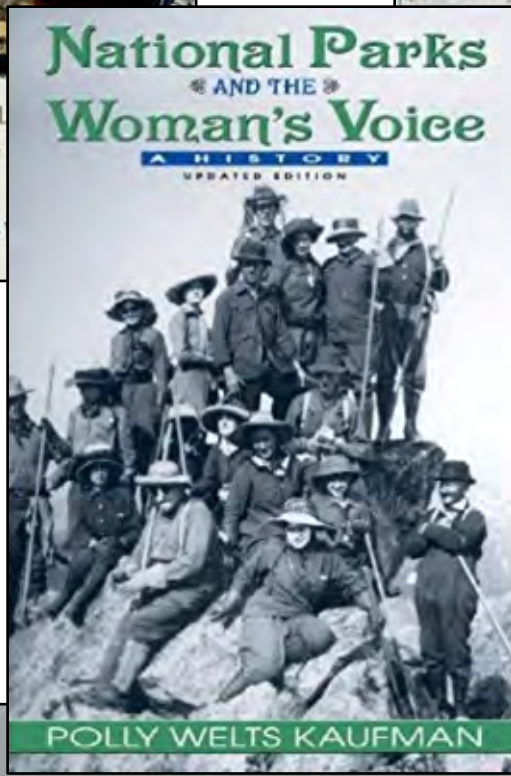
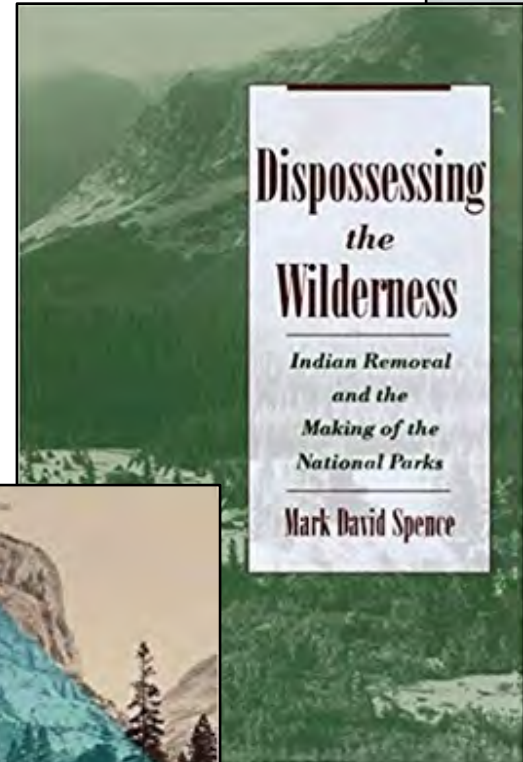
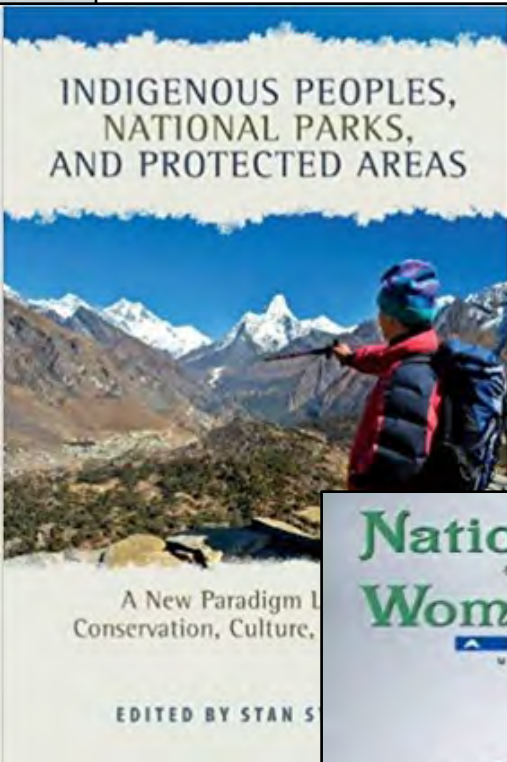
- Wild horse ecological damage
- Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971



# Questions

- In a multi-use system, what “uses” are valued over others?
- What are the impacts of a multi-use land conservation approach on wildlife and ecosystems?
- What impact does land conservation have on local economies?
- How do we balance the interests of diverse stakeholders?
- When should we extract natural resources from public lands, if ever? Who should profit from this extraction?

# Sustaining Natural Resources For Whom?



# Budgeting: A Few Useful Tips

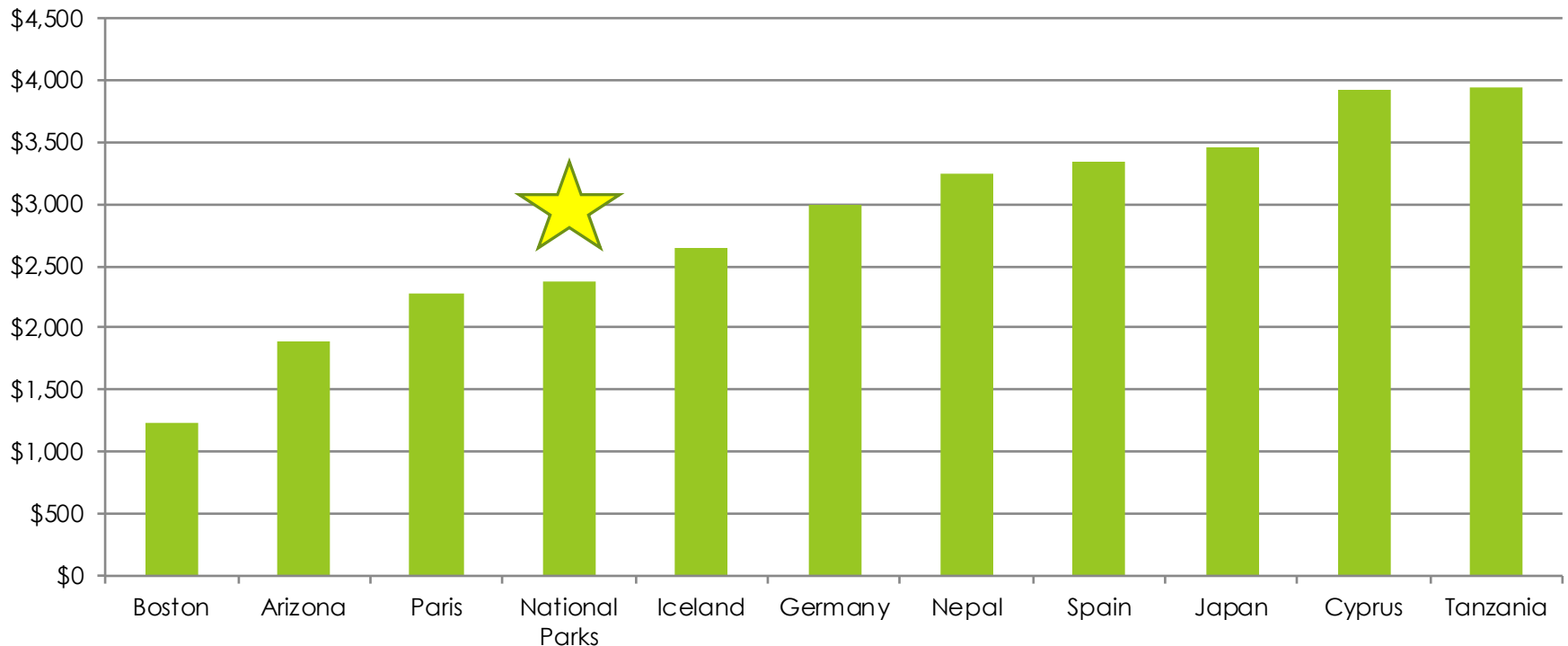
- Apply for an Academic Waiver to eliminate entrance fee costs
- Check with the motor pool of a nearby university for low-cost rental vans
- In most National Forests, you can camp anywhere that is not posted for free; you are not restricted to established campgrounds
- In National Parks, group campsites provide ~50% savings for groups >10



## Is It Cheaper? Yes and No.

- Course fee and additional expenses: \$2,375
- Cost is on the low end, but not “cheap”

### Course Cost (Excluding Tuition)



# Adaptation: Conservation in New England

# Conservation in New England

- Similar focus, similar duration or shorter
- Conservation in student's "back yard"
  - Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York
- Potentially – lower cost, due to reduced travel expense



# Potential Locations are Endless!

- Acadia National Park, Adirondack National Park
- White Mountains National Forest
- Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge
- Cape Cod National Seashore
- Baxter State Park + Khatadin Woods and Waters National Monument
- The Nature Conservancy – Big Reed
- 100 Mile Wilderness
- Land trusts (ex. Kennebec Land Trust)
- Lake Champlain, Lake Winnepesaukee

# Exploring Issues Close to Home

- Project Puffin seabird restoration
- American fisher and marten reintroduction
- Climate change, ticks and 'ghost' moose
- Climate change, rising sea levels, and salt marsh sparrows or shorebirds
- Forestry and fisheries – conservation, local economy
- Dam removal - Penobscot
- Energy corridor development
  - CMP Corridor, Northern Pass
- Ridgeline and offshore wind development
- Lake recreation, eutrophication

# Partnership Outside of UMF

- Ideally, for this course we would bring together students from two (or more!) universities
- Contact me if you are interested in discussing further
  - Email: [donelle.schwalm@maine.edu](mailto:donelle.schwalm@maine.edu)

Questions?



### What Students Should Gain From This Course

- In-situ learning about diverse natural ecosystems
- Engagement with real-world conservation research
- Understanding of conservation success stories and challenges in the National Parks
- Increased knowledge of public lands conservation policy, with emphasis on the National Parks
- Tools that increase their ability to “do no harm” when visiting public lands



# Crater Lake National Park: Climate Change and the Cascades

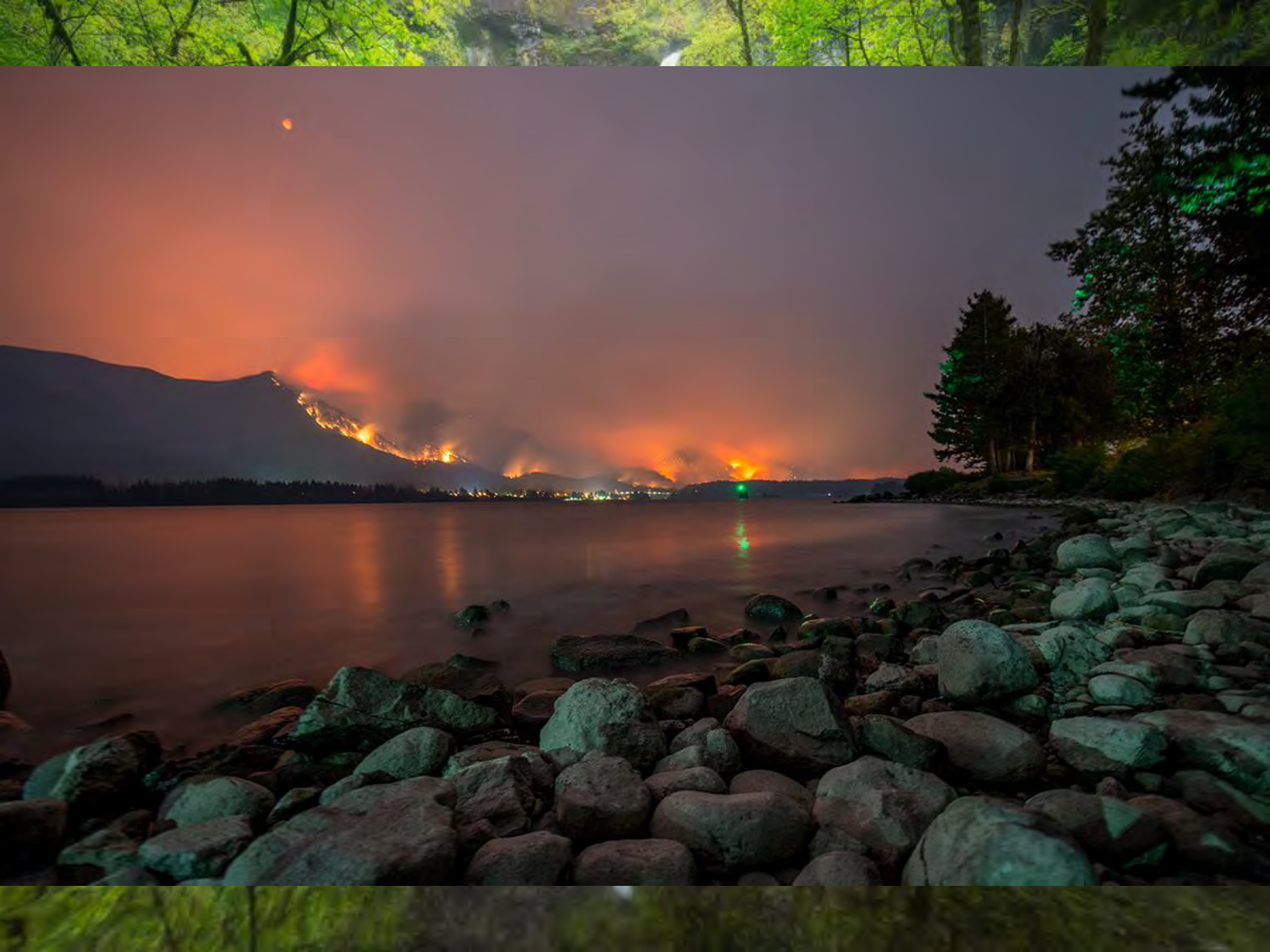


# Themes and Questions

- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - Review predicted impact of climate change on American pikas (*Ochotona princeps*)
  - Discuss forestry practices, climate change, and fire
  - Assist with white-nose syndrome monitoring in bats (lab)
  - Ponderosa Pine ecosystem – plant and wildlife ID (lab)

# Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area





# Transporting fossil fuels on the Columbia River



## Grand Teton National Park: Recreation in the NPS



# Themes and Questions

- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - The American pika, round 2
- Balancing opposing stakeholder opinions
  - Hunting elk
  - 4-wheelin' in the parks
  - Canoeing Jenny Lake
- Being a good citizen steward
  - Leave No Trace, continued



Craters of the Moon National  
Monument: Is it Getting Hot in Here?



# Themes and Questions

- Conserving species and ecosystems
  - American pikas and climate change, round 3
  - Vegetation ID and temperature logging (lab)
- Being a good citizen steward

# Minidoka National Historic Site: Lessons for Contemporary Times



# Wallowa/Whitman National Forest

