

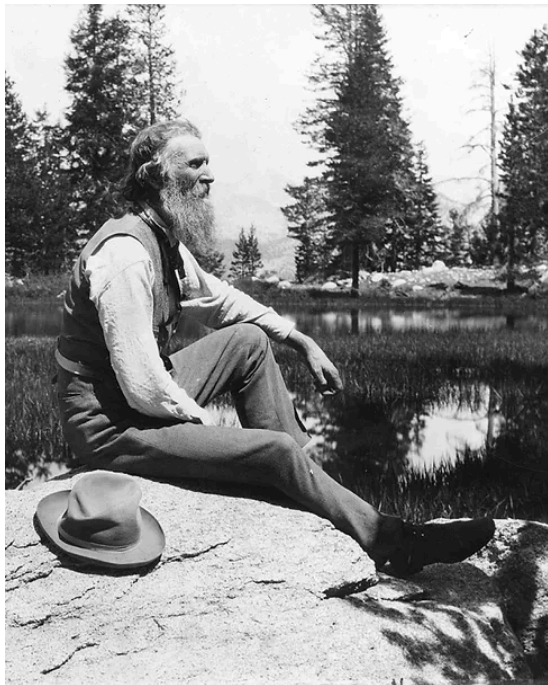
Which is Better? Conserving VS Preserving the Environment

Richelle Choi, Environmental Science

What is Conservation and Preservation?

Conservation and preservation are two ways of regulating the environment. Although they sound very similar, there are some huge fundamental differences between them. The constant battle between the two different philosophies on how to protect and use nature has led to a significant turning point in U.S. environmental history. Both of these philosophies seek to protect the environment, however, conservation focuses more on how the environment can be protected through resource regulation whilst benefiting humans, whereas preservation seeks to ban all traces of human activity in nature.

Conservationists are more concerned with using resources in a way that does not threaten the environment. For example, they would cut down trees to obtain wood and paper for humans, however only to a degree where CO₂ levels can still reach an equilibrium level between emissions and carbon sinks. Conservationists would not cut down trees to the extent where deforestation becomes an issue. Preservationists, on the other hand, would not even cut trees down in the first place, as they want to leave nature untouched and unused by humans. Gifford Pinchot was a strong advocate for conservation, whereas John Muir, pictured below, was one of America's greatest naturalists and preservationists.



John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt

In the 1890s, there was a lot of land in the West that was unregulated and unprotected by the government. The government had to make a choice: to conserve or to preserve?

Gifford Pinchot and John Muir had gone on a camping trip in Lake McDonald, now known as the Glacier National Park, and both became great friends over mutual admiration of the lake's beauty. Later, Pinchot's approach for conservation of the forests won The Forest Reserve Act of 1891, and he became America's first chief forester later in 1898.

Although there was an incompatibility between their philosophies, both men still managed to form an alliance and agreement that is beneficial for all. Considering national parks still exist till this day, this moment can be looked back on as a historical event for America's environmental history. The Forest Reserve Act allows national parks to still serve as a place of education for millions of US citizens and foreign learners to learn more about protecting and realizing the value of the environment.

Later on in 1903, John Muir and President Theodore Roosevelt visited Yosemite and spent three nights camping. They talked and both resonated with the beauty of nature, which led to Roosevelt signing agreements to the creation of five national parks, 18 national monuments, 55 national bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges, and 150 national forests. This is a huge deal to the preservationists, as more national parks meant that more areas of nature were now protected under the law.



John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt pictured above.

Modern Day Context

Nowadays, scientists and lawmakers aim to **conserve** the environment, as it is almost impossible to not use any of the natural resources and leave it untouched. Natural resources such as coal, oil, trees, contribute tremendously to our economy and our day-to-day lives. Therefore, conservation is a more practical way to regulate the environment as opposed to preservation in the modern day context.

Work Cited

Keel, L. (2020). *Frenemies John Muir and Gifford Pinchot*. [online] The National Endowment for the Humanities. Available at:

<https://www.neh.gov/article/frenemies-john-muir-and-gifford-pinchot> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2023].

Lane, T. (2020). *Conservation vs. Preservation*. [online] NWA Land Trust. Available at:

<https://www.nwalandtrust.org/post/conservation-vs-preservation> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2023].

Nps.gov. (2019). *Nps.gov. (2019). Conservation, Preservation, and the National Park Service - Teachers (U.S. National Park Service)*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/conservation-preservation-and-the-national-park-service.htm> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2023].

Nps.gov. (2021). *Roosevelt, Muir, and the Grace of Place - Yosemite National Park (U.S. National Park Service)*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/roosevelt-muir-and-the-grace-of-place.htm> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2023].

Smith, A. (2018). *What's the Difference Between 'Conservation' and 'Preservation'?* [online] Piedmont Environmental Alliance. Available at:

<https://www.peanc.org/whats-difference-between-conservation-and-preservation> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2023].