The Campaign Against Echo Park Dam and Collective Action Frame Theory: A Historical Analysis

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Grounded in the online interactivity, source credibility, and knowledge gap theories, this experiment assessed people's beliefs in health myths and the extent to which different types of health-related Web sites (blogs versus news sites versus health organization sites) can change their erroneous belief system. The findings show that health myths are still prevalent in people's belief system and that a knowledge gap exists between certain demographic groups. Men and African Americans are more likely to believe in health myths. News and health organization sites have higher potentials of changing people's belief in health myths, and they are perceived as both more credible and interesting compared to blogs, whose higher interactivity did not contribute to health belief change. The findings suggest that interactivity, at least by itself, does not guarantee effective communication.

It is said that if you speak on one side of Echo Canyon at the confluence of the Green and Yampa Rivers in Western Colorado your voice can be heard echoing perfectly on the opposite bank. Voices of the past still linger along this river – etched into the walls in petroglyphs just off the banks and in the voices of campers and river enthusiasts that still reverberate across the river in Echo Canyon. Farther south, after the Green River merges with the Colorado in southeastern Utah, the echoes come from below hundreds of feet of water. For centuries Glen Canyon was carved by the wild flow of the Colorado, creating miles of canyons, breathtaking arches and natural crossing points for humans migrating and exploring the landscape. Cave drawings and family dwellings now lie under the waters of Glen Canyon Reservoir. The etchings in stone made by members of the Powell expedition down the river are now covered by the "lake" that bears its leader's name.

Rivers of Americans cut a wide path across the continent, settling in Western states, establishing urban and suburban oases in vast deserts. This human swell created new areas of habitation that led to new needs for water, and rivers were diverted from the ancient pathways that had carved vast canyons into the landscape to run in more convenient patterns. Dams were erected in an effort to satisfy the exploding needs of power and irrigation. New directions were created and old landmarks were destroyed. Modern man, in the form of engineers, created rivers and lakes with the construction of a dam, and erased hundreds and thousands of years of human history.

Dams have been a controversial piece of land management for decades. Environmental groups have long argued that the drastic impact dams have on the landscape and environment far outweighs any power or irrigation benefit they may create. Conservationists and nature enthusiasts mourn the loss of dramatic landscapes and natural amusement parks. When the demand for water in the West reached a pitch that could

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not be ignored, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of the Interior hatched a plan to harness the Colorado River through a series of dams stretching from northern Colorado down to Arizona. The plan, known as the Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP), was introduced in Congress in 1953 and included proposed dams in Echo Park and Split Mountain—both pieces of Dinosaur National Monument—and Glen Canyon near the Utah-Arizona border (Stegner, 1955). For conservation groups the idea of a dam inside a national monument brought back difficult memories of the losing battle over the Hetch Hetchy Dam in Yosemite National Park. Conservation groups had fought unsuccessfully to save Hetch Hetchy Valley and saw the CRSP, and Echo Park and Split Mountain Dams specifically, as another move to sidestep the National Park Service. It was a battle for the soul of the national parks: If national parks were not free from development and dam building, what land was (Farmer, 1999, p. 138)?

To wage the battle against the Echo Park and Split Mountain Dams conservation groups engaged in a vigorous campaign that involved political pressure and calling on the public to act. As scholar Richard Nash noted, "Friends of the wilderness realized that their only hope lay in carrying their case before Congress and the public" (Nash, 2001). Many groups concerned with wilderness issues joined together to fight the CRSP. Led by the Sierra Club and its executive director, David Brower, thirty-one organizations (including the Audubon Society, the Wilderness Federation, and the Izaak Walton League, among others) formed several groups with the most active being the Council of Conservationists (CoC)[1] and waged a public campaign to stop the dams in Dinosaur (Harvey, 1994, p. 130).

The groups who made up the CoC approached their members with the Echo Park Dam issue mainly through their individual publications. In the days before the internet and twitter organizations communicated to their publics largely through publications sent out to members. This project analyzes the twenty issues of *The Living Wilderness* and thirty issues of *Audubon Magazine* published between 1952 to 1956—the years including the lead up to, introduction of the CRSP in Congress, debate over the project and its eventual passage—for commentary on Echo Park and Glen Canyon and their proposed dams. As members of the CoC, the Audubon Society and the Wilderness Society would be trusted sources of information on the topic of the CRSP, information that would likely appear in their official publications.

The Audubon Society began publishing a bimonthly publication in 1899. Measuring 8"x11", averaging 45 pages per issue, and laced with advertisements for items such as binoculars and bird feeders, *Audubon Magazine* has a different look than other conservation publications that were provided as a part of membership. Articles in Audubon Magazine are written by paid authors and contributors and were largely dedicated to birds (how to check binocular settings, where to find certain rare bird types, and more).

Published by The Wilderness Society, *The Living Wilderness* was a quarterly magazine designed to "bring wilderness needs to the attention of those concerned with public-land policies… We mobilize support for wilderness preservation and tell our members, other organizations, and the public about proposals that threaten this preservation…"[2] With

1. While several scholars have written on Echo Park Dam and the groups who fought against it including Neel (1980), Nash (1973), and Harvey (1994), there appears to be some confusion surrounding the coalitions formed. This paper focuses on the Council of Conservationists as its importance seems to be universally accepted. The CoC also appears most prominently in the publications analyzed.
2. This quote appeared on the back cover of each issue of The Living Wilderness.

an 8x11 format and a back page dedicated to the Wilderness Society, its bylaws and the purpose of the publication, this magazine was free to paid members of The Wilderness Society. The content was more general outdoor adventure with articles on various types of outdoor activities, from visiting nature parks to the eastern mountains in springtime to learning to appreciate the desert landscape.

This analysis draws on previous work on the Echo Park Dam controversy, including Neel's historical analysis of Utah's local reaction to the dam, Harvey's extensive work on the controversy as the birthplace of the national environmental movement, and Nash's seminal work on the American idea of wilderness and the manner in which conservation is included into policy (see Harvey, 1994; Nash, 2001; and Neel, 1980). Each of these works has utilized historical artifacts (including local and national newspapers and the Congressional record) in an attempt to more fully understand Echo Park's place in conservation history. This project will begin the process of examining the coalition that formed around the controversy and its public campaign. Specifically, this project focuses on the ways two of the organizations that comprised the conservation movement used their magazines to address the issue with their respective communities. By analyzing the messages appearing in each groups independent publications for similar themes, this project helps to identify whether or not collective action frames were utilized, and if so, how and to what extent.

Theory and Method

This study uses narrative analysis and collective action frame theory as explained by Benford and Snow (Snow & Benford, 1988). While a full explanation of the history and development of the collective action frame theory is beyond the scope of this paper,[3] a brief description is necessary. The collective action frame theory draws on research into social movements and how they mobilize their supporters. According to Benford and Snow, social movements utilize three main frames in public communication: the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames. The diagnostic frame identifies a problem in society and focuses on blame or responsibility for the problem. This frame can be difficult for larger movements, because the source of a problem is not always clear and diverse groups can focus on widely different sources. Prognostic framing involves an attempt to "not only suggest solutions to the problem but also to identify strategies, tactics, and targets" (p. 201). There is a strong relationship between the diagnostic and the prognostic frames, since once a diagnosis is agreed upon a solution is often clear.

Finally, the motivational frame is found in a group's attempt to rally members to a cause, enough so to have them engage in some sort of action such as donating money, contacting a government official or attending a rally. This frame depends on the effective achievement of the first two frames – once a cause and solution have been identified, organizations can call members to action. The motivational frame is vital to a social movement as "participation is thus contingent upon the development of motivational frames that function as prods to action" (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 202). This study examines the publications of the Audubon Society and the Wilderness Society, to determine whether or not these frames were present

The research process for this project began with a thorough reading of the 20 issues

3. The development of this theory and some of its uses can be found in Snow, D.A. & Benford, R.D. (1988); Capek, S.M. (1993); Benford and Hunt (1992); Hunt and Benford (1994); Gamson (1995); Benford (1997); Benford and Snow (2000); and Bostrom (2004).

of *The Living Wilderness* and 30 issues of *Audubon Magazine* for any reference to Echo Park, Dinosaur National Monument, Glen Canyon or the Colorado River Storage Project. Any article or item mentioning these terms was included in the sample and received a full analysis for collective action frames. A total of 35 articles were included in the final sample, including two large cover stories and several multi-page articles.

Findings

The coverage of the controversy surrounding Echo Park dam and the Upper Colorado River Project (UCRP) in the conservationist magazines was certainly not evenly distributed. As the official publication of the Audubon Society, *Audubon Magazine* billed itself as "devoted to the conservation of wildlife, plants, soil, and water" (*Audubon Magazine,* inside cover volumes 56-57). Of the thirty publications issued from 1952 to 1956, four issues contained information on the Echo Park Dam controversy, with the issues yielding a total of six articles out of roughly 450 articles. While this may seem small, it is important to remember that *Audubon* was not solely dedicated to wilderness or environmental issues, but spent much of its time addressing specific bird-watching activities.

Of the two publications available for this study, the most prolific in writing on the Echo Park Dam controversy was *The Living Wilderness*. Published by the Wilderness Society, this quarterly magazine was devoted to presenting wilderness issues including "public-land policies" and took pride in its active involvement in public action on conservation (*The Living Wilderness, 59*, back cover). Of the twenty issues that fall within the established time period of this study, fifteen contained articles related to Echo Park or Dinosaur National Monument. Of these issues, twenty-nine items appeared in relation to the issue of Echo Park and Dinosaur.[4] Items ranged in size from a two-paragraph note relating the progress of a bill through the legislative process to three issues dedicated largely to the dam controversy (*The Living Wilderness,* numbers 47, 50 and 55). Five issues referenced Echo Park or Dinosaur on the cover (*The Living Wilderness,* numbers 46, 47, 50, 55, 57) and of these, three featured full cover photographs of the monument (*The Living Wilderness*, numbers 47, 50 and 55). Clearly the fight over Echo Park Dam was an important issue for The Wilderness Society to have devoted so much valuable print space to its every twist and turn. The attention paid to the Echo Park dam proposal in *The Living Wilderness* continued after the issue was resolved and was held up as an example of how effective conservation groups could be when they participated in a strategic communication effort.

Analysis of issues of *Audubon Magazine* and *The Living Wilderness* from 1952 to 1956 revealed several themes and strategies at play by the conservationists. First, conservationists utilized the diagnostic frame by arguing the case against the Echo Park Dam as a failure of the government to fulfill its duty to protect lands set aside as national parks and monuments. The conservation groups made a conscious choice not to fight the entire CRSP. They believed it was unbeatable and chose to fight the two proposed dams that would be built in protected lands. The main thrust of the argument to protect Dinosaur National Monument lay in its designation as a National Monument – and if that did not warrant protection, what did (*The Living Wilderness*, 55, p. 28)? In an

4. There is reference to an article appearing in the Autumn, 1950 issue of The Living Wilderness. This issue did not fall into the timeframe for this study for two reasons: first, it appeared prior to introduction of the CRSP bill in 1952; and second, the Sierra Club Bulletin (the organization most active in the Echo Park controversy) index showed no items appearing prior to 1952, and only two items appearing in 1952.

attempt to seem less extreme, conservation groups emphasized that their objection was not with dams *per se* but with the placement of these dams inside protected lands. They saw it as a battle for the ages. As part of the diagnostic frame, organizations expressed strong concern for protecting these national lands—often using a metaphor of war or battle—by claiming the parks system was under attack.

Next, groups engaged in prognostic framing by first challenging the technical data presented by representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of the Interior. CoC representatives claimed that faulty data presented a false sense of necessity surrounding the Echo Park and Split Canyon Dams. The second piece of the prognostic frame can be found in the solution presented by the conservation groups. Drawing on the technical data and their original objection to the project, groups proposed alternate sites for the dams, including Glen Canyon.

Finally, the motivational frame was utilized in full by conservation groups. They engaged in bold calls to their members and readers to contact their representatives. They encouraged people to write letters, send telegrams and ask friends to write on behalf of the threatened national monument. Finally, the conservationists took great pride in the defeat of the proposed Echo Park and Split Canyon Dams. They claimed this campaign was groundbreaking and predicted it would be forever remembered as the birth of a new movement that saw the American public join with outdoors adventurers to support the cause of conservation.

Diagnostic Frame. When the Echo Park Dam issue first appeared in *Audubon*, it made quite a splash – appearing on page 13 with a copy of an open letter from Audubon Society President John H. Baker to President Eisenhower. The letter, dated December 29, 1953, described the National Parks and Monuments as benefiting the American people "spiritually, esthetically [*sic*], physically and recreationally" (Baker, 1954). This defense of the National Park System would reappear in *Audubon* and *The Living Wilderness* both, and would constitute the largest part of the narrative strategy used by these two conservation groups.

When drawing on the value of national parks as sacrosanct, conservationists made claims that "it is clear that the real issue is the integrity of the National Park System" (*Audubon Magazine,* 57(1), p. 38). This is also of note in that *Audubon* is quoting from *The Living Wilderness* in an attempt to convince its readers of the issue's importance. The proposal to build a dam in a national park was seen by conservation groups as the tip of a slippery slope. Many articles on the national park issue argued that if Echo Park was sacrificed for a dam, there would be no stopping future projects. Concern was evident in statements such as "the bars are down for the invasion of any national park or monument so long as there is a likely water storage or power site within its confines," and the claim that the project was "needless ruination of a stretch of canyon country" (Nature in the News. *Audubon Magazine,* 56(1) (1954), p. 37, quoting from the *New York Times, December 22, 1953*). In one example, conservation forces argued that if dams are constructed inside national parks, "we also will hear Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and the other great Republican conservationists of a half-century ago turning in their graves." By calling on easily recognizable Republican icons it appears that conservationists were attempting to lend legitimacy to the national park argument and was a clear way to encourage support from individuals who would want to protect the legacies left by these trailblazing nature enthusiasts.

A second way conservationists defended Echo Park was to point out the historical

value of the site, which rendered it more than just a pretty place the government should protect, but also a site of the living record of humans and reptiles. The historical value was in the rock art, petroglyphs, pictographs and ancient dwellings found throughout Echo Park and Split Canyon. There should be a way to construct a dam at a site that would avoid "destroying forever one of the unique remnants of primeval America" (Nature in the News, 1954, p. 37). Like *Audubon, The Living Wilderness* also called attention to the historical value of Echo Park and Dinosaur National Monument. In an article titled "Nature's Climax at Dinosaur," readers were given a detailed description of the Monument and its features (Hyde, 1952). Included in the details about running thrilling river rapids and camping in scenic canyons, Split Mountain is described as "one of the world's richest deposits of Dinosaur fossils. Ironically, there are a few fossilized bones to see at the old quarry. Those taken out were sent to museums in various parts of the country. But evidences in the sandstone ledge indicate that there are many more fossils to be excavated" (p. 8). Beyond the ancient bones, other artifacts are found by venturing "deep into Echo Park, by the river and along the canyon walls, searching out Indian Pictographs of mountain sheep and figures with spears" (p. 9). Readers are then told the proposed dam would mean that "most, if not all, of dinosaur's outstanding geologic displays would be flooded" (p. 14). Framing Dinosaur as an irreplaceable treasure was an important part of conservationists' effort to frame the dam projects as too problematic for completion.

The most common strategy in relation to the national park narrative, though, was to use the metaphor of war or battle to protect these places. Opponents of the dam would use terms such as "invasion" (Hyde, 1952) and "the real showdown will come on the floor of the House" (Baker, 1954). Readers of *Wilderness* who had been called to "battle" for the national parks were whipped into a frenzy with such rhetoric as "America must not allow one of its outstanding treasures to be destroyed" (News Items of Special Interest, 1953, p. 30) and claims that the two dams in Dinosaur would "constitute the first invasion of the national park system" (News Items of Interest, 1954, p. 37). A creative use of the war metaphor was found in *Conservation News* and reported in *Wilderness*:

> *A powerful drive for authorization of the Upper Colorado Storage Project, including Echo Park dam in the heart of Dinosaur National Monument, was blunted and stalled. Public opposition, spearheaded by a phalanx of national conservation organizations, centered its fire on the proposed invasion of the National Park System (News Items of Interest – Congress and Conservation, 1954, p. 26).*

The language of "invasion," "spearheaded by a phalanx," and "centered its fire" present readers with a perceived threat and a rush to address it.

Using this war metaphor to convey a sense of urgency, *Audubon Magazine* claimed that defeating the Echo Park Dam proposal "constitutes an important victory for conservationists, and will doubtless be construed as a warning to those who are striving to encroach upon the federal lands in one way or another" (The President reports to you, 1954). This message, written as part of the president's report in the magazine, expresses a clear anticipation that there will be future fights over protected lands.

Prognostic Frame. The debate over the proposed Echo Park and Split Canyon Dams did not center just on the national park issue, but also on technical disagreements between government officials and environmental activists. The prognostic frame appeared

as members of the Council of Conservationists made points about technical errors and proposed alternatives to the Echo Park site. In one of the most commonly told anecdotes from the controversy, when David Brower, executive director of the Sierra Club of San Francisco, testified before Congress he, "demonstrated errors in computation which exposed the Bureau of Reclamation's arguments on evaporation losses" (News Items of Interest, 1954, p. 32). Brower's compelling presentation included visual aids that demonstrated the gains that would be made if only the dams were not built inside Dinosaur but in Glen Canyon instead.

While several conservation leaders had pointed out technical errors in the Echo Park Dam project, General Ulysses S. Grant III testified as an expert on civil engineering and planning. He claimed that "alternative dam sites outside of Dinosaur are both available and feasible" (Ibid, p. 31). The argument was made that Echo Park was not the most efficient site for water storage, but rather alternative sites at "Flaming Gorge, Cross Mountain, Whitewater, and Glen Canyon" would cost less, store more water initially and lose less water to evaporation (Ibid, p. 31). In their zeal to save Echo Park, conservationists had laid Glen Canyon out on a picnic blanket and left it for the taking.

As reported in the *Congressional Record*, "conservation forces withdrew their opposition and remained neutral. They were sorry to see Glen Canyon Dam authorized, because this will ruin one of the finest and most accessible wilderness sections of the Colorado River, but it was not in a national park or monument so they did not oppose it" (News Items of Interest, 1956, p. 36). In fact, the one monument that was set apart in Glen Canyon, Rainbow Bridge, was taken into account in the planning for the reservoir. But once accommodations were made to ensure the bridge would not be submerged or damage conservation leaders felt they had to concede the canyon (*The Living Wilderness*, 1952). Environmental activists had framed their official opposition as a "contest between a unit of the National Park System and its would be destroyers" and it had worked (Litton, 1953, p. 28). The public had mobilized to protect the Monument, and the Bureau of Reclamation and Department of the Interior had backed down. But in their retreat, the engineers of Reclamation accepted the compromise first identified by conservationists: Glen Canyon.

Motivation Frame. The ability to motivate the public is central to any social movement and the Council of Conservationists worked to drum up public action in several ways. The January 1954 issue of *Audubon* included a reproduction of the telegram sent from Mr. Baker to the White House. At the bottom of the page readers found the following: "Editors' Note: The issue over construction of Echo Park Dam in the Dinosaur National Monument is now before Congress. Persons who wish to express their views on this subject may write to their Senators and Representatives in Washington" (Baker, 1953). This strategy of public involvement would appear once again in *Audubon* when it advised, "If at the time you read this, you have not learned from the papers or otherwise of final action by the Congress, and you have not already communicated with your own Senators and Congressmen, we urge you to express your views to them" (Baker, 1954, p. 118-119). It is interesting that no instruction is given as to how one might go about contacting a government official. Readers who did not know the name of their congressional representatives or who lacked a mailing address to send the letter to were given no further information in *Audubon*.

Following the same theme, a call to action can be seen in *The Living Wilderness*. Quoting Fred M. Packard of the National Parks Association, one article read:

> *Mr. Packard urges that views be expressed at once to the Honorable A.L. Miller, Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington 25, D.C., to Senator Hugh Butler, Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. Senate, and to Congressman Leroy Johnson, U.S. House of Representatives. Writers of letters should send copies to their own Representatives in Congress, Mr. Packard suggests, and to the Secretary of the Interior (News Items, 1953, p. 30).*

In autumn 1953, with a vote in the Senate rapidly approaching, there would be no calm urging; rather, a desperate plea would appear in place of a photograph. Below an article titled "Children Run Dinosaur Rapids" (Litton, 1953, p. 28) readers would see a handwritten note that began with "Sorry! Martin Litton's photo has been taken out of this space to make room for this emergency note."[5] The note (as seen in Figure 1) from Howard Zahniser, the president of the Wilderness Society, reported on the Secretary of the Interior's recommendation for the Echo Park Dam. It continued:

> *This proposed invasion of the National Park System must be opposed promptly and vigorously! Write President Eisenhower – or better still, wire him – and urge him not to approve this program until the Echo Park Dam has been taken out. …. And get others to write also – especially your local organizations! (The Living Wilderness, 1953, p. 29. Original emphasis).*

This handwritten note (Figure 1) from the president and editor was apparently added to the magazine layout in such a hurry that there was not even time to remove the caption for the missing photo; it appeared beneath the note.

The cover of the Winter 1953-54 issue of *Wilderness* featured a headline that read "Defense of This Scenic Wild Canyon Depends on Congress!" and would be followed with:

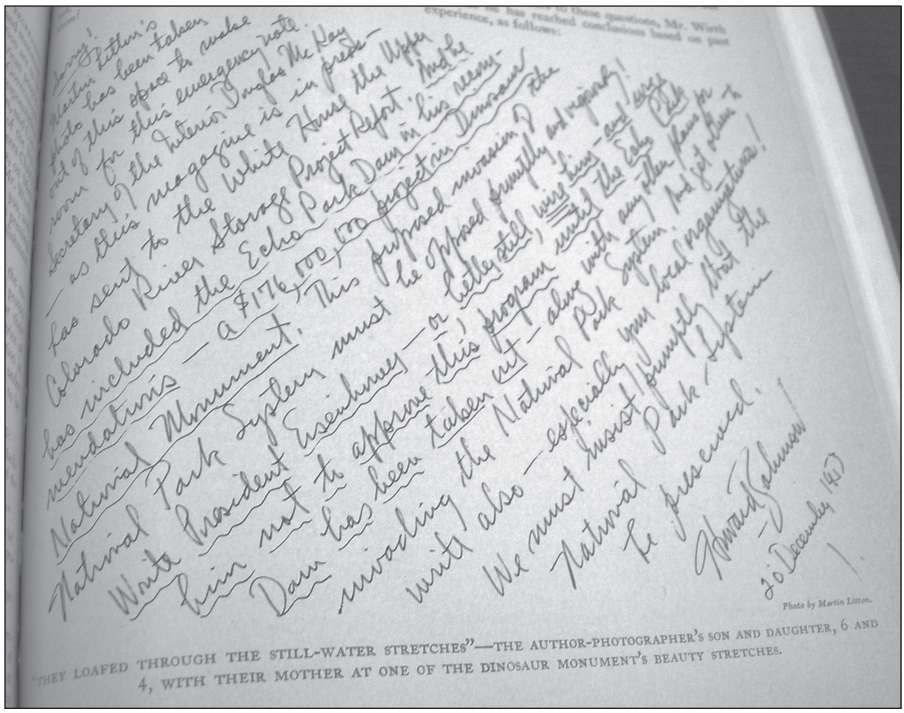
> *"CONSERVATION LEADERS IMMEDIATELY URGED* [SIC] *ALL WHO ARE CONCERNED TO* WRITE AGAIN *TO THEIR SENATORS AND TO THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AND URGE THE DEFEAT OF THE ECHO PARK DAM PROPOSAL" (Original emphasis).*

As the fight progressed, readers of *Audubon* and *The Living Wilderness* were given encouragement that their efforts were making a difference. Statements from prominent leaders included this one from Richard M. Leonard, president of the Sierra Club:

> *Conservationists throughout the nation are organized as never before to defend the National Park System. They will continue to oppose invasion*

5. Martin Litton was a prominent writer for the Los Angeles Times and a vocal opponent of the Echo Park Dam proposal. Mr. Litton was the author and the photographer of this article which contained large sections of text from an Los Angeles Times article appearing under the same title. The article chronicled the whitewater rafting trip down the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument. The trip was arranged by the Sierra Club of California and included Mr. Litton's children ages four and seven and an adventurer aged 77. The goal of the expedition was to dispel the misconception that the rivers running through Dinosaur were impossible to enjoy, except as sources of energy by damming.

FIGURE 1



Handwritten letter from Howard Zahniser. This letter, urging readers to contact President Eisenhower, was inserted in place of a photograph in an article about Echo Park Dam. This letter appeared on page 29 of issue 46 of The Living Wilderness.

> *of Dinosaur National Monument with all their power. The recent contest has demonstrated that they are not without power to make themselves heard and respected (News Items of Interest – Congress and Conservation, 1954, p. 26).*

Perhaps even more importantly, the magazine reprinted a United Press teletype report on the likely failure of the dam proposal that included a statement from the Speaker of the House Ray Martin (R-MA) saying, "Members of Congress have received hundreds of protests against the proposed Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument" (ibid, p. 27). This surely gave supporters some satisfaction to know that others were indeed writing.

The controversy reached an end in the winter of 1956. Conservationists had called on the public and the public apparently had responded in rare form. No one, including the leaders of environmental groups, had envisioned the extent of the public outcry. For years, preservationists had been labeled as radical and ineffective. In an article addressing the plight of conservationists, Dana Abell of the Sierra Club said, "The idea that wilderness supporters are at the most a straggling minority is fairly firmly entrenched in the minds of a good many governmental administrators these days, as it is with most of the wilderness lovers themselves" (Abell, 1955, p. 4). The public activity on behalf of Dinosaur Monument, it seems, had surprised not only congressional experts, but

conservationists as well (Russell, 1989, p. 66). According to John P. Saylor, a Republican serving Pennsylvania in the U.S. House of Representatives:

> *Few at first were the voices that I heard in support of this determination, but when the American people understood the issues at stake in the Echo Park controversy, I began to receive letters of encouragement from citizens in all parts of our land.*

Near the close of the 83d Congress the Speaker of the House told reporters that Congressmen had received more protests against the Echo Park dam than letters on any other subject (*The Living Wilderness*, 1957, p. 1).

According to an experienced congressman, conservation-minded Americans had made their voices heard.

A claim that member groups of the Council of Conservationists were responsible for mobilizing the public would be expected from the actual members and their supporters, but Congressman and conservation groups such as the Audubon Society and the Wilderness Society were not the only sources for this information. *The Living Wilderness* made it a habit to reprint AP and UP teletypes reporting on the progress of the CRSP bill through the legislative process. The AP reported that the House Speaker "believed there is little chance that the project bill could be passed even if brought to aovte [sic], largely because of opposition to the proposed Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument in northwestern Colorado" (News Items of Interest – Congress and Conservation, 1954, p. 26). Then again, *Wilderness* reprinted a UP report that the Echo Park Dam would be removed from the bill because the Secretary of the Interior, "after meeting with officials of the Council of Conservationists States" deemed it impossible to pass with the dam included (News Items of Interest, 1956, p. 29). In an attempt to lend legitimacy to their claims of effectiveness, the Wilderness Society gave its readers an unfiltered look at the reports of the impact the Council had had on the process.[1]

As the campaign had advanced, the Council of Conservationists decided to engage in public pressure of elected officials. Recognizing that letters to D.C. offices were powerful, but an artfully worded public statement could make an even stronger impact, the Council published an open letter to the supporters of the Upper Colorado River Project in the October 31, 1955, *Denver Post* and then reprinted the letter in *The Living Wilderness*. The letter, among other things, warned that:

> *Any Congressman voting for a huge reclamation project of any sort will have to face his own constituents with an explanation as to why he diverted millions of their tax dollars into a controversial project far away, with many projects at home needing – and not getting – attention. A Congressman will have to explain – if an effort is made to resurrect the present Upper Colorado Project – the exorbitant irrigation costs which will bring into production more farm land, at a time when farmers are already suffering acutely from an over-abundance of crops. You men are wise in the way of politics. You know what you are up against in attempting to promote any project, (even a sound one) under the present circumstances, in an election year (News Items of Interest, 1956, p. 24).*

While the letter did include the major point of protecting the national park system, the conservationists argued that they were in a stronger position because it was an elec-

tion year. They were engaging in a classic political strategy. And it worked.

A second strategy the groups used was to utilize a classic PR strategy, using multiple media to communicate with representatives. The Sierra Club arranged for a large group, including children, to run the rapids of the Green River – and they made sure to have it covered by the *Los Angeles Times* (Litton, 1953, p. 26). They produced a full-color book titled *"This is Dinosaur"* and a movie by the same name and distributed copies to the White House and each member of Congress. The film featured an interpretation that predicted what the canyons would look like if the dam were built: "It shows the impact of the not-gentle hand of man, should it be allowed to ravage this pristine beauty" (Packard, 1954, p. 16). Each of these public relations moves was reviewed in *Wilderness* and readers were encouraged to purchase personal copies and share them with friends and acquaintances.

From the campaign to save Dinosaur the conservationists gained experience and were eager to share with supporters their plans for the future. They had successfully used major media outlets and some unorthodox mediums such as films and targeted books to influence the opinions of elected representatives, but perhaps the most promising outcome of the campaign was the sense of cooperation between conservation groups themselves.

Readers of *The Living Wilderness* were told that the Dinosaur campaign had helped create a more cohesive community among conservation groups. Where there had once been strife and conflict, now there was cooperation (News Items of Interest, 1956, p. 26). It had engaged in a campaign under the auspices of a confederation of groups united in purpose, not a line of sniping groups waiting to one-up each other. *The Living Wilderness* extolled that, "The Council's executive committee also included four conservation leaders, serving in this capacity as individuals, rather than as representatives of organizations, but bringing to the Council the benefits of their acquaintance with the issues involved" (*ibid*). It was predicted that this new environment of cooperation would lead to successful campaigns in the future:

> *This cooperation coalesced in an effective public strategy that leaders vowed to continue in future battles: The great reservoir of strength of the conservation movement lies in the general public. If a single important lesson is to be drawn from the events of the 84th Congress, a lesson that can be applied in the future, this is it. The American people realize their dependence on natural resources (Callison, 1956, p. 30).*

It would appear that the conservation movement had found a winning combination for future campaigns. They made it clear that the strategy that had created the legitimacy and public support they had earned during the Echo Park controversy was going to be used again. Charles Callison of the National Wildlife Federation and the National Resources Council of America noted in *The Living Wilderness* that, "The rule, then, if you want to win a conservative victory, is *take the issue to the public"* (1956, p. 30. Original emphasis). The collective action frame, it appears, had worked for the conservation movement; whether they knew they were using it or not.

Conclusion

The controversy that surrounded the proposed Echo Park Dam rallied conservation groups from across the country, from California to New York. This study focused on two

of the groups that had joined the Council of Conservationists. The Audubon Society and Wilderness Society had been part of a campaign that had brought together interest groups in an unprecedented way to identify the problem, propose a solution and mobilize the public. The campaign to stop the dam has been identified as a textbook example for environmental public campaigns. But what can scholars interested in the history of media and communication learn from it?

First, when studying a social movement it is valuable to research the various components of the movement, not just the aggregate body. One could look to the Council of Conservationists for an idea of how the group waged a public campaign against the dam, but important pieces would be missing. For example, we would not know that there were varying degrees of involvement in the action as seen with the level of coverage in *Audubon* compared to that in *The Living Wilderness*. Also, there would be no indication of the member groups' tendency to quote each other and involve guest sources in their own publications. This level of cooperation would be hidden in an examination of the publications from the umbrella organization.

This study suggests that there is strong reason to believe the collective action frame theory developed in the 1980s can be seen in the 1950s conservation movement against the dams in Dinosaur. Groups engaged in an effort to diagnose the problem by identifying the cause. They followed this initial diagnosis with a strategic use of a war or battle metaphor to describe the situation. Next, conservationists identified a possible solution and continued to back this solution throughout the debate. By providing an alternative, conservationists were able to present themselves as reasonable and interested in a solution, not just obstruction. And finally, the motivational frame was utilized with a call to public action—urging individuals to contact government leaders and representatives and to talk to their friends and associates—and public communication demanding action from legislators as well.

While this study has uncovered several interesting points, there is still much to be done. Twenty-nine other organizations remain that claimed membership in the Council of Conservationists. Future research should include a survey of the publications from these groups as well. The survey should analyze whether the collective action frame theory was at play in these publications. Also, the Council of Conservationists had a publication for members during this time. A future research project could compare the frames appearing in membership publications with those in the CoC's publication. Do the frames present matching arguments? Do the positions in the membership publications align with the CoC publication?

This study contributes to past work on the Echo Park controversy and social movements' use of media. Its aim was to identify the tactics used in a successful environmental movement and to analyze the frames as compared to current academic theories.

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