"Hill People: Appalachian Culture and the American State"
Introduction to *Cultivated Country: Subsistence Farms, the New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia*

Home of Fannie Corbin, Shenandoah National Park, October 1935
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This scene of a mountain farm, which was replicated thousands of times up and down the Appalachian chain, was selected by New Deal photographer Arthur Rothstein as evocative of the mountain way of life—of its hardscrabble setting and its peripheral beauty. The family in this photograph represents the more than 150,000 farmers who eked a subsistence out of the rocky soils

of the Appalachian Mountains in the early twentieth century.[1] Transitional decades preceded this 1936 photograph, during a period when economic depression, erosion and drought, and government policies all combined to threaten the already tenuous hold of these farmers on their land. In some areas, these forces brought the mountain way of life to an end, transforming stretches of the Appalachians from a vernacular agrarian landscape to a federally managed forest landscape. *Cultivated Country* tells the story of that conversion in two areas, the northern Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, which were organized into the Shenandoah National Park, and the Green Mountains of Vermont, parts of which were set aside as the Green Mountain National Forest.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, when most Americans look at the forested lands of the Appalachian Mountains, few visual reminders remain of those households that populated the mountains a century ago, and so current visitors envision a landscape with a long and uncomplicated history. The dense forests appear untouched, save by the occasional mountain resort or ski area, and much of the region is dedicated to recreation and forestry. Celebrated as a national treasure, these mountains are a safety valve for the populous cities and suburbs of the Eastern Seaboard, and today, the Blue Ridge and Green Mountains are tourist meccas, offering rugged beauty and solitude within an easy drive of some of the nation's largest cities. The eastern mountains serve as an exemplar of how conservation policies have been implemented in the United States, and a reminder of the compromises that have been effected in order to open public access to natural areas.

During the middle decades of the twentieth century—because of a conjuncture of reformist ideology, economic conditions, and government expansion—the Appalachian landscape re-assumed a primeval aspect. Consequently, the twentieth-century history of these mountains demands a

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[1] The number of subsistence farms was placed at 150,659 according to the census report released on 1 April 1930. The source of this figure is one of the definitive studies of mountain life, published by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, *Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians,* miscellaneous publication no. 205 (Washington: USDA, 1935), 46.

deeper look beneath the sylvan façade. It is worth revisiting how, and why, the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia and Vermont became a recreational escape for American tourists and hikers. A great shift in land use in Appalachia occurred between the 1910s and the 1930s, as large swaths of the mountains were placed under federal management and farms and private forests were converted to public lands. The evolution of conservation planning in Appalachia redefined national land use planning, and the creation of national parks and forests in the East is partially a tale of losers and winners: those who had to give up their land for the larger national cause, and those who benefited from newfound access to the mountains. By the end of the century, the result of these land use changes was the reforestation of the eastern mountains.

The complexity of these mountain landscapes is matched by their history. The early twentieth century was rife with tensions between outsiders' promotion of conservation and land use reform and localism, and the regulation of land use provided a particularly acute point of conflict between local people and federal officials. During the 1920s and 1930s a local vision of Appalachia as a forested commons came into conflict with Progressive plans for expert management and land use reform, and the debate over the future of the mountain landscape reintroduced many of the issues first raised about government conservation policy in the late nineteenth century.

The dramatic realignments of the New Deal era are well known, and yet their precedents have been largely ignored. This book focuses on the antecedents of New Deal planning during the 1910s and 1920s, and the lessons that New Dealers took from them. In spite of the profound impact of the Depression and New Deal on American society, it is a principal contention of this book that the conservation programs for which the New Deal is famous are better understood as the culmination of drastic changes in land use that were already underway by the 1920s. New Deal initiatives and funding helped to restructure the American landscape, but this book is based upon

the argument that the most visionary federal conservation programs of the 1930s were solidly rooted in the research, programs, and policy debates of the 1910s and 1920s.

Cultivated Country refocuses attention on the influence of land use planning of the early twentieth century, and three principal arguments drive its structure. First, during the 1910s and 1920s, the federal government assumed a new objective—the conservation of private land through its reacquisition by the federal government. Congress' decision to return private land to the public domain represents a dramatic break with centuries of American precedent, and the 1911 Weeks Act created new national forests, thus preparing the way for a paradigm shift in federal and state policies that has reshaped the American landscape. The consequences of this change were particularly clear in Appalachia: the transformation of small, subsistence farms into federally managed forests and recreation areas had a measurable ecological impact on the natural landscape. The implementation of this policy highlights some of the earliest environmental consequences of state planning, as well as the expansion of government through a new approach to land management.

Second, New Deal planning had its roots in the conservation ideas of the Progressive Era, as many scholars have observed. However, far more important, and less acknowledged, is the precedent that the land use planners during the 1910s and 1920s had established for those New Deal conservation programs that have long been celebrated as the first of their kind. While conservationism in the early twentieth century is widely acknowledged, scholars have devoted less attention to the development of recreation areas during the 1920s, particularly in regions like Appalachia that were easily accessible to urban areas. The recreation and conservation initiatives of the 1910s and 1920s are the predecessors of the land use programs of the New Deal. Because of these early-twentieth-century land acquisition and recreation planning at both the state and federal levels, New Dealers had models of how to manage ambitious conservation projects. While local

antecedents did not ensure federal success, the history of land use planning in many areas did smooth the way for receptiveness toward many New Deal initiatives.

Third, the success of the New Deal was affected by local responses to federal initiatives, just as much as by the better-chronicled clashes between liberals and conservatives in Congress. Local reactions to federal land policy were intimately linked to the legacy of land use planning in the preceding decades, and this history had itself been conditioned by regional political culture. As plans for federal recreation and conservation areas proliferated, the people threatened with displacement to create parks responded—addressing their complaints to state officials, federal agents, the President, and the Supreme Court. While some of these protests resonated at the highest levels of power, many others went unheeded, and the impact of political pressure on both environmental management and land use planning is an important component of the history of these regions. In Appalachia, the structural differences between town and county management had a particular impact on how constituents reacted to government at all levels. Towns tended to demand greater citizen participation, while counties maintained a more hierarchical approach to government. The divergence between democratic involvement at the township and county levels had a measurable effect on public responses to federal land use planning. In sum, the tradition of government influence within mountain communities proved determinative in affecting the claim of local residents to a say in how change was implemented in their communities.

Federal land use planning and conservation policy led to fundamental changes in the approach of government to private lands, and, by extension, the rights of the American public. The transition from subsistence landscapes to federally managed public spaces reflects the intersection of Progressive-Era planners' ambitions to promote recreation and consumption with conservationists' efforts to monitor forest protection and production. By examining the negotiations over land use within the eastern forests, and their outcomes, this book demonstrates that the impact of policy

decisions altered both the American environment and those communities that shared the mountain landscape.

A Place Apart

The Appalachian Mountains were one of the first American frontiers, and they remained on the margins of national culture and economic relations into the twentieth century. The range stretches from northern Alabama into Quebec, and encompasses a diversity of mountain landscapes. The Northern and Southern Appalachians are rarely considered together, and yet the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia in central Appalachia, and the Green Mountains of Vermont, in the region's northern reaches, share a number of characteristics. Like most of the range, they boast a moderately rugged terrain, have historically been covered in forest and are ideally suited to growing trees, they have proved viable for small-scale farming and husbandry, and they are located in close proximity to important agricultural areas. In the early twentieth century the mountains of each state remained largely detached from the expanding regional markets, and yet regional road networks and rail lines bisected their ranges. In sum, these were geographically and economically similar areas that contained a diversity of households—much like the rest of rural America in the early decades of the twentieth century. Each was, however, easily caricatured by visitors and the press, and came to represent in the public imagination a particular, bygone, and unsustainable way of life. These caricatures developed into a critical component of the rhetoric of poverty and backwardness that eventually facilitated the transformation of private property into federal lands.

In Virginia and Vermont, and throughout Appalachia, local people recognized that the mountains were a dynamic landscape—where shifting resource uses and malleable boundaries meant that the local economy was constantly adapting to environmental conditions. The local dynamics within these communities belie the distortions often perpetrated by outsiders, and by revisiting the

history of local communities this book reinterprets their environmental impact on the mountain landscape, as well as the disjunction between local uses and the perceptions of visitors to the region. The mountain environment has always been its own force, not least during the development of plans for Appalachian land reform. A critical reevaluation of local ecology and land use practices allows for a more complex understanding of both the environmental and economic challenges that faced residents and policymakers, as well as the motivations that led to the push for government oversight of local land policy. The policy developments of the 1920s and 1930s had an impact that reached far beyond the nation-state, however, and the environmental impacts of the new purview of government reshaped the Appalachian landscape. This book builds upon the foundation of a "hidden history" of American conservation, rooted in the opposition of local people to the institutionalization of an externally-conceived system of land use and land management.[2]

Appalachia is more diverse than simply the coal fields of West Virginia or the rugged White Mountains of New Hampshire. Consequently, this study moves beyond the industrial and recreational enclaves of the mountains and into the agricultural countryside that sustained the region's population in the centuries before industrialization. While some sections of Appalachia had been ravaged by natural resource extraction during the late nineteenth century, others, including northwestern Virginia and Vermont, remained largely untouched by industrial forces. Even in the early twentieth century, the majority of the Appalachian region remained in small farms, and the mountains of the northern Blue Ridge of Virginia and the Green Mountains of Vermont remained primarily devoted to agriculture. These areas were not part of an extraction-dependent economy in which outside landowners exercised a dominant influence on land use decisions and, thus did not

[2] Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

fulfill the preconditions for a colonial economy like those described by many Appalachian scholars.[3] The most influential surveys of Appalachian development document a transition toward capitalism dependent on outside capital during the early twentieth century, with an accompanying waning in self-sufficiency, this evolution did not occur equally throughout the region.[4] In fact, land use in the 1920s in Virginia and Vermont looked similar to that in the 1880s, with all of the attendant advantages and disadvantages.

Appalachia has long been held up as a symbol of independence, challenge, and rugged survival. The region was re-discovered by folklorists and vacationers as a repository of folk culture in the late nineteenth century, and thereafter it was reinvented as a landscape of leisure, through a combination of private ventures and, later, with state and federal sponsorship. To a new class of tourists, the temperate Appalachian range appeared an ideal site for the expansion of national recreation lands. The twentieth century expansion of regional road networks finally domesticated these mountains; after having been bypassed by roads and railroads for over a century, they were increasingly tamed by the automobile and turned into a vacationer's retreat. Initially, the moderate mountain summers lured urban elites into their cool hollows and coves, and by the early 1920s the federal government started to take the initiative to expand access into mountain areas for all Americans. The democratization of recreation extended quickly into the Appalachian Mountains, which offered accessible, low-cost vacations for people from the eastern cities. The population

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[3] See, for example, Paul Salstrom, *Appalachia's Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region's Economic History, 1730-1940* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1982); Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and more recently Ken Fones-Wolf, *Glass Houses: Industry, Labor, and Political Economy in Appalachia, 1890s-1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

[4] The literature on the market revolution is significant for this project, as many of the cycles that nineteenth century studies identify are visible in the developing economies of Appalachia during the twentieth century. Critical among these is Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway's edited volume *The Market Revolution in America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

explosion in eastern cities led federal policymakers to search out safety valves that might distribute social pressures during the hot and volatile summer months.

Expanding the national domain into the East required that the United States government reframe its approach to property and land management, and federal agencies undertook a new role as land purchasers and conservationists. These new federal initiatives were spearheaded by a cohort of professionals who sought to put order into the American system, harkening a period of intensive experimentation in agriculture, conservation, and reform. Policymakers envisioned the most productive distribution of resources and energies for the entire nation, and during the early twentieth century researchers expert in agricultural economics, rural sociology, geography, and forestry were deployed to bolster nascent conservation policies.

Appalachia became a laboratory for federal planners during the 1910s and 1920s, as experts deployed an innovative planning apparatus, ideas about social uplift, and focus on conservation and preservation. The first stage of federal intervention in the region began in the forests, where the perennial potential for over harvesting and destruction meant that these areas increasingly attracted the attention of conservationists and land use planners. Because there was no formal regulation of forestry on private lands, and no avenue for federal forestry experts to offer assistance to private landowners, the first step toward forest protection occurred with the passage of the 1911 Weeks Act enabling the creation of new eastern national forests. Federal decisions to begin reacquiring private land and regulating land use were rooted in Progressive Era ideas about efficiency, best use, and the value of public improvements. With the expanding federal focus on regulation and management, and the development of a new class of experts who could direct federal efforts, the groundwork was laid for the establishment of a new land use program in the eastern mountains.

As federal officials took additional responsibility for national affairs during the 1920s and 1930s, government began to assert an unprecedented influence on the economic and political

landscapes of the Blue Ridge and Green Mountains. Federal planners sought to stabilize mountain economies by moderating the effects of depopulation in some areas; of overpopulation in others; and addressing the economic dislocation that had come to characterize both local communities and their people. Beginning in the early 1910s, foresters spread out to assess the health of the Appalachian woodlands, while agricultural economists deployed their expertise in order to analyze the viability of mountain farms. Social reformers and local boosters joined together in the early 1920s to investigate conditions in the mountains, spurred on by what they saw as a social and economic declension that they feared would continue to spread. The efforts of these disparate groups culminated in the late 1920s when local and state governments initiated new collaborations with federal agencies in an ambitious plan to preserve wide swaths of the mountain forests. The grandiose scale of plans for the mountains caused the eruption of a series of conflicts over local and federal power, as local people and federal planners disagreed over the prioritization of public over private property, and this period of state transformation did not pass unchallenged.

The transitional decades of the early twentieth century generated a new cadre of experts working to reform American society, the expansion of a national state that embraced innovation and efficiency, and the emergence of an economically intertwined civil society that allowed for the state to enter a new phase of influence in the daily life of its citizens.[5] This confluence of events swept the Appalachian Mountains—which had long remained apart from the economic, political, and transportation infrastructures of the nation—into the orbit of national life in an unprecedented way. In the process, the tension between the locals' vision of the mountains as an open commons and the planners' ethos of conservation and reform ricocheted across the region, and the conflicts that emerged in the 1920s over local autonomy and power continues to resonate in many areas of Appalachia today.

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[5] Scott, 2, 5.

A Place in History

Many scholars have argued that federal policymaking during the New Deal years was revolutionary, and consequently most of them have overlooked the evolution of ideas, and particularly of land policy research, during the first decades of the twentieth century.[6] From 1900 until the 1920s, the federal government engaged in new forms of planning for parks, forests, and agriculture. During this same period, rural states and their land grant universities took the initiative in encouraging agricultural and natural resource conservation, thus educating a cohort of scholars who would drive the expansion of federal conservation programs in the 1920s and 1930s. The first decades of the century also witnessed the newfound willingness of states to stake a claim to federal funding for developing local industries and infrastructure, including roads, tourism, and recreation, as a means of creating new business opportunities and combating economic distress. Collectively, these initiatives changed the face of the American landscape, in part by driving the dramatic redevelopment of the Appalachian region during the 1920s and 1930s. Until recently, few scholars have offered a sustained perspective on the evolution of the numerous conservation programs that altered the American landscape during the 1920s and 1930s.[7] *Cultivated Country's* regional, on-the-ground analysis of the impacts of land use planning during these decades adds local nuance and complexity to what is often portrayed as a strictly top-down process.

New Deal conservation programs must be considered as part of the larger state transformation that occurred between the 1910s and 1930s. This was a period when the American

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[6] See, for example William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959); Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[7] See especially Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Sarah T. Phillips, *This Land, This Nation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

state assumed a series of new responsibilities, and in the process it confronted a number of challenges both from local people and from the nation's leaders. Even as this book bears witness to the realization of progressive reforms during the New Deal, this history demonstrates that the roots of reform are clearly grounded in the careers of scholars and advocates educated in the early twentieth century. Projects initiated during the 1910s and 1920s necessitated a new degree of federal-state cooperation and a novel vision of the role of the American state, a paradigm that bore fertile fruit during the 1930s. The visionary sweep of conservation projects was not fully implemented until planners received the support of a final push of funding by the New Deal agencies, but their rationale had been established years before. After 1911, with the passage of the Weeks Act to create new national forests in the East, the federal government moved to acquire private land in order to preserve the nation's resources and protect its commercial future, which signaled a new phase in the evolution of the nation-state. The regional surveys that ensued were located primarily on private land, and thus were a part of the process whereby the federal government made the nation's land and resources legible, and thus governable, which signaled a critical stage in the emergence of the modern state. This process culminated in the United States during the New Deal, with federal land and soil surveys, planning programs, welfare initiatives, and infrastructural developments.[8]

During the New Deal, the legacy of land use planning came to fruition with the programs of the Resettlement Administration (RA), a Second New Deal measure that sought to reform American land use. The comprehensive vision of land reform embodied within the Resettlement Administration illustrates the mentality of the mid-1930s and the agency's movement beyond stop-gap, temporary relief measures and into a more universal, holistic approach to reform. The classic

[8] The process of surveying and quantifying national resources is given an international scope by James Scott, in *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

studies of New Deal land policy are focused on the bureaucratic wrangling within New Deal agencies, rather than on the evolution of planning within the federal government.[9] The addition of a regional focus on these policy debates allows for the reinterpretation of the effects of land use planning on the American landscape.

These conflicts over who would control the fate of the land raised powerful concerns about the future of local autonomy and government power, and they resonated from small hollow communities all the way to the federal government. This study complicates the traditional analysis of Appalachian oppression by allowing the protests of Appalachian residents to stand alongside the vision of those federal planners who sought to improve conditions in the mountains according to the principles of best use.

During the 1910s and 1920s, federal policy shifted drastically from an agenda of land distribution to one oriented around conservation. Conservation planning during this era began to include the protection of natural resources and scenic areas on private property, which led to an unprecedented land acquisition program and the creation of new federal parks and forests on formerly private land. This study approaches the process of land conversion by examining the transformation of the Appalachian Mountains from a landscape dotted with small subsistence farms into a patchwork of federal landscapes.

As governments committed to creating a new management paradigm in parts of the mountains, the state took an increasingly active role in mediating American interactions with the nature of the region. This period witnessed the government—both within several state and federal

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[9] The major New Deal policy histories to consider land use are Sidney Baldwin, *Poverty and Politics: The Rise and Decline of the Farm Security Administration* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Paul Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976); Richard Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966); and Bernard Sternsher, *Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1964).

executive agencies and in the U. S. Congress—embracing a new role as developer and embarking on the project of converting private land into national parks and forests. Not only did this contradict three centuries of precedent, but it also required a significant revision of federal and state property law. For the first time, government exercised the right of eminent domain for the purposes of conservation and recreational development, thus re-defining the scope of takings in the public interest

During the 1920s both Virginia and Vermont, among other rural states, had begun to stake a claim to federal assistance in developing local industries, especially tourism and recreation, as a means of combating declining agricultural markets and economic uncertainty. During this period, recreation and conservation represented interlocking threads of federal land policy. While the New Deal programs of the 1930s were the most obvious example of this quest for federal assistance, abundant precedents from the 1910s and 1920s demonstrate the continuity of federal-state cooperation. In turn, these Progressive Era projects built upon a framework of federal spending for the improvement of local landscapes that began in the West with federal investments in national park infrastructure in the late nineteenth century. The rural landscapes targeted for redevelopment were intended to serve both urban and rural communities, and new parks and forests pulled additional constituencies into recreation and tourism. As the federal vision expanded to include rural places and urban people, this period witnessed repeated conflicts between federal planners and local people, and the transformations of the local culture and economy that followed led to a larger restructuring of the mountain environment.

While the federal land policies that are the subject of this book are rooted in a specific time and place—early twentieth-century Appalachia—this regional perspective speaks to larger questions about national planning, local autonomy, and political prerogatives. Because of the dramatic

changes in Appalachia from the 1880s through the 1970s, the eastern mountain landscape offers a particularly provocative canvass for exploring this history.

The principal distinction between the states of Virginia and Vermont was the organization of local political systems and, particularly, the difference between the county and township forms of government. Most of Southern Appalachia operates its local governments at the county level, a form that had its roots in the diffuse agricultural areas of the Mid-Atlantic and the plantation South. By contrast, Vermont, like the rest of New England, is organized along a town or township system of government.[10] There is a significant geographic and a cultural difference between these two systems, influenced primarily by the scale of government. In townships it is common to have a small population and relatively democratic representation, whereas county populations tend to be larger and more dispersed. In comparison with the relatively small area of a Vermont township, which is between thirty-six and forty square miles, the average area of the eight counties in the northern Blue Ridge of Virginia is 425 square miles.[11] The distinction between these two systems merits clarification, because the small scale of local government in Vermont encouraged the participation of local people, whereas the diffuseness of political power in Virginia meant that even the staunchest critics of state and federal intervention had a limited mechanism for influencing local politics. As the following chapters will demonstrate, while the conditions of mountain life did not necessarily exclude mountain people from the political process, the scale of administration often did. As a consequence, Vermont communities were routinely more effective in their attempts to maintain an influence over the course of local planning decisions than those in Virginia. By recognizing how the distinct local reactions to policymakers and land use change were influenced by democratic

[10] Andrew E. Nuquist, *Town Government in Vermont* (Burlington: University of Vermont Government Research Center, 1964), 5-6.
[11] These data come from the University of Virginia's Historical Census browser, taken from the GeoStat Center website. Accessed on 18 February 2008, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/county.php.

traditions and local agendas, and by examining the divergence between different regions, this study demonstrates how local political structures influence the environment, and how planners and policymakers might benefit from a deeper understanding of conditions within communities targeted for reform.

Cultivated Country begins with a sustained evaluation of conditions on the ground in Appalachia and academia during the early twentieth century—the "Origins" of land use reform. The book begins with an exploration of the vernacular, subsistence farms that persisted in the mountains even after machine culture came to dominate the neighboring valleys. The first two chapters frame the Appalachian economy at the beginning of the twentieth century through an agro-ecological investigation of individual and communal land use in the Blue Ridge and Green Mountains.[12] These regions were similar in their geography and economic self-sufficiency, and yet cultural and political circumstances were sharply divergent, demonstrating the range of adaptations to the upcountry landscape. The first chapter chronicles conditions within the hollow communities scattered throughout the Virginia mountains, where clusters of households hugged the narrow streambeds dropping through the mountains. The mountains were located at the margins of the counties that represented their political and economic interests, and thus many of the people who

[12] These chapters add an Appalachian angle to the history of American agriculture during this period. The literature is already rather rich, with such books as Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), Deborah Fitzgerald, *From Farms to Factory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), and Hal Barron, *Mixed Harvest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Christopher Clark's *The Roots of Rural Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), James Lemon's *The Best Poor Man's Country* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), and Fred Shannon's *The Farmer's Last Frontier* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945) address many of the practices that were still common in Appalachian agriculture in the 1920s, as well as the market forces that influenced rural communities. Among the studies of agriculture that include the mountain South are Melissa Walker, *All We Knew was to Farm* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) and Lu Ann Jones, *Mama Learned Us to Work* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

lived the Blue Ridge had only a tenuous connection to local politics or the larger regional economy.[13] The second chapter explores similar communities in Vermont, where the rivers wending through the mountains left wider areas for settlement, and farms were oriented around small village centers that served as the nexus of local politics and trade. The denser scale of Vermont towns meant that neighbors were likely to participate together in town government, and that there was a long tradition of local involvement in both politics and state affairs. These local histories both contextualize the development of mountain environments and their economies, and lay the foundation for the changes that were to come during the 1920s and 1930s. The third chapter adds a third cultural landscape to the mix: the Progressive Era centers of academia and government that were responsible for generating a new generation of scholars who formulated a complex plan for reforming land use during the early twentieth century. Many of these experts moved into the federal government during the 1910s and 1920s, and with the funding and reformist energy of the early New Deal, their ideas quickly moved from paper into policy. The national interest in conservation, recreation, and the rehabilitation of local economies converged during the 1920s and 1930s to spur attempts to revitalize the Blue Ridge and Green Mountain landscapes through conservation planning. These policies had a notable impact on the Appalachian landscape.

The second half of this book, "Projects," explores three trajectories of conservation planning as they were implemented in Appalachia, and it illustrates the competing agendas for reform and control as they entered local communities during the 1920s and 1930s. Chapter four chronicles the creation of the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, which encompassed the hollows of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a site the Commonwealth of Virginia and the National Park Service targeted in 1924 as ideal for a new national park to serve the nation's growing urban

[13] Among the studies of Blue Ridge culture are Audrey Horning, *In the Shadow of Ragged Mountain* (Luray, VA: Shenandoah National Park Archives, 2004) and Mandel Sherman and Thomas Henry, *Hollow Folk* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1933).

constituencies. Local officials and federal policymakers teamed up to promote an innovative plan for recreation and conservation on what they saw as an uninhabited stretch of mountains, only to discover the communities that already laid claim to the mountain forests. In spite of local resistance to displacement, federal and state officials committed even more firmly to the park agenda, including the construction of the first federal ridgeline parkway, Skyline Drive, which ultimately led to plans for the removal of mountain landowners and the dedication of the new park.[14] Chapter five examines a different trajectory of state-federal cooperation, as beginning in 1925 the State of Vermont and the U. S. Forest Service collaborated to create a new national forest in the Green Mountains. Vermonters approved of the open-access, mixed-use regime of the national forests, and the project moved forward, even as voters rejected other federal initiatives, including the development of a Green Mountain Parkway. In Vermont, the tradition of local influence over state policy led to a far more involved cooperation between local communities and federal plans for the state. Chapter six argues that the experiences of state officials tempered their interactions with New Deal agencies that entered Virginia and Vermont in 1933 and 1934, and the response to federal proposals for comprehensive land use reform, including resettlement of local residents and the rehabilitation of marginal land by the Resettlement Administration. In Virginia, the removal of mountain residents necessitated federal intervention in their resettlement, in spite of local concerns about the scope of the RA program, whereas in Vermont state officials' discomfort with social planning led to the rejection of RA funding for relocations by the legislature.

In both Virginia and Vermont the culmination of the planning of earlier decades came during the 1930s, as the expanded federal government asserted an unprecedented influence on the

[14] Justin Reich, "Recreating the Wilderness: Shaping Narratives and Landscapes in Shenandoah National Park," *Environmental History* 6 (January 2001); Dennis Simmons, "Conservation, Cooperation, and Controversy: The Establishment of Shenandoah National Park, 1924-1936." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89 (October 1981): 387-404.

redevelopment of the American landscape. In the end, the success of New Deal programs in these states was linked to the local traditions of land use planning and federal-state cooperation dating from the 1910s and the 1920s.

By comparing the environmental impacts of farming in marginal uplands with the impact of new land uses—recreation and forestry—introduced into the Appalachian Mountains during the 1920s and 1930s, *Cultivated Country* acknowledges the impact of federal planning in altering both the ecology and the political economy of American landscapes. In Virginia, the Shenandoah National Park was designed to preserve the Blue Ridge forest, but a consequence of restoring natural communities was that the agricultural systems that had sustained themselves for generations were forced out of the mountains. Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest was created to ensure a sustainable timber harvest as well as watershed protection, but the increasing focus on recreation, summer homes, and winter sports that accompanied the national forest further marginalized subsistence agriculture within the state's economy. Meanwhile, throughout the nation, the New Deal programs of the Resettlement Administration sought to conserve and protect local resources while providing a stable and viable economic foundation for the people who had struggled on marginal lands. The RA's program of reform and social engineering resulted in political turmoil and dramatic cultural change as it sought to reorient land use in rural America. Between the efforts of the National Park Service, the U. S. Forest Service, and the Resettlement Administration, the transition from private land to public management was effected with varying degrees of success during a decade of radical landscape reconfiguration.

The policy decisions of the 1920s and 1930s prepared the groundwork for the regeneration of "wilderness" in Appalachia, and the region quickly recovered to what many people now perceive as the primeval forest. Consequently, the story of these Progressive Era and New Deal initiatives did not end with the 1930s. The epilogue revisits Virginia and Vermont during the 1970s, as the

return of the mountains to wilderness was celebrated within the environmental community as a demonstration of the successes of conservation planning and the management of the mountains once again entered the national spotlight. Following the passage of the Eastern Wilderness Act in 1975, struggles over the limits of federal prerogatives once again consumed the communities surrounding the Shenandoah National Park and the Green Mountain National Forest. In 1975 and 1976, sizeable portions of the Appalachian Mountain chain were designated as federally-protected wilderness areas. Small areas in the Blue Ridge of Virginia and the Green Mountains of Vermont were included in the early wilderness designation, and the plan to extend the protection of wilderness areas in the mountains was once again a hotly contested issue. The conflict over the status of these lands was again rooted in local concerns, and the terms of argument were familiar to the long-time inhabitants of the area. This time, some residents feared that further steps to protect the mountain forests would undermine local uses and endanger the livelihoods of residents living alongside federal lands. The debates that ensued over economic values demonstrate that far-reaching efforts at conservation are never simple in either their implementation or their impact.

Today, the Appalachian countryside is covered with a patchwork of federal, state, and private lands, and their fate remains at the hands of local people and federal policymakers, who have the same power to shape its future as their predecessors in the 1920s and 1930s. The changes that have altered these landscapes over the last century illustrate how nature, policy, and culture come into contact and conflict on a community level. From the 1910s through the present, federal conservation policy has had wide-ranging effects on the Appalachian landscape, illustrating the complexity that arises when political forces seek to reshape local environments. Variations in the response of the land and local people to the modified federal landscape suggest the importance of tempering the blunt instrument of federal policy with local expertise. Land use planners'

experiences during the early twentieth century reinforce the necessity of a flexible, dynamic approach to land policy, because both human and natural communities display more local variation and greater independence than can be appreciated from a strictly academic planning perspective.

The impact of the Progressive Era and New Deal on the American landscape and political system is indisputable. The reforms implemented during the first four decades of the twentieth century generated a sea change in national culture that had a particularly visible impact upon the Appalachian landscape. The dynamic planning vision of the 1910s and 1920s, and its influence on the New Deal, when money and manpower were available to implement the ideas of conservationists and social reformers on a regional level, combined to reshape the nation. *Cultivated Country* demonstrates the interconnectedness of these decades, and the importance of revisiting landscapes that appear to have a static history, because as in any environment, the dynamism of local communities, both ecological and political, is too often overlooked. The following chapters will dig into the mountain soils, and the upcountry psyche, in order to explain how the modern Appalachian landscape has come into its present form.