

create national forests. In 1897, the Pettigrew Amendment directed the Secretary of the Interior to make rules and regulations to protect these reserves and authorize the sale of timber. These forest reserves were not being *preserved*. They were being *conserved*, as stated in the Pettigrew Amendment, to “secure favorable conditions of water flow and to furnish a continuing supply of timber for the use of the citizens of the United States.” In other words, trees in national forests were to be harvested just like any other crop. But now harvesting was to be done in such a way as to result in a sustained yield of lumber over time.

### Gifford Pinchot

In 1898, Gifford Pinchot became chief of the Division of Forestry. He was to become one of the outstanding leaders in this country’s conservation movement. His grandfather and father had made fortunes in timber production. In an era without regulation, they and their fellow lumber entrepreneurs had left behind massive areas of denuded hills, eroded terrain, and silted rivers. Eventually Gifford’s family took a different view of forests. They had been greatly influenced by the book *Man and Nature*, written by George Marsh and published in 1864. Marsh was the first American to lay down in a book of general circulation the broad principles of conservation and to show how earlier civilizations had been ruined when they abused their natural resources. He pointed out that the United States would suffer the same fate if it continued to destroy its forests. In 1886, when Gifford was twenty years old, his father asked him if he would like to be a forester. No American up to that time had ever been a professional forester. As a matter of fact, in those days no American college even taught forestry. Later, Gifford said he had had no more conception of what it meant to be a forester than the man in the moon. He went to France in 1889 to get his training and became chief of the U.S. Forestry Division in 1898.

In 1905, during Teddy Roosevelt’s administration, that division was reorganized and became the U.S. Forest Service. This action was to give Pinchot control over one hundred and fifty million acres of national forest land.

Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt had a number of things in common including a great love of the outdoors. They were both appalled by the widespread waste and

destruction so visible around them in the 1890s and early 1900s. Pinchot later wrote in his communications to the president: “When the Gay Nineties began the common word for our forest was ‘inexhaustible.’ To waste lumber was a virtue and not a crime. There would always be plenty of timber. ... The lumbermen ... regarded forest devastation as normal and second growth as a delusion of fools. ... And as for sustained yield, no such idea had entered their heads. The few friends the forests had were spoken of, when they were spoken of at all, as impractical theorists or fanatics, more or less touched in the head. What talk there was about forest protection was no more to the average American than the buzzing of a mosquito and about as irritating.”

Pinchot came to the conclusion that all natural resources were to some degree related and had to be dealt with by a unified approach. His solution was federal regulation of public lands and scientific management of land resources. Roosevelt agreed and aggressively asserted his executive authority to implement Pinchot’s proposals. During his administration, he tripled the size of the national forests. This addition of over one hundred million acres greatly reduced the amount of lumber, grazing, and mining abuse. That is not to say that lumbering, grazing, and mining were not allowed in national forests. These lands were being conserved for *use*, but regulated in such a way as to eliminate waste and to ensure that use did not exceed the carrying capacity of the land.

### Yosemite—A New Concept—Preservation

“Government has a duty of preservation. ... The central purpose of the new preserve (The Yosemite Grant) is to prevent the otherwise insurmountable ... selfishness of individuals from destroying essential natural values.” So said Frederick Law Olmsted upon appointment to the Yosemite commission, 1866. He is considered to be the father of American landscape architecture.

President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill setting aside Yosemite Valley and the nearby Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias in 1864. That this would happen in an era when the prevailing attitude toward wilderness was one of exploitation might seem surprising, but in fact, Yosemite Valley was first preserved for its unique scenic value rather than as wilderness.

## CHARLES SCHMIDT

*Tidepool Near Mendocino, 2013*

Oil on Canvas, 18 x 36 in



*Starpool, 2014*

Oil on Canvas, 23 x 47 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST