Subduing the Wolf: Utah Pioneer Identity and the War on Wolves Between 1852 and 2020.

Mason Lytle
Utah State University

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SUBDUING THE WOLF: UTAH PIONEER IDENTITY AND THE WAR ON

by

Mason Lytle

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
History

Approved:

Nichelle Frank, Ph.D.
Major Professor

Lawrence Culver, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Seth Archer, Ph.D.
Committee Member

D. Richard Cutler, Ph.D.
Vice Provost
of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

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ABSTRACT

Subduing the Wolf: Utah’s Pioneer Identity and the War on Wolves Between 1852 and 2020

by

Mason Lytle, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Dr. Nichelle Frank
Department: History

With five national parks, the most per capita of any other state, Utahns lean into the public lands imagery to promote recreational tourism. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints members perceive themselves as exceptional, not only for landscapes but for the history of settlement. Utah (and specifically its Mormon variant) prioritizes an imagined religious, cultural, and state identity unique to themselves, but when you analyze the Mormon/wolf relationship, this identity breaks away. Early Mormon settlers committed to an agricultural lifestyle that established a proud history, which has translated into the twenty-first century. In fact, a “deseret pioneer” pioneer identity combines an adherence to a higher communal law that promotes economic stability that has remnants in the twenty-first century, with a proud urbanizing history that has aided in the construction of “Zion” in the Great Basin region. A combination of twentieth-century American environmental politics and proud pioneer heritage has made Utah a bastion of anti-wolf sentiment in the twenty-first century. In fact, a “deseret pioneer” identity primed Utahns to accept anti-wolf rhetoric with less questioning, to be more receptive to
anti-wolf discussions based on “anti-federal overreach arguments,” and to support a pro-self-sustaining ideology that prepares Mormon Utahns to question Church leaders less and US leaders more.

(108 pages)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Subduing the Wolf: Utah’s Pioneer Identity and the War on Wolves Between 1852 and 2020

Mason Lytle

Utah has a unique history of pioneer settlement connected to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This history has become a source of pride that began with the first white settlers. I have come to call this the “deseret pioneer” identity, to differentiate from other western settlers. From the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, politicians and agriculturalists used this “deseret pioneer” identity to thwart federal protections for wolves and respond to wilderness policies that made Utah the only “rocky-mountain” state to not have wolves in the twenty-first century.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Mason Lytle
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Introduction

In 2017, I took a late fall visit to Yellowstone National Park. This excursion was a college-sponsored trip with classmates interested in the American West. The purpose behind this trip was multifaceted, but visiting Yellowstone was a highlight for everyone involved. Due to the season, tourism was low; the usual traffic jam of vehicles eyeing wildlife was non-existent. We reveled at the thought of being some of the few who ventured into the park that brisk morning; as we all kept our eyes peeled out the windows of the rickety bus that we traveled in. Through the northeast entrance, we were able to see gorgeous landscapes as well as remnants of the famed 1988 fire. After about an hour, with many beginning to wipe their eyes of exhaustion, we reached Hayden Valley. We had all been told that if we were to see any wildlife, it would be here—and especially what we had all hoped to see—wolves! As we all watched anxiously, we saw a lone park vehicle parked off the side of the road with two individuals gazing at something through a spotting scope. Because we all hoped to see some type of wildlife, we pulled the bus over and hopped out. We approached the park employees and asked what had caught their attention. They offered to let us look through their scopes and laid out the scene before us. We got what we wanted—the scene was a pack of five to six wolves that had run down an elk; shortly after, a grizzly bear descended, stole, and buried the kill from the wolves. While we could not see the result, we witnessed a solid stalemate between a grizzly bear and a pack of wolves.

Witnessing wildlife was a main focal point for all of us and draws in tourists from all over the world. David Attenborough usually narrates this type of scene with epic
music and high-quality cinematography. However, I was getting it in real life and narrated only by my own frenzied verbal outbursts. Attenborough would have cringed had he heard it. I could not believe what I was seeing. I had never seen more than elk, bison, and mountain goats in my years coming to Yellowstone. As we all sat and watched in awe, I stepped back and got a larger picture. About seventy-five yards to our left, two elk watched as their fellow ungulate became the main course of two apex predators of Yellowstone. A lone bison wandered into the area to the right while a couple of coyote pups played off behind it in the distance. And in the most “American” moment, a bald eagle soared over our heads. To some, this story mirrors an “old fish tale,” but I have come to call it the “quintessential Yellowstone experience.” In twenty minutes, I saw most of the major fur-bearers and feather-bearers that many people hope only to glimpse when visiting. While this story has stuck with me over the years, the history of wolves in the US is not as epic as that view of them fighting for their claim to that elk. Rewind twenty-two years, and that story of wolves would generate a different response amongst visitors, residents of the Yellowstone region, and the many who live beyond the one-hundredth meridian: one of awe and wonder or general disdain at the economic strain wolves place on the livestock industry.

In 1995, wildlife biologists relocated wolves from Canada to Yellowstone National Park, historical stomping grounds for wolves before their extirpation from the region in 1926. Debates over public land use skyrocketed since legislators implemented an explosion of conservation policies from the 1960s and the environmental movement. Historian Adam Sowards’ analogy of public lands being like a “dinner table” illuminates the many voices that sit around the table and fight for their opinion on how to use public
lands. This analogy “works to guide us through the history of American public lands, and it helps us think about the public lands as part of the democratic experiment that is the United States.” Since the re-introduction of wolves to Yellowstone, the topic has held passionate views from many at this proverbial “dinner table,” such as “westerners,” hunters, agriculturalists, and wildlife sympathizers. With Utah being one of the many placeholders at the “dinner table” of public lands, Utah’s history provides a valuable contrast to the other western states impacted by conservation policies—especially those involving wolves. Fast forward to the twenty-first century, Utah favors more utilitarian views of wildlife, following current conservative trends towards hunting and recreation—particularly with wolves.

With five national parks, the most per capita of any other state, Utahns lean into the unique public lands imagery to promote recreational tourism. Utah Latter-day Saint Church members perceive themselves as exceptional, not only for the geography within the state but for the history of settlement. Utah and Mormon identity prioritize an imagined religious, cultural, and state identity unique to themselves, but when you

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2 Sowards, *Making America’s Public Lands*, 3. This recent monograph from Sowards is a compelling look at the political landscape of conservation from the seventeenth century onward. With a chronological approach, Sowards looks at how the ideas of land practice changed during various stages of US growth. While Sowards only mentions wolves during the re-introduction, he lays groundwork for ideals as they shifted through time.
3 Daniel J. Decker, Shawn J. Riley, and William F. Siemer. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife Management: Second Edition* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), 46. This map shows how Utah’s population value wildlife at 47.5% utilitarian. In other words, 47.5% of Utahns believe that wildlife should serve some type of purpose that benefits humans. Utah is the sixth highest state of the nineteen listed as the western states. Wolves, since re-introduction in Yellowstone, have signified federal regulation. Federal laws, such as the Endangered Species Act have limited state power on wolf management. Minimal government is a current heavy conservative stance, and wolves have become one of the most politicized species. Utah has not had a democratic senator since the 1950s, making Utah a heavy conservative state from the 50s onward.
analyze the Mormon/wolf relationship, this uniqueness breaks away.⁴ Early Mormon settlers committed to an agricultural lifestyle and a “higher law” of consecration that began in 1831 with revelation given to founding prophet Joseph Smith, and meant building up the “New Jerusalem,” or “Zion.” Once settlers reached the Salt Lake Valley, the law of consecration became a pivotal practice for survival by allocating excess resources to church leadership.⁵ While the early implementation of the “law of consecration” was meant for survival in a hostile Great Basin terrain, the communal use of resources, and the law of consecration in the Latter-day Saint “State of Deseret” would evolve between 1847 to 1896. Communal survival would become less relevant after the discovery of gold in California, and the westward expansion of the United States would force Mormon settlers to adapt to more standard laissez-fair practices after 1850.⁶ The memory and significance of “collective institutions” separated Mormon settlers from other western settlers. Early Latter-day Saint settlement created a proud history and cultural memory among descendants of those residing in what would become the state of Utah.⁷ The pride in Utah’s early Mormon settlers remains in the twenty-first century.

Because early Mormon settlers adhered to a pioneering identity, particularly one that incorporated their religion, I have come to define this as a “deseret pioneer” identity that changed over time and is separate from other pioneer tales of westward expansion. The “deseret pioneer” identity combined the communal use of resources among early

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⁵The Law of Consecration was a prophecy given to Joseph Smith in 1831. The wording of this law can be found in the Doctrine & Covenants, 42 (The Book of Mormon).
⁷Ibid.
Mormon settlers with economic practices that changed under a westward-expanding United States. As a result, Utah settlers adapted and abandoned ideas of “Mormon economic separatism.”

Early Mormon immigrants and the descendants of those immigrants altered their economic lens, and the “deseret pioneer” identity also began to describe a community that transitioned from agrarian survival to urbanized infrastructure that demonstrates a commitment to the dedication of resources to the Kingdom of God, and a community guided by divine principles. This identity primed Utahns to accept anti-wolf rhetoric with less questioning, to be more receptive to anti-wolf discussions based on “anti-federal overreach arguments,” and to support a pro-self-sustaining ideology that prepares Mormon Utahns to question Church leaders less and US leaders more. Therefore, bringing the communal aspect of pioneer identity with the business and economic well-being of members of the Church.

This thesis focuses on how Utah’s unique foundation, linked to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, cultivated in Utah territory an especially virulent version of an already nationalized hatred for wolves among the early settlers of the Great Basin region. Specifically, I evaluate how Utah residents carried out wolf extermination under the influence of agricultural associations such as the Utah Wool Growers Association and how federal aid protected livestock. While Utah agriculturalists benefited from federal predator removal programs, the government also represented a

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8 Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 112. Arrington argues that Mormon ideas of property rights and communalism, stood against larger ideas of individualism within the United States. Arrington also argues that this communalism helped the “Great Basin Kingdom” survive but would diminish greatly during the post-Civil War era. While the original ideas of communalism with the first Mormon inhabitants would change drastically by the 1900s, remnants of communalism remain to this day within the church such as tithing, the Bishops Storehouse, and fast-offerings that are all seeds of early communalism.

9 The term “deseret” comes from the Latter-day Saint book of scripture, Ether 2:3 (The Book of Mormon). The term literally means honeybee and is therefore a good representation of the communal mentality of early settlers.
roadblock to early pioneer principles that would challenge a proud “pioneer identity.”

The first chapter evaluates how, in the early 1900s, the creation of the Forest Service led to a “toxic relationship” between the federal government and Utah stock growers. Stockmen in Utah participated heavily in and favored wolf extermination policies well into the 1930s (the last documented wolf kill was in San Juan County in 1938). But with the government's aid to eradicate wolves came the creation of forest reserves to promote national interest in agriculture. Federal protection infringed on Utah settlers’ ability to practice early ideas of economic independence. With this change, societies such as the Utah Wool Growers Association worked with nationwide wool growers to combat laws that restricted agricultural practices of public grazing.10 The second chapter examines the rise of the environmental movement from the 1960s to the mid-1990s, including a reinvigoration of conservation-minded policies and increased division in the interpretations of public land use. With a shift towards conservation and environmental movements, policies began to impact the role of predators in these public spaces. The final chapter focuses on the post-1995 wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone and how Utahns viewed wolves into the twenty-first century.

While wolves in public lands have been covered extensively by environmental historians, these broad environmental histories of predator control are practical tools to help understand the tumultuous history of predators on public lands and the history of control within these landscapes. The sixty-nine-year absence of wolves in Yellowstone, the eventual reintroduction, the consequence of reintroduction, and environmental histories on public lands--focusing on the role of conservation and preservation within

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10 Utah Wool Growers Association Addendum, Box [64], Special Collections and Archives. Utah State University Merrill-Cazier Library.
National Parks and places of sanctuary for wildlife--have produced rich literature on wolves and their ecological role as well as better understanding of preservation on public lands. However, with literature devoted to predators (wolves being a popular species) and public lands, these works advocate for a comprehensive analysis of anti-predator policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries American West. Nevertheless, these histories on public lands and predator control tend to gloss over Utah or broaden the focus to larger narratives of predator policy in the American West.\textsuperscript{11}

These works have directed my research to explore the continued persecution of wolves in Utah during the twentieth century and how Utah has played a part in the more extensive, eventual removal of wolves in the West. This thesis relies on primary sources from the Merrill-Cazier Special Collections & Archives, the Church History Library, and the Utah Online Newspaper database. By comparing and analyzing materials from the Utah Wool Growers Association, Utah Wilderness Alliance, and state-funded bounties on wolves, I analyze how prevailing ideas of wolves derived from Utah’s proud pioneer foundations as well as national romanticized ideas of the American West. This understanding and focus on Utah can explain how Utah has contributed to national wolf removal projects. In doing so, I make the case that despite its unique culture and relationship to federal power, Utah is not unique when compared to other colonial

expansions in the American West, primarily looking at how wolf hatred has stemmed from conservative policies that emerged gradually since the time of established pioneers in the Great Basin region.
Historiography

The nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries has been a significant period in the history of the western United States. It provides valuable insight into the relationship between humans and nature, the importance of economic stability, and the use of resources by Western settlers in interpreting nature. Despite environmental history being a relatively new field, historical narratives have addressed myriad environmental issues from the twentieth century onward. William Cronon’s *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* became a linchpin for environmental history in the 1980s and beyond. He approached the historical narrative from an environmental perspective as well as showed how humans have interacted with their local environment. Within this field of environmental history, particular regions, such as the American West, have fueled rich literature on a popular subject, public lands, and human/wildlife relationships on these landscapes. The histories of public lands, conservation, and preservation have led to literature critically examining these spaces and how individuals use these areas for recreation and resource extraction. Much of this scholarship has focused on national parks, the politics behind established conservation areas, and, with this, the debates around who decides land use. Within these conversations about conservation and preservation are works that reveal the strain that public landscapes place on nearby communities. In these works, economic stability is a central pillar to the history of public landscapes. The history of wolves within the United States provides an interesting example of the difficulties nature can have on economic stability. The history of wolves also shows how economics, conservation, and preservation are relevant in
current political debates surrounding public lands. In 1995, wildlife biologists relocated grey wolves from Canada to Yellowstone National Park, former historical stomping grounds for wolves before their extirpation from the region in 1926. Since this reintroduction, much scholarly focus has been given to wolves and their persecution in the Western landscape.

A fitting start to the conversation of wolves and human relationships is understanding how wolf/human interactions have shaped the eventual political war that has spanned from the colonial period to the modern era of politically divided landscapes in the American West. Wolf hatred has survived for centuries and served as the focal point of author Jon T. Coleman's *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*. Wolf hatred survived “because Americans embedded their hatred of wolves in stories, rituals, and institutions built to withstand historical change.” Europeans who moved westward during the nineteenth century brought with them anti-wolf attitudes stemming from five hundred years of competing with wolves for resources and land. Europeans sought evolutionary dominance over wolves by passing down their genetic legacy, their possessions (livestock and private property), and the institutions to protect their livelihood against a formidable foe. Coleman uses this argument of history, folklore, and biology that shaped the attitudes of Mormon settlers towards wolves on the plains

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12 Douglas Smith, et al., *Yellowstone Wolves: Science and Discovery in the World’s First National Park* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020). This is the most comprehensive and current scientific work on wolf reintroduction.


and how Mormon survival hinged on their hatred toward the canid. Understanding how ideas of wolves survived through folklore, biology, and history helps us understand the “vicious” actions humans took toward wolves.

While the conversation about and treatment of wolves in the American West plays out similarly in each state beyond the one-hundredth meridian, some regional histories provide clarity on how groups responded to the threat of wolves, what wolves represented, and localized responses to wolves and the economic strain they placed on livestock. Leonard J. Arrington’s *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* examines how Mormon settlers in the Great Basin responded to an arid and isolated region. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ early history as an “ante-bellum New England” product helps explain how an eventual migration and settlement in the West differed from Euro-American settlement in other regions. Mormon economic policies were uniquely American, a product of its founder Joseph Smith’s upbringing in New York. Wolves don’t play a significant part in Arrington’s work and only garner a single reference within the text. However, the economic focus of Arrington’s work shows the importance of every resource to early Mormon settlers and how the thought of wolves contributed to the communal mindset of faithful Latter-day Saint settlers. Once applied in the West, “central planning, organized co-operation, and the partial socialization of investment” drove Mormon economic stability.

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16 Coleman, *Vicious*, 148-172. Coleman claims that Mormons were bound to each other and that wolves presented an obstacle to an established civilization away from persecution.
17 Coleman chose this title carefully. A focal point of *Vicious* is to understand why humans went to great lengths to torture and act out viciously towards wolves.
19 Ibid.
While Arrington emphasizes economics, parallels between environment and economic stability have emerged in other works related to Utah history. One example of this is Jared Farmer’s *On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape*. In a similar vein to Coleman, historian Jared Farmer analyzes the process of cultivating the landscape for production, the promotion of pioneer history of settlement, and the impact Mormon settlers had on nature. Memory of landscapes, or the forgetting of memory are significant in the tale of early Mormon settlement that the LDS Church and early official historians used to mythologize Utah’s pioneer period. Farmer also explains that Mormon scholarship has excluded non-Mormons and Native peoples to create a “Mormon-washed” version of history and that this exclusion provides a valuable understanding of Mormon perceptions of themselves and nature.

Continuing the theme of cultural understanding of landscapes, including humans and animals, historian Brett L. Walker analyzes the significance a culture can have on wildlife in his text *The Lost Wolves of Japan*. Walker approaches a similar argument to Coleman and how predominant attitudes towards wolves shifted in Japan from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. While Walker’s argument is about cultural shifts towards wolves in Japan, Walker points out that these ideas shifted differently than in the United States. With American expansion westward, wolf hatred started in the eighteenth century and began to shift by the twenty-first century; in Japan, wolves were revered and respected but eventually eliminated as Japan shifted into an industrialized nation.

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21 Ibid., 13.
cultural differences between the United States and Japan during the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries demonstrate a unique look at how cultures have shaped predominant
attitudes toward wolves. Japan’s unique attitude toward wolf/human relationships as
wolves were respected and worshiped for protecting crops from preying hooved animals
in Japan, while in the Western world, wolves represented wilderness or ungodliness, and
the “devilish inhabitant of a place without God.”24 With the juxtaposition of America
and Japan, Walker utilizes Japan’s removal of wolves as an “unheard perspective” and
“casualty” of Japan’s shifting culture to an industrialized nation.25 The Lost Wolves of
Japan focuses on a continent other than the United States, and it provides a good model
of cultural shifts within societies regarding wolves and their relationship with humans.

Continuing the evaluation of human and wildlife relationships, historians have
critically analyzed the cultural interpretations of predators in American culture. Although
not explicitly about wolves, Dan Flores Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural
History examines the mystic yet misunderstood coyote and the origins of the animal that
has colonized the continental United States. The comparison of coyote and wolf draws
similar abuse in terms of treatment and extermination acts, and one can sum up their
histories as “human-despised canid predators.” History of the coyote, as Flores examines,
alludes to this creature evolving alongside humans, even "eerily" mimicking humans as a
cosmopolitan species.26 Through his central argument of understanding the evolution of
coyotes, Dan Flores explores how these creatures have evolved alongside humans and

The evolution of coyotes was not solely dependent on humans as Flores highlights coyotes as being in the
background of other predators such as wolves.
how first-hand experiences are more regular than we think as coyotes have colonized the contiguous United States. Coyotes, a natural competitor to wolves, are a consequence of wolf removal from the ecological tree as the “prairie wolf” received the brunt of Federal and State extermination orders. While the coyote has survived massive persecution, other creatures did not benefit from the cunning survival instincts of the coyote.

*American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains*, another contribution by Dan Flores, explores the catastrophic decline of one of the last great wonders of the world, the Great Plains, and the wildlife that suffered due to its loss. Flores laments the savage nature of humans that eventually led to the decline of the Great Plains, as many earlier settlers would note. Flores states, "The nineteenth-century Great Plains was a slaughterhouse. In the years from the 1820s to the 1920s, this single American region experienced the largest wholesale destruction of animal life discoverable in modern history." The Great Plains housed some of the most prolific wildlife we know today, including bison, pronghorn, coyotes, grizzlies, and wolves. However, the United States’ civilizing mission drastically reduced these species to near extinction. During the Civil War, the Great Plains became an ecological niche for the "dominant predator" wolves; but this arch-predator saw its demise by the 1920s. Dan Flores laments the loss of the Great Plains but advocates for the restoration of ancient ecological understanding of the Great Plains, stating, "We have mostly stumbled 'til now, but in the present century we have the best chance so far to re-wild and re-create an American Serengeti of the size, and then in the template, of the world's first grand nature preserve, Yellowstone National Park." Conservation and restoration as a central theme in

27 Both Dan Flores and Jon Coleman highlight the rise of Coyotes as a “problem” due to the lack of competition from wolves.
American Serengeti, along with Dan Flores' expert knowledge in ancient ecological history and detailed understanding of the American West, demonstrates the necessity of knowledge and research required for conservation areas. While wolves were extirpated from the Great Plains region, Flores’ advocacy for understanding “ancient” landscapes, proves extremely important in current wolf reintroduction plans and understanding the historic landscapes for wolves.

Studies of wolves would be incomplete without looking at the cultural shift the United States undertook during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, with the outburst of legislation that led to the conservation movement.28 In Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation, Karl Jacoby presents a unique look at American conservation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and disputes the “prevailing narrative about conservation.”29 Continuing the evaluation of cultural impacts on conservation and the practices in designated areas, Jacoby looks at what he has coined “moral ecology” and how conservation was viewed from the bottom up, or in other words, how the rural folk viewed the economic strain these new policies placed on traditional practices of land use.30 While not containing anything specifically about Utah or wolves, Jacoby’s attention to rural communities', big game hunting and sport hunting and the response to legislation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide valuable context to how Utah settlers may have felt towards federal regulations on public lands, the concern

rural settlers felt towards the economic strain of western living, and the restriction of land use practice with conservation laws in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Understanding ecology and the role predators play in a healthy ecosystem is vital to understanding concepts such as preservation, conservation, and the "end goal" to define what constitutes saving. The idea of the "Edenic myth," in other words, a land devoid of human contact, is one that Sara Dant explores in her book *Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West*. Dant argues that exploiting Western resources for eastern profit is a "consequence of the European introduction of a capitalist market system."\(^3^1\) This relationship with the environment as an economic commodity creates a complex history. The idea of Western expansion as the solely responsible force in western exploitation harbors a narrow approach as Dant challenges readers to ask the more important question, "At what cost?" Dant also explores the "Tragedy of the Commons" by Garrett Hardin, stating, "Hardin argued that individuals acting in their self-interest will ignore the best interests of the larger society and deplete 'common' resources."\(^3^2\) Conservation and preservation are concepts usually used synonymously and is a fundamental idea explained in *Losing Eden*. Classic conservationists and preservationists such as Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir championed policies that have shaped the natural environment and the American West into the twenty-first century.\(^3^3\) Traditional conservation can be defined as the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time, while preservation is preserving something for its innate value. Dant examines the effects of conservation and preservation and how the

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33 Sara Dant, *Losing Eden*, 104.
Progressive Era shaped the government's role in public land use. In 1916, the Organic Act was passed, and the National Parks were born. With phrasing in traditional conservation, the Organic Act set out to cater to the tourist as Dant states, "This hybrid and often contradictory assignment would prove difficult to carry out in the long run. With 'tourism' as its prime directive, the newly minted Park Service struggled to reconcile protecting the sublime and providing pit toilets."\(^{34}\) The argument of conservation versus preservation finds itself at the center of the wolf debates since the twentieth century and remains relevant to today. Understanding this debate, and the areas where this debate is prevalent, is important in understanding wolves and the sentiments towards this canid.

Comparatively, *The Hunters Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* contrasts the "Tragedy of the Commons" with the infamous "Turner Thesis" by Fredrick Jackson Turner. This contrast allows Louis S. Warren to examine conservation and preservation. Louis S. Warren states, "In both essays, expanding settlement on the land brought about the end of free access to resources; both authors viewed the closure of the commons or frontier as inevitable; both believed that American society became less free when it happened."\(^{35}\) Conservation became the central point of the American West as Warren cites European styles of game management, recreational hunting, expansion through the railroad, and commodification of the landscape that all became actors in ideas that became national parks and national forests.\(^{36}\) As America

\(^{34}\) Sara Dant, *Losing Eden*, 115.
navigated what was necessary for protected areas, the very definitions of conservation and preservation became muddied.

Juggling between conservation and preservation, historian Alston Chase makes a bold claim that Yellowstone and the Park Service require an overhaul. *Playing God in Yellowstone: The Destruction of Americas First National Park* by Alston Chase, published in 1987, eight years before the official reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, is an alarming "wake up call" to the rapid decline of local wildlife within and under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Chase alludes to a lack of professionalism, science-based resource management, and traditions that have led to the decline of the Park Service.  

Alston Chase shares similar sentiments to Sara Dant in that the wording of the Organic Act has created confusion on how to navigate conservation, preservation properly, and the appeasing of tourists as "western civilization" has wholly altered these landscapes. The removal of Natives from these places demonstrates a lack of understanding that these public spaces are some "pristine" location, along with the elimination of predators, the introduction of exotic flora and fauna have created an "ecologic disequilibrium." In 1963, A. Starker Leopold, son of the famed Aldo Leopold, published the "Leopold Report" that called for the Park Service to return to some form of "primitive America," or as some interpreted as a plea for preservation. Alston Chase argues that in 1964 the national park system reorganized into three zones:

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38 Ibid., 382.

39 Ibid., 382.

natural, historical, and recreational that further divided the understanding of preservation and denied the "Leopold Report" from being enacted. This division has limited the potential research that could be done for proper ecological restoration while focusing on biological science in "natural" zones; historical-based research would be considered inappropriate.

Criticism for the Park Service and the handling of preservation is what historian Richard West Sellars approaches in his book *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*. Richard Sellars uses primary source material to argue similar sentiments to Alston Chase and Louis S. Warren. The "central dilemma of national park management has long been the question of exactly what in a park should be preserved." Sellars' time spent with the Park Service allows him to approach his criticism through personal experience as well as his use of primary sources to call the Park Service to attention to become the leader in the preservation of the natural environment. While the Park Service has struggled to decide what is worthy of protection, wolves have been at the center of much of that debate. Alaska, Yellowstone, and currently Colorado, has all dealt with the issue of reintroduction and has received significant opposition.

Environmental histories engaging with the topic of public lands have given considerable focus to wolves in the twenty and twenty-first centuries. Historians have focused on wolves, conservation, and public lands that assess the cultural shifts in America and other countries through the nineteenth and twentieth century.

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41 Ibid., 385-386.
42 Ibid., 386.
44 Ibid., 290.
of these works lies the concern for economic stability that settlers harbored during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Wolves in Utah signified one of many threats to survival. The historical memory of pioneers remains as a “deseret pioneer” identity that has contributed to twenty-first-century policies that could consider Utah an “anti-wolf” state. These evaluations also provide valuable context to conservation efforts tied to current political debates concerning proper practice—especially with wolves. While Utah lies in the middle of this political debate about wolves and the public lands on which they reside, there have only been a few mentions of Utah and wolves. The current historiography pays attention to larger ideas in America and provides a more concise view than Utah, which augments the growing literature on wolves and humans. By placing Utah in the larger narrative of predator policies in the twentieth century, my study illuminates the role Utah’s Mormon ideas have in a growing divide of wolf sentiment in the twenty-first century.
Chapter One: Survival and the “Deseret Pioneer” Identity

The Pilgrim, the trapper, the pioneer and the Western Cowboy hold unique and well earned places in the history of development of America. They are truly and quite exclusively American Institutions.

--L.C. Montgomery, “In a tribute to our remaining cowboys,” 1940

Down the ages has resounded the commandment to “subdue the earth” and the pioneer fathers who settled this area worked diligently under great hardships to make the desert blossom as a rose and convert the wilderness into a satisfactory home for themselves and their posterity.

--J.R. Broadbent, November 12, 1958

The buffalo had entirely vacated this portion of the country before our arrival; the elk, deer, antelope and bear, and all eatable game are very scarce, and there is little left here (abating the white population) save the naked rocks and soil, naked Indians and wolves. The first two we can use to good advantage, the last two are annoying and destructive to property and peace, by night and by day; and while we are trying to shoot, trap and poison the wolves on one hand, the Indians come in and drive off butcher our cattle and steal our corn on the other which leaves us little time between the wolves and Indians to fend and cultivate our farms; and if government will buy out and transplant the Indians, we will endeavor to subdue the wolves, which have destroyed our cattle horses, sheep and poultry by hundreds and thousands.

--Letter from the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1850

In 1852, Brigham Young, the prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and governor of Utah territory, gave a speech to a congregation promoting empowerment by advocating for the need to be self-sufficient. In his first speech as governor, Young stated

I have no hesitation in saying that our true interests [sic] is, and will be most wisely consulted in domestic manufacturing, to the exclusion of almost every article of imported goods. Our clothing of every description…and many other articles, for which our merchants continually drain the country of money might be manufactured just as well at home, within our own limits, thereby furnishing
Brigham Young focused on economic survival and pointed to the fragile economic state the newly established territory faced with continual westward expansion from gentiles, or people not of the Church’s faith. Young wanted to create a self-sufficient territory that toiled with the land and sought to eliminate foreign aid. Financial independence and minimizing reliance on the United States government allowed Young to seek solutions for their newly established “Zion.” One year earlier, Brigham Young sent his trusted lieutenant, Zachary Taylor, to Europe to procure wool machinery and “the best of sheep,” all cited as necessities for Utah territory. With machine and sheep organized, Young delivered the good news of promising economic independence. However, to establish their Eden, Utah colonization had to do what all colonizing powers had done—subjugate Native peoples and eliminate predators, specifically in Utah, the “enemy of the pioneer,” the wolf. The quotes at the beginning of this chapter encompass the dedication to “memory” that shaped the “deseret pioneer” identity over time. They show how communalism directed Mormon settlement and how Church leadership concerned themselves with the stability of settlers. Wolves threatened survival and challenged both economic stability and a mythicized pioneer history of Edenic settlement.

47 Leonard J. Arrington materials.
Early Church politics, similar to authoritarianism, ripened with the first generation of settlers in the Great Basin region. Wallace Stegner argued that these followers adhered to a “fanatic creed” that contradicted American democracy, led by a Prophet who held spiritual and temporal law over these followers. Brigham Young held absolute power, and those who made the journey were committed to his spiritual and theocratical teachings. With a body of loyal followers, Brigham Young set out from Illinois in 1847 on a seemingly impossible task, cultivating a landscape suitable for the faithful pioneers and their posterity. After 1847, settlers toiled and strived to understand the landscape of the Great Basin region. The first years of settlement devastated crop growers and herdsman. Low-producing crops undermined settlers’ ability to provide for their cattle, leaving a sense of desperation that prompted church leaders take control of overseeing all livestock.

Individual pioneer stories provide an important glimpse into the life of early settlers, but also how they viewed the teachings of their leaders. For instance, on July 30th, 1851, John and Esther Bennion, distant relatives of my own through my grandmother, wrote a letter to family back home in England. As some of the few that migrated from England and then followed Mormon pioneers from Illinois, John and Esther had been some of the faithful that upended their lives in pursuit of a better life devoid of conflict with the federal government. Their story, aside from binding me more closely to the one I tell, provides the perspective of those who followed Brigham Young and how they interpreted his guidance and the teachings of the Church. After some

50 Arrington, *The Great Basin Kingdom*, 58-59. Arrington also states that “storehouses” provided members/settlers with a sufficient food supply. This idea is still relevant in the twenty-first century. Bishop’s storehouses provide the same type of resources for underprivileged members.
hardships, the letter depicted a land now fruitfully producing “in the midst of a good harvest, and there is hundreds of bushels of bread stuff to spare.” Their optimism and faith are apparent as they point to the progress of the lands that “had been thought unfit for being settled by civilized society on account of its altitude.” John and Esther continued, “They found good soil covered with grass from fine mountain grass up to the big wheat grass and reeds two to eight feet high, also a few poor miserable Indians, the wolf, the antelope and the grizzly bear roamed at large over the prairie.” John and Esther Bennion seemingly cast an interpretation that easily could represent many settlers in a daunting wilderness. There seemed to be promising agricultural land, but also Native peoples and predators, which they viewed as “obstacles.”

John and Esther Bennion were also observant of the political state of their location as well as the persuasion Brigham Young had on the land stating,

There is now extended over this country a territorial government by the United States. President Brigham Young is our governor. We believe that still better days are ahead, home manufacture is encouraged and is going on which will greatly increase the wealth and independence of this people.

Their commitment to Brigham Young tested their faith even further when lands occupied by the Bennion family were “requested” by Young for the means of a Church farm. They moved and eventually found their permanent home near present-day Taylorsville, Utah. According to John Bennion, the land was notorious for “difficult and tedious” soil. Their solution to the unfruitful ground— “is found in the fact that the pioneer Bennions and Harkers brought with them from their eastern homes several cows and sheep, from which

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nucleus have grown herds of cows and sheep.”

Hard work to cultivate the land for farming eventually bore the fruits of the harvest, a point of pride to the Bennion family. Nevertheless, survival came from the communal sharing of land and livestock, demonstrating “the very highest respect, confidence, and brotherly love.” Each family [Bennion and Harker] treated and respected each other’s livestock as their own in a communal way, an idea that was later forgotten or disregarded by descendants who looked back on the pioneers with pride but became pivotal for the survival of the Mormon settlers. While the documents do not indicate if they shared the wealth, they protected each other’s livestock and shared resources.

Communalism was an essential method of survival that historians have pointed to in early Mormon settlements as a pivotal survival tactic. Author Sara Dant elaborates on early Mormon settlement being heavily dependent on communalism, utilizing strategies of Native peoples to cultivate the land. Dant states, “The LDS prophet [Brigham Young] preached a message of communalism that suffused Mormon settlement of the American West and set it apart from the many individualistic and capitalistic pursuits that had dominated other Euro-American colonization efforts.” While early settlers focused on community and autarky to survive in their newly established “Zion,” a war was waged on predatory species, the “wasters and destroyers” that stood in the way of survival. This war had a long-lasting impact on one species—the hunter of sheep, the enemy in religious allegory, the wolf. In total, amongst various hunting parties, 1,414

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54 Bennion, The Bennion Family of Utah, 42.
55 Bennion, The Bennion Family of Utah, 43.
wolves were exterminated from the Great Basin region in the spring of 1849 alone, and upwards of 500,000 predators were eliminated between 1915 and 1923.\(^{58}\)

White Utah agriculturalists generally acted under standard landscape practice across the West by removing predators the descendants of pioneer settlers fought to prove their “Americanness” by following conservation efforts throughout the United States. While the LDS Church doctrine remained obscure to many Americans, the followers continued to abide by leaders' teachings. Wallace Stegner said of these followers and the budding political stance of the Church, “Their loyalty, in other words, was first of all to the Church and the Prophet, its leader, and that unswerving loyalty gave rise to a theocratic and patriarchal form of government.”\(^{59}\) By the turn of the century, Utah had become a state. Church leaders, and settlers abandoned the idea of economic independence to become a state. However, the land use practice pre-statehood settlers in Utah became influential for future generations. Early pioneer memories would become what I have come to call a “deseret pioneer” identity that pulled in ideas of economic independence, self-sufficiency, and the memory of sacrifices made by individuals that toiled to convert the landscape into an “Eden.” The “deseret pioneer” identity would influence future endeavors of agriculture, public grazing, and land use as Church officials and citizens gained statehood by 1896. LDS settlers, perhaps begrudgingly, abandoned Mormon self-sufficiency with the expanding of the economy between 1860 to 1880 that

\(^{58}\) “American Society of Range Management” No. 13, vol. 5, Range management collection, Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department; this text is a look at the sheep industry in 1923 and states that between 1915-1923 500,000 predators were eliminated from the “12 western states.” Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious*, 179-181. For predatory hunting see Victor Sorenson, “The Wasters and DestROYERS: Community-Sponsored Predator Control in Early Utah Territory,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 62 (Winter 1994): 26-41.

\(^{59}\) Wallace Stegner, *Mormon Country*, 94.
relaxed a Church hold on to local resources, and placed Utah within the larger expansion of the United States.\textsuperscript{60}

On January 4, 1896, Utah entered the United States. The timing of this situates itself within the same period of a national push towards understanding the damage of grazing done on western landscapes. In 1891, Congress passed the General Land Law Revision Act, which authorized the President of the United States to set aside land for forest reserves from the public domain. Early forestation science intended to focus on watersheds and forests. However, it inevitably focused on another key issue, one that Mormon settlers had adopted upon settlement, agriculture, and the grazing land their livestock subsisted on.\textsuperscript{61} Author Dan Flores states of this bill, “Public retention of the mountains, perhaps the most critical legislation ever passed for the perpetuation of civilization in the American West, came about with astonishingly little fanfare.”\textsuperscript{62} The General Land Law Revision Act set the stage for the early establishment of the forest service; regulated use and fees for specific uses started the “principles of federal ownership.” The Uinta Forest Reserve was established by 1897, with ten more following over the next thirteen years. Flores notes the early sentiments of the people of Utah: “perhaps because early Church regulation of resources had established a precedent of control, the people of Utah were more solidly in favor of the National Forest plan,” but continually pressured the Forest Service for more leeway on land use policies.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{60} Arrington, \textit{The Great Basin Kingdom}, 94-95. Arrington argues that property ownership was less restrictive after a booming economy thanks to the gold rush of 1849. Local resources were no longer dependent for survival and provided an avenue for economic gain. This shift is significant in the ideas of communalism from early church settlers to the settlers at the turn of the century.
\textsuperscript{63} Dan Flores, “Zion in Eden,” 333.
By 1905, at the time of the creation of forest reserves run by the Forest Service, Utah agriculturalists, and stock growers had long recognized the impact of overgrazing and sought the aid of the newly established forest reserve system. In a plea for aid and a demonstration of patriotism by asking for federal help, stock growers eyed solutions for decaying rangeland. Senator George Sutherland of Millard, Utah, petitioned Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson, asking that he consider a new forest reserve above the towns of Kanosh, Meadow, Fillmore, Holden, Oak City, and Lemington. Overgrazing at the hands of local ranchers and other state ranchers had debilitated the range by reducing the natural vegetation, bringing on soil erosion, flooding, and disappearing spring water. This petition's main concern was water, a lifeblood source for desert communities. The idea of a forest reserve seemed plausible, as dust and declining water sources had left the settlers desperate and angry. Uncle Sam’s aid to set aside a forest reserve helped with the growing rate of forest fires, “which are now common because carelessness of trespassers,” and to preserve the precious streams for irrigation. The Forest Service would become the acting agency involved in protecting areas similar to Kanosh, Meadow, Fillmore, Holden, Oak City, and Lemington.

The newly appointed Forest Service, an agency that shifted from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture in 1905, had a tall task of understanding and restoring rangeland. By 1910 the Forest Service pushed for better scientific knowledge to improve debilitated rangeland in the West. The Grazing Branch of the

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65 “File Petition for Forest Reserve,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 16, 1905, [https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6dr45gp/13776991](https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6dr45gp/13776991).
Forest Service used plant succession science to blend European-style land management with scientific understandings of plant growth.\textsuperscript{66} Dynamic Ecology, a theory developed in 1905 by EF Clements, suggests that plants pass through a development cycle. This would become pivotal in later giving Clements the title “father of range science.”\textsuperscript{67} This theory suggested that plants struggled early in their development stage, but once they reached a certain point, they would hold strong. The first field station created to study this was in the Manti National Forest in Utah. With this field station, field scientists could monitor and study the amount of grazing feasible in a particular area and the “availability of forage provided by a successional stage of vegetation.”\textsuperscript{68} The creation of the Utah Field Experiment Station ushered in some of the most intensive range studies in Utah.\textsuperscript{69} Utah became an area of centralized focus on the well-being of agriculture. While there seemed to be some pride in this, it led to a tumultuous relationship with the federal government.

The twentieth century ushered in conservation ideals of resource protection through public interest and government reforms that sought to address social inequalities as the nation rapidly urbanized.\textsuperscript{70} Progressive ideals also brought strong religious undertones that combined protestant morality with capitalism and democracy to create a Christian stewardship over forest reserves.\textsuperscript{71} Conservation, an ideal heavily promoted during this era, advocated the wise use of nature to protect the nation and its use by future

\textsuperscript{66} Rowley, \textit{US Forest Service Grazing and Rangeland}, 101-103.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Dant, \textit{Losing Eden}, 104-105.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
generations. Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service, would become one of the most famous conservation advocates, focusing largely on forest reserves and timber.\textsuperscript{72} In 1910, sheep growers in Utah showed their disdain for “overregulated” forest reserves by voicing their joy when “Gifford Pinchot done got fired.”\textsuperscript{73} Gifford Pinchot favored regulation that sparked ire with the Utah wool growers. President of the Utah Wool Growers, E.H. Callister, stated his opinion on Pinchot and his ideas of regulation,

I think this has been a hobby of his, but I do not believe he has been intentionally vicious. Where he made a big mistake was in appointing people who were hostile to the sheep's interests everywhere. In fact, this was the universal rule, it seems to me what we want in the office that Pinchot will vacate is a practical man who understands stock conditions. Such a man can be found in the West. But there must not be another man with views such as Pinchot permitted to be worked out by his force.\textsuperscript{74}

The Utah Wool Growers respected Gifford Pinchot, favored government, and management of these spaces was necessary. However, these spaces became heavily contested with government officials not concerned with local interests. This idea solidifies what Dan Flores observed of early Anglo-American people from Utah favoring forest reserves, but only as long as they aligned with sacred ideals.

With the Forest Service, protected forests, and wolves inhabiting those forests, the Utah Wool Growers Association members had to keep their heads swiveling; multiple fronts plagued their production. Government regulation remained a constant threat, alongside deteriorating rangeland caused by overgrazing that spoiled the landscape for cattlemen, eventually leading to the range wars of the West.\textsuperscript{75} Before grazing allotments

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} “Wool Growers Happy Over the Removal,” \textit{The Salt Lake Tribune}, January 1, 1918, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6jm3mt1/14117653.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} “The Sheep Industry,” \textit{American Society of Range Management} 13, vol. 5, Utah State University, Special Collections and Archive Department.
from the Forest Service, sheep and cattle ranchers fought over grazing space. Sheepherders were often seen as the more egregious offender because sheep were more destructive to local vegetation, causing feuds between cattlemen and sheep herders. However, a familiar foe in predators—wolves—harassed sheep herders in Utah and nationwide. President George Austin analyzed the industry conditions in a scathing speech before the Utah Wool Growers Association in 1916. He claimed that one of the greatest evils facing wool growers was wolves. Austin points to the economic loss from predatory animals, “nothing less than a ten percent loss annually to herds,” coupled with the high cost of processing wool as the reason for wolves and predatory species alike being evil.76 In the same year, trappers and hunters killed 40,344 predators, giving $68,265 in bounties, and becoming a lucrative business. Of these 40,344 animals, only 151 were marked as wolf kills.77 Perhaps the only strategy Austin presented to the group was a united front claiming “it is far easier to combat evil as an organization than as individuals and cheaper too, for that matter. Predatory animals are the worst enemies today of the wool growers.”78 To gain favor of all citizens residing in Utah, tales of wolves provided agriculturalists the justification in continuing to eradicate wolves and a method to unite Church members to memorialize their ancestors' struggles.

The early settlers of Utah Territory faced many conflicts in arid landscapes, established Native peoples, and predators (such as wolves) that stood in the way of agricultural growth. Wolves represented a time past, a time of persecution, a time of

suffering, a time of nature untamed, a time of land unprofitable. The death of a wolf and
the coming together of a community to fend off a beast for the sake of rugged
individualism all become powerful memories that helped a community grow and
flourish. Stories passed down by early settlers inspired, provided comedic relief, and
brought solidarity with tales of humans overcoming wolves. One such story transcribed
by Austin and Alta S. Fife and told by Mary S. Hilton shows how Utah settlers viewed
wolves and how this impacted local establishments.

Twas in the middle of the winter when they decided to have a big dance in
the barn, so they sent for Uncle Tom. Twas late when he got his chores done and
he began walking toward Plain City, and found that he couldn't go along the usual
road because of the drifts, so he cut back over across the Weber River and started
down through the river bottoms by Wilson Lane. As he was walking along he
heard in the distance a [howl]. He had heard there was timber wolves around, but
he didn't pay much attention until suddenly over on the other side came an echo-
ing [howl]. Pretty soon he could hear something behind him, then on the other
side [howl], and suddenly he realized that it was a wolf pack gathering.

He hurried through the snow as fast as he could go, and finally came to the
ca
bin where the McFarland boys had boiled their molasses called the Old
Molasses House. He went inside and hastily shut the door, all the time hearing
the wolves getting closer and closer. He was very frightened -- but when he
turned around and saw that someone had removed the window, because it wasn't
very far from the ground if the wolves were really hungry they would jump in.
He hardly knew what to do. He looked around and saw the huge stone fireplace
and decided, 'Well, I could climb up there and they couldn't catch me.' So he went
up the fireplace, and suddenly remembering his violin he scrambled down again
and took it with him. He sat up in the top of the fireplace with the wolves around
him howling and jumping.

Suddenly they began to build a ladder just as you've seen pictures of them
do. One wolf braced his feet against the side of the cabin, and another wolf
jumped on his back, and another one jumped on his back. In the meantime, the
people at the dance began to be worried because Tom hadn't come. So several of
the boys went out and hitched up a team to a sled and started out hunting for him,
and went down just the very trail they thought he would take in. As they were
driving through Wilson they heard the howling of the wolves and turned over
toward the Old Molasses House. And then as they drew nearer they could hear
Uncle Tom. He suddenly remembered that animals were charmed by music, and
there he sat on the top of the chimney fiddling away as hard as he could THE
TURKEY IN THE STRAW.

79 Coleman, *Vicious*, 174-175.
The boys shot the wolf— at the wolves and killed one of them. The rest of them were frightened and ran away and they rescued poor old Tom. But he nearly died of pneumonia. And when they counted the wolves’ tracks around the cabin they found as near as they could tell there were more than seventeen wolves in the pack.

In many ways, the memory of persecution is still relevant in Utah. Like the story, the image above also indicates how Anglo-American Utah livestock growers felt about wolves. As a slide from 1915, the image and description offer a glimpse into how pioneers and their descendants viewed wolves. To combat the perceived ferociousness of wolves and to label them as enemies, colonial institutions fostered the idea of wolves as an enemy of progress. In Utah, early settlers accomplished this through early settlers and their affiliation with the religious institutions of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.\textsuperscript{81} Brigham Young’s economically independent mindset crafted early associations, such as the Utah Wool Growers, that would eventually involve themselves within National Wool Growers associations. However, as one of the “public land states,” Utah


\textsuperscript{81} Coleman, \textit{Vicious}, 5.
agriculturalists would weave their pioneer foundations with national anti-wolf sentiments that would help in the extirpation of wolves in Utah by 1930 and almost the entire lower forty-eight states by the 1940s.

It is easy to draw the connection of opposition between agriculturalists and wolves. However, the fervor at which western settlers hunted and mutilated wolves "shows far less restraint and far more perversity." This theme of opposition is familiar with Mormon pioneers and other settlers in landscapes containing wolves. It is one author Timothy Rawson addresses in his book Changing Tracks: Predators and Politics in Mt. McKinley National Park. Timothy Rawson examines the "wolf-sheep controversy" in Mount McKinley National Park (now recognized as Denali National Park) and how this controversy has been an important factor in future wildlife management projects. Like other environmental historians, Rawson concludes that negative perceptions, economic justification, and tradition shaped early negative sentiment toward wolves. These ideas shaped the 1930s and 40s controversy, and it was not until the turn of the century that wolves began to gain favor in public spaces.

Similar to Utah and the National Parks before 1930, debates over wildlife management in the public domain dictated the fate of wolves. Celebrated hunters in Utah were honored with hero-esque status during the twentieth century during heavy campaigns from local, regional, and national entities to rid Utah of wolves. Roy Musselman reached this heroic status as a hired gun for local ranches in Southeast Utah. In 1927, a local newspaper accredited Musselman with “…2100 lynx or bob cats, 6000

84 Timothy Rawson, Changing Tracks, 3.
coyotes, 1500 foxes, 6000 skunks, 43 wolves and 4 lions,” numbers that would earn him
the title as best trapper in the region.\textsuperscript{85} Wolves killed thousands of dollars’ worth of slain
livestock, which led to high bounty prices on particularly troublesome wolves such as Big
Foot, whose pelt alone brought in one thousand dollars. In 1938, the last wolf was killed
by Roy’s nephew Rusty, solidifying the end goal of the total extermination of wolves
from the region.\textsuperscript{86}

Between the founding of the National Park Service in 1916 and 1925, wolves
drew the ire of more than just local ranchers but also National Park rangers and park
superintendents who decided to eradicate wolves and predator species. Within
Yellowstone National Park, America's first National Park became the “guinea pig” of
policies. Questions of what to preserve and why became controversial. The championed
ideas of famed conservationists and preservationists John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt
helped pass the Organic Act in 1916.\textsuperscript{87} With the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park
Service was born. During this creation and shift towards tourism, the significance of the
National Parks is in the wording of the Organic Act,

The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal
areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified
by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purposes of the said
parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and
the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the
enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them
unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{85} “Roy Musselman and the Extermination of the Wolf,” \textit{History Blazer} (August 1995), USHS,
https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6639p3f/419350.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Dant, \textit{Losing Eden}, 104.
\textsuperscript{88} “Organic Act of 1916.” National Park Service. Last modified February 5, 2017,
With the goal of conservation and tourism in mind, the early stages of the National Park Service mirrored ideas and management styles from European wildlife management programs. As the early European experience of America drew humans closer to wolves, wolf and human evolution created a rivalry that has evolved into a natural disdain with the introduction of livestock.  

Utah’s relationship with national parks and the National Park Service varied since the creation of National Parks in 1916. In the early stages of the Park Service, Utah residents seemed excited at the prospect of a new form of industry, tourism, aided by the Northern Pacific railroad that would become a small bump in Utah’s economy. It would not take long before Utah would get its own National Park. In 1909, William Howard Taft, under the power of the Antiquities Act, would protect Zion Canyon, which would get National Park status by 1919. However, the National Park Service and Utah agriculturalists’ relationship would quickly become tainted. Author Betsy Gaines Quammen argues that cowboys altered the paths used to relocate their livestock, and the paths once favorable to ranchers inside the park were no longer friendly to livestock. Wolf removal in Utah mirrored what happened in Yellowstone, removing predators to combat livestock depredation and protect the wild game. The National Park Service acted under federal order to eliminate wolves at the hands of rangers on public lands. Similarly, in Utah, agents from the Biological Survey and state trappers hunted wolves to complete extirpation in the region.

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88 Coleman, Vicious, 11.
90 The Salt Lake Tribune from 1916 onward would report of visitors passing through Utah to get to Yellowstone.
91 Betsy Gaines Quammen, American Zion: Cliven Bundy, God and Public Lands in the West (Torrey House Press, Salt Lake: UT, 2019), 111-114.
Near the end of the nineteenth century, and prior to the establishment of the Forest Service, forest reserves, National parks (what would become National Parks thanks to the Antiquities Act of 1906), and bounties at the state level served as the main form of predator control on the public domain. However, the beginning of the twentieth century ushered in a new government funded agency, the Bureau of Biological Survey (it would take nine tries to settle on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), striving to consolidate the issue of predatory species preying on agricultural livestock. In 1905, the Bureau of Biological Survey became a partial brainchild of Stanley Young, an enthusiastic hunter from Colorado, who successfully lobbied for predator control as a home defense by the end of WWI.\textsuperscript{92}

By the twentieth century, bounty systems on wolf eradication began to dwindle, primarily due to the creation of the Biological Survey. Congress became less concerned with pure science towards environmental issues, and Western agriculturalists became angry that public lands became a refuge for predator species. The Bureau of Biological Survey survived by becoming the solution to predator species.\textsuperscript{93} Utah stock growers, specifically the Utah Wool Growers, had a tumultuous relationship with the federal branch. In 1919, state representatives and the Biological Survey came to a head over the federal representative in place for the state. The threat of losing a federal entity that spent upwards of $30,000 on predator elimination did not seem to matter to Utah agriculturalists who stated, “the attitude of the Biological Survey men was that the state should simply act by signing the vouchers as presented to it by the survey

representative,” or in other words, the stock men were most concerned with the power federal agents had at hiring or firing hunters and trappers.94 Utah stockmen continually fluctuated with federal aid and tried to assert their power over how their contributed money went towards predator removal programs. Federal trappers, employed by the Bureau of Biological Survey had created a divide between local and federal interests. Federal removal of predators would persist through the early twentieth-century eliminating wolves from the West by 1926. The debates on public lands would never subside but would intensify again in the 1950s with a push for more federally protected land and the predators on those landscapes.

The Utah Wool Growers Association had a significant role in land use policies in Utah and predator policy within the state. One document that supports this is a speech given by J.R. Broadbent in an address on November 12, 1958, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the Special Senate Interior Sub Committee. J.R. Broadbent, built upon years of ideas and sentiments of past leaders, his role as President of the Utah Wool Growers as a representative of the wool industry speaks to the sentiment of Utah’s stock growers towards predators—specifically wolves, public lands, and federal mandates that directly impacted the wool industry in Utah.

In response to Senate Bill 1176, which would become the Wilderness Act of 1964, Broadbent said,

the policy of Congress to administer the national forests with the general objectives of multiple uses and sustained yields, and in order to carry out this policy, the Secretary of Agriculture is accordingly directed to administer the

national forests on a multiple-use basis so that the resources thereof will be used and developed to produce a sustained yield of products and services.\textsuperscript{95}

J.R. Broadbent pointedly states that as a grazing state, Utah only controlled 22\% of the land competed on by various agriculturalists that limit and exhaust resources within this small space. Broadbent's language throughout the document is aggressive and “anti-government” and at one point refers to the federal government as an “absentee landlord.” Broadbent also states both his heritage as a generational rancher to the state's larger pioneer “heritage” that worked diligently to “make the desert blossom as a rose” and make suitable homes for “themselves and their posterity.”\textsuperscript{96} The Bill would establish protected “wilderness areas” to a “primeval environment.” Broadbent’s address contains many mentions of many Utahns' understanding of the landscape, heritage, and doubt for the necessity of more federally protected land.

J.R. Broadbent’s speech represents the ideals of the Utah Wool Growers Association towards livestock, grazing, and local resources for their economic gain. His, at times, aggressive wording indicates a larger sentiment within the state’s agricultural sphere. This speech mirrors the tone of other speeches and newspaper coverings in the late 50s in that Utah agriculturalists—sheep and wool growers—wanted public lands turned over to the state and, at points, privatized to avoid federal policies altogether. This document built on the growing worry of federal overreach on landscapes that the wool growers used for sheep.

\textsuperscript{95} Statement of JR Broadbent to Special Senate Interior Sub Committee, November 12, 1958, box 1, folder 16, Utah Wool Growers Association Papers, 1943-1972, Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department. Logan, Utah. (Hereafter cited as UWGA papers).

\textsuperscript{96} JR Broadbent to Interior Sub Committee, November 12, 1958, UWGA papers.
Federal land ownership alarmed many stockholders and became a roadblock to economic survival. Much concern and focus went into combating the policies that rolled out of Congress. With the support of stock growers such as the Utah Wool Growers Association, Utah politicians voiced their concern and dismay at the potential for a wilderness protection act. In 1956, the base property value for total sheep in Utah was just shy of $80 million, which gave Utah’s economy a nice bump. Frederick P. Champ, a native Utahn and well-respected financial advisor offered his advice to the Utah Wool Growers Association, which faced more restricted land use. Champ's expertise allowed him to show how to continually turn a profit even in the face of the federal government's overreaching hand. Champ states, “I have learned that a consistently successful range livestock producer must be and is a genuine conservationist.” Working side by side with federally protected land, and conserving the resources used to feed sheep and other livestock, would mutually benefit the stock growers and the federal goals of conserved landscapes. Nevertheless, the real issue for Utah woolgrowers was laws from the government, not by man. However, to the dismay of the wool growers, conservation efforts seemed to muddy the line of a workable relationship with the federal government and stock growers that utilized the public domain for grazing their sheep.

Early establishment of Mormon pioneers in the “Wasatch Oasis,” a phrase coined by prominent Utah historian Thomas Alexander, found early Church leaders and

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98 Ibid.
members opposed to the federal government. Ideas of federal overreach had continually found their way into American agricultural discourse, largely surfacing before the establishment of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Frederick P. Champs’ comments hit their mark with Utah wool growers as he chastised conservation efforts that eyed more government-controlled land with “undue expansion of single-use areas comprising national parks, monuments, and so-called recreational or wilderness areas withdrawn from productive use and dedicated to recreational use.” Secondly, “an apparent weakening in the application of the principle of multiple-use to those lands, such as National Forests and grazing districts which are needed and expected to produce food and fiber as well as recreational and other values.” Champ quickly attacks single-use conservation to impair local economies. The solution to the Wilderness Act would then be for a “statutory base for the privilege of grazing on the National Forests,” all of which would benefit the “livestock industry, improve the range, help preserve the watersheds, restore the value of grazing privileges, promote the multiple-use principle of public land administration, eliminate discrimination, and reduce controversies.” Public grazing on the domain, in the mind of Frederick Champ, would improve range quality and boost the economy surrounding livestock. However, this mindset would continue land use practices that would exclude predator species until 1963, when biologists question policies restrictive to predators.

100 Statement from Frederick Champ, January 8, 1958. William D. Hurst Papers, 1935-2001, box 25, folder 7, Utah State University, Special Collections and Archive Department. (Hereafter referred to as William Hurst papers).
101 Ibid.
In 1963, A. Starker Leopold and his fellow advisory board members on wildlife management wrote a report entitled “Wildlife Management in the National Parks.” This report, later known simply as the “Leopold Report,” looked at park policies regarding animal conservation and predator control. The “Leopold Report” states, “The goal of managing the national parks and monuments should be to preserve, or where necessary to recreate, the ecologic scene as viewed by the first European visitors.”

However, this aspect of a “European inherited” environment is a naive one and disregards what Dan Flores states as, “15,000 years of Indian life in America and the obvious manipulation of continental ecology that implied, the Leopold Report recommended that the national parks be considered wilderness vignettes and preserved in the timeless condition they enjoyed when white eyes first fell on them.”

Science becomes a focal point of the Leopold Report with wording like “A greatly expanded research program, oriented to management needs, must be developed within the National Park Service itself. Both research and the application of management methods should be in the hands of skilled park personnel.” The Leopold Report still was not enough to change policies but allowed for a more “mature” America to grow in the late 1960s. “It advanced the radical idea that we offer ethical treatment —at least by guaranteeing their right [predators] to coexist on the planet with us—to other species.”

The report circulated amongst agriculturalists, especially the Utah Wool Growers Association, and alarmed them. The

103 Flores, Coyote America, 161, 187.
105 Flores, Coyote America, 161, 187.
Leopold Report simply analyzed predator policies but represented an undoing of decades worth of money and time spent on removing predator species.

Early Church settlers in the Great Basin region toiled and built a landscape void of wolves in order to situate themselves between coastal establishments and federal expansion into these regions. With a commitment to autarky, aided by economic fragility, Brigham Young taught the importance of economic self-independence. Therein stood the basis of an identity that would strengthen with the threat on their livestock. Wolves stood in the way of a Mormon community, and over the course of about one-hundred years, Mormon settlers and federal trappers eliminated wolves from the Utah landscape between 1930 and 1940. Institutions such as the Utah Wool Growers Association, a local organization that combined itself with a National Wool Growers Association, built on early land cultivation practices that necessitated livestock protection. While the Utah Wool Growers blended in National practices and concerns of the larger woolen economy, the Utah Wool Growers association re-enforced locally their connection to the Mormon faith and their “pioneer identity” that has remained a source of pride amongst members of the Church. There is much to say about American identity, but some of the most identifiable traits of Americans, particularly western Americans, are the idea of rugged individualism, cowboys, freedom, and land (private and public).

Utah members of the church find identity in many of these traits, but for many, their connection to the LDS Church further adds to this. By becoming a state in 1896, early settlers and their descendants set out to prove themselves by adhering to American ideals of the yeoman farmer. By doing this, agriculturists were preserving their heritage and building on an identity that aligned with a “mythic frontier” of western landscapes.
conquered by steadfast individuals. Western landscapes promoted hope for Utah settlers this is very true. Under changing perspectives of landscape management during this century, anxieties over land practices would cause agriculturalists to fall on a “deseret pioneer” identity to understand a growing concern for environmental degradation.

In the late 1960s, a groundbreaking article by Lynn White Jr attacked Christianity, pointing a heavy finger at Christian faiths being the cause of environmental crisis. The article “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” would generate numerous responses, many of which were from authors applying this article to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The reason for this focus on the Mormon faith came from White’s heavy criticism of land use practices in the Great Basin region. Subsistence farming and land distribution, both early practices within the pioneer landscape, profoundly changed pioneers’ relationship with the earth. Settlers had been a part of nature and quickly became exploiters. Human ecology had affected how pioneers viewed the things around them, causing them to feel as if they were masters. Religion had helped pioneers understand their human ecology by shaping their understanding of nature and destiny.

More specifically, White argued that the victory of Christianity over paganism became a “psychic revolution” in our culture. He explained that western Christianity especially has become the most “anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen” and

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has insisted that it is God’s will that man exploits nature “for his proper ends.”

Christianity is a stark contrast to paganism, where every living thing has a genius loci (guardian spirit), and by destroying animism or the idea of spirits in living organisms, Christianity made it possible to alter landscapes for their will drastically. Brigham Young blended cultural and religious ideologies in land use, and Lynn White Jr’s analysis helps illuminate how Brigham Young accomplished the task of controlling the landscape. White says, “The consistency with which scientists during the long formative centuries of western science said that the task and reward of the scientist was to think God's thoughts after him and that modern western science was cast in a matrix of Christian theology.” In other words, Christianity, and its triumph over animism, has impacted and influenced modern science.

Mormon settlers and their descendants utilized land use practices typical of European settlers and blended a Christian understanding of land use established by Brigham Young and the Law of Consecration. The “deseret pioneer” identity began under necessity with controlled resources by Church leaders and would establish ideas of communalism that would be relevant in years to come. With the turn of the century, the “deseret pioneer” identity began to represent more the recognition of individual self-sufficiency aided by tales of early settler’s contributions to their faith and one another. They ditched their communal origins to align more with the “Christian mainstream and evolved from anti-American pacifists to conservative Republican patriots.” This idea

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of settlement and development seems to be the highlight of Mormon remembrance, but that remembrance tends to ignore early settlers' communal practices.\textsuperscript{112} The connection to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has set Utah aside as a bastion of conservative values that have guided environmental decisions within the state, impacting species such as wolves and setting the stage for larger anti-public land movements setting the stage for larger environmental movements. Wolves have become a symbol of federal overreach by taking away state control of wildlife management that stands in the way of "pioneer ideals," particularly in Utah. However, wolves have also historically represented wilderness as the antithesis of progress. While Utah may be similar to other states opposing or radically attempting to remove wolves, the connection to the LDS Church demonstrates how Utah’s unique history towards pioneer survival has created a cultural cognition that has helped mandate policies towards wolves.

\textsuperscript{112} Stoll, \textit{Inherit the Holy Mountain}, 231.
Chapter Two: Politics and Agriculture

As a rancher, I am not as opposed to the fur-bearing type of wolf as I am to the briefcase-bearing one.


In 2023, while researching documents from the Utah Wool Growers Association collection, I uncovered the lone page of a bill suggesting a wolf transfer to Liberty Park in downtown Salt Lake City.\textsuperscript{113} At first, I thought I had missed something big in the history of wolves. A proposal to transfer wolves to a suburban area seemed both odd and intriguing. After further investigation through JSTOR, digitized newspapers, and archival databases I was unable to find anything confirming this bill was ever real. I reached out to author and environmental historian Dan Flores, who suggested that this may have been a tongue-in-cheek proposal by the Utah Wool Growers Association and other agriculturalists to show environmentalists what it would be like to have wolves in their backyard.\textsuperscript{114} With no other evidence supporting the validity of a wolf transfer to Liberty Park, this bill proposal seemed more likely to be a façade.

What this bill does suggest, however, is that the relationship between pro-wolf advocates and agriculturalists in Utah aligns with the larger national status of environmentalism and its opponents at the end of the twentieth century. Wolves would not resurface as an issue until the end of the twentieth century, but the anti-wolf fervor was set in the 1960s and 1970s with a litany of wilderness and wildlife protections that

\textsuperscript{113} Utah Wool Growers Association addendum, “Public Lands Committee,” collection 218, box 1, folder 5, Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department. Logan, Utah. (Hereafter cited as UWGA Addendum)

\textsuperscript{114} Email to author January 25, 2023.
would bring varying perspectives on wilderness. Ranchers, hunters, and wildlife advocates in Utah attempted to find common ground, and in Utah the “deseret pioneer” identity would divide politicians and agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{115} Like the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, wolves represented the limits states had against the federal government. In Utah, the response to wolves and their protection under the Endangered Species Act paralleled other western states. However, Utah added one more bullet to the magazine of anti-government fervor in the mid-twentieth-century US West: a “deseret pioneer” identity that utilized the pioneer heritage as well as the economic independence taught by Brigham Young. Utah agriculturalists became amorphous in their regard towards the federal government, accepting aid when beneficial and crying foul when infringements came through federal dictations on public landscapes. What became a commonality was falling back to a “deseret pioneer” identity that pulled in both a collective, romanticized recollections of pioneer struggles and commitment to communal survival.

On April 2, 1966, the small town of Vernal, in the eastern corner of Utah, dedicated the day to famed state representative and longtime resident and sheepherder Briant H. Stringham, formally calling it “Bry Days.” At a local Uintah high school, and under much fanfare, Governor Don Clyde gave a speech highlighting some of Briant “Bry” Stringham’s most remembered state conservation contributions. Governor Clyde says of Stringham,

As a businessman, Bry is known throughout the state and the West for his success in the sheep industry where he has contributed, throughout his lifetime, to the sound development of the community and state in which he lived. He is typical of

the group of men and women who have maintained their independence throughout the years without unreasonable government subsidy.  

Clyde’s remarks point to important ideals, Stringham was “known to virtually every Utahn in the Colorado River Basin and every sheepman in the entire West.” A message of independence and minimized reliance on government aid set “Bry” Stringham as nothing short of a political hero. Other local sources wrote that Stringham’s pioneer stock contributed to his value as a state legislator. Governor Clyde’s words showed nothing less than admiration for a man that had helped boost his local community as well as his endeavors in helping to move the state forward.

In 1966, the same year Bry Stringham became a hometown hero for his high praise as a civil servant in Utah, national predatory animal issues arose to challenge agriculturalists. Stringham would attack a government initiative meant to reduce compensation due to livestock loss caused by predatory animals. Stringham would utilize his “deseret pioneer” identity to challenge a government that had neglected his ancestors while they were developing a hostile terrain, and now attempted to neglect his livelihood. In his capacity as a National Wool Growers Association Predatory Animal Committee member, Stringham wrote a letter to all state associations. Concerns of wildlife depredation had forced the Wool Growing Associations to act. Stringham felt that presenting in Washington D.C. would demonstrate local land users' knowledge and expertise on predator issues. However, to combat coyote populations, local stock growers

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116 Briant H. Stringham papers, 1940-1980. (COLL MSS 48), box 5, folder 3. Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department. (Hereafter referred to as Stringham papers)
117 "Vernal Man Candidate for GOP Nomination," Milford News, May 11, 1944. https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=5262556&facet_type=%22article%22&q=Briant+H.+Stringham &year_start=1942&year_end=1991 in 1944, when Stringham ran for state legislature, one of the first mentions is of his pioneer heritage and lineage connected to Vernal. See also Stringham papers box 5, Folder 3.
118 Stringham papers, box 16, folder 8.
needed federal government help through livestock loss appropriations. Stringham’s tactic was to arouse the National Wool Growers Association: “Gentlemen: Hell’s hot and so is this predatory animal problem. Are we just going to sit there and let those who are opposed to control of predators, with their great numbers, finally eliminate the appropriations entirely, or are we going to get up and fight”? Stringham further proclaimed, “It is important we know immediately who your representative will be.”

Letters sent to various National Wool Growers members who would attend the meeting in Washington D.C. stressed that specific points be covered. Of these points’ predator depredations on big game populations, stress to sheep, a $350,000 budget cut for predator depredation to livestock, federal land ownership, and the “golden eagle problem” were the main focal points. The letter called for organization and five-minute statements covering specific issues in hopes of retaining federal aid in predator removal.

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119 Stringham papers Box 5, folder 3.
120 Stringham papers Box 5, folder 3.
While not directly about wolves, another debate surrounding wildlife and the federal government in the 1960s known as the “gold eagle problem” requires some exploration here in order to illuminate how the federal government’s relationship evolved towards canid predators. The “gold eagle problem” touched on by Stringham had recently received an amendment to the 1962 Bald Eagle Act that would allow hunting or removal of the endangered bird in areas impacting agriculturists. In a report released in 1967 by the Committee of Bird Protection, it states, “The 1962 amendment to the Bald Eagle Act, extending protection to the Golden Eagle, contains a disastrous provision allowing control of the latter in regions where damage to livestock is believed to
occur.”\(^\text{121}\) The solution to this problem? Reduce the limitations that the Bald Eagle Act would have on the sheep and goat industry. The idea of federal restrictions on sheep growers to protect their herds had caused Briant Stringham to make this a central focus in D.C. While environmental control at the hands of the “feds” intimidated agriculturalists, especially those Stringham represented, the general tone for environmentalism was being set both politically and generally through fierce advocates in the sixties and seventies.

The political climate of the sixties and seventies was everchanging, focusing on landscapes, and the mass use of chemicals. Questions around pesticides such as DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) had spawned Rachel Carson to write her monumental text *Silent Spring* in 1962. Questions around chemicals such as DDT halted their use, in fear of losing precious wildlife like the American symbol—the Golden Eagle.

Agriculturalists such as Briant Stringham were concerned with the policies that proceeded the release of *Silent Spring*. While no evidence shows Stringham commenting on *Silent Spring*, as a representative of Utah’s agricultural community, his concerns over protecting livestock from predatory birds illustrate that the concern for livestock safety outweighed protection for predatory birds. Rachel Carson’s writing explored how the mass use of chemicals on crops, forests, and fields had unintended consequences on species, specifically the national symbol of the eagle.\(^\text{122}\) Historian Adam Sowards interprets the title of *Silent Spring* as Carson posing the question of imagining a world of silence because all birds had died, and the symbolic eagle had declined due to poisoning through DDT-infested animals.\(^\text{123}\) Many historians mark the beginning of the modern


\(^{123}\) Ibid., 148.
environmental movement with the release of Rachel Carson’s text. However, it would be incomplete without the protective legislation of Presidents John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon that focused on protecting nature from exploitation.\textsuperscript{124} Carson’s work inspired not only respected politicians but also aided in ending aerial spraying of DDT by the Forest Service.\textsuperscript{125} Carson’s focus on insecticides would lead to big changes that would cause Western agriculturalists, specifically the Utah Wool Growers Association, to challenge more federal regulations that would come through restrictions of strychnine or 1080 poison traps for coyotes.\textsuperscript{126}

In the 1970s, alongside a national push towards conservation and environmentally-minded politics, Utah politicians shifted their focus to economic issues that pitted Utah state officials against a growing environmental movement. In an article in the \textit{Deseret News}, some reports came in concerning Utah’s ability to progress if the Central Utah Project, a project aimed at the delivery of one million acre-feet of water from the Green River to the Great Basin, was stopped at the hands of environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and the Utah chapter of Trout Unlimited, then it would severely weaken Utah’s agricultural needs and halt any progress Utahn’s hoped to make.\textsuperscript{127} Since the Mormons settled in Utah, they had considered the Uintah mountains a desolate terrain meant “to hold the earth together.”\textsuperscript{128} Briant Stringham had felt that the Uintah mountain

\textsuperscript{124}Dant, \textit{Losing Eden}, 154.
\textsuperscript{125} Dant, \textit{Losing Eden}, 163.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
range had more to contribute to the development of the state and could serve “its mechanical function of holding the earth together, but it is contributing more—and more—to the prosperity and development of Utah.”\textsuperscript{129} With the Central Utah Project, Stringham aimed at securing Utah’s economic future in agriculture and industry. With his work in water projects and advocating for agricultural communities—particularly with the Utah Wool Growers Association—Stringham received the titles “Conservationist of the Year” in 1960 and “Sheepman of the Year” in 1971.\textsuperscript{130} These titles speak more to a larger concern in Utah to secure the economy for the future in the 60s and 70s. Continual federal regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act, challenged Utahns’ aspirations to grow economically, and led some Utahns to cultivate a sentiment of a federal government undermining Utah’s ability to control resources.

On February 8, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed an executive order to ban chemical toxicants on public lands. The use of poison, however, (at least according to the Utah Wool Growers Association had become the most effective tool in eradicating coyote populations. So, the signing of this order shocked the wool-growing community and left a general tone of anxiety on what the next steps would be in defending themselves from coyote depredation.\textsuperscript{131} With the order taking effect immediately, any challenge to the executive order was futile. Governor Calvin L. Rampton called a meeting of livestock representation, agricultural leaders, and other interested groups “in the preservation of the

\textsuperscript{129} Utah Prosperity Stems From Uintah Basins Says Up Writer,” \textit{Vernal Express}, May 30, 1946.
\textsuperscript{130} Stringham Papers, box 24.
\textsuperscript{131} “The Utah Wool Grower,” Stringham Papers, box 16, folder 17. \textit{The Utah Wool Grower} was an annual publication sent out to talk of various issues within the state’s wool growing endeavors. This particular addition pointed to the banning of chemical toxicants on public lands.
environment." With the ban on poison traps, a number of other landmark issues would arise in the late twentieth century, three decades that would culminate into what Richard Nixon would call the “environmental decade” and would greatly impact the opinion of agriculturalists in Utah and the relationship to the federal government.  

Federal power over wildlife regulation had grown in the latter half of the twentieth century, injecting itself into local communities. Utahns met this federal power with concerns over economic well-being. When the executive order banned toxicants from eradicating predators in 1972, Utah was one of the last remaining “large range-sheep industries” and was losing $1 million annually. With wolves still out of the picture, the primary predator on livestock was the coyote, which accounted for 80% of all lamb and ewe losses. The banning of toxicants in 1972 would only add to federal regulations of species that would become the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and as historian Dan Flores points out, the results were immediate that “in rural, conservative communities, the shit hit the fan.” With virtually no resistance, the newly minted Endangered Species Act passed the Senate 92-0 and in the House 390-12. This shift in wildlife protection scored big with environmentalists, pulling away from partisan politics and angering rural agriculturalists’ sentiments towards the federal government.

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132 Ibid.
133 Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 272. While Rawson focuses on Alaska specifically, his summary of the 1960’s-1970s as the “environmental decade” does a great job summarizing National sentiments towards the environmental movement.
The break from partisan politics was being set with Nixon’s monumental National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) which sought to examine environmental impacts, allow public participation, and review documents for any Federal agency environmental plans. The language here, coupled with the protection of specific species of the Endangered Species Act, concerned Utah politicians and their ability to grow economically. Certain sections of the Endangered Species Act would draw the most ire from conservatives. Section 4 requires that agencies identify and protect the habitat of an endangered species. In Utah, some of the first issues, aside from livestock depredation, came from one of Utah’s native fish, the humpback chub. In 1978, the Colorado River Basin project was in danger of being locked up due to concerns about essential habitat along the Colorado River for the humpback chub and Colorado squawfish. Senator Jake Garn (R-UT) argued alongside the Western Coalition, an amendment to the Endangered Species Act. In the same year, the Supreme Court had restricted the Tellico Dam in Tennessee to protect the tiny darter snail. Garn felt that a similar fate loomed over the Colorado River Basin, and this caused a fear that the lack of water diverted from the Central Utah Project to the Uintah basin would impact oil shale development and other water projects that would lead to a “political firestorm.”

While the “political firestorm” in Utah was unfolding over federal regulations, the Utah Wool Growers Association took a pettier approach in response to bans on controversial 1080 bait traps and regulations over coyote depredations. Prohibiting localized action on predators, the Wool Growers closed private lands to recreationists to

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138 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.
“dramatize the need for federal action to reduce coyote predation upon livestock.”

According to a spokesperson of the Utah Wool Growers in 1978, restricting land use was a last-ditch effort stating, “The measure is taken with great reluctance. We have worked long and hard through conventional channels to get action, but to date, no action has been taken.” Sheep numbers from 1972 to 1978 saw dramatic shifts. In 1972 sheep numbers were at 1,009,000 and had dropped to 491,000 by 1978. With a 49 percent drop in numbers, the Utah Wool Growers pointed fingers at government regulations banning 1080 poisons. Utah shepherds relied heavily on toxic poisons to regulate predator populations, and with a government ban on 1080 toxicants, the shepherders in Utah directed their anger towards government regulations. In a local press, the importance of sheep was laid out, and, similar to early sentiments upon Mormon settlement in the Valley, was considered an important aspect of Utah’s economy “producing food and fiber from a renewable range land resource, harvesting forage from any areas not suitable for other animal groups.” The sheepman of Utah had now shifted their ilk towards environmentalists and the federal government that had “brainwashed the American public” into thinking that they misused 1080 to take other predators, not just coyotes. As a large source of income for the state economy, the Utah Wool Growers' significance would magnify future tensions between the federal government and Utah, which would become known as the Sage Brush Rebellion of the 1970s.

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142 Environmental historians have extensively covered the Sage Brush Rebellion. Aside from beginning in parts of Utah, the ideas behind the Sage Brush Rebellion resonated with Utah’s agriculturalists. Recent scholarship has excellent summaries of the Sage Brush Rebellion see James Morton Turner, *The Promise of*
Brush Rebellions’ central argument of federal overreach on western landscapes held strong with the agriculturalists of Utah—especially among the stock growers—as mistrust of federally protected lands extended into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The seeds of the Sage Brush Rebellion, planted early in Utah by individuals such as J.R. Broadbent, former President of the Utah Wool Growers Association, created a general mistrust of federal land ownership. Broadbent, in the 1950s, had argued that heritage, cultivation of the desert landscape, and misuse of public space provide valuable context to the growing mistrust Utah agriculturalists felt towards the federal government and explain why wolf debates continued throughout the twentieth-century.

While attitudes towards predators remained relatively negative, a shift in ideals towards wolf policy sparked by wilderness advocates and biologists after the signing of the Endangered Species Act. In 1978, John Weaver was employed by the National Park Service to discover if wolves existed in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Weaver found no evidence of wolves and recommended reintroduction. Weaver published his results in *The Wolves of Yellowstone* followed by Doug Houston’s book on northern Yellowstone Elk, who also advocated for wolf reintroduction.143 With these works and the signing of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, the path was set for federal wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone. The Fish and Wildlife Service began to work on wolf recovery plans towards the beginning of the 1980s, and according to some historians, the

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attitude amongst newer and older Americans began to shift that would “predict yet another theater in a politicized future.”

While political discourse in Utah surrounding wolves was primarily negative at the end of the twentieth century, some politicians advocated for wolves and, in a unique turn, utilized their religious heritage to do so. One individual who helped shape the political culture around wolves in the West was a Democratic state representative from Utah and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Representative Wayne Owens who represented Utah’s mainly rural second district. It’s hard to speculate where wolf reintroduction would be without political advocates such as Wayne Owens in their corner, but regardless, the political stage shifted with wolf reintroduction under Representative Owens. Owens’ commitment to environmental policies, seen as liberal in a state predominantly conservative left him on the other side of the fence. Still, his bipartisan approach earned the respect of his constituents and Church leaders. Understanding the political contributions of Wayne Owens towards wolves in the West help illustrate the political culture around wildlife in the West and how Owens navigated his religion in a predominantly religious state while advocating for wolves on a political stage.

Owens came onto the political stage at the tail end of almost two decades of environmental laws that Sara Dant states “focused national attention on preservation—protecting nature from exploitation—and established some of the most far-reaching and powerful laws affecting plant and animal species, air and water, and public lands ever.”

Owens’ became a congressman in 1972, one year before the inception of the Endangered

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144 Flores, *Wild New World*, 358.
Species Act. As a Democratic representative, Owen's relationship with politics and religion made him an interesting political figure in Utah. In 1979, *Sunstone: A Uniquely Mormon Magazine* interviewed with Wayne Owens. *Sunstone Magazine*, designed to provide a nuance of the Mormon experience coupled with educational discourse, published in 1974 and focused heavily on social issues within the Church, mainly African Americans and the priesthood. The interview discussed many issues Owens was concerned with, and at the time, these were mainly social issues. A similar theme was at the heart of the questions, summarized as “how do you balance your religious beliefs with your democratic stance?” Asked if there was anything that caused “Mormonism” to be more inclined to conservative politics, Owens responded, “Basically, the Church leaders have always taken the stand that reasonable men and women can disagree politically … The Church’s attitude is not only that reasonable people can disagree, but that the Church should include members of both political parties.”

Owens’ response indicates that as a Democrat, he concerned himself with other members' opinions and that he valued other perspectives. Owens was conscious of his religious upbringing but held to values that he felt would help navigate the ever-changing political world of the late-twentieth century.

To further explain his sentiments, Owens looked back on the LDS Church’s approach to past political disputes to clarify his stance on bipartisanism. Owens states, “Stories are told that in the days before statehood, the president of the Church took

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146 The LDS church has a long and tumultuous history with a ban of sacred religious ordinances to African Americans between 1852-1978. For an in-depth analysis on this topic see Russell W. Stevenson, *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830-2013*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

people in a room and had the Republicans stand on one side and the Democrats on the other … This was to assure that Utah would be adequately represented in both parties, to have a sort of balance politically.”  

Owens continues,

> Historically the Church has felt abused for a hundred years plus by the federal government. And rightly so. The federal government was at times abusive to Church members and also very lax in protecting and enforcing their civil liberties and rights. As a result the Church developed a distrust for the federal government, and I think in the public mind Democrats are identified, and properly so in some respects, with a strong central government. Republicans tend to run against the federal government, and I think that is instrumental in creating the generalization that Church members tend to be conservative and Republican.

Owens’ distinguishes in this quote the cultural divide within the Church and the federal government, but he also recognizes that, in Utah, Church members are predominantly conservative and Republican. Owens’ cultural understanding of politics amongst LDS members points to his awareness of a general mistrust of centralized government by members of the Church, but also demonstrates how Owens was able to interpret a “deseret pioneer” identity differently than other Republican candidates that “push[ed] the connection between self-reliance in Mormonism and the Republican philosophy.”

The publication for this interview also introduced a cultural conundrum that Utahns, particularly those who were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints faced towards the end of the twenty-first century—an understanding of the Church’s history and teachings. *Sunstone*’s intentions at its start were to understand the Church in the 1970s, with LDS historian Leonard J. Arrington opening the archives to scholars. Peggy Stack, one of the original creators of *Sunstone Magazine*, said of this time, “In a time of social reform, we confronted the role of the military in the wake of

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148 Ibid.
149 Ibid., 57.
Vietnam, women’s rights, drugs, suicide, teen pregnancy, and sexual identity.”

With Church membership rising globally, more media attention came to the Church prompting leaders to address the religion.

In an attempt to unify members, one prominent leader, Dallin H. Oaks, addressed “alternate voices” that sought to confuse “lambs lost in a moving herd.” Although Dallin H. Oaks never mentioned *Sunstone Magazine* specifically, his words echoed a challenge to those that sought to speak without authority. Oaks states,

> Some voices speak of the things of the world, providing the useful information we need to make our way in mortality. I will make no further reference to these voices. My remarks will refer to those voices that speak of God, of his commandments, and of the doctrines, ordinances, and practices of his church. Some of those who speak on these subjects have been called and given divine authority to do so. Others, whom I choose to call alternate voices, speak on these subjects without calling or authority.

This attempt at strengthening members would become a nail in the coffin for the small *Sunstone* publication as Church leadership would eventually release a statement condemning some of *Sunstone’s* events. Wayne Owens’ interview with *Sunstone* years before Oaks’ statements, became an attempt at pushing bi-partisan politics to the foreground of a Church centered in myriad social issues during the 70s and 80s. With a heavy emphasis on bi-partisan politics, Rep. Wayne Owens would utilize his well

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standing within the Church to push what would become a debated topic amongst Utah agriculturalists and much of the American West—wolf reintroduction.

By the 1970s in Utah, agriculturalists were flexing their political muscle alongside other westerners ranching on federal landscapes. According to historian James Morton Turner, the Mormon Church had become one of the West's biggest and most powerful ranching interests. However, ranching, and public grazing had been a central focus of the 1980s as Democrats and Republicans had seemed to come together to reform below-cost grazing issues on public lands. Environmental advocates had pushed public land reforms grounded in natural resource economics, conservation biology, and existing laws to adjust “below-cost logging and grazing” issues to reshape polices to protect endangered species. The success of a bi-partisan response to logging and grazing issues would lead local Utah state representative Wayne Owens’ to follow suit to push to push one of the most contentious wildlife proposals in the twentieth century.

153 Turner, 277.
154 Turner, 295.
On May 19, 1989, Wayne Owens penned a letter to fellow congressional colleagues to introduce legislation to re-introduce wolves in Yellowstone.

In an attempt to showcase the intentions of this legislation, Owens begins with a quote from famed conservationist Aldo Leopold,

You cannot love game but hate predators; you cannot conserve water but destroy the range; you cannot build the forest but mine the farm. The land is one organism. Its parts, like our own, compete with each other—and cooperate with each other. The competition is as much a part of the inner workings as are the cooperators. You can regulate them cautiously, but you cannot abolish them.155

Figure 3: Photo of Wayne Owens with a trained wolf. 11-01-1987, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=29220060

155 Sierra Club, Utah Chapter archives, 1972-1986 (COLL MSS 148), box VI:3, folder 1. Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department.
Owens’ use of Aldo Leopold to appeal to conservationists would become what historians would analyze as our understanding of the human relationship with the natural world. For example, William Cronon’s “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1995) challenged Americans understanding of wilderness. Wilderness, according to Cronon, was a human construct that represented “the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth.”\(^{156}\) For Wayne Owens, the preservation of wilderness and a return of “the mystery and beauty of our wildlife heritage” could return with the wolf’s reintroduction. Owens’ actions were not in a vacuum as historians have analyzed the changing environmental movement and the political tactics environmental advocates utilize.\(^{157}\)

The timing of Owens’ congressional proposal of wolf reintroduction aligned with a growing surge of wolf science and attempts at potential wolf reintroduction between 1980-1990. Wolf sightings in Canada and parts of northern Montana in the 1970s led to an increase in wolf studies by organizations such as the Wolf Ecology Project, that would become influential in the tracking of wolves throughout the tail end of the twentieth century.\(^{158}\) In 1986, a pair of collared wolves led to the discovery of established wolf packs in Northwest Montana. Natural recovery seemed a viable option. Wolf sightings near Glacier led to the discovery of livestock depredations, confirmed as wolf killings. Ranchers called on the government to aid because wolves had received protections under


\(^{158}\)Yellowstone Wolves, 14.
the Endangered Species Act, and by 1987 the entire wolf pack was captured or killed.\textsuperscript{159} The discovery of wolf populations near Glacier and wolf predation on livestock led to the pro- and anti- wolf debates that have persisted into the twenty-first century.

Opposition to wolf recovery created a complicated path for wildlife managers interested in wolf restoration in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Under the Endangered Species Act, wolves held strict protection, leaving ranchers “helpless” to wolf depredation. Also, fierce protection for wolves further angered agriculturalists and the politicians that livestock organizations lobbied. In 1983, an amendment to the Endangered Species Act, 10(j), opened the door to a bipartisan approach to wolf recovery. Under amendment 10(j), wolves could be labeled a nonessential experimental population, giving agriculturists more management options.\textsuperscript{160} Biologists, and politicians in favor of wolf recovery viewed this bipartisan approach as a viable option to restore “our nation’s first and grandest national park” through the establishment of keystone species to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.\textsuperscript{161} It would not be long until the political door for wolves would open.

Conservationists had shifted their political strategy in the twentieth century to include legislative, scientific, and legal approaches in response to a changing political world that divided environmentalists and those opposed to environmental politics.\textsuperscript{162} A bi-partisan tradition has been important to environmental politics, and in Utah the issue of

\textsuperscript{159} Ib\textit{id.}, 15. \\
\textsuperscript{160} Ib\textit{id.}, 15. \\
\textsuperscript{161} Sierra Club, Utah Chapter archives, 1972-1986 (COLL MSS 148), box VI:3, folder 10. Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department. \\
\textsuperscript{162} Turner, 8.
wolves divided urbanites from rural Utahns. Wayne Owens’ proposal to re-introduce wolves opened the door for biologists and wildlife managers to begin drafting plans for wolves, but did not make the path to wolf recovery any easier, just possible. News media in Utah was quick to capture both the anxiety (see figure 4) surrounding wolves and the shifting strategies environmentalists engaged with at the end of the twentieth century.

Local coverage engaged readers with titles claiming expert opinions. For example, an article from The Salt Lake Tribune in 1993, “Researchers Prepare for Day

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163 Turner, 9. Turner suggests that bipartisanship has been important to environmental historians, but that this approach shows where issues lie, and how environmentalists responded to opposing views. My argument lies here, that the response from rural Utahns, those utilizing the “deseret pioneer” identity responded negatively to wolves because of what wolves represented.
When Wolves Return to Utah,” or another article from 1994, “USU researcher says Utahns should prepare for wolf’s return.”164 From the other perspective, hunting interests and agriculturalists also gained favor in news coverage. One title read, “Proposal Would Block Wolves’ Route to Utah,” or “Utah Wolves: The Pack Soon May be Back.”165 News coverage captured Utahns' general anxiety toward potential wolf restoration and a healthy migrating corridor between Yellowstone National Park and Rocky Mountain National Park along the Green River Corridor.

In 1995, after much political debate, biologists successfully re-introduced wolves to Yellowstone National Park.166 Wolf re-introduction became possible with the proposal by Wayne Owens in 1989, agriculturalists and politicians heavily contested the response, but Owens’ desire to protect and preserve wilderness would truly test his bipartisan approach. Wolf re-introduction in Yellowstone also highlights Americans' shifting values towards the end of the twentieth-century. The period between 1970 to 1995 found Utah’s agricultural community shifting its cultural understanding under a litany of national Environmental policies that affected public land use. With a growing “progressive” movement in environmentalism, the Utah political stage focused on predator removal. While wolf discussions were non-existent since eradication in 1930, Utah’s Wayne Owens introduced legislation opened a wound that challenged cultural and

164 Both of these articles came from the Salt Lake Tribune. However, where I uncovered them is also intriguing. These articles where in the Utah Wilderness Association records, 1980-2000. (COLL MSS 200). Utah State University. Special Collections and Archives Department. Logan, Utah.
165 High Uintas Preservation Council records. (USU_COLL MSS 390). Special Collections and Archives. Utah State University Merrill-Cazier Library. Logan, Utah.
historical pioneer narratives. With wolves being absent from Utah, agriculturalists had built a foundation of anti-government regulation between 1960 and 1995. When wolves became a worry, agriculturalists successfully made the image of wolves represent something more than a fearful part of the wilderness; to them, wolves were also a symbol of an overreaching government.
Chapter Three: Wolves as Political Symbols

*If you have uncontrolled wolf populations, they will drive game populations down significantly, to the point where hunters will have nothing left to hunt.*

-Don Peay, founder of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, December 3, 2002

*Ensuring Utah does not repeat the same mistakes is vital to protecting native wildlife populations in Utah.*

-Annual Report Utah Wolf Management, June 30, 2020

In 2020, I moved my family to a little town in southeast Colorado called Lamar. After just recently graduating with my undergraduate degree and my wife just giving birth to our son, we completely upended ourselves in the pursuit of a dream of mine to work for the National Park Service. A few months prior, I had been accepted into an internship position through AmeriCorps as a Community Volunteer Ambassador for the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. Bordering Kansas, Lamar was an agricultural town with approximately eight thousand citizens and the nearest mountains roughly three hours west of us. The flatness and lack of color shocked my wife and I since we had grown up in Utah's Wasatch Mountain range. What was more interesting was being in a rural agricultural town during the 2020 presidential election. Months before the election, rallies and trains supporting Donald Trump would occasionally pass on the small main street, and massive American-made trucks, altered by aftermarket auto parts, would cruise down the street with various flags supporting Donald Trump. Aside from the presidential election, one ballot initiative had garnered some attention statewide, Proposition 114. This potential bill would allow for an artificial re-introduction of wolves on the western slope of the mountains in Rocky Mountain National Park. The wolves would be under Colorado’s state wildlife agency. Discussions leading up to
election day had been typical surrounding wolves. Ranchers opposed the initiative, while scientists and advocates defended the idea of re-establishing a key predator species of the region. A few weeks before the election, the discussions and coverage had decreased. The debate would be left up to all voters, thereby allowing the entire state to become the stakeholder on wolves.

After election day and the ballots had been counted, Proposition 114 passed narrowly with the thanks of the suburban voters of Denver. I looked over the voting map (Figure 5) and noticed that the rural community opposed wolf re-introduction. In Lamar, only roughly one thousand of the eight thousand voters had voted “yes” to Proposition 114. The result of this election stood out to me, and the map showed “yes” voters being on an isolated island surrounded by opposing voters.

![Figure 5: Colorado Proposition 114 voting results. Red indicates opposition, green indicates approval of wolf re-introduction. Image courtesy of coloradonewsline.com.](https://coloradonewsline.com/2021/02/27/gray-wolf-reintroduction-wasnt-popular-with-western-slope-voters-some-lawmakers-want-guardrails/)
After the results, opposition continued, highlighting fears about impacts on hunting and fishing, and allocating funds for wolves instead of other needs.\textsuperscript{167} Regardless of these fears, the vote had passed, giving Colorado Parks and Wildlife two years to draft a reintroduction plan that would be released on December 31, 2023.

After the election and my time with the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site had ended, my wife and I decided to move back to Utah for me to pursue higher education. We returned to Utah in January 2021. A few months after our return, and the thought of all Coloradans voting on wolves still on my mind, I learned that Utah politicians had responded to Colorado’s reintroduction initiative in February 2020. Bill HCR-019, a bill proposing that Utah would oppose any artificial introduction of wolves, was written into the Utah State Constitution. The bill passed with little fanfare and minimal news coverage, most likely due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.\textsuperscript{168} While I pondered the larger question of why Utah introduced this seemingly meaningless constitutional amendment, one thing became apparent: Utah and Colorado seemed similar. Agriculturalists, especially those in political office, advocated strongly for a proposition in the Constitution, stating that Utahns had no time or concern for wolves, mirroring the results of Colorado’s election. Moving into the twenty-first century,


agriculture and hunting in Utah have become a stonewall against wildlife policies that would challenge a proud “deseret pioneer” identity.

In the twenty-first century, organizations such as the Utah Wool Growers Association, born from early Church initiatives of agricultural independence, had become less of a prominent voice towards public land issues. Shifting values on public landscapes made agricultural interests a blue-collar concern that challenged old methods of land use that shifted away from past consumer practices. Agriculture had dominated Utah territory since the original settlers established themselves in their “Zion.” Brigham Young, the second prophet to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, set out to cultivate the land and ensure that the faithful would survive economically. Issues of wolf sightings, historical land use practices, and a resurgence of symbolic fears regarding wolves caused Utah politicians, agriculturalists, and wildlife managers to fall back on a “deseret pioneer” identity to help pass legislation restricting wolf movement within Utah state boundaries in the twenty-first century. Wolf re-introduction in Yellowstone National Park, rising Mexican wolf populations in New Mexico and Arizona, and a passing ballot initiative in Colorado to re-introduce wolves on the western slope of the Rockies had boxed Utah in as the last remaining Rocky Mountain state not to have an established wolf population. Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), wolves gained federal protection restricting state officials' and public land users’ responses to predators protected under the ESA. Utah’s attempts during the first and second decade of the

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twenty-first century to combat federal overreach would mirror pioneer ideals to combat a federal government that had persecuted them and forced them west. In order to continually combat wolves in the state, Utah politicians have fallen back on the “deseret pioneer” identity to advocate for economic growth in the twenty-first century.

On December 31, 2002, a headline story in the Salt Lake Tribune read “Will Utah Find Room for Wolves?” and included a map of Utah indicating potential wolf habitat. The general tone attempted to capture the excitement, anxiety, and anger associated with wolves. The purpose of this article stemmed from the accidental capture of a wolf in Utah just one month before the publication. With the first confirmed wolf sighting in Utah in “over 70 years,” the paper attempted to make sense of the controversial predator and its impact on Utah. Some coverage assessed the wolf sighting with little fanfare, while others fell to old tactics from pre-1995 wolf introduction in Yellowstone, like titling articles “Big, bad wolves may be in Utah.” With a wolf sighting, public and political figures alike seemed to be caught with their pants around their ankles. With years of public land disputes, a combating of federal policies on wildlife, and cultural interpretations of the state’s history—Utah was not prepared with any type of wolf management plan.

On November 27, 2003, “a public-driven process” began to discuss the future management of northern gray wolves captured just one year earlier in Utah. The newly formed Wolf Management Working Group opened its meeting to the public to maintain a public presence while discussing early plans for wolf management. Craig McLaughlin,

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the mammal coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources, stated, “Following the establishment of the wolf population in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is beginning to discuss transferring management authority for wolves to state wildlife agencies.” From 2002 to 2005, the Wolf Working group, created as a bi-partisan agency to aid the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in developing a management plan, resulted in severe pushback from pro-hunting groups in Utah, started by Don Peay. Don Peay, a prominent figure in Utah’s hunting realm and creator of Sportsmen for Fish and Wild, would use his power to stage both a symbolic and actual walkout to oppose the wolf management plan in 2005. While reports do not indicate Peay’s exact appeal to the wolf management plan, the danger of wolves impacting his business of guided hunts seemed in peril with wolves, and his later actions would point to his fierce support of his LDS faith and opposition to the federal protection of wolves.

In 2005, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources released the Utah Wolf Management plan. The plan, at its core, would give the power to manage wolves to the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) upon delisting of wolves in the Endangered Species Act. The management style would align with historic predator management and “manage, study, and conserve wolves moving in[sic] Utah while avoiding conflicts with the wildlife management objectives of the Ute Indian Tribe; preventing livestock depredation; and protecting the investment made in wildlife in Utah.”

175 The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources & The Utah Wolf Working Group. Utah Wolf Management Plan. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Publication #: 05-17, 2005 (hereafter referred to as UWMP).
allows wolves to inhabit the state while giving power to livestock owners by allowing them to hunt or harass wolves hurting their livelihood. Hunting advocates would also provide a significant voice within the Utah Wolf Management Plan. The plan under the UDWR and the Utah Wolf Working Group (WWG) consisted of thirteen groups representing various interests within the state. The WWG is composed of 13 members that represent diverse public interests regarding wolves in Utah. The WWG includes representatives from academia (USU faculty), wolf advocates (Utah Wolf Form), sportsmen representatives (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife), agricultural interests (Utah Farm Bureau Federation and Utah Wool Growers), local government representatives (Utah Association of Counties), the Ute Indian Tribe, two at-large conservation organization representatives, and a member of the Utah Wildlife Board. Stakeholder involvement showcased who managed wolves, and in Utah the most powerful stakeholders came through in the loose interpretation of confirmed wolf kills and acceptable lethal force. Utah agriculturalists had provided themselves a method of protection through loose interpretations on lethal management, best preparing themselves for the return of wolves from neighboring states.

Issues over wolf-recovery had also confronted other western states. New Mexico in 2003, within the same time frame of Utah’s wolf management discussions, Mexican Gray wolf recovery was a serious topic amongst agriculturalists. Historian Marsha L. Weisiger, in 2003, wrote about the cultural divide Mexican Gray wolves presented to locals. Much to what I have attempted to accomplish throughout this paper, Weisiger analyzed the height of the debates in New Mexico. Weisiger’s article about a symposium

176 UWMP, 1.
177 UWMP, 39.

Weisiger points to a crucial understanding of wolf re-introduction, science, and policy to understand the public perceptions and stakeholders' views of wolves. Weisiger states, “it struck me that many of those shaping the public discourse viewed the world in dualistic terms. It was a depressingly familiar, mutually exclusive equation that pitted wild nature against human enterprise.”\footnote{Ibid., 124.} There are many similarities between the history of New Mexico, Mexican gray wolves, Utah, and Northern gray wolves. In Utah, the discourse surrounding wolves follows Wesiger’s understanding of the New Mexico wolf introduction. Stakeholders in Utah became the driving force behind the Wolf Management Plan. The original thirteen groups in the Utah wolf plan laid out their concerns. They attempted to work in solidarity to bridge the gap between environmental interest groups and agricultural and hunting communities.

The comparison between Utah and New Mexico speaks to a larger cultural divide between the agricultural and suburban communities. Wolves in the twenty-first century relied heavily on federal laws and experts for recovery. Protected wilderness became prime habitat for wolves, but containing wolves in these spaces was impossible. The conundrum of wolves in the twenty-first century found its most heated debates at the intersection between wilderness and suburban living. Wolves had significant advocates...
in the twenty-first century, something they had lacked in the previous century.\textsuperscript{180} But the opposition felt that wolves were less of a concern, rather the threat was in the overreaching government through the Endangered Species Act. Financial stability has been central to the argument around wolves, and public spaces were where wolves and livelihood intermingled. The discussions in Utah and New Mexico between 2002-2005 highlight the anxieties of regulated species and landscapes. While the geographical location differed, many Utahns and New Mexicans agreed that modern science on wolf recovery did not take in their well-being and caused much animation amongst agriculturalists in the southwest region.

In 2011, agriculturalists would gain a large legal victory against wolves when the United States decided to de-list wolves from the Endangered Species Act in certain states. De-listing fueled discussion around predator management at the hands of state wildlife agencies, and Utah was no exception. News coverage explored an increase in wolf activity in Utah with multiple sightings. In 2010, wolf sightings had reached a new high at fifteen, and according to a KSL news article, these sightings had been significantly higher than in prior years.\textsuperscript{181} Utah politicians and wildlife managers jumped quickly at managing wolves at the state level, arguing that wolves become a game animal.\textsuperscript{182} This move was considered by some news outlets and wildlife officials as a “housekeeping” bill, meaning that wolves were not officially established in Utah. In the words of Kevin

\textsuperscript{180} Wolf advocacy groups such as \textit{Defenders for Wildlife}, or \textit{Yellowstone Forever} have led the charge in the twenty-first century to advocated for wolves. However, in the twentieth-century wolves had no such advocacy.


Bunnell, a wildlife section chief with the Division of Wildlife, "This is a housekeeping bill in anticipation that at some point, wolves will be delisted, and we will have some management authority in the state. If and when we have that, and we can offer some harvest of wolves, we would be ready for that." Moving management of wolves to the hands of wildlife officials in Utah built on ideas of a “deseret pioneer” identity that was leery of federal overreach, as well as establishing economic stability.

For most of the twentieth-century, Utah's economic stability had benefited from agricultural endeavors. Interestingly, agricultural institutions such as the Utah Wool Growers had diminished in output on public lands and predator policies at the turn of the twentieth century. While agriculture still held a prominent role in Utah, hunting interests now accompanied concerns about livestock and wildlife on public lands. In the wake of political back and forth over wolves during the 2010s, agriculturalists and wildlife managers were preparing themselves for the potential management of wolves handed over to the state. Other western states with heavy conservative constituents (e.g. Idaho, Montana, Wyoming), began using aggressive tactics to manage wolves. Utah was attempting to follow suit. Utah’s pioneer history, and nostalgia through the “deseret pioneer” identity further embedded the notion that wolves threatened economic stability.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has continually pursued the nostalgic history of the original Mormon settlers as a form of memorialization. Various films showcasing this history have attempted to demonstrate the struggles and sacrifices of pioneers to practice their faith freely. One film, 17 Miracles (2011), took the accounts of the Willie Handcart Company and turned them into a visual representation of

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183 Ibid.
nostalgia. T.C. Christensen, writer, and director of *17 Miracles* released an article in the LDS youth magazine *New Era* one year after the release of his film. This article, “Beware the Wolves,” focused on the difficulties youth may encounter in their lives, using a religious analogy comparing wolves of the pioneers to moral “wolves” of today. Christensen points out that wolves are “a huge problem for the pioneer handcart Saints.”¹⁸⁴ His emphatic language continues to paint wolves negatively, falling back on Brigham Young's sentiments of wolves being a barrier to progress. Christensen states, “The wolves followed the buffalo on the plains, but many times the buffalo moved on (almost overnight) and left many soon-to-be-hungry wolves in their tracks. Those wolves also followed the pioneer Saints across the plains.”¹⁸⁵ Christensen takes these pioneer remembrances of wolves and utilizes them as a focal point in his film.

In order to recreate the continual threat of wolves in his theatrical rendition of pioneer struggles, Christensen brought in a wolf trainer and wolves to recreate specific scenes. While searching for a filming location, trained wolves were left in trailers in the wooded outdoor studio. “Even though they are ‘trained’ wolves, they are still wolves and can be very aggressive. They have natural instincts to attack and kill.” What happened next became the analogy.

We returned a couple of hours later and were amazed to see a deer standing less than 15 feet from the trailer. Her ear was out, her eyes alert, and she was staring at the trailer. She seemed mesmerized. Normally when you see a deer in the wooded area, the deer sees you, bounds off, and disappears within seconds. This time, not so. The deer was so focused on that wolf-harboring trailer that she didn’t even notice us until we were about 15 feet away. She finally noticed our presence and then seemed to come out of her trance and ran off. I asked the trainer if he’d ever seen anything like that before. He hadn’t, and he couldn’t explain it. The next morning when the trainer approached his trailer to begin the

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¹⁸⁵ Ibid.
day’s work, to his astonishment he saw close to 15 deer standing in a circle, all the way around the trailer. Like the first deer, they too were transfixed and stared intently at the trailer. Their circle grew smaller and smaller as they each continued to move closer to the trailer. The trainer could hear the wolves inside, pawing and clawing away as they seemed to be saying in wolf language, “Let me at ‘em!” Again the trainer moved very close to the deer before they became aware of him and ran into the nearby woods.\textsuperscript{186}

Christensen quickly compared this experience to moments in people’s lives when they face something we know is not good for us, but “yet we may be attracted to it for an unexplained reason.”\textsuperscript{187} Wolf symbolism in the twenty-first century has consistently fallen to representations of wilderness, religious temptation, or for Mormon pioneers—persecution.\textsuperscript{188} While Christensen may have unintentionally demonized wolves, he fell back on a continual trend of memorializing pioneer experiences, particularly with wolves or predators, to understand our day and age and even justify continual hate toward the canid predator. While politicians or Church officials have subtly fallen into a romanticized identity of pioneers to guide themselves, Christensen does so bluntly. The wolf, and more importantly, the symbolism of wolves on public landscapes in Utah, would continue in the later part of the twenty-first century.

Wolves according to some prominent hunters in Utah still held symbolic roadblocks to progress on public lands. Don Peay, one of Utah’s most influential pro-hunting political figures, and member of the LDS Church had injected himself into the debate for wildlife on public lands in 1993 with his organization Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife.\textsuperscript{189} In 2013, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, and another sister organization

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
started by Peay—Big Game Forever, received $300,000 in taxpayer dollars to advocated for anti-wolf policies in Washington D.C.¹⁹⁰ Don Peay’s hatred towards wolves mirrored sentiments established by Brigham Young in 1852 that wolves stood in the way of progress. For Don Peay, wolves not only stood in the way of his personal endeavors, but also infringed on his “deseret pioneer” identity.

Don Peay’s application of the “deseret pioneer” identity can be found in a High-Country News article, Don Peay states, “To think you can have a natural landscape with wolves and bears and other predators on it is romantic, but it's not true…As the West develops, predators will be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.”¹⁹¹ Don Peay’s management tactics carried all the signs of an organization in favor of healthy ecosystems, advocating for wildlife under expansive oil interests on public lands. However, his hatred for wolves pointed to a romanticized “deseret pioneer” identity that promoted hunting and agricultural interests over sustained ecosystems.¹⁹² Under a heavily Conservative state, Don Peay and his pro-hunting organizations successfully argued that Utah’s economy was at risk if wolves returned, allocating not only taxpayer dollars but allowed for Big Game Forever to “work with the state and federal agencies to pursue legal and legislative solutions” to maintain wolves within the state.¹⁹³ According to historian Ralph Maughan, Don Peay disgraced the North American model of wildlife management in favor of a more privatized model, advocating for more rights given to  

¹⁹¹ Hal Herring, “Predator hunters for the environment,” High Country News, June 25, 2007, https://www.hcn.org/issues/349/17076?b_start:int=1#body. High Country News tends to be more liberal when it comes to reporting issues on public lands and wildlife. What interests me more is this quote specifically from Don Peay. The idea of a modern civilization hanging on whether or not wolves had established themselves in Utah mirrors what Brigham Young was quoted saying about wolves.
¹⁹² Ibid.
¹⁹³ Maffly, “Legislators steering another $300,000 to anti-wolf crusade.”
private land owners to reduce the federal government's power. Don Peay’s actions enshrined the “deseret pioneer” identity by preserving Utah’s landscape through an argument of a pioneer era connection to hunting and predator control for the sake of self-preservation and self-reliance; this argument would surface again the following year over issues of public grazing.

Indeed, in 2014, the Southern Utah and Nevada border experienced disputes over public lands that would eventually turn hostile. Cliven Bundy, a rancher from Nevada and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, would challenge the federal government over grazing rights that conflicted with his understanding of federal laws, as well as a family history connected to early settlers of the LDS Church. Cliven Bundy had become a national symbol for conservative ideals of states’ rights over federal regulations on public lands. Bundy and his family had reached political stardom with their continual anti-government rhetoric over grazing rights and the shortcomings of the Bureau of Land Management. One of the early threats to the Bundy ranch, the proposed listing of the desert tortoise to the Endangered Species Act in 1985, became one of many battles that Cliven Bundy would utilize to fuel his hatred towards federal regulations. Cliven Bundy’s hatred for protection towards the desert tortoise resonated with many agriculturalists. In Bundy’s words, “This isn’t going to better the tortoise’s position or habitat. The only thing we’re doing is destroying man and his integrity and

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his destiny to produce and go forward.” Like wolves, the desert tortoise presented a threat to rights Cliven and his family felt should be protected as hard-working Americans. Tortoises, unlike wolves, do not predate on livestock, but what they do share is protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The Endangered Species Act and the protection of the desert tortoise in 1989 became a tool of federal overreach in the eyes of Cliven Bundy that would lead to the demise of man's “destiny” of progress. Bundy’s ideas of self-preservation, and doomsday rhetoric of retrogression, found links to Bundy’s religious affiliation with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and propelled him as a symbol of the “American frontier and a symbol of conservative America.” By 2014, Cliven Bundy, his sons, and a culmination of followers connected to the Tea Party and Patriot Movement had been inspired by what the Bundys fought for over three decades; the right to graze cattle on public lands and states’ rights to regulate these landscapes.

The infamous Battle of Bunkerville, the unofficial name given to the 2014 Bundy standoff, set the stage for renewed debates on public grazing. Historian Adam Sowards points to the cultural shifts over public lands, stating that the livelihoods of those participating “hung in the balance, and their sense of identity, rooted in the land, was threatened.” However, the events that led up to the armed standoff had also been built up by religious interpretations of constitutional rights. Cliven Bundy and his followers

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197 Skillen, 18. Skillen makes the argument that Bundy and his sons were making these claims based on religious teachings that had been compiled in a self-made booklet entitled the “Nay Book” that consisted of prophetic teachings in scriptures from the LDS church. Skillen also emphasizes that the Church did not officially recognize the Bundy’s message, but that the narrative resonated with a wide range of conservatives.
198 Sowards, 164.
had confronted federal agents over the right to graze cattle, but the issue ran deeper for Bundy. The inspiration for anti-federal institutions came from “radical” fringe Mormon ideology. For the Bundys and a select few of their followers, the standoff became what historian Betsy Gaines Quammen called a “defense of Mormon homeland—American Zion—is a holy war over public lands, state sovereignty, and a distorted understanding of the Constitution.” While the Church has consistently distanced itself from political discourse on public lands, the Bundys took matters into their own hands, taking religious teachings and applying an apocalyptic retrogression to the “deseret pioneer” identity.

Running livestock, rugged individualism, and an inherent “right” to the landscape, both politically and through genealogical connections, shaped the Bundy perceptions of public spaces. With wolves removed from the southern Utah/Nevada area roughly eighty years prior to 2014, they were not a factor in public land debates surrounding the Bundys. And yet, the symbolism around wolves and the landscapes they inhabit would become a significant factor in a changing landscape. Utah agriculturalists and politicians shared similar ideals to the Bundy’s and the shifting attitudes towards public lands and the protection of endangered species on these landscapes. To one reporter from Harper’s Magazine, the symbolism around wolves meant “challenges to the old ways of doing things. Wolves mean loss of control.” The changes happening on public lands were not caused by wolves, but wolves “have become the means by which ranchers can voice

199 Quammen, 195.
200 Brady McCombs, “Sage grouse plan at issue: Utah brings lawsuit against federal government,” Park Record, February 10, 2016, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=22628144&q=Cliven+Bundy%2C+endangered+species+&sort=rel. In this report in 2016, Utah politicians attempted to sue the Federal Government over protection given to the Sage Grouse. The main concern was that the protection under the ESA would limit the state’s ability to manage wildlife, echoing sentiments of Cliven Bundy towards the desert tortoise.
201 Askins, “Releasing wolves from symbolism.”
their concern about what’s happening around them.” Potential wolf establishment in Utah meant more than an attack on agricultural practices. Wolves challenged the “deseret pioneer” identity that guided many Mormon Church members. The symbolism of wolves challenging a “deseret pioneer” identity would become a powerful tool utilized by Utah state officials in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Symbolic representation of wolves impeding progress had taken on a new form in the twenty-first century, federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, descendants of the original pioneers had fought to preserve their way of life in the face of national changes on public lands, and in the twentieth century, wolves now took on a different form of economic instability. A core worry of the Endangered Species Act in Utah was the re-introduction of Mexican wolves. In 2015 news coverage suggested that Utah could become a State essential in the recovery plan for Mexican wolves. Utah Wildlife Board Chairman John Bair, a self-proclaimed “Mormon Redneck,” said that no evidence would convince him of Mexican wolves inhabiting Utah. He stated, “There is no need to have them here other than those political reasons.” At the core of his concern, aside from political protection, was a cultural concern, “People want to use the wolf as the silver bullet to kill the culture of the West.” While the purpose of his statement seems clear (“wolves will

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202 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
kill the culture of the West”), Bair’s choice of words complicates the matter. While silver bullets culturally suggest fictitious werewolves, his reference could say, “people want to use the wolf as the silver bullet to kill the aggressive traditions of the state.” John Bair’s claim as a “Mormon Redneck,” as well as references to western culture, falls back on a “deseret pioneer” identity to cry foul on wolves belonging in the state.

While “Western” identity has been discussed by historians in the twentieth century, the idea of a Western mystic identity has permeated into the twenty-first century. The debate over wolves, and the threat they bring to agriculturalists, make wolves an interesting lens to view western identity in the U.S. Author and historian Robert G. Athearn’s *The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America* narrows in on this “mystic mythic West” as his book provides a chronological approach to the birth and nurturing of an ideal West that began to dwindle as time pressed on. Athearn states, “From the outset, the emergence of the mythic West was a sure thing. Along the way, it has been nurtured by many things—economic frustrations and dreams, an awakening sense of history, a feeling of kinship with the land, and suspicions about the modern world,” and then adds that ignorance was the main ingredient to this.206 In Utah the connection to the land is found through the rich history of pioneer settlement and the early struggles for economic survival.

Athearn broadly placed stresses and struggles to maintain a western identity in economic concerns and dreams. Hunting has become an economic stronghold for Utah in the twenty-first century. For wildlife board members like John Bair, the thought of wolves in the state attacked hunting rights and the economic relief hunting brought to the

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state. Regarding wolf recovery in southern Utah, Bair stated, “We know how wolf recovery turns out. You reach a goal, and it moves a little further and a little further.”

Bair’s main concern: wolves would reduce elk populations which would, in turn, deplete the $34.5 million in hunting revenues. While economic factors dictated anti-wolf fervor, Salt Lake Tribune columnist Brian Maffly also pointed to a significant concern for Utah politicians, “Utah officials fear the state could become a hybridization area where wolves won’t count toward Mexican wolf recovery, and it will become impossible to de-list the subspecies even if they proliferate.”

Wolves represented a hitch in the booming hunting economy. Big Game Forever, a pro-hunting sister company started by Don Peay argued that wolves under the Endangered Species Act had surpassed original recovery goals. Big Game Forever aimed to protect Utah’s hunting culture through legislative action. Annual reports showcased BGF’s endeavors to combat expanding wolf populations along the west that had driven down wild game numbers and threatened Utah’s $2.4 billion hunting industry.

The central purpose of Big Game Forever was to generate enough interest at the grassroot level to return wolf management over to the state, and in 2020, Utah politicians would align themselves with hunting interests to attempt to block federal plans to introduce wolves in Utah.

On March 23, 2020, representative Casey Snider from Cache Valley stood up to speak about the implications of wolves in Utah and that the right to hunt is an intrinsic right to Utahns and, more broadly, humans. Snider poetically states, “Hunting and

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208 Ibid.

fishing has always been a critical component of our state. It doesn’t matter if you were one of the first settlers of this valley in 1847 or those who had been here long ago.”

Snider specifically mentions pioneer settlers and sweeps Native peoples into this discussion. Snider's prose and wording seem apparent and obvious, a mention of the state's heritage and Native peoples, even if broadly, to encapsulate the importance of hunting. Snider continues, “You’ve relied on that activity, that sustenance in this state for time indefinite and time immemorial. It is one of those activities we enjoy now.”

Snider touches on several themes that share both western frontier identity and a “deseret pioneer” identity of self-preservation. Snider then adds, “It’s a part of who we are. This bill is not only about protecting who we are but preserving who we are moving forward.”

Hunting as an activity and an economic proponent to the state economy and preservation of moral values are thread throughout his opening remarks.

The bill Rep. Casey Snider references, bill HJR15S1, looks at wildlife issues beginning in 1998 about how ballot initiatives would allow public access to these issues. Casey Snider argued that hunting was a right dating back to original pioneer settlement, and wolves infringed on those rights. Colorado’s ballot initiative increased the threat of wolves to Colorado’s agriculturalists, hunters, and those in Utah. Snider states, “I dare you to ask anyone in western Colorado right now who is going to bear the impact of wolf introduction from an earlier debate because they are a minority. Those pushing it are coming from a majority portion of this state.”

Snider’s comment illuminates a growing fear of urban and diverse populations in favor of wolves. One state politician noted that

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211 Ibid.
wolves introduced “along Utah’s eastern border” would threaten wild game, agriculture, and caused fear amongst citizens. In response, another politician posed an interesting question, “Any of these woofs ever lived in Utah?”212 This question, and the debates around HCR-19 shed light into over one-hundred and fifty years of a tumultuous history between pioneers, the memory of pioneers, and the memorialization of their ideals and the relationship to the environment and wolves.

212 Ibid.
Conclusion

I am a westerner. I have grown up most of my life at the base of the Wasatch Mountains. I have also grown up within the rich pioneer culture of Utah, viewing first-hand the significance the original pioneers have on many members of the Church. While researching this topic, I even learned how some of my family histories are important to my family's understanding of the Church and their understanding of land. The history of Utah and the pioneer heritage have always been passed on to me since I can remember. Lavish pioneer stories of sacrifice, bravery, and faith have guided and inspired many individuals recounting them. From my own experiences, these stories have been told to teach analogies, create gratitude, and inspire individuals to better their lives. Some of these stories gained famed status, becoming “Hollywood-esque” films played in the “Temple Square” in Salt Lake City. Pioneer memories did not just stop with recanted stories and films. A coming-of-age experience for many youth members of the Church, a multi-day excursion called “Trek,” would take pioneer memories and apply them literally in a trip meant to recreate pioneer handcart companies' sacrifices. Following similar prompts from the “Oregon Trail” video game, youth dressed and recreated pioneer experiences as best as possible.

Frequent visits to the Church’s famed “Temple Square” showcased pioneer memorials dedicated to the thousands of followers of Brigham Young that upended their lives to follow the promptings of a prophet. In Utah, July 24th, Pioneer Day, is meant to commemorate Utah becoming a state but also highlights the connection to the original settlers. In many ways, the heritage of Utah’s pioneers has been imprinted on Church members residing within Utah’s boundaries. Pioneer tales and memories have shaped
what I have come to call a “deseret pioneer” identity that pulls in religious remembrance with values of economic independence established by Brigham Young.

The “deseret pioneer” identity became more applicable to me when I began investigating the Church’s relationship to agriculture and how Utah territory began navigating national issues relating to public lands and predator policies from the twentieth century onward. In 2020, Utah passed house bill HCR-19, which solidified Utah’s stance of zero tolerance towards wolves. The final buildup to this cosmetic bill pulls in history from pioneers into the twenty-first century. Senator Wayne Owens’ understanding of the Church's relationship with the Federal Government points to how the Church, and more importantly, the followers of the Church, responded to the government and the laws implemented throughout the twentieth century that led to what historians would call the environmental movement. Understanding the history of the view of wolves in Utah, aside from becoming complicated with their complete removal in 1930, comes to light by analyzing agricultural groups such as the Utah Wool Growers Association.

The response of the Wool Growers in Utah aligns with the National agricultural bias against wolves but in Utah, the implication of wolves returning challenges a history of economic self-sufficiency established with pioneer settlement. Since the 1995 re-introduction in Yellowstone, Wolves have taken on a new representation of “Federal overreach” through the protection of the Endangered Species Act. For Utah agriculturalists and politicians, wolves now mean more than just another predator to hunt

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213 See page 53 of this thesis.
livestock; they represent a government limiting a state power—a state with a history already complicated within the Nation.

Even at the completion of this project, pro-hunting organizations in Utah continue to wage war on a predator that has not even established itself within state boundaries. Don Peay, a prominent advocate for hunting and member of the LDS Church, has continually pushed anti-wolf legislation, even taking taxpayer money to do so.\textsuperscript{214} However, Utah has a unique opportunity to create a healthy wolf migration route in the “Green River Corridor” from Yellowstone to Colorado.\textsuperscript{215} Wolves, as of 2020, were re-listed to the Endangered Species Act, giving federal jurisdiction over wolves regardless of how they impact local livestock. Utah has continually attempted to revoke federal control over wolves allowing for state control, citing that Utah has proper personnel in place to manage wolves.\textsuperscript{216} Historically, this ends with complete removal, which would aid in the result of a failed attempt to restore an apex predator to the region. While the Utah wolf management plan states that wolves are protected, the actual plan loosely defines the regulations around wolf management, from compensation funds to actions that constitute lethal removal. Gone are the days of accepting wolves as a species of the past. In some places, this idea may persist, but the reality of wolves returning to Utah is very present. Understanding the rich history of Utah, its relationship to self-sufficiency, and how wolves challenge the “deseret pioneer” identity become important when looking at the more extensive debate around wolves within North America. Understanding this


\textsuperscript{215} Paige Blankenbuehler, "Why have gray wolves failed to gain a foothold in Colorado?" \textit{High Country News}, September 1, 2021.

\textsuperscript{216} UWMP, 51-53.
history can hopefully dispel the common myth that an old acquaintance recently told me:

“Wolves are bad.” Perhaps then, Utahns can bridge the gap between wolf and Mormon memory.
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