

Excerpt From The Wilderness Letter  
Written December 3, 1960

By Wallace Stegner

We need wilderness preserved--as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds--because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there--important, that is, simply as an idea.

Background on the Letter: (<http://wilderness.org/bios/former-council-members/wallace-stegner>)

Addressed as follows:

Los Altos, Calif.

December 3, 1960

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Stegner joined the conservation movement in the 1950s while fighting the construction of a dam on Dinosaur National Monument's Green River. In 1960, he wrote his famous Wilderness Letter on the importance of federal protection of wild places. This letter was used to introduce the [Wilderness Act](#), which established the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1964.