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Environmental Politics and the Creation of a Dream: Establishing the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

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Harold C. Jordahl Jr.
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The Apostle Islands are a breathtaking archipelago of twenty-two islands in Lake Superior, off the northern tip of Wisconsin. Containing white sand beaches, rugged cliffs, and water-carved caves—as well as the last remnants of the state's old growth forests and the largest collection of lighthouses in the National Park System—these islands are among some of the last vestiges of Wisconsin's unspoiled beauty available to all people. Yet, when the 1960s saw mass exploitation of land and water for private ownership and recreation throughout the US, Harold C. Jordahl and many like him realized that the Apostle Islands had the potential to become a paradise available only to the rich.

In 1970, after a decade-long fight, twenty of the islands and the adjacent twelve miles of mainland shoreline on the Bayfield Peninsula were placed under federal protection as the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Jordahl, who served as the first director of the Wisconsin Department of Resource Development and then regional coordinator for the Upper Mississippi River and Western Great Lakes Area through the Department of the Interior, chronicles the difficult road to this achievement.

The story of this natural place is a personal one for the author, who was instrumental throughout the ten-year process of procuring special status for the islands. In drawing from his own files and recollections, he recounts the work of all who made this dream a reality—from local residents and two Native American tribal councils to high-ranking politicians such as Wisconsin governor and senator Gaylord Nelson and President John F. Kennedy.

Divided into four parts, the book explores the history of regional, state, and federal policies toward areas of natural and historic importance; the story of the drive to develop the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore; issues surrounding its establishment; and reflections and lessons learned. Additionally, the book contains helpful appendices—a chronology of events relating to the park, identification of participants who worked to make the federally designated lakeshore a reality, and related bills that went before the Senate and House of Representatives. Extensive end notes and a sensible index make this a valuable book for environmental readers and scholars alike.

In detailing the intricacies and challenges of protecting the Apostle Islands, *Environmental Politics and the Creation of a Dream* makes clear that these difficulties are not isolated to particular places and times. To that end, Jordahl provides inspiration and guidance. While of particular interest to those interested in Wisconsin environmental history and politics, Jordahl's book reaches out to all visionaries concerned with the protection of the nation's natural resources.

JENNIFER FANDEL (July / August 2011)

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