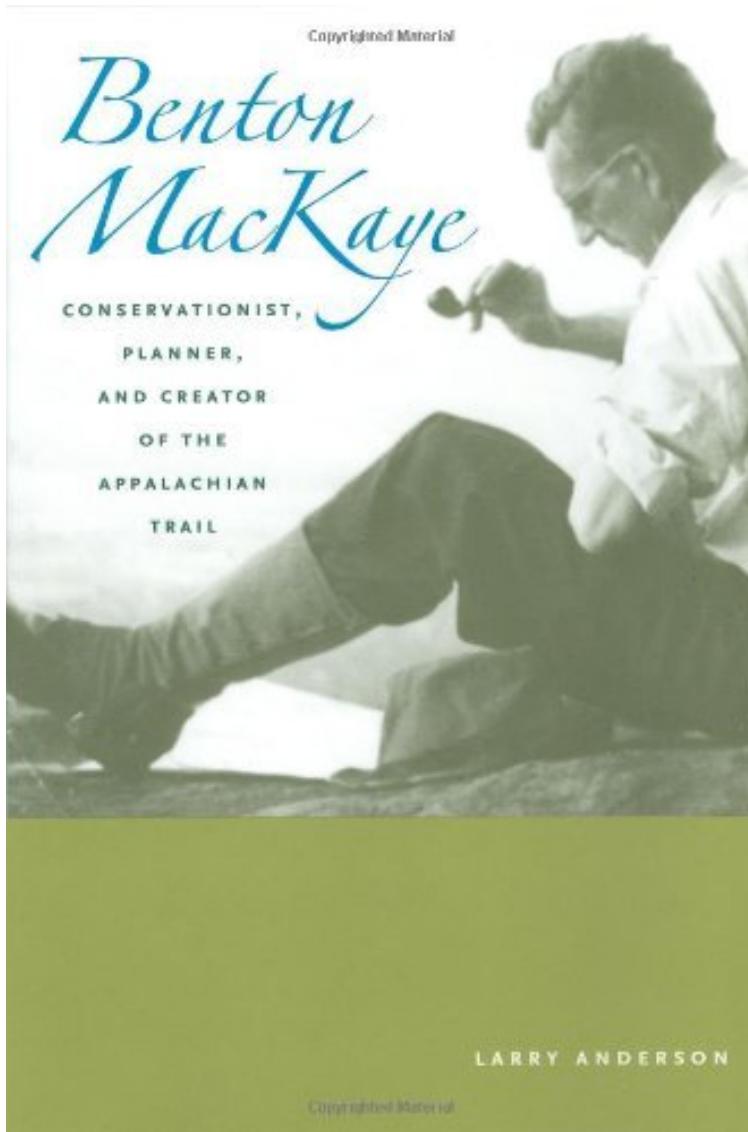


[PDF] Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape)

Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape)

Larry Anderson

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Larry Anderson : Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy CustomerA great introduction to an important author.16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. One person CAN make a differenceBy Corinne H. SmithPerhaps you're familiar with the name Benton MacKaye (1879-1975); at the very least, you've heard of the Appalachian Trail. You might see the title of this book and say, "Oh, OK, he was the guy who thought up the idea for a footpath from Maine to Georgia. Big deal. I've never stepped on it, so why should I care about him?" Well, without Benton MacKaye, we probably wouldn't have the Trail. We might not have a Wilderness Society, the Wilderness Act of 1964, the National Trail Systems Act of 1968, or the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We might not have Shenandoah National Park in Virginia or the Great Smoky Mountains National Park straddling the Tennessee-North Carolina border. We could instead have just interstate highways crowning the entire length of the eastern mountain range. We could conceivably have uninterrupted suburbia from the Atlantic coastline to the Midwest, with little consideration given to the mountains or any natural area in between. Benton MacKaye might very well be one of the most influential 20th-century American environmentalists you've never heard of. A New Englander with a Harvard graduate degree in forestry, MacKaye spent most of his professional life taking a variety of short-term government or association jobs that dealt with conservation issues. Eventually he carved a niche for himself as an outspoken regional planner. He was adept at writing articles and proposing legislation that included catchy words or concepts: geotechnics, new exploration, townless highways, highwayless towns, watershed democracies, wildland belts, and habitability. For MacKaye was at heart a boy who loved to wander through the natural landscape of central Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. In the early 1900s, he was already worried about increasing numbers of motorists invading those wild spaces, particularly into the region's mountainous areas. He spent the majority of his life fighting to keep those places "sound-proof as well as sight-proof" from the intrusion of contemporary civilization. In some ways, he was the Thoreau of his day. The formal publication of "The Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning" (included here as an appendix) came to fruition in 1921, and it laid the foundation for the rest of his articles and essays. We who consider ourselves environmentalists today find his words still striking an inner chord. MacKaye wrote in the 1950s: "Verily, the first and simplest rule on earth: Give back to the earth that which we take from her. Return the good we have borrowed; in short, pay our ecological bills. Pay them in dirt, not dollars. It's the only currency the good earth accepts. Too long have we lived on dollar ecology." (p. 336) Yes, Mr. MacKaye, yes. Let's shout that one from the mountaintops, if we can still find them. Anderson is admirably neutral in presenting the facts and interpreting MacKaye's connections with and influences on more "famous" individuals like Lewis Mumford, Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, and Olaus Murie. That must have been a tough job indeed, since the author obviously spent a huge amount of time with his subject. The resulting details are valuable to have compiled into one volume but might limit readership to scholars of the AT or of the environmental movement. With every turn of a page, though, his chronicle of MacKaye's endeavors brings home a basic truth that still holds today: that every environmental debate is a political one. We can be either encouraged or chagrined by that knowledge.

Planner and originator of the Appalachian Trail and a cofounder of the Wilderness Society, Benton MacKaye (1879-1975) was a pioneer in linking the concepts of preservation and recreation. Spanning three-quarters of a century, his long and productive career had a major impact on emerging movements in conservation, environmentalism, and regional planning. MacKaye's seminal ideas on outdoor recreation, wilderness protection, land-use planning, community development, and transportation have inspired generations of activists, professionals, and adventurers seeking to strike a harmonious balance between human need and the natural environment. This pathbreaking biography provides the first complete portrait of this significant and unique figure in American environmental, intellectual, and cultural history. Drawing on extensive research, Larry Anderson traces MacKaye's extensive career, examines his many published works, and describes the importance of MacKaye's relationships with such influential figures as Lewis Mumford, Aldo Leopold, and Walter Lippmann. This book will appeal to students, scholars, and professionals in preservation, conservation, recreation, planning, and American studies, as well as general readers interested in these subjects.