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WHITE HOUSE AIDE NEW PARKS CHIEF

Conservation Groups Voice Concern Over Post

By WILLIAM M. BLAIR
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13 — The Administration broke a longstanding tradition today in naming an assistant to President Nixon as director of the National Park Service.

In appointing Ronald H. Walker, 35 years old, the Administration made a political

appointment that drew immediate expressions of concern from conservation groups. These groups have called for continuation of a nonpolitical, professional career director as the park system faces difficult times.

Mr. Walker replaces George B. Hartzog Jr., whose resignation is effective Dec. 31. Mr. Hartzog, a New Jerseyan who is a holdover from the Johnson Administration, is among eight top Interior Department officials being ousted in a reorganization by the Nixon Administration. He has come under fire from conservationists.

Michael McCloskey, executive director of the Sierra Club, said, "We are profoundly disturbed that somebody has been

named who has none of the credentials we expected." He added that he was disturbed because there was no evidence of the credentials "we had heard discussed with top officials of the Department of the Interior."

Awaits More Information

Mr. McCloskey and other conservation leaders said that they had not been consulted about the new director and did not know him.

George Alderson, legislative director of the Friends of the Earth, a leading critic of Mr. Hartzog, had no immediate comment. His office said that he would wait until the organization found out more about Mr. Walker, who has been an ad-

vance man for the President's travels at home and abroad.

Friends of the Earth called for Mr. Hartzog's resignation earlier this year, charging that he had engaged in a "give-away" of some park lands, carried favor with park concessionaires and permitted parks to be "destroyed through piecemeal developments" at a time when the public was seeking expanded outdoor recreation.

Stewart L. Brandborg, executive director of the Wilderness Society, said that many environmentalists had hoped the new director would be a man of "professional background and broad environmental knowledge."

However, Mr. Brandborg said that Mr. Walker had a

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"tremendous opportunity" and hoped that he would respond to Mr. Nixon's desire to fulfill a pledge to have an open Government.

He said that the Park Service had "fallen behind" in serving the people and hoped that Mr. Walker would be able to restore the spirit of Park Service employees to attack the problems of overcrowding, developing wilderness areas and other needed outdoor recreation facilities. "We wish him well," he said.

Daniel Poole of the Wildlife Management Institute said that "we have the normal concerns and apprehensions" over such a political appointment. Echoing other conservationists, he said, "We had hoped that the

person selected would have a demonstrated knowledge and concern for the National Park System, its philosophy, concept and principles."

Cites White House Ties

Mr. McCloskey said that he hoped that Mr. Walker's "strong ties to the White House will draw support for the parks." It was not necessary, he said, to have a professional career man from the ranks of the service but added, "I doubt that anyone in the environmental field ever heard of him."

Mr. Hartzog, who invited Mr. Walker to meet with the Park Service staff this afternoon, termed his successor "a very attractive young man."

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, in announcing Mr. Walker's appointment, said he had been selected "because he is a dedicated person of unusual talent and ability." Mr. Morton said that Mr. Walker would be a "strong successor" to Mr. Hartzog.

"Ron is totally committed to leading the National Park System into its second century," Mr. Morton said. "The mission of our Park Service to conserve and preserve our natural and historical heritage and to provide educational and recreational opportunities for millions of visitors is one of the great challenges of our time."

Mr. Walker came from the Government.

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