

In the Netherlands, well into the twentieth century, privately owned estates formed the backbone of forest ownership. With one notable exception, political concerns about deforestation led not to strong governmental regulation but rather to cooperation. By examining the contributions of large Dutch estates and the Nature Scenery Act of 1928 to preserving forest cover, we can expand our understanding of private forests' landowners as a whole in forest and conservation history.

THE NATURE SCENERY ACT OF 1928

IN THE NETHERLANDS

James Lord Brice, British ambassador in the United States from 1907 to 1913, called the idea of national parks “the best idea America ever had.” But the concept that not just “nature” as such but also beautiful scenery should be conserved for future generations was not a uniquely American one.¹ Over the course of the nineteenth

century, in much of Western Europe and the United States, scenic landscapes had become the object of public concern, and in the twentieth century the concept of national parks became popular in the Old World, too.

Today the Netherlands, a nation approximately the size of Maryland, has 20 national parks, 18 of which were established after 1989. The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality, which oversees the country’s national parks, claims they offer “the story of nature in the Netherlands.”² This interpretation overlooks or minimizes the historical role Dutch estates have played in forest and nature conservation.

Though there are numerous historical studies of old European estates, the subject of the conservation policies on estates, with the exception of England and Scotland, has attracted little interest

among environmental historians in North America and Europe.³ Studies of America’s national parks and government policies concerning the protection of nature abound, but their size, ownership, and historical settings differ greatly from the situation on estates and therefore comparisons with parks like Yellowstone or Yosemite are of little use.⁴

Landscape and nature conservation efforts in Europe are older than the introduction of the idea of national parks. They were the concern of the state as well as many thousands of private individuals who owned forested land as part of their landed estates. “Pastoral” nature was the norm rather than the exception.⁵ Moreover, “feudal” estates were the bearers of the idea of pastoral nature as farming became increasingly rationalized and modern over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In

BY S. W. VERSTEGEN



The scenic beauty close to the estate Mariënwaerd, owned by the noble family Van Verschuer, offers visitors stereotypical views of the Dutch landscape. Today, the estate is a full-blown commercial operation.

Europe, glorifying the “noble” past and the pastoral went hand in hand with nature protection.

In this article, I focus on the policy concerning the preservation of forests on landed estates in the Netherlands, with an emphasis on the Nature Scenery Act of 1928 (NSA). This law did not allow fellings without consent. It strongly reduced the inheritance tax for estate owners if they kept the estate intact for 25 years, kept a certain percentage of their land forested, and maintained its condition well. Taxes were even further reduced if the owner opened his estate up to the public. This approach successfully protected many of the landed estates from their demise over the past 85 years. How did this success come about and, as society has changed in many ways since the 1920s, how was the law adapted to these changing circumstances? The Dutch example shows that forest history should involve the history of estates and not confine itself to forest management in a strict sense.

In the United States, governments, be they state or national, wanting to protect forests from overcutting had to protect them from private industry—the big lumber companies. Until the 1920s those companies took little interest in forest management.⁶ So while the national park idea may have originated in the United States, the country lagged behind in forest protection. In contrast, from the early nineteenth century onward, European forest preservation was more of a matter of interaction between governments and private landowners, although outright bans on felling were

not unknown. Given that aristocrats had an important say in politics, this is not surprising. In the Dutch case (as in other European countries as well), not just constraints on private forestry but also stimulating (fiscal) measures proved to be a very strong and effective way of protecting nature and forests without major financial sacrifices for the fiscal administration of a country.

AFFORESTATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

To explain why older and smaller estates are so interesting from a forestry-conservation point of view, we should first consider the following. In many European countries, the nineteenth century was a time of considerable afforestation. In the Netherlands, at the start of the 1800s, only around two percent (around 70,000 hectares, or 173,000 acres) of the land area was covered by forests.⁷ Deforestation became problematic not because of the lack of wood, as the Dutch had been importing wood on a very large scale from Germany and Scandinavia since medieval times, but for ecological reasons. Especially in the southern and eastern provinces, as happened in Denmark and Scotland, sand drifts expanded as a result of ruthless farming practices like overgrazing and heath extraction. The biggest sand drift in the Netherlands was about 2,000 ha (5,000 ac). In some hard-hit regions about 10 percent of the land was lost for economical use.

As in many parts of Western Europe, after the revolutionary Napoleonic era, a new nationalistic mood struck the country. In

the Netherlands, this mood focused on an economic revival and the making of a new golden age. As in the surrounding countries, the “rebirth” of the forest had begun more than a century earlier than in the United States.⁸ The government stimulated afforestation by offering tax exemptions on newly forested lands. Forest cover grew from approximately 169,000 ha in 1833 to 268,000 in 1900 (419,000 to 664,000 ac).⁹ Afforestation would restore degraded lands, including sand drifts and heaths, and make them economical useful once again while also making the country more independent from imports and providing work for the poor.¹⁰ Slowly the forest recovered, but in 1868 forest cover in the Netherlands



Hunting scene in the 1960s on the estate of Den Treek, owned by the noble family De Beaufort.

was still only 7 percent of the land area. The situation was comparable in Denmark (5.5 percent) and Great Britain (5 percent) but quite different from the still heavily forested northern and eastern countries, such as Russia (33 percent), Sweden, and Norway (both more than 60 percent).¹¹ As was the case in Scotland, most of the new forests consisted of rows and rows of monoculture pine plantations.¹² On older, often noble country estates one could find biologically more diverse forests and mature oaks and beeches alongside lanes. From the ecological point of view of forest conservation policies in Europe, such estates might even be more important than the history of state forests.

DUTCH LANDED ESTATES FROM A NEW WORLD PERSPECTIVE

What did such a Dutch forested estate look like? When the Dutch State Forest Service (*Staatsbosbeheer*) before the Second World War calculated the income and expenditure of an average estate, the assumption was that it covered only 250 ha (700 ac), consisted of a country house (not by definition an old one), beautiful lanes, a park and its surroundings (mostly forested), and sometimes hunting grounds. From a heritage point of view, such a privately owned house, park, and its surroundings form an *ensemble*. To make a more illuminating comparison with the New World, the estates protected by the Dutch NSA looked more or less like the old *seigneuries* in Canada or old plantations in the U.S. South, in size as well as in emanation.¹³ The reason is that like those properties in the New World, most of the protected estates in Europe belonged to aristocratic families.

A comparison between Mariënwaerd in Holland, the Oakley House plantation in Louisiana, and the domain of Joly de Lot Binière in Québec might be useful here.¹⁴ In 1951, 252 ha (623 ac) of the former *seigneurie* Mariënwaerd became registered under the NSA.¹⁵ In the center lies “the big house.” (The Dutch also used this expression that we know from southern plantation homes.) The historic estate of Mariënwaerd dates from 1744, and the property once housed a monastery established in 1129.

Today, the estate is a full-blown commercial undertaking: it invites visitors to walk or cycle around the estate and its surroundings. The view offers not just trees and forests but also a near-cliché—a Dutch river landscape. The estate has a conference center, the owners sell “slow-food,” and they rent it out for weddings and parties.

By comparison, Oakley House was a privately owned plantation until it was purchased in 1946 by the state of Louisiana. The house, with its beautiful gardens and surroundings, was restored as a museum in the last century. After the Second World War, Oakley House, with an additional 40 ha (100 ac) of “lush natural setting,” became the center of the Audubon State Historic Site, which offers many attractions to visitors.¹⁶

The owners of Mariënwaerd follow more or less the same policy in attracting visitors as Joly de Lot Binière in Québec and many old plantations in the South by offering a range of activities: weddings, home-grown food in restaurants, tours of beautiful gardens and flowers. Just as in Mariënwaerd, visitors can walk along the riverside (though the St. Lawrence is much bigger than its Dutch counterpart). Just like its Old World counterparts, the present-day Domaine de Lot Binière, situated on the former *seigneurie* Lotbinière, has an interesting history, which is clearly one of its attractions.¹⁷ In Europe as well as in North America, heritage, history, and nature are intertwined.

THE PROBLEM BEHIND THE NATURE SCENERY ACT

As in the United States, by the late nineteenth century, scenic beauty had become a political concern in the Netherlands. In the 1890s liberal members of Parliament worried about the few recreational options for the working poor and townspeople. Industrialization in the Netherlands had had a slow beginning but was in full swing by then, and living conditions for the working class were considered problematic. The NSA has the same roots as the American national parks movement, and in this respect the early Dutch preservation ideas were closely related to the American example.



JULES VAN DER VOORST DE VRIES, THE NETHERLANDS

There are several estates in the Netherlands in the neoclassical style that strongly resemble the plantation landscapes in the U.S. South. The privately owned mansion Maarn, located in the heart of the country and comprising 143 ha (353 ac) when it was accepted as an NSA-estate in the 1930s, is the best example.

The way the Dutch Parliament wanted to handle the preservation of the estates and entice city dwellers to visit them was, as in the nineteenth-century afforestation projects, not by direct control but by tax incentives. These could be either negative or positive and would, it was hoped, induce landowners to open their estates to the public. During the First World War this idealistic proposition mixed with concerns about the future of the estates and especially the safeguarding of wood resources. The Netherlands was not among the belligerents during the First World War, but nevertheless the country had to raise taxes to pay for armaments and troops to safeguard its neutrality. England's blockade of Dutch harbors to prevent trade with Germany hampered imports, and the price of wood soared in the Netherlands. As a result landowners started felling and selling large trees and forests to meet their financial obligations to the state. If the need for cash became even more urgent, owners parceled out and sold their estates.

During the war, the fledgling Dutch society for the protection of nature (*Natuurmonumenten*, founded in 1905) and the Royal Dutch Touring Club raised the alarm. Estates were disappearing at a frightening rate because of the tax burden; inheritance taxes more than doubled between 1911 and 1917. The Dutch problem was more or less the same as in England, where according to the *New York Times* in 1919, many old mansions were sold because of the war:

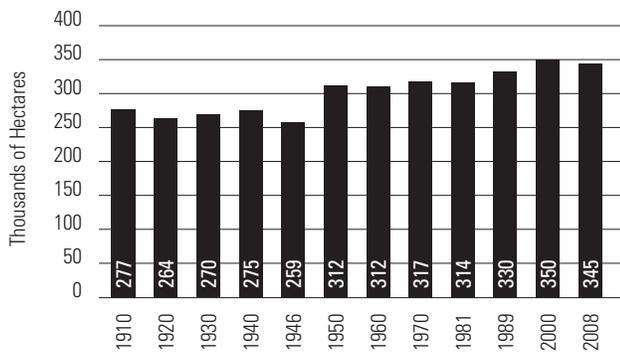
So heavily has the war borne upon the English landowner that he finds himself no longer able to maintain his estates, so, in whole or in part, he is giving them up.... Long lists of estates advertised

*for sale are to be found every day in the London newspapers, and nearly every day there is the brief account of some old family demesne passing after many generations, into strange hands.*¹⁸

During the war, the Dutch government responded by prohibiting the felling of trees without permission. But the government was very reluctant to give tax exemptions to estate owners to protect trees. The Dutch economy relied heavily on foreign trade, so everybody was suffering from the consequences of naval warfare and the disruption of trade. In these circumstances "rich" landowners (even though the yields of their estates were very low) were not in a position to ask for any privilege in taxation and as a result this proposal was turned down. Only after the financial problems eased somewhat in the 1920s did tax exemptions become an issue once more. During the war, the secretary of Agriculture was strongly opposed to helping estate owners because he feared draining state finances; after the war, these fears relaxed. By the 1920s forest cover in the Netherlands was for the first time in many decades falling and almost at its lowest point in the twentieth century, with 264,000 ha (654,000 ac). (See Figure 1)

Because 184,000 hectares, or two-thirds, of the forested area was in private hands, concern over disappearing forested estates grew after the war. As seen in Table 1, a 1925 investigation revealed what these private estates comprised: softwoods and coppice dominated, and 8.5 percent of the privately owned forests consisted of hardwoods, accounting for a very considerable part, maybe even half or more, of the total hardwood cover of the country.²⁰ Also noteworthy from the viewpoint of scenery preservation is

Figure 1. Forest Cover in the Netherlands in Thousands of Hectares from 1900 to 2008¹⁹



that individual trees and trees lining estate-owned avenues made up 13 percent of the total market value of trees and forests.²¹ (See Table 2 on page 11.)

At this critical moment, in 1924, political pressure came from a Communist member of Parliament, Willem van Ravensteyn, son of a successful industrialist, who was also a fervent lover of nature. He was concerned about the many estates being destroyed and argued (not surprisingly) for confiscation by the state. The secretary of Agriculture made good on a promise to look into the matter. In close cooperation with *Natuurmonumenten*, the Royal Dutch Touring Club, and elitist newspapers, a successful lobby was organized to build up pressure on this issue and in the Queen's Speech of 1926, Queen Wilhelmina (i.e., the government) announced the long-awaited law that would stimulate the preservation of privately owned estates, trees, and forests. In the same year, the government stipulated that income taxes on private forests be lifted. The timing was rather close to developments in the United States, where in the 1920s and 1930s many states, and the federal government, wanted to examine whether changes in the property tax could give special considerations to forestlands.²²

Table 1. Privately Owned Trees and Forests in the Netherlands in 1925

Forest Cover	1,000 acres	Percentage
Softwood (pine, fir)	245	53.8
Hardwood (beech, oak, poplar, elm, willow, etc.)	39	8.5
Coppice	170	37.2
Total	454	100.0†

Value of Forests and Trees

Avenues and individual trees	fl. 20 million‡	13
Forests	fl. 134 million	87
Total value	fl. 154 million	100

† The estates accounted for 68 percent of the Dutch forest cover. The other 32 percent was owned by local authorities, provincial governments, and the state.
‡ 1 Dutch guilder in 1925 was worth approximately \$0.40(US).

THE DYNAMISM OF NATURE PROTECTION ON ESTATES

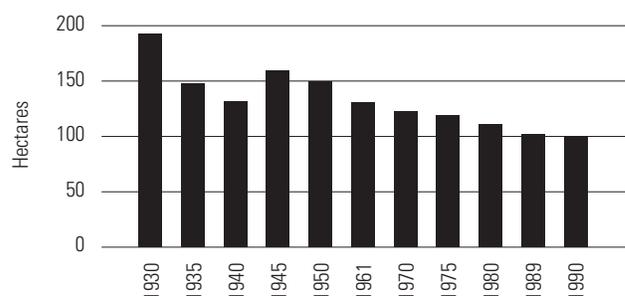
The basic idea behind this fiscal law was that the tax on real estate was based on the market value of the land. Urbanization and land development put upward pressure on values, so taxes weighed ever more heavily on estates close to cities. The Nature Scenery Act stated that if the owner of an estate promised to keep the estate intact for 25 years, taxation value was lowered to the market value of the estate as a complete and intact piece of landed property and not as the sum of individual plots of land open for development. An investigation was carried out to estimate the amount of money involved, and the rough estimate was that lowering the inheritance tax for estate owners would not be problematic because only a low percentage of the Dutch countryside was covered by estates. This guess proved to be correct, and between 1930 and 1948 only a small percentage of the income from the inheritance tax was lost because of the NSA. In practice, the value of the estates was on the whole lowered to 70 percent of its normal value. Since taxes were progressive, the tax rate turned out to be even somewhat lower than that.

Without any resistance whatsoever and with only slight amendments, Parliament agreed to the proposition. There was some skepticism, though, that the law would not work because landowners could still dispose of their estates if they wanted to, no matter what tax provisions were offered. The most vocal opponent of the law was the socialist Henri Polak. He had visited England, was an admirer of the English National Trust, and adopted the slogan of English activists that to protect the English landscape, one had to “kill the Octopus” of urban sprawl. But he did not vote against the proposal because it offered at least some protection. According to him, it was “a first modest step in the right direction.”²³ He feared that his constituency would not understand it if he voted against the law.

At first sight, skeptics like Polak appeared to be wrong because between 1928 and 1956, more than 100,000 ha (247,000 ac) of land and close to 800 estates were protected by the Nature Scenery Act. This was more than half of the privately owned forests in the country. Between 1928 and 1946, the owners removed only 10 percent of this area from the list of protected estates. In the long run, however, the number of protected hectares stayed more or less the same for half a century. The number of protected estates slowly increased, however, as new, relatively small, estates were registered but big ones were removed from the list. The effect was that the average area of a protected estate declined from approximately 200 to 100 hectares. (See Figure 2.)

We can visualize how the removal of estates from the list was

Figure 2. Average Area of a Protected Estate in Hectares

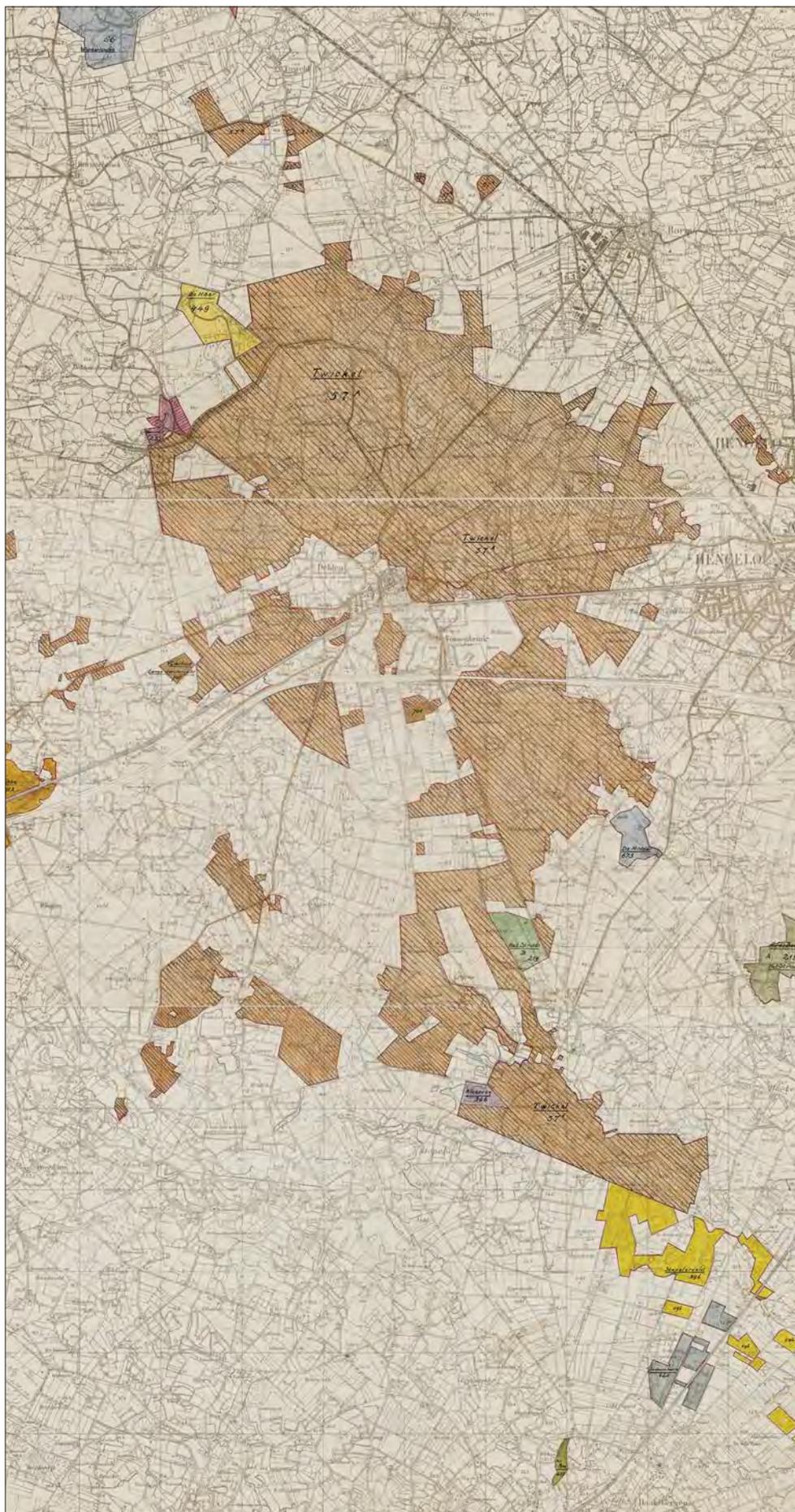


documented on maps. In the 1980s, by sheer luck, a large collection of some 300 maps from the 1950s was saved from a trash container of the Dutch Department of Agriculture. They show all the NSA-registered estates as well as shaded areas, indicating estates that were removed from the list. A famous example is the Castle Twickel and its surroundings.

Why were such big estates removed and how did this seemingly unfortunate trend come about? After the Second World War, trouble arose when institutional investors like pension funds, local governments, or private clinics became more interested in complete estates to enhance their prestige. The previous notion that a complete estate would do less well on the market than the individual parcels proved to be outdated. As a result, new concerns emerged about the future of Dutch estates. One of the proposals introduced in Parliament in the 1960s was to create an English-style “National Trust” that should take care of all threatened estates. At first sight, this was not such a bad idea, since England and the Netherlands shared a common problem: inheritance taxes weighed heavily on the owners. The proposal was debated in Parliament and some special committees, but the general opinion was that the country house scheme of the National Trust was not a good format for the Netherlands. In England, the National Trust really took over the estate from the owner. In the Netherlands, however, the owners did not like the idea of “confiscation,” as they called it. The estate owners were not interested, and neither was the government, and the idea was turned down.

But something had to be done, and in the end, three totally different approaches proved successful. As the concern about the environment and nature protection rose in the 1960s,

The biggest noble estate in the Netherlands is Castle Twickel in the east of the Netherlands. The estate covers more than 4,000 hectares spread over five parishes, and includes agricultural land and meadows interspersed with moorland, fens, and woods.





KATHY HART

As interest in protecting nature rose in the 1960s, organizations for the protection of nature and heritage saw donations dramatically increase, which allowed them to buy estates. In 2000 the famous estate Haarzuilens was bought by Natuurmonumenten.

organizations for the protection of nature and heritage saw donations skyrocketing, which allowed them to buy estates. A very good and recent example of this policy is the famous estate Haarzuilens, a kind of fairytale castle built at the end of the nineteenth century on the foundations of a medieval building and owned by the Rothschilds. In 2000 the estate of about 350 ha (865 ac) was bought by *Natuurmonumenten*. The art collections of the castle, though kept in place, were donated to a separate foundation. Politically, the government on all levels lent a financial hand. A second option was that old (noble) estates passed into the hands of foundations, as had happened to Twickel. That big, old estates were moved off the list of protected estates did not mean that the NSA was not successful, but handing them over to foundations and nature conservation societies offered a better prospect for the historical estates in the long run.

Third, the government decided to lower taxes so that in the end the owners of estates, provided they kept their estates intact, did not have to pay any inheritance tax at all. Finally, besides tax exemptions, subsidies to maintain forests were offered to estate owners who opened up their forests to the public. This last move became a necessity because after the Second World War tourists flooded the forests and estate owners had to spend increasing amounts of money on damage control. As with the national parks in the United States after the Second World War, the very success of the Nature Scenery Act became problematic.

WHAT WAS PROTECTED?

What was protected and on what grounds? The NSA was primarily a law that protected forests and scenic areas, the latter mostly meaning beautiful lanes with old-growth beeches, oaks, and sometimes poplars. If surrounded by trees or coppice, agricultural land

with a “scenic” value could be protected, too, as could historical sites and old buildings (such as farms, windmills, and country houses).

The forest counsel (*Bosraad*), a special committee nominated by the Department of Agriculture during the Great War, undertook inspections to determine whether an estate had enough scenic value to merit tax exemptions to the owner. This committee had a hard time in the early years of the existence of the NSA. Many elderly members of old families wanted to lower the inheritance tax for their offspring and asked for registration. It was not uncommon for members of the counsel to visit four or five estates, by train and car, in a single day. Considering this pace, the *Bosraad* must have been acquainted with the estates; some were rejected because the forest was too young, large-scale felling had just occurred, or the scenery was considered boring, to mention a few reasons for refusal. Estates could vary in size, though, from smaller than 5 ha (12 ac), in which case it was really a kind of park around a country house, up to 2,000 ha (5,000 ac), which was exceptional.

When plotted on a map, one can see that in the 1950s most of the protected estates were situated in what is called the “noble belt,” which runs right across the Netherlands from west to east, leaving the north and the south virtually devoid of (protected) estates. If we take a closer look at the maps, it is very clear that beautiful lanes were an important element in the NSA: much of the protected areas around country houses show small outward lines in diverse directions. In the 1940s and 1950s around half of the protected estates belonged to families of old noble descent who were also the owners of the biggest estates. Most estates were situated in the eastern part of the country, where these families had been living for centuries. However, the problem was that

owners of smaller estates in the urbanized west were not keen on using the tax provisions of the NSA to its full extent. These owners were afraid that opening up their estates to the public would ruin their inheritance. Many complaints were voiced around the middle of the twentieth century about city folks roaming among the trees, damaging plants, carving names in trees, and even harassing the daughters of the landowners. So, these owners could not reap the full benefits of the law.

According to some observers, the owners of the smaller estates in the urbanized west were mostly upper-class bourgeois families—though some were also of old stock—who were not so strongly attached to an estate and even less dependent on its income. Newspapers in the 1930s uttered concerns that parvenus had fewer problems in selling their land and profiting from the urban sprawl that pushed real estate prices upward. For these reasons, estate owners in the west were less interested in the NSA, exactly in the area were the parliamentarians in the late nineteenth century complained about the limited recreational opportunities for the townspeople. In this respect, the NSA was not a great success.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

What were the ideas behind the NSA? In the early 1920s, the Dutch National Forestry Service organized a survey on the forest literature in European countries and also took a brief look at U.S. nature conservation practices. The survey included 15 documents from the German-speaking countries, France, Belgium, Italy, the United States, England, and Denmark and sought to identify laws and regulations concerning “scenery,” the protection of species and their scientific importance, landscapes, and the conservation of nature and monuments.

The Dutch forest service was especially interested in laws on the national level. Did national governments use tax incentives to protect nature? Did they consider confiscations? Were there lists of what was damaged and what was worth protecting? What obligations could be asked from owners? And the list went on. It turned out that in Germany, nature and monuments could be protected together but scenery was not an explicit concern. The forest service thought the Germans to be rather vague about this. In England the desire to preserve the beauty of estates was captured in the agency’s name: National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty. Belgian, American, and Italian regulations explicitly talked about scenery and the beauty of landscapes.

The French and Danish regulations were considered useful by the Dutch forest service because they focused on taxes. The French, for instance, had ordained that new forests be free from taxes for a period of 30 years. Denmark was especially interesting

for the Dutch because the situation there looked very much like that at home. Denmark is approximately the same size as the Netherlands, the geography is more or less the same, forests covered just a small percentage of the land, and most of it (74 percent) was privately owned. From 1903 onward, young forests (aged less than 20 years) on poor land were free from land tax, but owners had to maintain the forests in good condition. To stop quick profit taking, new owners of forests were not allowed to fell trees for commercial purposes without the consent of the forest department.

The NSA was a mixture of these foreign regulations. Tax exemptions were known in France; protection of scenery was common in Belgium, the United States, England, and Italy. The stipulation that owners could not cut down trees without permission and maintain their forests in good condition was an idea found in Denmark.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The NSA was successful in protecting hundreds of estates for future generations. But was it also successful in attracting visitors? Visiting protected estates was not problematic. Prices for tickets were low, on the order of 10 or 20 Dutch cents before the Second World War (the equivalent of just a few U.S. pennies), and tickets for a year were even cheaper, relatively, at few guilders a year. These prices were symbolic because the aim of the landowners was not to generate profits but to control access, and many of them stipulated that only persons of good conduct be allowed in. But despite this low barrier, it took a while before the estates began attracting large numbers of visitors. As elsewhere in the Western world, before the coming of the welfare state in the 1950s, hiking in “nature” was an elitist affair. In the 1930s and 1940s an estate that sold more than 200 tickets a year was exceptional. Just as in the United States, mass tourism came late in the Netherlands, but by the 1970s the numbers had risen to an impressive 12,000 visitors per estate a year on average.²⁴

Until the early 1980s private landowners in total owned more forests than the National Forest Service and preservation clubs. (Approximately 55 percent of the forest area in the Netherlands is owned by the government.)²⁵ In the first decade of the twenty-first century, preservation organizations owned more forestland than did private individuals. In the years before the Second World War this was not possible, since these organizations did not have the money to acquire estates on a large scale. (See Table 2.)

With the rise of the environmental movement in the last decades of the twentieth century, the aims of the NSA slowly shifted. Nature protection as such became more important, and

Table 2. Forest Ownership in the Netherlands, 1975–2008

Year	Private forests	National Forest Service	Organizations for Preservation of Nature	Other (e.g., Local Government, State Domain)	Total
1975	38	24	9	29	100
1981	31	29	11	29	100
1991	24	32	12	31	100
2000	22	32	19	27	100
2008	20	33	22	25	100

commercial logging in the Netherlands, less so. As a result, members of Parliament were openly asking whether the NSA should not be changed. It never was entirely clear to what extent a protected estate should be covered with trees anyway, but in the 1990s the question was whether this mattered at all. Despite this criticism the secretary of Agriculture did not give in: the NSA was meant as a “forestry law.” In 1989, after a long debate in Parliament, a compromise was reached: 30 percent of the area of the NSA estate should be covered with trees. Only when 50 percent of the surface of the estate existed of “natural terrains” (i.e., sand, heaths, swamps, lakes, and other terrain without agricultural or commercial uses), the forested area could be as low as 20 percent. Special regulations were made for agricultural lands: they should be surrounded 75 percent by trees—and not just any trees, but characteristic trees that guaranteed the scenic beauty of the place. Of late the Dutch government explicitly stimulates the formation of “new” estates, giving tax reductions to anyone who plants his nouveau-riche estate with trees and opens it up to the public. Helped by the abandonment of farmland, this policy is still successful: today, more hectares than ever are protected (117,000 ha or 289,113 ac in 2007). After more than 80 years, the NSA is still very effective.

CONCLUSIONS

In the Netherlands and in Europe in general, until far in the twentieth century, privately owned estates formed the backbone of forest ownership. Europe differed from North America in that these estates were often run by old aristocratic families and not by commercial lumber companies. In the Netherlands, political concerns about deforestation led not to strong governmental regulation (except during World War I) against the interests of the estate owners but instead to cooperation. Tax exemptions were the carrot (and high inheritance taxes the stick) that proved successful. The National Scenery Act was a fiscal law aimed at protecting forests on privately owned estates. In this respect it looked to some extent like earlier Dutch fiscal measures to stimulate afforestation.²⁶ One can see foreign influences in the use of tax incentives, the name of the law (“scenery”), and government control regarding its maintenance. Temporarily, for a period of some 30 or even 50 years, the NSA was very helpful for protecting forests, trees, and scenery, and continues to do so today in modified form.

For the history of forest preservation and conservation, accounting for the contribution of old plantations in the U.S. South, *seigneuries* in Canada, and Dutch (and English) estates to forest cover creates opportunities to expand our understanding of forests as a whole. Integrating transnational research on old plantations, *seigneuries*, and estates with research on national parks offers interesting new perspectives for the study of forestry, nature, and historical land management. □

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NOTES

1. Ney Landrum, *The State Park Movement in America: A Critical Review* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 4.
2. “National Parks in the Netherlands” website, accessed at <http://www.nationaalpark.nl/documents/home.xml?lang=en>.
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4. For information on the United States, I used Douglas W. MacCleery, *American Forests: A History of Resiliency and Recovery* (Durham: Forest History Society, 2011).
5. See, for example, Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Penguin, 1984), Chapter 5, “Trees and Flowers.”
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7. G. M. J. Mohren and F. Vodde, “Forests and Forestry in the Netherlands,” in *Forests and Forestry in European Union Countries* (State Forest Information Centre and the Forest Research Institute, 2006), 334; and J. L. van Zanden and S. W. Verstegen, *Een groene geschiedenis van Nederland* (A Green History of the Netherlands) (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1993) 17, 167.
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10. S. W. Verstegen, “Fuel Resources and Wastelands in the Netherlands around 1800,” in T. L. Whited, J. I. Engels, R. C. Hoffman, H. Ibsen, and W. Verstegen (eds.), *Northern Europe: An Environmental History* (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford: ABC Clio, 2005) 172–75.
11. Williams, *Deforesting the Earth*, 279.
12. J. Jan Oosthoek, *Conquering the Highlands: A History of Afforestation of the Scottish Uplands* (Canberra: Australian National University E-press, 2013).
13. The author visited Rosedown and Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, during a field trip of the American Society of Environmental History conference in Baton Rouge (2007) and Québec and its surroundings following the society’s conference in Toronto (2013).
14. An unscientific but nevertheless interesting comparison of the three estates discussed can be made by viewing the videos available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vstAg2FsKsg>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFNDjFXdCdM>; and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhEE9edfvKU>.
15. The estate is more than 900 ha.
16. “Louisiana State Parks—Historic Sites: Audubon State Historic Site” website, accessed at <http://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/historic-sites/audubon-state-historic-site/index>.
17. “Domaine Joly-De Lotbinière” website, accessed at <http://www.domaine-joly.com/fr/accueil/>.
18. “Breaking Up Estates: One of the Effects of the Way That Is Noticeable in England,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1919.
19. Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics a.o., *Compendium voor de Leefomgeving: Feiten en cijfers over natuur, milieu en ruimte* (Environmental Data Compendium), accessed at <http://www.compendiumvoordeleefomgeving.nl/indicatoren/nl1001-Ontwikkeling-van-het-bodemgebruik-vanaf-1900.html?i=15-18>.
20. Jan Clement and Lammert Kooistra, *Eerste Boststatistiek Digitaal. Opbouw van een historische database* (Wageningen: Wageningen University 2003–2004), 19, 45. The Dutch category of “loofhout” is not the same as the English category of “hardwood”; it includes poplars, elms, and willows.
21. The number of hectares they covered is unknown but not very relevant.
22. MacCleery, *American Forests*, 35.
23. Merlin Waterson, *The National Trust: The First Hundred Years* (London: National Trust, 1995), 84–88.
24. MacCleery, *American Forests*, 45.
25. Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics a.o., *Compendium voor de Leefomgeving, “Ownership of forests, 1975–2012,”* accessed at <http://www.compendiumvoordeleefomgeving.nl/indicatoren/nl1262-Eigendom-van-bossen.html?i=4-25>.
26. *Ibid.*