

Yosemite Leadership Program presents:

# ***What are we protecting in protected areas?***

**Jordan Fisher Smith**  
***2017 California Book Award Winner***

**Thursday, March 8th, 2018 at 3 pm**  
**California Room, University of California, Merced**

What makes a wild place wild? For a long time, there have been two competing answers: The Wilderness Act defines such a place as “untrammeled,” meaning uncontrolled or unmanipulated. Another definition of a wild place is one that still possesses a near-complete assembly of plants, animals, and other natural entities.

As many of us are aware, climate change, the Sixth Extinction, and landscape fragmentation have now rendered these two definitions of wildness in conflict with each other. Given the pervasive effects of these anthropogenic forces, places that are not deliberately manipulated in such schemes as endangered species recovery plans may lose key biota, and places that by our efforts retain their rich biota may not remain untrammeled or unmanipulated.

What is less widely known is that this conflict between these definitions goes back to at least the 1950s, well before the Wilderness Act’s passage.

Beginning with a gruesome bear attack during the 1972 Yellowstone Centennial, in his prize-winning book *ENGINEERING EDEN*, environmental writer Jordan Fisher Smith traces the roots of this conflict to heated controversies over the management of America’s oldest and grandest national parks in the 1960s.

*ENGINEERING EDEN* won a 2017 California Book Award and was longlisted for the PEN/E.O. Wilson Award for Literary Science Writing. The Wall Street Journal calls it “an intensely reported, rousingly readable and ambitiously envisioned book.”

Smith spent 21 years as a ranger in law enforcement, EMS, wilderness, and fire. His 2005 memoir of a portion of that time, *NATURE NOIR*, was an Audubon Editor’s Choice and a San Francisco Chronicle Best Book. Newsweek said of Smith in *NATURE NOIR*: “He writes about the natural world with more grace than anyone since Edward Abbey.” Smith will appear as a guest of the Yosemite Leadership Program, the California Center for Parks and Protected Areas Leadership, and the George Wright Society.

