

# In Memorium

Warren Russell Bacon, May 14, 1937–November 2, 2024

Robert Ribe

Warren Bacon died in Lake Oswego, Oregon, on November 2, 2024. He is among the seminal landscape architects who led the growth and evolution of the profession in response to the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. He worked within the U.S. government, gaining less notice than other leaders in the profession, including Ian McHarg, Carl Steinitz, Beatrix Farrand, Lawrence Halprin, David Wallace, Roelf Bentham, Christopher Tunnard, Jacques Sgard, Karl Linn, M. Paul Friedberg, Angela Danadjieva, Lynn Margulis, Dennis Scott, Phil Lewis, and James Corner. Bacon clearly saw how landscape architects should and would play a significant role in comprehensive and sensitive national forest planning initiated by the National Environmental Policy Act and The National Forest Management Act. His leadership in establishing methods and standards for landscapes that offered beauty, evidence of care, and quality recreational experiences influenced public practice in other agencies and worldwide.

Bacon earned a BLA at the University of Oregon in 1962 and began his career as a landscape architect at the Shasta Trinity National Forest in Northern California. He quickly rose to the position of southern regional landscape architect in Atlanta. His innovative responses to new demands soon landed him at national headquarters in Washington, D.C. Previous forest planning methods had emphasized technical aspects of forest exploitation and conservation with incidental attention to recreation sites and little attention to aesthetics at landscape scales. Bacon recognized that visual and recreational resources clearly needed to be given the same importance as other resources managed by scientific professionals. He saw that rigorous and effective measurement and advocacy by landscape architects for the visual and

recreational value of landscapes was needed, and that failure to provide it would neglect important social needs and the success of land management. He recognized the potential for landscape architects to be effective players in implementing new environmental laws. These laws demanded defensibly accurate impact assessments that would be adopted by agencies as best practices and stand up in permitting hearings or court challenges. The National Environmental Policy Act also required clear public communication and engagement, and Bacon guided new methods that would be widely understood. Landscape analysis methods needed to be technically respected by other professionals and their stakeholders, and his contributions helped foster effective collaborations. All these achievements had to be codified in procedural rules and manuals, which he played a leading role in writing, to authorize, legitimize, and help guide the work of landscape architects.

Bacon began his seminal work in Washington, D.C., but because he preferred maintaining contact with local, on-the-ground forest management problems and mentoring landscape architects working there, he became the agency's Pacific Northwest regional landscape architect in Portland, where he continued national leadership until retiring in 1997. He saw that public perceptions of forest management and national forest experiences had become crucial to the agency's success and that aesthetic values required rigorous, defensible, and effective advocacy.

In addition to rewriting landscape planning elements of the *U.S. Forest Service Manual*, Bacon took the lead in writing the agency's *Visual Management System* and *Recreation Opportunity Spectrum*. Both documents are extensively employed and emulated as foundations for landscape planning and impact assessments.

*National Forest Landscape Management*, Volume 2, Chapter 1, The Visual Management System (1974)

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) User Guide. Region 6-REC-021-90 (1990)

He also substantially influenced the update of the Forest Service's Scenery Management System.

*Agriculture Handbook Number 701, Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*. U.S. Forest Service (1995)

Bacon also coauthored forest service landscape planning and design manuals for utilities, rangelands, roads, timber management, wildfire, ski areas, and recreation facilities.

*National Forest Landscape Management*, Volume 2, Chapter 2: Agriculture Handbooks 478, 483, 484, 559, 608, 617, and 666 (various dates)

His collaborators in writing these documents included Steve Galliano, Robert Ross, Wayne Iverson, Howard Orr, Asa Twombly, Jerry Coutant, R. Burton Litton, Lee Anderson, Edward Stone Jr., Perry Brown, Rai Behnert, Bill Fox, Harry Coughlin, Wayne Tlusty, and Americo DiBenedetto, among others.

Within the federal government, Bacon's works demonstrated how landscapes could be dealt with holistically as places arousing public affection and scrutiny. The profound influence of his diplomatic, diligent, and impactful works and his role in teaching young professionals were recognized with a USDA Superior Service Award in 1976, a Presidential Design Award in 1994, and the faculty of the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts nominated him to the Dean for their highest honor—the Ellis Lawrence Medal—in 2007.

Robert Ribe is a professor emeritus of landscape architecture at the University of Oregon's School of Architecture and Environment.