

Environmental Conservation in Early 20th-Century America: A Perspective from Oil Development

Miao Zhang

Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics, Kanazawa Seiryō University, Kanazawa, Japan

Email: miao Zhang8@hotmail.com

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Abstract—This paper examines the historical relationship between oil development and environmental conservation in early 20th-century America, with a particular focus on the tensions between rapid industrial growth and emerging conservationist thought. Drawing on case studies from Venice and Huntington Beach in California, it analyzes how local communities, municipal governments, and federal authorities responded to the environmental consequences of oil development. The study explores the development of conservationist ideologies, such as Gifford Pinchot's "wise use" principle and Theodore Roosevelt's national conservation policy, and traces their influence on early regulatory frameworks. Through an interdisciplinary review of historiography, legal structures, and policy responses, the paper highlights how environmental conservation evolved from forest and water management to encompass urban and coastal environments affected by oil activities. It argues that sustainable environmental governance in this period was shaped not only by top-down initiatives but also by civic engagement, local resistance, and democratic institutions. Ultimately, the study suggests that the lessons from early 20th-century America—particularly the integration of science, public participation, and institutional reform—remain highly relevant for contemporary environmental policy-making.

Keywords—oil development, environmental conservation, early 20th-century America, conservation policy, urban environmental history

I. INTRODUCTION

The early 20th century marked a pivotal era of economic and social transformation in the United States. The rapid progress of industrialization and urbanization following the Industrial Revolution, along with the widespread adoption of automobiles and mechanization, led to a dramatic surge in national energy demand. Among the various sectors that supported this transformation, the oil industry emerged as a key driver of economic growth and played an essential role in shaping modern America.

In the early 1900s, numerous oil fields were discovered—particularly in Texas—and the emergence of large-scale wells such as the Spindletop oil [1] field triggered dramatic changes in regional economies and sparked a nationwide oil boom. While this boom generated immense wealth, it also brought with it severe challenges regarding environmental conservation. Unregulated drilling practices and excessive extraction placed enormous stress on surrounding areas, causing land degradation, deforestation, and contamination of groundwater. Waste products and oil leaks associated with drilling and refining operations severely disrupted the ecosystems of rivers and lakes, directly impacting the lives of nearby residents.

The expansion of the oil industry also heightened concerns about air pollution from refinery operations. Emissions of hazardous gases and soot from refining facilities contributed to worsening air quality in urban areas, leading to increased respiratory diseases. In rapidly growing cities such as Los Angeles and New York, air pollution had already become a pressing issue for urban life by the early 20th century.

Furthermore, the development and popularization of the automobile industry led to an exponential increase in the demand for oil-based products. The consumption of gasoline and diesel soared, and the rise in vehicle exhaust emissions created new environmental problems, particularly in urban centers. While road infrastructure was developed to accommodate the growing number of automobiles, increased traffic volumes resulted in more noise and air pollution—eventually becoming recognized as public health and environmental concerns.

In this context, early 20th-century American society found itself at a crossroads between economic gain and environmental conservation. Public policy and societal awareness at the time had yet to fully recognize the importance of environmental protection, and existing regulatory mechanisms were inadequate. The oil industry prioritized economic benefits, while the government promoted industrial development, often relegating environmental concerns to the background.

However, as environmental damage intensified, public awareness grew, and early conservation movements began to take root. Campaigns to protect forests and water resources gained visibility, and some local governments and states started to enact independent environmental regulations—gradually introducing restrictions on oil drilling and refining operations.

Moreover, the environmental damage and social consequences caused by the oil industry during this period had a lasting influence on subsequent environmental policies. The foundations of the environmental movements and regulatory frameworks that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century were shaped by lessons drawn from these early experiences. There was a growing societal recognition of the need to understand and address the environmental burdens posed by industrial activity [2].

This paper explores the historical relationship between oil development and environmental issues in early 20th-century America. By analyzing the social and policy responses of the time, this study also aims to offer a historical perspective on contemporary environmental policy challenges—particularly the ongoing effort to strike a balance between environmental conservation and economic development.

II. THE EMERGENCE OF OIL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

In the early 20th century, the United States experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization, during which the oil industry underwent remarkable expansion. This growth was driven largely by a sharp increase in energy demand associated with the rise of automobiles and the acceleration of industrialization. A pivotal moment came in 1901, when a massive oil gusher erupted at the Spindletop oil field in Texas. This event marked a watershed in the history of American oil production, catalyzing a dramatic expansion in oil output nationwide.

Following the success of Spindletop, oil fields were discovered not only in Texas but also in California, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and other states, triggering an oil development boom. This new wave of resource exploitation brought about dramatic transformations in local economies, stimulating related industries such as railroads, steel manufacturing, and chemical processing. The growth of the oil industry also significantly boosted employment, accelerating urbanization by drawing people from rural areas into cities.

Moreover, the expansion of the automobile industry greatly accelerated the development of the oil sector. With Henry Ford's introduction of mass production techniques in the early 20th century, automobiles became affordable to the general public, causing a rapid increase in demand for gasoline and lubricants. As cars spread across the country, road infrastructure was developed, and national transportation and logistics networks expanded, intensifying the nation's dependence on oil products.

However, the rapid expansion of the oil industry also exacerbated environmental problems. In the early stages of oil development, the pursuit of profit was prioritized above all else, and little attention was paid to environmental conservation or resource management. Unregulated drilling activities and the proliferation of oil wells frequently caused oil spills, leading to severe contamination of land and water resources in surrounding areas. Waste materials and hazardous substances discharged from refineries were released into rivers and lakes, while smoke and toxic gases emitted into the air contributed to growing health problems in urban centers [3].

As a result, American society in the early 20th century began to experience the severe environmental consequences of economic prosperity. In particular, urban areas suffered from increased traffic, noise pollution, and worsening air quality. These issues gradually came to be recognized as public pollution problems. The experiences of this period served to raise public awareness about the importance of balancing economic activity with environmental protection, ultimately playing a formative role in the development of future environmental policy.

III. HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

A. The Problem: S. S. Elkind's Theory as a Starting Point

Elkind offers a sharp critique of postwar coastal development in the United States, particularly in California, by examining the relationship between environmental conservation discourse and large-scale development. Her

argument traces a continuum from the criticism of small-scale developers to the justification of corporate expansion in the name of "conservation", ultimately leading to environmental degradation and the exclusion of local residents [4].

Elkind begins by noting that in the postwar period, with surging demand for housing and recreational facilities, small-scale developers were socially criticized for engaging in unregulated construction that harmed natural landscapes and ecological systems. These criticisms were eventually appropriated by large corporations, who used them to justify their own development projects under the guise of environmental conservation. Real estate firms and resort companies portrayed themselves as agents of "orderly development" and "coexistence with nature", positioning themselves as correctives to the chaos wrought by small-scale developers.

However, Elkind argues that such conservation rhetoric was merely a façade to mask the private interests of corporations. Large companies, invoking the ideals of "conservation" and "brand value maintenance", restricted access to land by local residents and small-scale developers while pushing forward with large resort complexes, luxury housing developments, and golf courses. As a result, the natural coastal landscape and ecosystems were extensively destroyed, and the access rights and living conditions of local communities were significantly diminished.

That said, Elkind's critique should not be interpreted one-dimensionally. These corporate-led, large-scale development projects were, in many ways, policy responses to rapid economic growth and urbanization. In attempting to balance conservation and development, many companies and policymakers adopted scientific management techniques and environmental impact assessments in pursuit of sustainable resource use.

Moreover, the issue of coastal land use involved a diverse array of stakeholders, including local residents, government authorities, small-scale developers, and large corporations, each with their own overlapping and sometimes conflicting interests. The concept of "conservation" itself was fluid, oscillating between a preservationist perspective that sought to protect the aesthetic and spiritual value of nature and a utilitarian approach that emphasized rational, long-term management of resources. Within this complex context, it is difficult to categorically dismiss corporate claims to conservation.

In sum, while Elkind's critique serves as a vital warning against corporate-driven environmental policy, it must be situated within the broader socio-economic context of the time. It is important not to judge past development solely through the lens of contemporary values. Instead, we must examine the interplay between conservation and development from multiple perspectives, taking into account the historical imperatives and layered social conditions of the era.

B. How Other Scholars View "Conservation"

① Olien couple [5], regarded by Hinton [6] as a seminal work in the field of politics and policy, examines how cultural perceptions and values surrounding the oil industry in the United States before 1945 influenced policy

formation-particularly antitrust legislation and conservation policy. The negative image of Standard Oil, strategically utilized by its competitors and political actors, eventually expanded to encompass the entire industry, forming the basis for broader regulatory justification. This trend was politically supported by New Deal liberals, contributing to the strengthening of industry regulation.

Chapter 5 of the book [5, pp. 119–140] highlights geologist David Talbot Day, who predicted a potential exhaustion of American oil resources by 1935 based on existing production data. Although his forecast overlooked market dynamics and price fluctuations, it significantly shaped public opinion and policy. Day advocated for the scientific development of alternative energy sources, such as synthetic oil and alcohol.

He also criticized wasteful oil usage-particularly for exports and as a substitute for coal-and called for government control and fair leasing of public lands to prevent indiscriminate development. His ideas not only advanced conservation thinking but also justified his role in the U.S. Geological Survey.

Day's views influenced academia as well, University of Wisconsin president Charles R. Van Hise echoed concerns about the economic impact of oil waste and emphasized the need for resource control in the public interest. These discussions of oil depletion and conservation, involving science, policy, and public discourse, remain deeply relevant to today's energy issues.

② Ref. [7] is a two-volume overview that addresses key controversies in American environmental history, with particular attention to the concept of "conservation". Conservation refers to the sustainable use of natural resources and became a significant policy issue in the United States from the late 19th to early 20th century.

The book clearly distinguishes between "conservation" and "preservation". The former, supported by figures like Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt, emphasized scientific management and utilization of resources. In contrast, preservation, advocated by John Muir, prioritized the maintenance of nature in its original state. These two positions reflected fundamentally different philosophies regarding humanity's relationship with the environment.

During the Roosevelt administration, conservation became a national policy priority. Roosevelt actively promoted the protection of public lands and the establishment of national parks, while Pinchot, as the first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, introduced scientific forestry management. These initiatives laid the foundation for institutionalized natural resource management by the federal government.

The expansion of the conservation movement was driven not only by governmental efforts but also by the involvement of citizens and civic groups. Sportsmen, educators, and nature enthusiasts advocated for conservation, helping the idea to gain broad societal acceptance. In the 1930s, under the New Deal, conservation was incorporated into economic recovery programs, combining public works projects with natural resource management and job creation.

Pages 257–259 of the book [7] show that conservation policies were pursued not only for environmental protection but also for broader goals such as economic growth, maintaining social order, and fostering national identity.

Pinchot's "wise use" philosophy is highlighted as a principle of resource management that remains relevant today.

Moreover, the book examines the political and social uses of conservation. Conservation was sometimes used to justify particular development projects or impose restrictions on local communities under the guise of environmental protection. On the other hand, debates over conservation raised public environmental awareness and contributed to the growth of environmental movements.

In sum, this book illustrates the multifaceted significance and historical development of conservation thought in the United States. It provides valuable insights for understanding both past and contemporary environmental policies.

③ Daintith [8] provides a detailed analysis of how the "Law of Capture" shaped the development of the oil industry in the United States and globally. The "Law of Capture" is a legal principle that holds that underground natural resources are not owned by anyone until they are extracted, and the party that brings them to the surface obtains ownership. In the United States from the late 19th to early 20th century, this rule allowed landowners to freely drill for oil, leading to rapid industrial growth. However, this system also encouraged chaotic drilling, resource overproduction, price volatility, and environmental degradation.

In response, governments introduced conservation regulations aimed at ensuring the sustainable use of oil resources. These regulations did not outright reject the "Law of Capture" but rather sought to reform it within a new institutional framework. Specific measures included limiting production volumes, establishing permit systems, regulating well spacing, and enforcing safety and environmental standards. Through these mechanisms, the "Law of Capture" was embedded within a broader legal and regulatory system, thereby redefining its role and significance.

The implementation of these regulations was largely led by state governments, each tailoring policies to local geological and economic conditions. At the same time, the federal government played a vital role in managing public lands, coordinating interstate resource use, and shaping international cooperation frameworks. This multilevel governance structure helped stabilize the industry and curtail its earlier excesses.

This Chapter 9 [8, pp. 236–302] ultimately reveals how the challenges of resource depletion and disorderly development led to the institutionalization of conservation measures, integrating the "Law of Capture" into a managed resource system. Rather than discarding existing legal principles, the United States modified and integrated them into new institutional designs. This historical process offers valuable insight into how resource governance can be adapted to meet the demands of sustainability in both past and present contexts.

④ Ref. [9] is a significant study that explores American environmental history from multiple perspectives. Chapter 8 [9, pp. 241–277], "The Many Uses of Progress Conservation", examines the multifaceted roles and historical evolution of the concept of "conservation" in the United States. Conservation was not merely about protecting natural resources, it was employed within economic, social, cultural, and political contexts.

First, conservation was seen as a means to achieve

long-term economic growth by promoting the sustainable use of resources such as forests and minerals. It also served as a social policy tool to maintain public welfare amid the environmental challenges brought on by rapid urbanization and industrialization. Moreover, protecting nature contributed to the formation of a national identity and cultural values unique to America.

Intellectually, Pinchot's philosophy of "wise use" – which emphasized scientific management and sustainable resource utilization – contrasted with Muir's preservationist approach, which valued the aesthetic and spiritual aspects of nature. In the 1930s, New Deal policies integrated conservation into public works programs, linking resource management to economic recovery.

The chapter also addresses the political uses of conservation. At times, conservation served to legitimize specific policies or development projects, and it was occasionally used to justify restrictions on local communities. On the other hand, public debate over conservation raised environmental awareness and helped foster grassroots environmental movements.

In summary, Warren shows that conservation has functioned as a multidimensional concept in American history and provides critical insight into the background of environmental policy and activism.

IV. CONSERVATION THOUGHT IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

A. Origins and Development of Conservation Ideals

As the oil industry rapidly expanded in the early 20th-century United States and environmental degradation became more severe, the idea of conservation centered on how to utilize natural resources in a sustainable manner – began to emerge and spread. This conservationist ideology was primarily advocated by Pinchot and Roosevelt, who together laid the foundation for American environmental policy.

Pinchot, often referred to as the "Father of Conservation", was a central figure in the American conservation movement. He distinguished "conservation" as the rational and planned use of natural resources, from "preservation" which emphasized protecting nature in its untouched state. Born in 1865 into a wealthy family, Pinchot studied forestry in Europe before returning to the United States to become the country's first professional forester. Upon becoming the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905, he introduced a series of policies aimed at preventing the reckless exploitation and waste of natural resources while promoting their sustainable and systematic use [7, pp. 256–257].

Roosevelt, who worked closely with Pinchot, was also a staunch advocate of environmental protection. While he valued nature preservation, Roosevelt actively pursued policies to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources. A key initiative was the establishment of the National Conservation Commission in 1908, which sought to prevent resource waste and unchecked exploitation on a national scale. This commission conducted surveys and issued reports on resource use, offering concrete countermeasures to address the looming depletion of resources such as oil.

Another significant policy in this context was the 1909

Public Lands Withdrawal Order issued by President William Howard Taft. This measure allowed the federal government to directly manage public lands in designated areas – such as California's San Joaquin Valley – for the purpose of fuel conservation and preventing resource waste. It marked a strategic shift toward treating specific resources as national assets, laying the groundwork for future resource management policies [10].

Equally notable was the emergence of the "Law of Capture", a legal principle that allowed landowners to freely extract subsurface resources. While this encouraged aggressive and wasteful exploitation of oil resources, it also prompted both federal and state governments to impose regulations and oversight mechanisms to counteract the negative consequences of such unregulated access.

At the state level, conservation policies also began to take concrete form. From the 1910s into the early 1920s, major oil-producing states like Texas, Oklahoma, and California implemented legal frameworks to promote oil conservation. These included measures to prevent waste through production limits, restrictions on the spacing of oil wells, and coordinated extraction practices tailored to regional conditions [11].

Through these efforts, the concept of environmental conservation gained traction both socially and politically in early 20th-century America. As conservation thought evolved, awareness among government officials, industry leaders, and the general public also began to shift. The need for sustainable resource use and environmental protection came to be widely recognized. In the next chapter, we will examine the specific policies enacted at both the federal and state levels, analyzing how conservation thought was operationalized in concrete policy measures.

B. Federal and State Government Policy Responses

As public awareness of the environmental consequences of oil industry expansion grew in the early 20th-century United States, both federal and state governments began to implement concrete policy responses. These efforts became especially pronounced under Roosevelt and his successor, Taft.

Roosevelt positioned environmental conservation as a central pillar of national policy. In 1908, he established the National Conservation Commission, which was tasked with investigating the usage of natural resources—including oil—and proposing strategies to prevent waste. Regarding oil specifically, the commission highlighted the need to regulate production and prevent unnecessary waste, promoting fundamental concepts for sustainable resource use. Roosevelt also convened a series of governors' conferences to encourage the adoption of resource conservation policies at the state level.

Building upon Roosevelt's initiatives, Taft took further concrete action. One of the most notable measures was the Public Lands Withdrawal Order issued in 1909. This policy permitted the federal government to place oil-rich lands under federal management, with the aim of conserving strategically important resources. It was especially implemented in regions such as California's San Joaquin Valley, where it served both to suppress reckless exploitation and to ensure national energy security.

By the 1920s, the federal government moved to promote a more systematic resource conservation strategy through the establishment of the Federal Oil Conservation Board (FOCB) in 1926. Comprising officials from the Department of the Interior, the military, the Navy, and the Department of Commerce, the FOCB clarified governmental responsibility for oil and gas conservation and promoted cooperation with industry stakeholders. Among its key functions was the introduction of regulatory measures concerning resource ownership and drilling rights, with the goal of stabilizing oil production.

State governments also took an active role in formulating oil conservation policies. Major oil-producing states such as Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and California each developed independent regulatory frameworks. For example, Texas and California implemented spacing requirements between oil wells and established production quotas to prevent overproduction. During the late 1910s and early 1920s, community lease systems and zoning regulations were introduced to enhance environmental protection at the local level [12].

In California, the city of Los Angeles demonstrated a particularly proactive stance. The municipality implemented strict regulations on oil drilling within urban areas and introduced environmental protection measures. These included local ordinances for the treatment of waste oil, safety management of drilling facilities, and restrictions aimed at preserving urban landscapes. These initiatives were often driven by grassroots civic action, including campaigns by local residents, chambers of commerce, and citizen organizations. As such, they played a crucial role in mitigating the environmental burdens associated with oil development.

The policy responses of both federal and state governments in this period provide a concrete framework for understanding the relationship between oil development and environmental conservation in early 20th-century America. The following chapter will examine specific regional case studies to analyze how these policies were applied in practice and what outcomes they produced.

V. CASE STUDY: THE CASE OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

To understand the intersection of oil development and environmental concerns in early 20th-century America, the Los Angeles region of California offers an especially instructive case. While the area rapidly rose to prominence as one of the leading oil-producing regions in the country, it also experienced severe environmental degradation and deterioration in residents' quality of life.

A. *The Case of Venice*

Venice, a coastal district in Los Angeles, California, provides a compelling regional case study of the tensions between oil development and environmental conservation in early 20th-century America. Originally developed as a resort destination, Venice was renowned for its picturesque beaches and canal system, attracting tourists from across the nation. However, from the late 1920s through the early 1930s, the district was engulfed by a wave of oil development that rapidly degraded its landscape and environment [13].

In 1929, the Los Angeles City Council officially approved

oil drilling in the Venice area, citing economic benefits and the need to bolster the municipal budget. Amid the financial strain of the Great Depression, oil development was viewed by local authorities as a quick source of revenue and a means of job creation. As a result, oil wells began to appear alarmingly close to residential neighborhoods and coastal recreational areas [14].

This sudden expansion of oil drilling inflicted serious damage on the local community and natural environment. Noise, vibrations, and the pervasive odor of oil made living conditions increasingly unbearable. Waste oil and debris began washing up on the shores, while concerns arose about subsidence and coastal erosion due to changes in underground structures caused by drilling [15].

In response, civic groups, chambers of commerce, and tourism-related stakeholders organized movements demanding a halt to oil extraction. These coalitions emphasized public health, safety, and the conservation of the area's cultural and aesthetic heritage. They strongly opposed corporate actions that prioritized profits under the guise of "property rights" and unregulated development. The growing resistance significantly influenced city politics, prompting serious debate in the City Council about stricter drilling regulations and environmental assessments [10, pp. 62–63].

What makes the Venice case particularly noteworthy is its connection to the broader conservation ideology emerging in early 20th-century America. The principles of "conservation", as advocated by Roosevelt and Pinchot, emphasized the rational, planned use of resources and the sustainable maintenance of the environment. Although initially applied to national forest and water resource policies, these principles were increasingly relevant to urban oil development challenges as well.

Indeed, some members of the Venice civic movement and city government echoed conservationist rhetoric by framing the natural environment as a "shared heritage to be protected across generations". Their interpretation of conservation extended beyond sustainable economic resource use to include the protection of intangible values such as quality of life, urban aesthetics, and local cultural identity [16].

In early 1931, the rapid depletion of local oil fields prompted the City of Los Angeles to terminate drilling operations in Venice. While this decision was partially motivated by economic considerations, it also reflected mounting public opposition and the rise of conservation-oriented public opinion [15, p. 85].

Thus, the case of oil development in Venice offers a valuable example of how conservationist thought could be concretely realized in urban policy and grassroots activism [17]. In early 20th-century America, environmental conservation had evolved beyond the conservation of wilderness and forests, it was increasingly linked to urban quality of life and the protection of community landscapes.

The experience of Venice also highlighted the importance of local participation and municipal governance in shaping environmental policy. It underscored that the implementation of conservation ideals was not solely a top-down process driven by federal authorities and experts, but could also emerge from bottom-up civic action and local political engagement. This case thus serves as a powerful reminder that environmental protection must be grounded in both

institutional reform and community-based advocacy.

B. The Case of Huntington Beach

Huntington Beach, emerged as one of the rapidly developing oil cities in the early 20th century. It became a key site where the tensions between oil-driven growth and emerging conservationist thought were visibly enacted. Unlike Venice, where citizen opposition became a focal point, Huntington Beach was notable for the close cooperation between municipal authorities and oil companies, which actively promoted oil development-even in environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands. At the same time, growing public opposition revealed how conservation ideals were contested within local politics and economic imperatives [10, pp. 66–76].

Oil development in Huntington Beach accelerated between the late 1920s and early 1930s. The city government, aiming to boost urban growth and stabilize public finances, encouraged drilling in coastal and wetland areas, establishing legal frameworks to support such activities. In 1931, a city council-led referendum called for amendments to state laws and the California Constitution to legalize drilling on state-owned tidelands. This political maneuver reflected a broader strategy to unlock previously restricted areas for extraction [18, 19].

The push for oil development was fueled by the devastating economic effects of the Great Depression. Oil production was seen as a promising means to create jobs and increase municipal revenue. However, concerns over the environmental impact were persistent among residents. Noise, odors, and waste from drilling operations affected daily life, while the tourism and coastal recreation sectors began to suffer from the degradation of the shoreline [15, pp. 82–83, 20].

In response, certain civic organizations and chambers of commerce organized under the slogan “Save Our Beach”, demanding limitations on further oil development. These protests were grounded in a genuine conservation ethic, which regarded nature as a public trust to be protected for future generations [10, p. 69, 19, pp. 17–18].

The influence of conservation thought could also be seen in city ordinances. A 1926 municipal regulation included provisions for controlling drilling activities – such as zoning restrictions, waste disposal protocols, and scenic protections. Environmental standards were introduced for the granting of drilling permits, including fire prevention measures, safe infrastructure design, and the mandated use of waste oil tanks [15, p. 83].

From 1932 onward, however, the debate over such regulations intensified. Municipal authorities and oil firms sought to open tidelands for development by contracting with independent producers, challenging the *de facto* monopoly held by companies such as Standard Oil [18, pp. 4–6]. This sparked backlash from tourism operators, local residents, and conservative factions within the state government. The tension peaked in 1933 when the state ordered a moratorium on further drilling in the disputed areas [10, pp. 70–72].

Eventually, a compromise was reached in 1934 between the state government and oil interests: extraction could proceed on the condition that a portion of the revenue (in the form of royalties) would be paid to the city and state. This

resolution was emblematic of a broader trend in conservation politics during the era—a pragmatic balance between environmental concerns and economic necessity. Technical solutions were emphasized, including deep drilling to preserve surface aesthetics, the use of steel tanks for waste management, and architectural shielding of drilling facilities [10, p. 76].

Thus, the case of Huntington Beach illustrates both the implementation and limitations of conservationism in early 20th-century America. Conservation policies were frequently caught between municipal revenue needs, corporate interests, and the demands of environmental protection. The social context of the Great Depression made such trade-offs even more complex, highlighting the challenges of policy-making at the local level.

One particularly notable aspect of the Huntington Beach case is the role of civic engagement and democratic institutions in advancing environmental conservation. Public referenda, city council debates, and regulatory ordinances played a significant part in shaping policy outcomes. This underscores that the institutionalization of conservation required not only governmental authority, but also the active participation and awareness of local communities.

In conclusion, the struggle between oil development and environmental conservation in Huntington Beach provides valuable insight into how conservationist ideas were negotiated, institutionalized, and challenged in the socio-political dynamics of early 20th-century America. The fundamental question of how to manage natural resources sustainably remains relevant today, and the lessons of Huntington Beach offer important guidance for contemporary environmental governance.

VI. CONCLUSION

The cases of oil development and environmental issues in the Los Angeles region during the early 20th century provide many lessons that remain relevant today. These examples show that economic development and environmental conservation are not inherently incompatible, but achieving a balance between them requires clear and robust policies and institutional frameworks. In Venice, cooperation among residents, civic groups, and local authorities led to strengthened regulations, the suspension of drilling, and the preservation of the landscape, demonstrating that economic activity and environmental protection can coexist [21]. In contrast, Huntington Beach prioritized short-term economic benefits and employment, promoting large-scale drilling in wetlands and coastal areas, which ultimately caused a decline in tourism resources and deterioration of living conditions. This contrast highlights the crucial importance of public participation and transparency in regional decision-making.

Furthermore, these cases underscore the need for specific and effective regulations on the oil industry. Standards and ordinances governing waste treatment, oil spill prevention, and facility safety are indispensable in reducing environmental impacts. They also reveal the importance of policies that encourage technological innovation and the introduction of environmentally friendly production and refining methods.

In addition, these examples emphasize the necessity of incorporating scientific data and environmental impact

assessments into policymaking to prevent resource depletion and environmental destruction. This remains a pressing issue in the modern era. The American experience also demonstrates that resource management and environmental issues can have international repercussions. Therefore, forming and implementing policies that integrate economic, environmental, and social dimensions is essential for building a sustainable society. These historical lessons continue to hold significant value today.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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