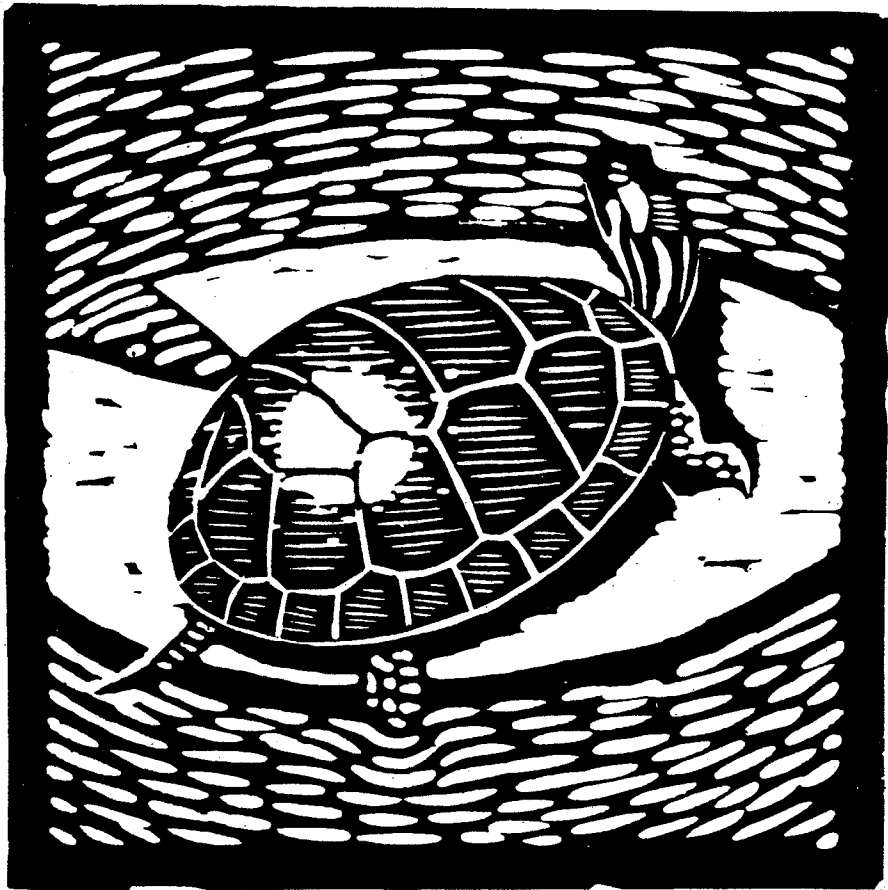


Wild 
EARTH
Special Issue



The
Wildlands
Project

Plotting A North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy

\$6⁰⁰

Around The Campfire

You hold in your hands, I sincerely believe, one of the most important documents in conservation history; indeed, one of the most important documents in the last five hundred years.

What you have here is a turning back and a going forward. It is a bold attempt to grope our way back to October 1492, and find a different trail, a trail overgrown and nearly forgotten. We seek not the broad highway that leads to gold, empire, and death. Columbus and the hard men who followed have already found that yellow brick road.

What we seek is a path that leads to beauty, abundance, wholeness, and wildness. We look for the big outside instead of empire, we seek wolf tracks instead of gold, we crave life rather than death.

What you have in your hands is a special issue of *Wild Earth* magazine focusing on The Wildlands Project (North American Wilderness Recovery Project). The ideas here are a rare confluence of the passion of those who love wild things and the scientific rationality of those who study wild things. The Wildlands Project is a coming together of grass-roots conservation activists and conservation biologists in a time of crisis.

We cannot sit idly by as biological diversity is ravaged on Earth. This magazine is the foundation of our active vision of how to protect and perpetuate native species and systems in North America. It tells how we put conservation biology into effect.

Please read the Mission Statement of The Wildlands Project first, and then read Dr. Michael Soulé's introduction to the project. The centerpiece of this issue is Dr. Reed Noss's detailed model for Wilderness Recovery Plans—core wildernesses surrounded by buffer zones and connected by corridors. I add some practical points to Noss's model for activists, and a brief overview of the North American Wilderness Recovery Project.

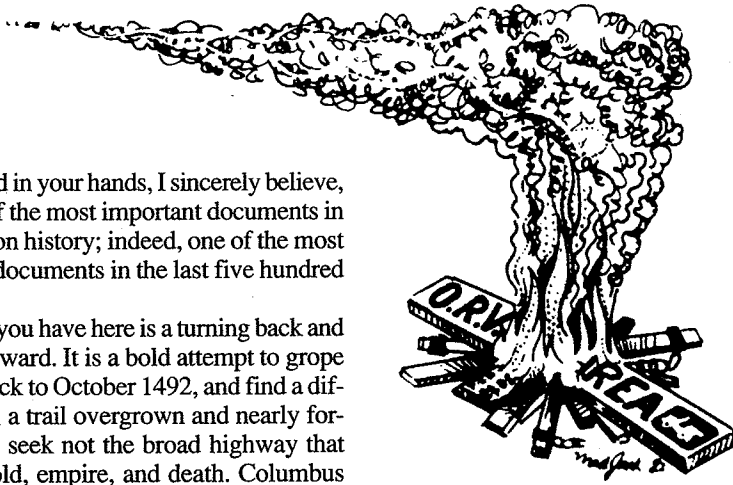
Gary Snyder, perhaps the deepest thinker of this generation, offers his thoughts on how we can live our lives in harmony with this wild vision, and how we can advance on a watershed level.

Several specific proposals for restoring wilderness are also presented. They are building blocks for the continent-wide network; they are also meant to spark discussion on how we should proceed.

Finally, several pieces by John Davis, Rod Mondt, and Dave Johns explain who *Wild Earth* and The Wildlands Project are, and what you can do to help.

Because the North American Wilderness Recovery Project is unprecedented, audacious, and visionary, it is not fully formed. The authors included here do not march in lockstep to the beat of a single drum. Life on Earth is diverse, and diverse approaches are presented in this special issue of *Wild Earth*. As John Davis points out in his introduction to the proposal section of this issue, these plans are tentative and unfinished. Read them in that light.

Similarly, do not be discouraged from becoming involved with The Wildlands Project and its cooperating groups because you fear all the work has been done. We are just beginning. While regional Wilderness Recovery Networks should evolve in har-



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WILD EARTH



The Wildlands Project

Special Issue



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On the cover: Turtle woodcut by Patrick Dengate.

mony with Reed Noss's model, I am sure that the model will change subtly as it is applied throughout the extraordinary variety of natural ecosystems and human social systems in North America. Just as in wild Nature, we will see the dynamic of *co*-evolution between the theoretical model and the on-the-ground application of it in the art and science of specific regional Wilderness Recovery Networks.

Your input as a lover of things natural is needed at all levels of The Wildlands Project.



Since we hope to transform the conservation movement as well as the debate over "natural resources," we are trying to achieve the widest possible distribution of this issue of *Wild Earth*. A number of cooperating groups are sending it to their members. There may be some unavoidable duplication in distribution. If you receive two or three copies of this special issue, please share them with others. If you would like more copies, contact Rod Mondt at The Wildlands Project. If you have access to a mailing list and would like to send this *Wild Earth* to your group, contact Rod. (See Clearinghouse article in this issue.) We are distributing 75,000 copies of this special issue.

In addition to the many people who have worked on this Wildlands Project issue of *Wild Earth*, we thank Doug Tompkins of the Ira Hiti Foundation for Deep Ecology, who provided a grant for printing and distribution. We deeply appreciate Doug's support and leadership.

We now need to reach out to other friends and supporters for help over the coming year. If what you read in the following pages tingles your spine like the distant howl of a wolf pack, send The Wildlands Project your contribution so we can work together to make our shared vision a shared reality. Please send your checks to:

The Wildlands Project
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Tucson, AZ 85703
(2721 W. Calle Carapan, 85745)

We at The Wildlands Project are tired of campaigning for a mere slowing of the rate of destruction of natural diversity; we will no longer accept the status quo. What we seek is nothing less than the full flowering of the natural biological diversity of North America. We welcome all those who share this audacious vision and passion.

—Dave Foreman
Wolf Pond, Five Ponds Wilderness Area
Adirondack State Park



Western Azalea (Rhododendron occidentale) by Robin Peterson

THE WILDLANDS PROJECT

MISSION STATEMENT

OUR MISSION

The mission of The Wildlands Project is to help protect and restore the ecological richness and native biodiversity of North America through the establishment of a connected system of reserves.

As a new millennium begins, society approaches a watershed for wildlife and wilderness. The environment of North America is at risk and an audacious plan is needed for its survival and recovery. Healing the land means reconnecting its parts so that vital flows can be renewed. The land has given much to us; now it is time to give something back—to begin to allow nature to come out of hiding and to restore the links that will sustain both wilderness and the spirit of future human generations.

The idea is simple. To stem the disappearance of wildlife and wilderness we must allow the recovery of whole ecosystems and landscapes in every region of North America. Allowing these systems to recover requires a long-term master plan.

A feature of this design is that it rests on the spirit of social responsibility that has built so many great institutions in the past. Jobs will be created, not lost; land will be given freely, not taken.

OUR VISION

Our vision is simple: we live for the day when Grizzlies in Chihuahua have an unbroken connection to Grizzlies in Alaska; when Gray Wolf populations are continuous from New Mexico to Greenland; when vast unbroken forests and flowing plains again thrive and support pre-Columbian populations of plants and animals; when humans dwell with respect, harmony, and affection for the land; when we come to live no longer as strangers and aliens on this continent.

Our vision is continental: from Panama and the Caribbean to Alaska and Greenland, from the Arctic to the continental shelves, we seek to bring together conservationists, ecologists, indigenous peoples, and others to protect and restore evolutionary processes and biodiversity. We seek to assist other conservation organizations, and to develop cooperative relationships with activists and grass-roots groups everywhere who are committed to these goals.

THE PROBLEM

We are called to our task by the failure of existing Wilderness, Parks, and Wildlife Refuges to adequately protect life in North America. While these areas preserve landscapes of spectacular scenery and areas ideally suited to non-mechanized forms of recreation, they are too small, too isolated, and represent too few types of ecosystems to perpetuate the biodiversity of the continent. Despite the establishment of Parks and other reserves from Canada to Central America, true wilderness and wilderness-dependent species are in precipitous decline:

√ Large predators like the Grizzly Bear, Gray Wolf, Wolverine, Puma, Jaguar, Green Sea Turtle, and American Crocodile have been exterminated from most of their pre-Columbian range and are imperiled in much of their remaining habitat. Populations of many songbirds are crashing and waterfowl and shorebird populations are reaching new lows.

√ Native forests have been extensively cleared, leaving only scattered remnants of most forest types. Even extensive forest types, such as Boreal Forest, face imminent destruction in many areas.

√ Tall Grass and Short Grass Prairies, once the habitat of the most spectacular large mammal concentrations on the continent, have been almost entirely destroyed or domesticated.

THE MEANING OF WILDERNESS

The failure of reserves to prevent the losses just mentioned rests in large part with their historic purpose and design: to protect scenery and recreation or to create outdoor zoos. The Wildlands Project, in contrast, calls for reserves established to protect wild habitat, biodiversity, ecological integrity, ecological services, and evolutionary processes—that is, vast interconnected areas of true wilderness. We reject the notion that wilderness is merely remote, scenic terrain suitable for backpacking. Rather, we see wilderness as the home for unfettered life, free from industrial human intervention.

Wilderness means:

- Extensive areas of native vegetation in various successional stages off-limits to human exploitation. We recognize that most of Earth has been colonized by humans only in the last several thousand years.

- Viable, self-reproducing, genetically diverse populations of all native plant and animal species, including large predators. Diversity at the genetic, species, ecosystem, and landscape levels is fundamental to the integrity of nature.

- Vast landscapes without roads, dams, motorized vehicles, powerlines, overflights, or other artifacts of civilization, where evolutionary and ecological processes that represent four billion years of Earth wisdom can continue. Such wilderness is absolutely essential to the comprehensive maintenance of biodiversity. It is not a solution to every ecological problem, but without it the planet will sink further into biological poverty.

THE WILDERNESS PROPOSAL: CORE RESERVES, CORRIDORS, BUFFERS, AND RESTORATION

We are committed to a proposal based on the requirements of all native species to flourish within the ebb and flow of ecological processes, rather than within the constraints of what industrial civilization is content to leave alone. Present reserves—Parks, Wildernesses, Refuges—exist as discrete islands of nature in a sea of human modified landscapes. Building upon those natural areas, we seek to develop a system of large, wild core reserves where biodiversity and ecological processes dominate.

Core reserves would be linked by biological corridors to allow for the natural dispersal of wide-ranging species, for genetic exchange between populations, and for migration of organisms in response to climate change.

Buffers would be established around core reserves and corridors to protect their integrity from disruptive human activities. Only human activity compatible with protection of the core reserves and corridors would be allowed. Buffers would also be managed to restore ecological health, extirpated species, and natural disturbance regimes. Intensive human activity associated with civilization—agriculture, industrial production, urban centers—could continue outside the buffers.

Implementation of such a system would take place over many decades. Existing natural areas should be protected immediately. Other areas, already degraded, will be identified and restoration undertaken.

The Wildlands Project sets a new agenda for the conservation movement. For the first time a proposal based on the needs of all life, rather than just human life, will be clearly enunciated. Both conservationists and those who would reduce nature to resources will have to confront the reality of what is required for a healthy, viable, and diverse North America. Citizens, activists, and policy makers will be able to confront the real choices because the choices will be on the agenda. It will no longer be possible to operate in a business-as-usual manner and ignore what is at stake.

The Wildlands Project will also inspire the development of indigenous proposals for other continents.

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

The Wildlands Project is a non-profit publicly supported organization based in Tucson, Arizona. We are a group of conservation biologists and biodiversity activists from across the continent.

We work in cooperation with independent grass-roots organizations throughout the continent to develop proposals for each bioregion. These organizations include Preserve Appalachian Wilderness, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Greater Ecosystem Alliance, Sky Island Alliance, Klamath Forest Alliance, Finger Lakes Wild, Coast Range Association (Oregon), and many others. Development of regional Wilderness proposals is based upon principles of conservation biology. Draft proposals are developed through discussions and conferences that bring together regional activists, conservation biologists and other scientists, and conservation groups across the spectrum of the movement. The Wildlands Project supports this process through funding, networking, and offering technical expertise.

We undertake and encourage research on appropriate human activities in buffers, reintroduction of extirpated species, design of connecting corridors (especially through areas with significant human obstacles), overcoming fragmentation and achieving habitat connectivity, genetic diversity, population viability, and control of exotic species.

As proposals are developed we will publish the results in pamphlet form, in *Wild Earth*, and in other conservation publications to reach a wide audience. Videos, slide shows, and academic articles will be produced and traveling exhibits will be organized to educate the public about the proposals. When proposals for all bioregions of the continent have been completed, a book and compendium of maps will be produced, as well as updated videos and related materials.

In short, our job is to educate the public, the environmental movement, government agencies, the academic community, and others about the importance of biodiversity and what is necessary to protect it.

The Wildlands Project welcomes the participation and support of all persons and organizations interested in these issues.

—Prepared by Dave Foreman, John Davis, David Johns, Reed Noss, and Michael Soulé.

PROYECTO DE TIERRAS SILVESTRES DECLARACION DE MISION

Traducido por María Quintana

NUESTRA MISION

La misión del Proyecto de Tierras Silvestres es la protección y la restauración de la riqueza ecológica y diversidad biológica indígena de Norteamérica a través del establecimiento y promoción de un sistema de reservas conectadas.

Al comenzar un nuevo milenio, la sociedad se aproxima a un momento crítico para la fauna y la inmensidad. El medio ambiente de Norteamérica está en riesgo y se necesita un plan audaz para lograr su supervivencia y recuperación. Sanar a la tierra significa reconectar sus partes para que los flujos vitales puedan ser renovados. La tierra nos ha dado mucho; ahora es hora de devolverle algo—de empezar a permitir que la naturaleza salga de su escondite y de restaurar los enlaces que sostendrán tanto a la inmensidad como al espíritu de futuras generaciones humanas.

La idea es simple: para detener la desaparición de la fauna y la inmensidad, tenemos que permitir la recuperación de ecosistemas y paisajes enteros en cada región de Norteamérica. Dejar que estos sistemas se recuperen requiere un plan maestro a largo plazo.

Una característica de este diseño es que se basa sobre el espíritu de responsabilidad social que ha levantado a tantas grandes instituciones en el pasado. Trabajos serán creados, no perdidos; terrenos serán dados libremente, no quitados.

NUESTRA VISION

Nuestra visión es sencilla: vivimos para el día cuando los Osos Pardos de Chihuahua tengan una conexión ininterrumpida a los Osos Pardos de Alaska; cuando las colonias de Lobo Gris continúen desde Nuevo México hasta Groenlandia; cuando vastos bosques ininterrumpidos y extensos llanos vuelvan a prosperar y mantener abundantes colonias de plantas y animales precolombinos; cuando los humanos vivan con respeto, afecto, y en armonía con la Tierra; cuando veamos a la naturaleza libre como nuestro verdadero hogar y dejemos de vivir como extranjeros en este continente.

Nuestra visión es continental: desde Panamá y el Caribe a Alaska y Groenlandia, desde el Ártico hasta las repizas continentales, tratamos de unir a conservacionistas, ecologistas, gentes indígenas, y otras personas para proteger y restaurar a los procesos evolucionarios y la biodiversidad. Tratamos de asistir a otras organizaciones conservacionistas, y de desarrollar relaciones cooperativas con activistas y grupos de origen popular en todas partes que estén comprometidos a estas metas.

EL PROBLEMA

Nos llama a esta labor el fracaso de las existentes áreas silvestres, parques, y refugios de fauna en proteger adecuadamente a la vida en Norteamérica. Aunque estas áreas preservan paisajes de vistas espectaculares y áreas idealmente adaptadas a formas de recreo no mecanizadas, son demasiado pequeñas, demasiado aisladas, y representan muy pocos tipos de ecosistemas para poder perpetuar la biodiversidad del continente. A pesar del establecimiento de parques y otras reservas desde el Canadá a Centroamérica, la inmensidad y las especies que dependen de ella están declinando precipitadamente.

Predadores grandes como el Oso Pardo, Lobo Gris, Carcajón, Puma, Jaguar, Kawama Verde, y Cocodrilo Americano han sido exterminados de la mayoría de su recorrido precolombino, y están en peligro en gran parte de la habitación que les permanece. Las colonias de muchos pájaros cantores están fracasando y las colonias de aves acuáticas y aves marinas están alcanzando puntos muy bajos.

Los bosques nativos han sido extensivamente desmontados, dejando solo remanentes dispersos de la mayoría de los tipos de bosques. Aún los tipos de bosques que todavía son extensos, tal como el bosque boreal, enfrentan la inminente destrucción en muchas áreas.

Las praderas de yerbas altas y las praderas de yerbas cortas, una vez la habitación de las más espectaculares concentraciones de mamíferos grandes en el continente, han sido casi totalmente destruidas o domesticadas.

EL SIGNIFICADO DE LA INMENSIDAD

El fracaso de las reservas en prevenir las pérdidas mencionadas anteriormente es debido en gran parte a su propósito y diseño histórico: proteger las vistas y la recreación, o crear zoológicos en las abiertas. El Proyecto de Tierras Silvestres, en contraste, demanda el establecimiento de reservas para proteger la habitación, la biodiversidad, la integridad ecológica, los servicios ecológicos, y los procesos evolucionarios—es decir, vastas áreas interconectadas de terreno yermo. Rechazamos la noción que la inmensidad es solamente terreno escénico y remoto apropiado para excursiones de mochila. Mas bien, vemos a la inmensidad como el hogar de la vida desencadenada, libre de la intervención de la humanidad industrial.

LA INMENSIDAD SIGNIFICA:

—Extensas áreas de vegetación indígena en varias etapas de sucesión cerradas a la explotación por los humanos. Reconocemos que la mayoría de la Tierra ha sido colonizada por los humanos en solamente los últimos

cuantos miles de años.

-Colonias viables, autoreproductivas, y genéticamente diversas de todas las especies indígenas de plantas y animales, incluyendo predadores grandes. Diversidad al nivel genético, de especies, de ecosistema, y de paisaje es fundamental para la integridad de la naturaleza.

-Vastos paisajes sin carreteras, represas, vehículos motorizados, líneas de alto voltaje, vuelos de aviones, u otros artefactos de la civilización, donde los procesos evolucionarios y ecológicos que representan cuatro billones de años de la sabiduría de la Tierra puedan continuar. Tal inmensidad es absolutamente esencial al mantenimiento comprensivo de la biodiversidad. No es una solución para todos los problemas ecológicos, pero sin ella el planeta se hundirá más profundamente en la pobreza biológica.

LA PROPUESTA DE INMENSIDAD; RESERVAS CENTRALES, CORREDORES, ZONAS AISLADORAS, Y RESTAURACION

Estamos comprometidos a una propuesta basada en los requerimientos de todas las especies indígenas para prosperar dentro del flujo de los procesos ecológicos, en vez de dentro de los constreñimientos de lo que a la civilización industrial le place dejar en paz. Las reservas actuales—los parques, las áreas silvestres, los refugios de fauna—existen como discretas islas de naturaleza en un mar de paisajes modificados por los humanos. Edificando sobre esas áreas naturales, deseamos desarrollar un sistema de grandes, silvestres reservas centrales donde la biodiversidad y los procesos ecológicos dominen.

Las reservas centrales serían conectadas por corredores biológicos para hacer posible la dispersión natural de las especies de recorrido extenso, el intercambio genético entre colonias, y la migración de organismos en respuesta al cambio del clima.

Zonas aisladoras serían establecidas alrededor de las reservas y corredores para proteger su integridad contra las actividades humanas disruptivas. Solamente serían permitidas las actividades humanas compatibles con la protección de las reservas centrales y los corredores. Las zonas aisladoras también serían dirigidas para restaurar la salud ecológica, las especies extirpadas, y regímenes naturales de disturbio. Las intensas actividades humanas asociadas con la civilización—la

agricultura, la producción industrial, los centros urbanos—podrían continuar fuera de las zonas aisladoras.

La implementación de tal sistema tomaría lugar a través de muchas décadas. Las existentes áreas naturales deben de ser protegidas inmediatamente. Otras áreas, que ya han sido degradadas, serán identificadas y se emprenderá su restauración.

El Proyecto de Tierras Silvestres establece una nueva agenda para el movimiento conservacionista. Por primera vez, una propuesta basada en las necesidades de todas las formas de vida, en vez de solamente las de la vida humana, será claramente articulada. Tanto los conservacionistas y ellos que reducirían a la naturaleza a meros recursos, tendrán que enfrentar la realidad de lo que es requerido para una saludable, viable, y diversa Norteamérica. Los ciudadanos, activistas, y los que formulan la política podrán enfrentar las verdaderas alternativas porque ellas estarán en la agenda. No nos será posible seguimos conduciendo como de costumbre e ignorar lo que está en la balanza.

El Proyecto de Tierras Silvestres también inspirará el desarrollo de propuestas indígenas para otros continentes.

QUIENES SOMOS Y QUE HACEMOS

El Proyecto de Tierras Silvestres es una organización que no proporciona ni busca provecho, apoyada por el público, y basada en Tucson, Arizona. Somos un grupo de biólogos de conservación y activistas a favor de la biodiversidad de a través del continente.

Trabajamos en cooperación con organizaciones independientes de origen popular a través del continente para desarrollar propuestas para cada bioregión. Estas organizaciones incluyen: Preserven los Montes Apalaches (Preserve Appalachian Wilderness), Alianza para los Montes Rocosos (Alliance for Wild Rockies), Alianza de Grandes Ecosistemas (Greater Ecosystem Alliance), Alianza para las Islas de Cielo (Sky Island Alliance), Alianza para el Bosque Klamath (Klamath Forest Alliance), Lagos del Norte del Estado de Nueva York Silvestres (Finger Lakes Wild), Asociación de la Cordillera Costal de Oregon (Oregon Coast Range Association), y muchas otras. El desarrollo de propuestas de inmensidad para cada bioregión está basado en los principios de la biología de conservación. Borradores de las propuestas se

desarrollan a través de discusiones y conferencias que reúnen a activistas regionales, biólogos de conservación, y otros científicos y grupos ecologistas a través del espectro del movimiento. Apoyamos a este proceso con fondos, intercomunicación, y la oferta de conocimientos técnicos.

Emprendemos investigaciones de las actividades humanas que son apropiadas en las zonas aisladoras, la reintroducción de especies extirpadas, el diseño de los corredores conectadores (especialmente a través de áreas con significativos obstáculos humanos), como vencer la fragmentación y alcanzar la conectividad de la habitación, la diversidad biológica, la viabilidad de las colonias, el control de las especies exóticas, y otros problemas.

Al ser desarrolladas las propuestas, publicaremos los resultados en forma de pamfletos y en la revista *Wild Earth* (Tierra Silvestre) y otras publicaciones para alcanzar a una audiencia extensa. Videocintas, transparencias, y artículos académicos serán producidos y exhibiciones viajantes serán organizadas para educar al público acerca de las propuestas. Cuando se hayan completado propuestas para todas las bioregiones del continente, un libro y compendio de mapas serán producidos, así como videocintas y relacionados materiales puestos al día.

En breve, nuestra labor es educar al público, el movimiento ecologista, las agencias del gobierno, la comunidad académica, y otros acerca de la importancia de la biodiversidad y lo que es necesario para protegerla.

El Proyecto de Tierras Silvestres recibe con gusto la participación y apoyo de todas las personas y organizaciones interesadas en estos problemas.

—Preparado por Dave Foreman, David Johns, Michael Soulé, Reed Noss, y John Davis.



A Vision For The Meantime

by Michael Soulé

As our species balloons by a billion every decade or so, and as the population in the United States strides toward a half billion by 2150, it gets harder to be sanguine about wildlands and the return of wolverines, grizzlies, wolves and mountain lions. Rational people have abandoned the goal of stopping human expansion within the next few decades; now we foresee a century or more of growth in numbers of people in the tropics, perhaps 50 years of growth in the United States. If there is hope for nature, it must rest on the assumption that this binge of reproduction will be a transient blip on the graph rather than a surge to a plateau of permanent planetary obesity. A premise of this "blip theory" is that the 20th century population explosion will be followed by a slow implosion in the late 21st and 22nd centuries.

In the meantime, what should we be doing about wildlands and big creatures in North America? The "meantime" will be an interval of increasing human population and possible habitat loss; yet it is full of possibilities. The meantime must be an era for militant defense of what remains and for laying the foundation for a massive transformation of the American landscape. The meantime will require a long-term vision, a 22nd century vision, as Arne Naess has said.

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both in space and time.*

Talk of decades, let alone centuries, distresses many people, especially young ones. But we must not indulge in illusory quick fixes. An instantaneous ecological metamorphosis in North America is impossible because the continent is now too disrupted and fragmented. The isolated mountain ranges of the Southwest and our island parks and wilderness areas are too small and too poached today to sustain viable populations of big predators.

Repair—restoring and reconnecting the land—will take time; it will require the dedication of thousands of bioregional activists. Cattle and sheep grazing in many of the federal lands will have to be reduced or curtailed. Road building in major sections of National Forests and BLM lands will have to cease, and many existing logging roads will have to be closed. In the lowlands some eroding and degraded croplands now used to produce feed for livestock (in the US, livestock consume about 70% of grain production) will have to be converted to other uses. It is no simple matter to repair the ravages of centuries.

The two tools for this historic project are both radical: they are the expedients of land-use planning on *spatial* and *temporal* scales never attempted before. The key is thinking BIG, both in space and time. Can this be done during hard economic times, and when the human population of many regions of the country is growing at rates rivaling those in tropical nations? Can wilderness recovery and biodiversity protection be achieved without raiding the public treasury and without creating too much

