

# WILDEARTH



Winter 1995/96



\$4.95 US



The First Thousand Days  
of the Next Thousand Years

*The Wildlands Project at Three*

# WILDLANDS



T H E W I L D L A N D S P R O J E C T

## 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 Durango to Labrador; 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 high peaks 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 grassroots groups everywhere who are committed to these goals.

## THE PROBLEM: Biological Impoverishment

We are called to our task because existing parks and wildlife refuges have not adequately protected 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, face imminent destruction in many areas.

✓ Tallgrass and shortgrass prairies, once the habitat of the most spectacular large mammal concentrations on the continent, have been almost entirely destroyed or domesticated.

## THE SOLUTION: Big 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 MEANS: 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, wilderness areas, 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.

## THE PROJECT

The Wildlands Project is a non-profit publicly supported organization based in Tucson, Arizona. We are a group of conservation biologists and citizen conservationists from across the continent devoted to forming a North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy.

We work in cooperation with independent grassroots organizations throughout the continent to develop proposals for each bioregion. These organizations include Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, Sky Island Alliance, Siskiyou Regional Education Project, Coast Range Association (Oregon), Northern Appalachian Restoration Project, RESTORE: The North Woods, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project, 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, population viability, and control of exotic species.

As proposals are drafted we 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.*



# WILD EARTH



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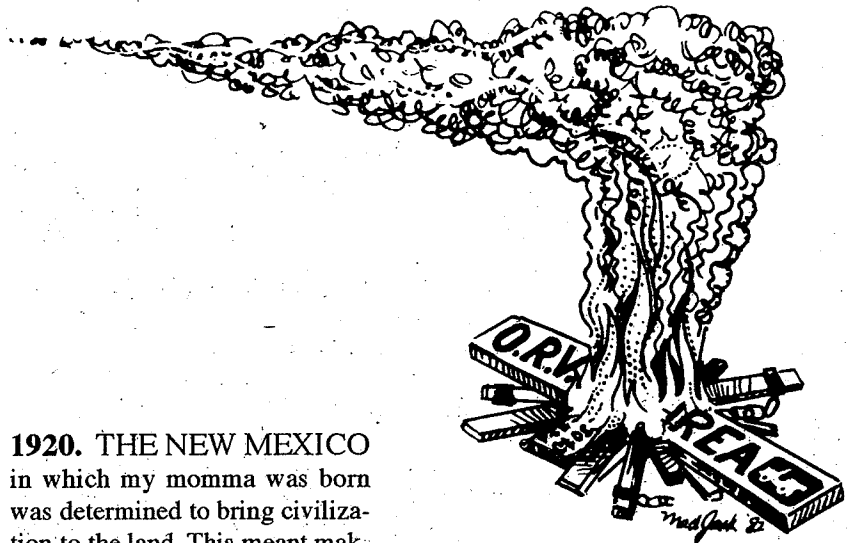
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# Around the Campfire



## 1920. THE NEW MEXICO

in which my momma was born was determined to bring civilization to the land. This meant making the range safe for the white-faced cow and the sportsman's buck. The last packs of Lobos were hunted down on the high plains; then came the more difficult task of tracking down the scattered packs and loners in the western mountains and southern deserts.

1946. The New Mexico in which I was born was wolfless. Federal dollars, Newhouse traps, strychnine, and repeating rifles had done the job. But one of the ringleaders in the campaign to exterminate the wolf was having a change of heart. This man—Aldo Leopold—was polishing a wolf elegy for his book, *A Sand County Almanac*. Did we know what we had done when we killed the last of the Lobos, he wondered. Could we even imagine what we had lost when we extinguished the green fire that shone in the eyes of wild wolves?

1995. New Mexicans both newly arrived and those claiming generations of inhabitancy decide that a New Mexico without Lobos is not really New Mexico, that humans without wolves have lost something priceless, something we need to be really human. Like Aldo Leopold, they have come to understand what the howl of the wolf means, that a land emptied of it is an empty land, that a people who fear sharing the land with wolves are a pitiful people, a people afraid of wild things and sunsets.

Two months ago I sat in an auditorium in Socorro, New Mexico, for the US Fish & Wildlife Service's public hearing on reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf. When Jim Winder, a public lands rancher with roots stretching back into the last century, got up to testify that he could live with wolves, I realized that The Wildlands Project wasn't so improbable after all.

We of The Wildlands Project (TWP) hold as our mission the protection and restoration of the ecological richness and native biodiversity of North America. We propose to accomplish this by applying the science of conservation biology to design and establish a connected system of reserves throughout the continent. In this second special issue of *Wild Earth* about The Wildlands Project, we catalogue the progress made both in theory and practice toward that lofty goal.

*continued...*

To better spread the word, we're sending this issue to Sierra Club and other conservation leaders and to members of the Society for Conservation Biology, in addition to regular subscribers of *Wild Earth*. It's fitting that this second Wildlands Project special issue marks the completion of *Wild Earth*'s fifth volume—our first half decade of publishing the most visionary writing on biodiversity and wilderness issues, of promoting New Conservation Movement groups and campaigns, and of serving as publishing wing of sister organization The Wildlands Project. (If this is your first view of *Wild Earth* and The Wildlands Project, reading The Wildlands Project Mission Statement on the inside front cover and *WE*'s Statement of Purpose on page 96 will help you understand what these collaborating entities aim to accomplish and what role each plays.)

In the three years since the first special issue of *Wild Earth*, The Wildlands Project has held dozens of meetings around North America to begin the mapping of science-based reserve designs. We've spread the word about marrying conservation biology and conservation advocacy. Our progress can be measured in three areas.

First, we have influenced a variety of conservation groups to use science-based arguments to defend Nature and to apply The Wildlands Project model to reserve design and land management. Second, with our key cooperating groups, we have begun the real work of designing reserve networks in various regions of North America. Third, both the science and the politics of The Wildlands Project have become more detailed and sophisticated.

This issue presents our progress in theory, advocacy, and reserve design.

In "Wilderness: From Scenery to Nature," I set out the evolution of nature reserve design and advocacy from scenic National Parks to the protection of all Nature. In

"Wilderness Areas and National Parks: The Foundation for an Ecological Reserve Network," I argue that even with changing goals, Wilderness Areas and National Parks remain the basic building blocks for protecting Nature.

In "Science Grounding Strategy: Conservation Biology in Wildlands Work," Reed Noss invites scientists to employ their expertise in helping ground a wilderness recovery strategy. In "What Should Endangered Ecosystems Mean to The Wildlands Project?," Reed urges the nature

preservation movement to turn its attention to protecting and restoring samples of all native ecosystems.

In "Getting from Here to There: An Outline of The Wildlands Reserve Design Process," David Johns and Michael Soulé show us how to translate vision into reality. Of course, without actual proposals for actual landscapes, all of the above is theory, hot air. But hot air can lead to lines on maps. Lines on maps can lead to public support which can lead to nature reserves which can lead to healthy populations of wolves and Caribou or Jaguars and tapirs. The center of the magazine updates you on reserve design progress in six key regions of North America: the Southern Rockies (by Roz McClellan), New England's Northern Forest (Jamie Sayen), northern Minnesota (Mike Biltonen), the North Cascades (Peter Morrison et al.), Costa Rica (George Powell et al.), and the Klamath-Siskiyou mountains of Oregon and California (Ken Vance-Borland et al.). Then Rod Mondt, field director of TWP, wraps it up with "Real Work and Wild Vision."

All is not sweetness and light, of course. (Newt Gingrich hasn't called to invite me to a power lunch with the GOP satraps to figure out how to implement The Wildlands Project. Hell, Bill Clinton hasn't even called.) There *are* real problems with designing nature reserves; there are even bigger problems trying to establish them. Steve Trombulak, Reed Noss, and Jim Strittholt hang these problems up to dry for all of us to see in "Obstacles to Implementing The Wildlands Project Vision." Among the problems we face are the dumped-spaghetti-plate of roads fragmenting wildlands: Kraig Klungness and Katie Alvord Scarborough look at that mess in "ROAD-RIP and The Wildlands Project." Law professor Eric Freyfogle takes a look at another big problem—how to protect biodiversity and wilderness on private land—in "Land Ownership, Private and Wild." In "Endangered Interrelationships..." biologist Don Windsor reminds us that biodiversity means much more than just big animals; equally important are the many parasites that inhabit all animals' bodies and the networks of relationships all these organisms form.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to implementation of The Wildlands Project's vision is in the hearts of men and women. Back to 1920. Lots of folks still live there. Terry Tempest Williams takes on that monumental problem, and sets the tone for this whole issue, in her opening "Testimony."

To find out how you can help realize our dream of a wild North America, contact The Wildlands Project (POB 5365 Tucson, AZ 85703; 520-884-0875; FAX 520-884-0962). Stay in touch by subscribing to *Wild Earth*. If you want additional copies of this issue, contact Tucson. Happy Trails.

—Dave Foreman



illustration by Sarah Lauterbach

# Testimony

by Terry Tempest Williams

*To bear testimony is to bear witness, to speak from the truth of our lives.*

*Barry Lopez reminds us, "the correspondence between the interior and exterior landscape is story."*

*The act of bearing testimony is the act of storytelling, a gesture on behalf of community.*

*Our wildlands are under siege; even the idea of wildness is being compromised in the name of intellectual abstractions.*

*We must continue to speak out of the humility of our bodies and the bedrock knowledge we hold in our bones.*

*Wild hearts. Open minds. Alert eyes. Our testimonies allow us to put our love into action.*

*The following is the testimony I presented before the Senate Subcommittee on Forest & Public Lands Management regarding the Utah Public Lands Management Act of 1995, in Washington, DC, 13 July 1995.*

**M**r. Chairman, members of this subcommittee, my name is Terry Tempest Williams. I am a native of Utah. My family roots run deep holding me in place—five, six generations of Mormon stock run through my veins. Our family has made its living on the land for the last six decades laying pipe in the Utah substrate. We are a family of pipeline contractors and although I have never dug the ditches, I love and care for the men who do: my brothers, cousins, uncle, father, John Henry Tempest, my grandfather, John Henry Tempest Jr., who is in his ninetieth year, even my great grandfather, John Henry Tempest Sr. We understand the power of continuity and our debt to these lands that have given us livelihood. As a Utah family, we would like to enter into the Congressional Record personal letters, four generations worth, of why we care about wilderness, why we do not favor Senate Bill 884, and why we want more wilderness designation in Utah, not less. Some of the letters are forthcoming, some I have brought with me. With a large, extended family I trust you can appreciate the organizational logistics. These letters represent men and women, Republicans and Democrats alike, registered voters and voices too young to vote but not too young to register their opinions. They are individual and original, some sealed, some open. It is a gesture of sincere concern for what we hold dear.

I appreciate this time to be able to share with you some of my own thoughts about the Utah Public Lands Management Act of 1995.

- It is not a wilderness bill that the majority of Utahns recognize, want or desire.
- It is not a wilderness bill that honors or respects our history as a people.
- It is not a wilderness bill that honors or respects the natural laws required for a healthy environment.
- And it is not a wilderness bill that takes an empathetic stance toward our future.
- It is a wilderness bill that lacks vision and undermines the bipartisan principles inherent in the Wilderness Act of 1964.



Dead Junipers, woodcut by Patrick Dengate

