

Religious Impact of the International Environmental Agenda

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Philosophy and History: Religious Undercurrents in Environmentalism and Forestry

Abstract:

Since the 1960s an emerging philosophy or religion based on the belief that “nature knows best” has challenged traditional natural resource management in the United States. Over the past ten to fifteen years, traditional conservationists and foresters have been attempting to find common ground with many environmentalists and resource managers who hold to the “nature knows best” philosophy. However, politically powerful national and international environmental interests, having no interest in finding common ground, are quietly imposing their beliefs using political connections and international law to undermine those efforts to find common ground. The process is converting property rights from inalienable rights to government grants, severely impacting the foundational concept of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” This paper exposes this effort and calls for an open dialog with full understanding of all consequences before implementing resource management policies.

Keywords:

Religion, sustainable development, Wildlands Project, Biodiversity Treaty, property rights

Along with the creation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, an organization called the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was also formed to serve as a scientific advisor to the UN. Since then, two other major international environmental organizations have also been created to serve as advisors to the UN; the World Wildlife Fund for Nature and the World Resources Institute. All three work closely together to achieve common goals. This paper will focus primarily on the IUCN and to a lesser degree on the World Resources Institute.

The IUCN has as members 82 individual nations and 111 government agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and other land or water based agencies. Additionally, the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon, National Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund and a host of other U.S. environmental organizations are among 800 plus NGOs members. Finally, the UN Environmental Program (UNEP), UN Development Program (UNDP) and UNESCO are also members.

IUCN planning sessions with government representatives, environmental activists and UN personnel take place behind closed doors to the exclusion of the media and other interested parties. Many people are deeply concerned by these closed meetings. Their concern is heightened by the IUCN's purpose:

The Union's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. (IUCN 2005)

Although the definition initially appears innocuous, the IUCN's primary purpose is to *influence, encourage and assist* societies to change the way they view the world. This is an enormous undertaking, historically associated with religious movements. The concern with this purpose is that it does not define what is meant by the phrase to conserve the *integrity and diversity of nature*. Nor does it define what it means to ensure that *any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable*. What is equitable or sustainable? Such undertakings can have enormous impacts on Americans and natural resource management. Yet the IUCN excludes all but its selected government, NGO and UN members from participation – or even knowing what those within the IUCN are planning.

People with a more traditional natural resource background have attended IUCN meetings and were stunned at the new age, nearly religious fervor of the proceedings. (McDonnell, 1994) It was very apparent to these observers that the meaning behind the purpose of the IUCN is not what most Americans would interpret them. The actual purpose of the IUCN more closely approximates the purpose given in the IUCN's Ethics Working Group's publication, *Earth Ethics*, in 1996:

...promote alternative models for sustainable communities and lifestyles, based in ecospiritual practice and principles...to accelerate our transition to a just and sustainable future.... Humanity must undergo a radical change in its attitudes, values, and behavior.... In response to this situation, a new global ethics is taking form, and it is finding expression in international law. (Rockefeller 1996)

Many find the concept of ecospiritual practice and principles alarming. Most natural resource managers believe that although present resource management practices are not perfect, improvements will be made as better ways are discovered. In the meantime, resource utilization is better than it's ever been in the history of the United States. Why does it require a radical change in humanity's attitudes, values and behavior to be sustainable? Just what does sustainable development really mean?

To most people sustainable means that we manage our renewable resources in a way that maintains them *in perpetuity* for man's continued use. Dr. Steven Rockefeller, often described as the father of sustainable development within the IUCN and worldwide, provides an entirely different definition in his and John Elder's book *Spirit and Nature*:

Sustainable by definition, means not only indefinitely prolonged, but nourishing, as the earth is nourishing to life and the self-actualizing of persons and communities. The word development need not be restricted to economic activity, but can mean the evolution, unfolding growth and fulfillment of any and all aspects of life. Thus sustainable development may be defined as the *kind of human activity that nourishes and perpetuates the fulfillment of the whole community of life on earth.* (Rockefeller and Elder 1992, p. 8) (Italics original)

Rockefeller is professor emeritus of religion at Middlebury College in Vermont. As the son of Nelson Rockefeller, and part of the Rockefeller family, he has powerful connections. For example, he currently chairs the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. During his active tenure at Middlebury and following, he was fully involved within the IUCN promoting sustainable development. His vision calls for a radical change in people's behavior and activities.

Robert Prescott-Allen, senior consultant to the second World Conservation Strategy project in 1990 explained that: "Sustainability calls for a *fundamental transformation in how people behave.* Changes in behavior can be assisted by laws and incentives. . . to a *new morality.* . . and a *new moral conception of world order.*" (Prescott-Allen 1990) (Italics added) The World Conservation Strategy is a project of the IUCN, UNEP and World Wildlife Fund started in 1980.

Rockefeller and Elder go on to describe the actions needed to achieve sustainable development:

Make sustainability a primary goal of economic and development policies, reflecting that goal in budget and investment decisions; establish the commitment to sustainability in law; make liable those who deplete biological wealth or damage the health of people or ecosystems; include environmental costs in the prices of energy, raw materials, and manufactured goods; use economic instruments to provide incentives for sustainable action; incorporate changes in environmental health and the stocks and flows of natural wealth in national accounting systems. (Rockefeller and Elder, 1992, p. 134)

This vision of how economic systems should function is explored many times in IUCN and UN documents. It is at the heart of *Agenda 21*, a comprehensive 40 chapter United Nations document that spells out UN requirements for sustainable development within nations. The United States signed *Agenda 21* at the 1992 Earth Summit. It calls for regulating virtually every aspect of human interactions with the environment. International agencies authorized by the UN along with national agencies will enforce the requirements. (Agenda 21 1992)

Agenda 21 was converted into United States policy in the 1996 report entitled *Sustainable America*. *Sustainable America* and a host of sub documents were written by the President's Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD). Of the 26 appointees to the PCSD by President Clinton, nearly half represent organizations or agencies which are members of the IUCN, allowing the agenda of the IUCN to heavily influence the decisions of the PCSD.

The changes demanded by *Agenda 21* and *Sustainable America* do represent a radical departure from America's current culture change in the lives of U.S. citizens. It would mean a complete shift from the constitutional basis of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" to one of protecting nature at all costs.

This concept of sustainable development, of course, is a deeply held view for those who believe in the sanctity of "Mother Earth." If debated in the public forum, it can provide for healthy dialog. However, if federal agencies, environmental NGOs and UN organizations are quietly implementing their beliefs by developing implementing quasi-religious strategies and treaties behind the closed doors of the IUCN, then it is the business of every American. What has happened in the IUCN for the past 30+ years is like various Christian churches in the U.S. planning with the U.S. Attorney General behind closed doors to develop a strategy to overcome *Roe vs. Wade*. It makes a mockery of the growing concept of separation of church and state.

The Earth Charter

The first international effort to codify the emerging new values was the World Charter for Nature. It was accepted by the United Nations in 1982. The World Commission on Environment and Development was commissioned by the UN in 1983 to develop "a global agenda for change." Chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Bruntland, the commission issued a report entitled *Our Common Future* that called for humanity to "insure that meeting present needs does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs." While most Americans would probably agree with this goal, Secretary General of the Bruntland Commission Jim MacNeill (1989) clarified what he thought was at stake:

Much of what God created, man is now destroying.... The world's economic and political constitutions are seriously out of step with the workings of nature.... Our economic and ecological systems are now totally interlocked in the real world, but they remain almost totally divorced in our institutions."

The sense of urgency that the commission felt was correctly turned into a religious fervency by Bruntland (1989) herself:

A new cultural ethos is the main thing. That ethos, I believe, is intergenerational responsibility. If that ethos is not accepted almost as a religious belief, we cannot convince anyone that we must change the way we live. If we cannot make people realize that living as we do will make it impossible for their grandchildren to live at all, they won't change. If people believe this is true, it is a premise that can reach both minds and hearts.

To develop a new ethos required a "radical change in...attitudes, values, and behavior" articulated by Steven Rockefeller. This in turn required a two step process. First, was the need to

change laws and the form of governance to be more ecocentric, and second, to change the fundamental ethical or religious beliefs of all humanity. The concept of sustainable development became the umbrella for these two efforts and emerged as the guiding force for all nation states with the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in the form of a host of international treaties and the Earth Charter. The seemingly unexplainable zeal to protect nature at any cost can be understood by the Earth Charter.

During his active tenure at Middlebury, Steven Rockefeller was not only promoting sustainable development within the IUCN, he was concurrently promoting the Earth Charter. The first Earth Charter presented at the 1992 Earth Summit was not accepted. Instead, a watered down Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was written and accepted. (Agenda 21 1992)

Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Premier of the Soviet Union, and Maurice Strong, assistant to the Secretary General of the United Nations until 2004 were tasked to sanitize the Earth Charter to make it more acceptable to the monotheistic religions or secular humanism. With Gorbachev and Strong providing a cover of respect, Rockefeller chaired the Earth Charter International Drafting Committee and joined the Earth Charter Commission in May of 2000.

Gorbachev ruled over the nation having the worst environmental record in the history of mankind. The Soviet Union and her satellite countries polluted the environment orders of magnitude greater than anything ever done by the United States. Following his removal as Premier of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev claimed to have undergone a spiritual eco-awakening. He immediately formed Green Cross International, through which he co-chaired writing the Earth Charter.

Strong was the Secretary General for the both the 1972 Earth Summit in Stockholm and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. During his career, Strong was a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation, a director of the IUCN, a director and vice-president of the World Wide Fund for Nature, a director of the Aspen Institute, and a director of the Bretton Woods Committee of Washington, D.C. After presiding over the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, Strong created the Earth Council through which, like Gorbachev, he co-chaired the writing of the Earth Charter.

While Steven Rockefeller was the “nuts and bolts” man behind sustainable development, Strong was the global organizer. Canadian investigative reporter, Elaine Dewar (1995) claimed that, “Those in the know said he [Strong] deserved a prize for crafting the world’s greatest human network” to implement Agenda 21, sustainable development and the Earth Charter.

Until April of 2005 Strong reported to Secretary General Kofi Annan. He was tasked with implementing reform in the United Nations that will lead to what the United Nation openly calls global governance. He resigned his position with the UN because of his involvement with the Oil for Food scandal.

The first Earth Charter Benchmark Draft issued in 1997 was also too pantheistic for most of the world to accept. Pantheism is the religious belief or doctrine that equates God with the forces and laws of nature and the universe, or the worship of all gods. The first Earth Charter draft also claimed the only choice before humanity was, “to care for Earth or to participate in the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.” The heavily pantheistic tone and the absolutist language of the Earth Charter were still too alarming for the world.

The purpose of the Earth Charter in the first draft was to:

...set forth an inspiring vision of the fundamental principles of a global partnership for sustainable development and environmental conservation. The Earth Charter initiative

reflects the conviction that *a radical change in humanity's attitudes and values is essential to achieve social, economic, and ecological well-being in the twenty-first century....* (Earth Charter Overview 1997) (Italics added)

Once again the need for a radical change in humanity's attitudes and values is deemed essential to save planet earth. The 1997 Earth Charter Overview also stated that it is the:

articulation of a *spiritual vision* that reflects *universal spiritual values*;... a people's charter that serves as a *universal code of conduct* for *ordinary citizens, educators, business executives, scientists, religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations*, and national councils of sustainable development; and a declaration of principles that can serve as a "soft law" document when endorsed by the UN General Assembly. (Earth Charter Overview 1997)(Italics added)

Those promoting the Earth Charter believe that every human being must ascribe to its ethics, if not its beliefs – just as Gro Bruntland had stated nine years earlier. It forms the basis for sustainable development as defined by the UN, IUCN and other international institutions. The Charter has gone through several iterations from a blatant pantheistic document to a sanitized version. The final version has the same goals but without the overtly offensive pantheistic overtone of the first drafts. For instance, in the 1995 draft the Charter started by saying “*Earth itself is alive. We are part of an evolving universe. Human beings are members of an interdependent community of life with a magnificent diversity of life forms and cultures. We are humbled before the beauty of Earth and share a reverence for life and the sources of our being.*”

The Earth Charter Commission completed the Charter in March of 2000, and the sanitized final version states: “Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life.... The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.” (Earth Charter 2000) While the pantheistic undertone is still there, it is not nearly as obvious. Nor is the mission of the Earth Charter so extreme. The mission of the Earth Charter is now:

"To establish a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace." (Earth Charter 2000) (Italics original)

Although the language in the final Earth Charter is less inflammatory, the belief the earth is indeed alive and has a conscience is held by many leaders at the national and international level. For instance, Ann Roberts, Steven Rockefeller's sister and past president of the Rockefeller Family Fund, told the 1992 Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA) participants,

“we can understand our inner being with the natural world, and we can at last understand that *spirit can dwell in matter* and we do not have to deny the matter of our being or of this earth.... If we lie on our apartment floor on the fortieth floor, and really listen we can be nourished and feel mother earth and her energy coming all the way up through those floors to us.” (Roberts 1992) (Italics added)

The EGA was created by the Rockefeller Family Fund in 1987 and today is made up of

over 250 of the largest foundations in the U.S. today, including the various Rockefeller Foundations, Ford, MacArthur, Arco and Chevron Foundations, and Pew Charitable Trust. The EGA provides over \$500 million in grants for this agenda annually. Con Nugent, Program Director for the Nathan Cummings Foundation told the attendees of the EGA meeting:

We start with the premise...that the current use of the earth by humans is unsustainable and that the damage is done through billions of micro-economic behaviors and that stopping, modifying, or transforming those behaviors at any place along the economic spectrum from raw materials to the landfill, through law, or through culture is what we do in this business. (Nugent 1992) (Italics added)

As with Rockefeller and other like-minded people, Roberts and Nugent have a right to believe whatever they want to believe. However, it is obvious their convictions are born of religious fervor that is unlikely to be swayed by facts that are contrary to their own, or consideration for the lives and well-being of others who their beliefs and funding may harm. This lack of concern was driven home in another session of the 1992 EGA meeting, when Donald Ross, director of the EGA for the Rockefeller Family Fund said:

How are we, who have no experience of ever running a business, managing a business, or starting a business, gonna go in and advise loggers who have no high school education and are making \$40,000 a year to convert to some other kind of economy in the middle of the woods that is gonna produce \$15,000 a year at best, and expect they're gonna embrace it.... If it means shutting a plant down, or it means stopping a pulp mill in Sitka or what have you, that's what has to happen.... There are local communities that are going to go over the abyss in the short run. It's gonna be either a different kind of economy or it's not gonna be there. (Ross 1992)

These candid looks of the fervor of major leaders and funders of this movement clearly illustrate the "take no prisoners" attitude of at least some of them. Certainly, the majority of EGA members do not have this zeal. Indeed, some attending the EGA meeting even expressed concern about this zeal in the discussion time of the sessions. Nonetheless, this is exactly what happened in the Ancient Forest Campaign in the Pacific Northwest in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The campaign was funded by the EGA. It has also happened in countless other smaller, less visible efforts across the United States. In one session of the 1992 meeting, speakers went on at length describing how they, along with federal agencies, have spent tens of millions of dollars engrafting these beliefs "at every grade level and in all subjects" (Link 1992) the public school system in the U.S. and how they overcame resistance from teachers who had other worldviews.

This is but a sample of what the Earth Charter and sustainable development advance. Since the completion of the Earth Charter, millions more dollars have been spent incorporating it into U.S. schools, churches and communities. Steven Rockefeller reports that thousands of organizations have endorsed the Charter, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors (Rockefeller 2002b) among hundreds of other groups in the U.S. (Earth Charter USA Network, 2005)

Implementing the Earth Charter is no minor task. Led by Mikhail Gorbachev, Maurice Strong and Steven Rockefeller, the IUCN heavily promoted the Earth Charter to receive "endorsement of the Earth Charter by the United Nations in 2002." (Earth Charter 2002a) The

UN's endorsement was to be made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) where it would provide the "ethical framework for a covenant on sustainable development." (Earth Charter 2002b) Prior to the WSSD, Gorbachev, Strong and Rockefeller organized through the IUCN an international conference called Earth Dialogues. Held in February, 2002, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan gave the keynote address. IUCN President, Yolanda N. Kakabadse told the Earth Dialogues attendees, "We must globalise a code of ethics and principles such as the ones contained in the Earth Charter to make globalization work for sustainable development." (Kakabadse 2002)

As the WSSD drew near, proponents placed the Earth Charter in a chest called the "Ark of Hope," intended to be a modern-day imitation of the Biblical Ark of the Covenant, complete with carrying rods. Regaled in colorful occult symbolism, they brought the Ark of Hope to the Johannesburg, South Africa summit. Given its blatant pantheistic nature, many Christians and Jews consider its obvious link to the Biblical Ark of the Covenant heretical.

Once the UN accepted the Earth Charter, the IUCN had a new 225 page treaty written in 1995 to enforce it called the Covenant on the Environment and Development (CED). (Hassan 2004) Like the Biodiversity Treaty, it is an international treaty that would force every person on earth to comply with the pantheistic-based Rockefeller/IUCN Earth Charter as employed in sustainable development – without any debate at the national or local level. Hundreds of people from all over the world protested the effort. Warned about the true goals of the UN brand of sustainable development, the U.S. succeeded in getting the Earth Charter removed from the final draft of the summit's resolution. Steven Rockefeller lamented in his final report:

...in the closing days of the Summit, the first draft of the Political Declaration—the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development—which was prepared by South Africa, included in paragraph 13 recognition of "the relevance of the challenges posed in the Earth Charter." Unfortunately, on the last day of the Summit the reference to the Earth Charter was deleted from the Political Declaration in closed-door negotiations. (Rockefeller 2002a)

With the failure to get the Earth Charter accepted as the global earth ethic, promoters of the global agenda had no justification for introducing the IUCN's Covenant on the Environment and Development. Rockefeller's efforts failed.

Conservation Biology

One of the initial obstacles in the 1970s of this unorthodox version of sustainable development was that there existed no science to justify their position that modern resource management techniques were destroying ecosystems. In 1980 the IUCN released the first World Conservation Strategy in collaboration with UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and the World Wildlife Fund calling for "a new ethic, embracing plants and animals as well as people. (Rockefeller and Elder 1992, p. 7) From this evolved the holistic science of conservation biology.

Conservation biology centers on the largely unproven assumption that nature knows best and that all human use and activity should follow natural patterns within relatively homogenous soil-vegetation-hydrology landscapes called ecosystems. Ecosystems, however, don't fit well within the political boundaries of man and any single ecosystem may cross several political boundaries and many property owners. To be effective therefore, environmental law had to be superior to

property rights and political jurisdictions. Government had to be reinvented to apply the new science.

This largely unproven science was introduced to U.S. colleges by providing endowed chairs and grants to natural resource colleges by Rockefeller-aligned foundations (Anonymous 1992). As students began to graduate with conservation degrees in the late 1970s federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and others – all members of the IUCN – changed the qualifications for employment as field managers to include those holding conservation degrees.

Following the first World Conservation Strategy in 1980, Dr. Michael Soulé was tapped to create a professional society and a scientific journal that centered on the new science of conservation biology. Soulé successfully formed The Society for Conservation Biology in 1985 and published the first the *Conservation Biology* journal in 1987. Soulé, also the society's first president, outlined the purpose of conservation biology in the journal's first issue:

The society is a response...to the biological diversity crisis that will reach a crescendo in the first half of the twenty-first century. We assume implicitly that...the worst biological disaster in the last 65 million years can be averted.... We assume implicitly that environmental wounds inflicted by ignorant humans and destructive technologies can be treated by wiser humans and by wholesome technologies. (Soulé 1987)

In the first chapter of the textbook of *Conservation Biology*, Soulé further explains the initial strategy of conservation biologists:

In many situations conservation biology is a crisis discipline. In crisis disciplines, in contrast to “normal” science, it is sometimes imperative to make an important tactical decision before one is confident in the sufficiency of the data.... Warfare is the epitome of a crisis discipline. On a battlefield, if you observe a group of armed men stealthily approaching your lines, you are justified in taking precautions, which may include firing on the men. (Soulé 1986, p. 6)

This almost unbelievable arrogance and militancy formed the fundamental understanding of right and wrong for many of these early conservation biologists. Many graduates holding to these radical ideas were hired by our federal and state agencies. It shouldn't be surprising then to realize that those government employees holding such extremist views are quite hostile to all people using government lands for *any* purpose. Likewise, many of those regulating private land are naturally prone to believe that property owners must be controlled to protect Mother Nature. Although mellowed with time, many of these conservation graduates hold senior management positions today.

Tragically, the change that occurred within our natural resource colleges and government agencies did not come about from a healthy debate based on solid scientific evidence. Instead, it came from an unethical, or perhaps even illegal, collaboration between federal, NGO and UN change forces to advance their agenda without the affected people even being aware of it. In a very real sense, early conservation biologists declared war on traditional science and resource management without bothering to inform their alleged enemy – the general public – that they were at war.

While not all federal resource managers, not even many of those who graduated with a

conservation degree, ascribe to the militant approach taken by Soulé, various degrees of this mindset have permeated our federal agencies at every level. For instance, a 1994 United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) internal working document on Ecosystem Management brazenly equated human beings as merely a part of nature; “All ecosystem management activities should consider human beings as a biological resource.” (BLM 1994)

The reduction of humanity to the level of a “biological resource” has an enormous impact on the internal culture of these agencies. Many employees no longer view themselves as servants of the people and stewards of the resource, but as righteous protectors of nature *from* humans who would damage her. Nature’s welfare becomes more important than human welfare. Many of these federal employees can often enforce regulations that harm or even destroy the lives of property owners and resource users because they honestly believe they have a moral responsibility to protect nature from man’s perceived damaging activities no matter what the cost.

Certainly conservation biology has matured since Michael Soulé penned his uncompromising words in the 1980s. It has now developed to the point where traditional resource managers are compelled to look at natural resources differently and provides science new ways of analyzing natural systems. Credible scientists, without personal agendas, use methodology derived from conservation biology to investigate natural relationships. Nonetheless, conservation biology is a young science. It has been politically thrust into the scientific and resource management arena before it has had time to mature. Hence, there was little justification in adopting conservation biology as the foundation for federal policy making that occurred in the 1990s.

The arrogance and near militant words used by Rockefeller, Soulé and others advancing their brand of sustainable development continues to provide cause for concern. It is especially alarming when they claim their version of sustainable development is being implemented by international law.

The Convention on Biological Diversity

The early writing of conservation biologists and those advocating sustainable development carry an urgent, almost desperate, need to implement their ideas in law before ignorant humans doom the earth. This was attempted through the writing and implementation of numerous international treaties by the IUCN and its two companion organizations the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the World Resources Institute (WRI). Unknown to most Americans, these international NGOs either wrote or were involved in writing almost all of the international environmental treaties signed or ratified by the United States. Among these is the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, often called the Biodiversity Treaty, was first written by the IUCN in 1981, but was not introduced to the world until the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It was designed to fulfill Chapter 15 of Agenda 21. Even then, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) claimed it was not a real treaty, but merely an eighteen-page outline of a treaty. Consequently, President Bush Sr. did not sign it. President Clinton did, however, immediately after assuming office in 1993.

Article 8a of the Convention calls for the establishment of “a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity.”(Convention on Biological Diversity 1992) It also calls for the promotion of “environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas with a view to furthering protection of these areas.” While this may sound innocent, this rather simplistic language obscures the horrendous cost of protection demanded by the treaty.

This author had been following the activities of the IUCN since 1988 and especially the Biodiversity Treaty. The language used in the treaty was almost the same as another plan supported by the IUCN and Michael Soulé – The Wildlands Project. Dr. Reed Noss, coauthor of the plan, along with Soulé and Earth First! founder George Forman wrote in a special issue of *Wild Earth*:

One half of the land area of the 48 conterminous [United] States be encompassed in core [wilderness] reserves and inner corridor zones (essentially extensions of core reserves) within the next few decades.... Half of a region in wilderness is a reasonable guess of what it will take to restore...natural disturbance regimes, assuming that most of the other 50 percent is managed intelligently as buffer zone.... Eventually, a wilderness network would dominate a region and thus would itself constitute the matrix, with human habitations being the islands. (Noss 1992, p. 15)

This was part of the radical change discussed within the IUCN and other international circles in the 1980s. And radical it was. If the treaty was ever fully implemented, up to 50 percent of the U.S. would be withdrawn into wilderness areas and most of the rest would be highly regulated – not to benefit man, but to protect the attributes of the core wilderness areas. It would totally transform the United States into a nature-based society. By definition, the concept of inalienable rights and liberty are suborned by nature's rights. Its merits weren't going to be debated in the public arena where it should be, but surreptitiously imposed on American citizens without the benefit of *any* debate. Unfortunately, the United States Senate was completely ignorant of the potential danger of this treaty.

Although I and three other individuals went to Washington to warn the Senate that it was highly likely that the treaty was based on The Wildlands Project, the warning was ignored because the eighteen page treaty contained no direct reference to The Wildlands Project. The first vote was stopped in August of 1994 when a fax alert campaign by the Alliance for America and the American Land Rights Association resulted in one to four million people phoning the Senate (Personal Communication, 1994). Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) quickly withdrew the Convention from the calendar for "further study." (Lamb 1998)

Prior to this vote the UN Environmental Program had contracted the World Resources Institute (WRI), a sister organization of the IUCN, to write the Global Biodiversity Assessment (GBA). The GBA was to provide the background information for the implementing language of the treaty. Repeated efforts by the Senate to secure a copy of the draft GBA in late August and September of 1994 from the United Nations hit a rock wall when the UN insisted the GBA did not even exist. That wall came tumbling down, however, on September 30, 1994 – the day of the scheduled vote – when we sent the Senate a draft copy of the GBA.

I and three other people received a copy of chapter 10 of the draft GBA on September 29, 1994. It was sent by overnight express from none other than the IUCN world headquarters in Gland, Switzerland – the author of the treaty itself. We had requested it several weeks before – from a contact in New York City.

The United Nations funded GBA, written to provide the justification and implementation strategies for the treaty, stated that to protect biodiversity:

Representative areas of all major ecosystems in a region need to be reserved.... Reserved blocks should be as large as possible.... Buffer zones should be established around core areas and that corridors should connect these areas. This basic design is central to the Wildlands Project in the United States (Noss, 1992), a controversial... strategy... to expand natural habitats and corridors to cover as much as 30 percent of the US land area. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 993)

Realizing that the treaty's ultimate goal was likely to be The Wildlands Project, and having a Ph.D. in ecology and ecosystem classification and management, I had been drawing a simulated map (Figure 1) of The Wildlands Project's impact if fully implemented. Chapter 10 of the draft GBA was the smoking gun we had been looking for, and we sent it, along with the partially completed map overnight express to the U.S. Senate. The cloture vote on the treaty was set for four o'clock on September 30, 1994, and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson exposed the agenda on the Senate floor at three o'clock. (Hutchinson, 1994) Upon seeing this evidence, Senator Mitchell once again, and for the final time, withdrew the treaty from consideration. The U.S. Senate never voted on the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Had the Convention on Biological Diversity been ratified, it would require

setting aside between 30 to 50 percent of the landscape into core wilderness reserves and interconnecting corridors, all surrounded by buffer zones that are heavily regulated to further protect the wilderness reserves. This is the ultimate goal of sustainable development, and requires cramming people into islands of human habitation surrounded by a sea of wilderness.

Such an approach supposedly reduces mankind's "ecological footprint" by drastically reducing the land area where humanity can live and grow food. The United Nations funded GBA claims that, "Population growth has exceeded the capacity of the biosphere." The GBA goes on to say that it is "estimated that an 'agricultural world' in which most human beings are peasants should be able to support 5 to 7 billion people.... In contrast, a reasonable estimate for an industrialised world society at the present North American material standard of living would be *1 billion*. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 773) (Italics added) Since the human population of the earth is estimated now to be around 6.5 billion people, the GBA would require that citizens of developed nations reduce their standard of living to the level of agrarian peasants or reduce the human population by nearly 85 percent – or something in between.

Although the U.S. Senate did not ratify the treaty, the Clinton Administration instituted a number of programs like the Roadless Areas initiative within the U.S. Forest Service. This program is a major step towards dramatically increasing the amount of wilderness in the U.S., putting 31 percent of U.S. Forest Service into a de facto wilderness status. (USFS 2005) He also initiated the GAP Analysis Program that uses geographic information technology to identify private land that must be condemned or controlled to protect biodiversity as defined by the Biodiversity Treaty. (USGS 2005)

States are also advancing the Biodiversity Treaty. Among eastern states, Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Rhode Island, New York and Maine are rapidly implementing the goals of the treaty without its ratification. Most state legislatures and employees who are involved really don't understand the unintended consequences of what they are doing. Finally, environmental NGOs are putting tremendous political pressure on every state to advance the goals of the Biodiversity treaty. Taking Liberty, for example, is an interactive internet program



Figure 1 A depiction of what the Wildlands Project might have done if the Convention on Biological Diversity was fully implemented according to recommendations by the UN funded Global Biodiversity Assessment. The red areas are wilderness reserves and corridors and the yellow areas buffer zones. The author used an earlier color version of this map to stop the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the U.S. Senate. For more information see <http://www.takingliberty.us/>.

(www.takingliberty.us) for those with high speed internet connections that graphically reveal how much progress has been made since 1994 on implementing this program. (Coffman 2005)

President Clinton has continued the implementation of other aspects of the treaty and that of sustainable development through the Presidents Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD), formed in 1993. The heavy domination of PCSD by members of the IUCN allowed Agenda 21 to heavily influence the decisions of the PCSD. By 1996 the PCSD published *Sustainable America* which called for increases in land use restrictions patterned after the IUCN's Covenant of Environment and Development – a new treaty that was supposed to be introduced in 2002 following the adoption of the Earth Charter by the UN at the World Summit on Sustainable Development meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Federal agencies following the 1992 Earth Summit were already adopting the principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Agenda 21. On March 9, 1993, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – a member of the IUCN – laid out an eight-year ecosystem management plan to conform U.S. environmental regulations to those of the UN and IUCN. The EPA said:

Natural resource and environmental agencies... should...develop a joint strategy to help the United States fulfill its existing international obligations (e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 21)... The executive branch should direct federal agencies to evaluate national policies...in light of international policies and obligations, and to amend national policies to achieve international objectives. (EPA 1993)

During the 1990s the land use focus of federal agencies was redirected to fulfill the philosophical concepts of sustainable development by employing conservation biology and much stricter interpretations of land use regulations. The federal government also attempted to implement ecosystem-oriented programs like the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Program (ICBEMP), the Northern Forest Lands Study (NFLS), the Man and the Biosphere Program, the American Heritage Rivers Program AHR, the Clean Water Initiative (CWI) and many more – all designed to implement central control over land use efforts by unelected people.

All of these programs were packaged in ways that sounded noble – veritable motherhood and apple pie concepts. Neither the federal employees nor the communities promoting them understood what was really happening, where they were coming from or their unintended consequences. If there was public discussion at all, it was always about surface issues that had little to do with the root underpinnings of the programs. In most cases local citizens just did not like or agree with them. They rarely understood why.

There is one thing that is common to all these programs. In every case these programs eroded or eliminated the bundle of property rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

The Real Danger – Loss of Property Rights

To enforce the IUCN's vision of sustainable development, governments must control property rights. This is especially true for The Wildland Project. The Preamble of the consensus document resulting from the May-June 1976 Habitat I Conference held in Vancouver, British Columbia clearly showed that belief:

Land...cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principal

instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore contributes to social injustice; if unchecked, it may become a major obstacle in the planning and implementation of development schemes. The provision of decent dwellings and healthy conditions for the people can only be achieved if land is used in the interests of society as a whole. Public control of land use is therefore indispensable...." (Lamb 1997)

Throughout the recommendations of this United Nations document, denial of private property rights is set forth as the basis for future United Nations policy:

Public ownership or effective control of land in the public interest is the single most important means of...achieving a more equitable distribution of the benefits of development.... Governments must maintain full jurisdiction and exercise complete sovereignty over such land.... Change in the use of land...should be subject to public control and regulation...of the common good. (Ibid)

The theme of state-managed property rights occurs repeatedly in UN and environmental literature. It is also in the UN funded GBA that was the base document for writing the implementing language for the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- Biodiversity's benefits are in large part 'public goods' that no single owner can claim. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 779)
- Property rights are not absolute and unchanging, but rather a complex, dynamic and shifting relationship between two or more parties, over space or time. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 776)
- The point here is that the reallocation of property rights implies the redistribution of assets. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 902)
- In reality, access to every public good involves a political process, in the course of which *users cede rights to some decision-making regulatory authority*. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 903) (Italics added)
- A common characteristic of many ecosystems is that resources are non-exclusive in their use: they are in the nature of local public goods. Property rights can still be allocated to the environmental public good, but in this case they should be restricted to *usufructual or user rights*. Harvesting quotas, emissions permits and the development rights are examples of such rights. (Heywood and Watson 1995, p. 903) (Italics added)

Usufructual rights are as old as the Roman Empire where it described the issuance of rights and privileges to build, farm and use the Caesar's land because the Caesar owned everything. The GBA calls for organizing our society into self-sustaining "bioregions" of similar ecosystems in which the usufructual permitting process will be administered by a non-elected council or commissions of people representing "central or local government, private, community and community tenurial rights." (Heywood and Watson 1994, Section 10.7.3.4) In other words, the proposed governance essentially bypassed local elected government and any accountability to the people they govern.

Former Vice President Gore's "reinventing government" efforts created this exact system of non-elected governance for the American Heritage Rivers Program, the Clean Water Initiative and Ecosystem Management Programs. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of

1986, the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) initiated in 1993 and the Northern Forest Lands Study started in 1990 also employ this non-elected governance. Governor Nelson Rockefeller – Steven Rockefeller and Ann Robert’s father – used the same model in creating the Adirondack Park Agency Act (APA) in 1971 in Upstate New York. Likewise, Congress enacted the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve Act of 1978 patterned after the APA Act. In fact, the APA Act seems to provide the template for the IUCN’s model of sustainable development for the entire world in latter decades.

Not surprisingly, those affected by the legislation or executive actions strongly resisted these efforts in every case. They may not have understood why, but they knew these actions were fundamentally wrong and would have huge negative affects on them. In many cases their resistance was so strong the federal and state governments let the effort die on the vine without formally killing the programs.

Although the IUCN’s brand of ecospiritual sustainable development has many condemning problems, the one that stands above all others is the loss of property rights. This approach to governance is diametrically opposed to the concept of individual private property rights envisioned by America’s founding fathers. Property rights, in turn are the foundation to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” penned in the declaration of independence. Laying out the historical evidence from the Magna Carta to the writings of John Locke, James Madison claimed:

Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well as that which lies in the various rights of individuals.... this being the end of government, that alone is a just government, which impartially secures, to every man, whatever is his own. That [which] is not [a] just government, nor is property secure under it, [is one] *where arbitrary restrictions*, exemptions, and monopolies deny to part of its citizens that free use of their faculties, and free choice of their occupations, which not only constitutes their property in the general sense of the word; but are the means of acquiring property strictly so called. (Madison 1792) (Italics added)

The importance of private property rights is easy to understand; whoever owns the land, owns the people. If the people themselves own the land, they are protected from abuse by government or their neighbors and are free to create a life for themselves – as long as those actions do not harm their neighbors. If the government owns the land or has the right to regulate it as they seem fit, the people are at the mercy of politicians and bureaucrats who are merely “doing their job,” or bent on empire building. The former Soviet Union is an obvious example. But those who suffered from the Ancient Forest Campaign in the 1980s in the Pacific Northwest also know its agony – even within a democracy. Again, James Madison illuminates this truth:

In *all* cases where a majority are united by a common interest or passion, the rights of the minority are in danger."(Madison 1787a) [italics added] Madison continues, "[A] pure democracy...can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of [the majority]...and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal securities or the right of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. (Madison 1787b)

Since property rights are so fundamental to liberty, the founders knew they had to protect

them from the fad of the day – even from endangered species or the religion of sustainable development. Therefore, private property is not a thing or place, but an *inalienable right* not subject to the whims of the day. It is a right to use what a person owns in any way he or she desires – as long as that activity does not harm others. If the government limits the right to use that property for a public use or public good, the government must pay just compensation. The only regulations exempt from just compensation are those needed to protect property owners from each other or for health reasons.

International institutions like the UN and IUCN base their concept of sustainable development on the premise that property rights create self-interest in the individual and cause inequity in the social structure and abuse of the environment. Conversely, John Locke and our founders recognize and use the human trait of self-interest to improve the economy, and as a byproduct, protect the environment. Unencumbered private property provides the catalyst to stimulate individuals to be creative and take risk in finding a better way, product, or service to meet a human need – including protecting the environment.

Contrary to the belief of many, private property rights actually encourage protection of the property's asset value because of pride of ownership and the need to maintain environmental health for continued production, use, or investment returns. While not perfect, this system of governance has created the rich diversity of opportunities that has led to the free market system and produced the greatest nation in human history. In Locke's approach only laws and regulations that keep them from activities that clearly cause harm to their neighbors or their property would restrict property owners. If government takes property for the public good, the public pays just compensation.

Although property rights advocates have long stated that private property rights are essential for freedom and the economic ability to protect the environment, several recent international studies and analyses have made this point nearly indisputable. In his compelling book *The Mystery of Capital*, Peruvian Hernando de Soto accurately identifies private property rights as the key to reducing poverty and producing wealth. His book is the result of a three year global study funded by the World Bank. He found that legal title to use property represents equity and power to build wealth. Without private property, individuals are powerless to oppose any infringement on their rights due to government control over the fruits of their labor.

The developing nations of the world perhaps provide the most striking example of how excessive government regulation destroys the wealth-building capability of property. In these nations, the simple act of legally transferring the title to property is extremely costly. It can take years, even decades because of a sea of bureaucratic regulations. Few people have the time or resources to own property legally. This "extralegal" property therefore has no legal asset value.

De Soto has shown that the total value of this kind of extralegal property within developing nations and former communist countries is at least *\$9.3 trillion!* This is ninety-three times as much as all development assistance to the developing nations from all advanced countries during the past thirty years. (DeSoto, 2000, pp. 20-21, 35) There would be no need for development assistance to these nations if these poverty-stricken people could have access to the asset value of their property that is presently dead capital.

DeSoto provides example after example that excessive government regulation breeds corruption, economic stagnation, and if sufficiently severe, poverty. Yet, the United Nations, IUCN and the international community are presently putting together a series of international treaties in the name of "sustainable development." These treaties systematically prevent citizens

in the third world nations from ever attaining the formal property rights that will give them wealth and liberty.

Property rights are important even in Argentina where it is difficult to get equity loans on property because of their laws. The Wall Street Journal reported a Harvard study showing striking differences between families holding title to the land and their neighbors who don't have title. The history of the 1600 families is identical. All of the families started as squatters. About half were able to get title to the land and the other half could not. After twenty years, families having title to their land typically had well-built colonial type homes or equivalent with strong slab roofs. The homes are spacious with one bedroom per child. Those that did not have title lived in small, cramped cinder block homes with flimsy corrugated zinc roofs. They are so cramped that often some of the family members have to sleep in the dining room and kitchen. (Moffett 2005)

The Harvard study also showed important social differences. Landowning households averaged about five members, compared with six for the untitled. Only about 8 percent of adolescent girls in titled households got pregnant compared with more than 20 percent in the untitled households. Children from five to thirteen years old in titled households had lower rates of school absenteeism and completed about one-half year more of school than their untitled counterparts. (Moffett 2005) Economics aside, pride of ownership has a very positive social impact on society.

Research done at the Fraser Institute of Canada also supports DeSoto's economic findings. Their research showed that property rights play the single greatest role in per capita gross domestic product. Figure 2 shows impoverished Third World nations having limited property rights have less than \$8000 per capita income, with those having little to no property rights fall below \$1000. At the same time Western nations having legal property rights have incomes of greater than \$12,000, usually greater than \$20,000. (Gwartney and Lawson 2004, p. 31.) There is a 91 percent correlation between their property rights index and per capita gross domestic product. The more regulations imposed by government, the lower the property rights index and the lower the per capita gross national product.

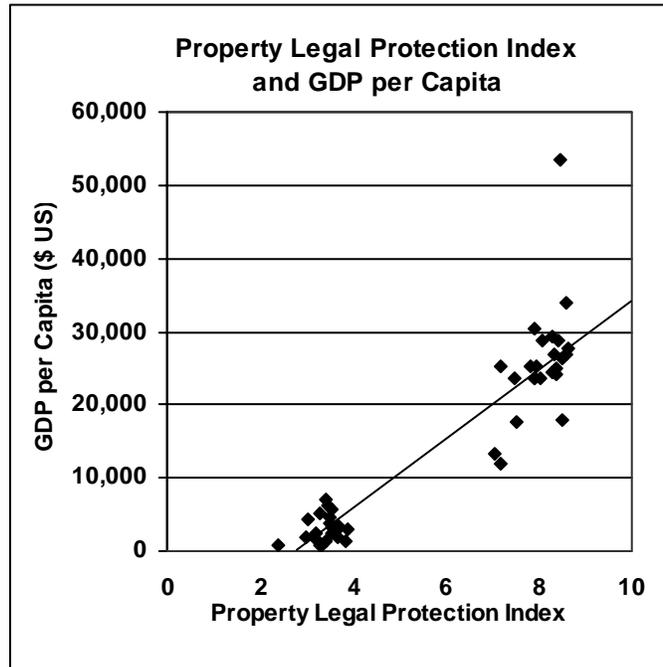


Figure 2 By using a relative index of property rights the Fraser Institute illustrates that there is a high correlation between property rights and per capita Gross Domestic Product between third world and first world nations. Source: Gwartney, James and Robert Lawson. 2004. *Economic Freedom of the World – 2004 Annual Report*. Fraser Institute. <http://www.freetheworld.com/2004/efw2004complete.pdf>

Joseph E. Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics and former Senior Vice President of the World Bank, identifies the desperate need for the poor in the third world nations to have property rights. Stiglitz understands that a free market system “requires clearly established property rights and the courts to enforce them.” (Stiglitz 2003, p. 74) He blames the international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for making the plight of the poor even worse. Only the transnational corporations or the wealthiest 10 percent in the nations population that invest in factories and business are blessed with

property rights. It is the poor and middle class who must have legally protected private property rights to benefit from a market economy. Because the IMF denies the poor this type of protection by only giving lip service to property rights, they become the victims of globalism. The IMF merely creates the perception of property rights without requiring the legal structure that protects them in an equitable manner.

If environmental regulations encumber property rights, there is little to no equity, and therefore little to no capital with which to create wealth. Without wealth, a nation cannot protect the environment. A family whose primary focus is to put food on the table is not going to be interested in protecting the environment. Tragically, the very policies of international organizations like the UN and IUCN to control property rights and impose environmental regulation in the name of sustainable development will keep impoverished third world nations impoverished so that they will never have the economic ability to protect the environment. Paul Driessen calls this eco-imperialism in his book of the same name. (Driessen 2003)

Conclusions

Since the 1960s and the counterculture movement, the American people have become far more environmentally sensitive. For many, they merely want clean air and water and to conserve species specifically and the environment in general, but not at the expense of harming people. This group includes most natural resource managers and users. For others, they see naturalism as a philosophy that they want integrated to protect the environment. For still others, environmentalism is a religion based in pantheism in which nature must be protected at all costs.

Vigorous dialog is ongoing between the three which can be beneficial if conducted in the public arena. However, it is obvious that certain, very influential institutions demand land use policy be based on a pantheistic or nature knows best foundation. They are not interested in a public dialog. They are advancing their beliefs into resource use and management through international treaties and law. It is being done without any dialog with those of opposing views.

Most federal employees don't understand how federal agencies have changed their regulatory enforcement and land management practices to comply with the international agenda. Certainly, those that must live with these policies don't understand what has happened. Most don't even know their elected representatives are enacting laws based on international agreements and treaties until they experience their detrimental or sometimes devastating impact on their lives. The most devastating law ever passed is based on five international treaties. It is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA).

Additionally, these policies can have little to no real benefit to the environment because they are often based on philosophies and religious beliefs rather than hard science. Many analysts believe this is exactly why the ESA has only recovered 1 percent of the nearly 1300 species listed in the 32 years of its existence. While many people would hotly contest that statement, it is impossible to deny the ESA has been a dismal failure. Many people believe it has failed because it destroys property rights rather than promoting them in the protection of species.

Two of the three key architects of the ESA in 1973, Frank Potter, Jr., and Lee Talbot, are proud of the fact that species would win any contest with landowners. "We wanted," said Potter, "to make the mesh in the net as fine as we could get away with." (Mann and Plummer 1995, p. 158) Potter was counsel for the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee and Talbot was senior scientist at the newly formed Council on Environmental Quality. Formerly an ecologist for the United Nations and Smithsonian Institution, Talbot became director general of the IUCN in the

1980s. They even acknowledged that not a single congressman knew the ramifications of what they were passing. (Ibid, p. 160)

That congress did not understand the ramifications of the ESA is not surprising. However, most international and national environmental treaties or laws tend to make nature superior to humans. They don't even have to be religiously motivated. If a certain activity is causing a perceived harm, the easiest solution is to pass a law stopping people from doing it. Such a simplistic approach can carry with it heavy direct and indirect human costs. Add to that religious zealotry by some NGOs and government employees, and the conflicts that exist today between landowners and government agencies is the natural result. The deepening hostility federal agencies have received from local citizens reflect the growing resentment local citizens feel as their human needs are superseded by what they believe to be misguided perceptions of nature's needs.

Property rights, liberty and a healthy economy cannot long exist under the earth ethic/religious system advanced by most international and national environmental NGOs. Ironically, such a system ultimately harms the environment itself. The massive forest fires of the later 1990s and 2000s at least partially reflect this unintended consequence. No harvesting policies were implemented that decreased or eliminated the very harvesting and thinning that would have reduced the huge fire loads that were allowed to accumulate over the decades by earlier fire prevention policies.

Likewise, the Lake Pontchartrain ecosystem was decimated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 because of zealous environmental lawsuits designed to allegedly *save* the Pontchartrain ecosystem. The environmental lawsuit prevented construction of dams needed to prevent storm surges – like the one created by Katrina – from breaching the levees surrounding New Orleans. To drain New Orleans, millions of gallons of highly toxic floodwater were pumped back into Pontchartrain resulting in far worse damage to the ecosystem than would have occurred if the dams had been built. (Taylor, 2005). In the process hundreds of lives were lost.

The growing hostility between local citizens and communities and federal agencies does not have to continue. Ignorance often breeds hostility. Everyone needs to have full knowledge of the history and the potential harm to American citizens of “nature knows best” basis of sustainable development. It is time federal agencies, professional resource managers, congress, state legislatures, and citizens review the entire concept of sustainable development and Agenda 21 as promoted by international institutions and environmental NGOs.

Also, we should no longer allow our federal agencies to plan strategies and treaties with NGOs and UN agents behind the closed doors of the IUCN or other forums. That federal agencies have done so in the past represents an enormous conflict of interest. Doing so allows them to participate in writing the very international treaties that they then enforce on the American people. The United States must withdraw membership of our federal agencies from the IUCN and any other international institution that can circuitously develop national policy it then enforces.

Central to this review of sustainable development is the need for protecting private property rights. Without property rights, nothing is sustainable. National and personal income will plummet, and along with it personal liberty and the financial ability to protect the environment. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a new ESA reauthorization in 2005 which attempts to restore protection to property owners. It is a step in the right direction – if it also passes in the U.S. Senate without substantial change. If so, the ESA will provide incentives to *encourage* landowners to provide the habitat needed for an endangered species rather than punishing them.

In the same vein, federal employees within regulating agencies should be educated on the importance of property rights and the need to elicit the cooperation of the local landowners and

governments in protecting the environment. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) currently encourages such recognition and cooperation, but few federal agencies take advantage of it.

Finally, sustainable development does not have to be based on naturalism or pantheism. The concept of stewardship – the managing and use of resources while prudently caring for them – provides a valid ethic for conserving the environment. An alternative to the pantheistic philosophy of the Earth Charter and sustainable development is currently under development by the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA) (ISA 2005) and others.

The ISA is a coalition of religious leaders, clergy, theologians, scientists, academics, and other policy experts committed to bringing a proper and balanced Biblical view of stewardship to the critical issues of environment and development. It is based on the Cornwall Declaration written by Jews, Catholics and Protestants and is rapidly being accepted as the guiding ethic for environmental stewardship by Jewish, Christian and unaligned organizations across America. (Cornwall 2005) It espouses an environmental ethic based in stewardship that can be accepted by most people.

Likewise, concerned citizens are also developing an alternative to Agenda 21. (Freedom 21 2005) Unlike Agenda 21 which depends on a collectivist strategy for protecting the environment, Freedom 21 bases its approach on stewardship, private property rights and the free market that unleashes man’s creativity to find solutions to environmental problems while still utilizing resources.

Freedom 21 provides information contrasting the very great difference between the approach used by Freedom 21 and that of Agenda 21:

Contrast Between Freedom 21 and Agenda 21 In Attaining Sustainable Development

Freedom 21	Agenda 21
Based on the principles of John Locke and individual rights that form the basis of the U.S. Constitution and private property rights. Focuses on self-government where all men are created equal and have equal opportunity. Administered by a minimum of government.	Based on the principles of Jean Jacques Rousseau and the “general will” (public good) as defined by the state (UN and NGOs). All people supposedly share equally in the wealth. Administered by collectivist governance that ultimately harms people <i>and</i> the environment.
Power to make decisions primarily in the hands of the people thereby encouraging risk-taking. The only laws needed are those to enforce the golden rule (often described as common law) that no person can conduct activities that cause harm to another person or their property. Creativity to find new and better ways of doing things is encouraged by minimal regulatory structure.	Power to make most decisions primarily in the hands of government and bureaucrats. Breeding ground for government corruption and arbitrary enforcement of ever expanding regulations. Stifles creativity to find new and better ways to do things because production and activities are limited by one-size fits all regulations, supposedly designed to protect the environment.
Establishes and protects private property rights which allows the creation of needed capital for the creation of wealth and provides the <i>only</i> proven way to eliminate poverty. It is why capitalism works in Western nations and doesn’t within centrally controlled nations. It also provides the financial ability to protect the environment.	Minimizes property rights to only those allowed by the state to reduce risk of possibly harming the environment. Places nature’s perceived needs ahead of man’s real needs. By controlling property rights there is little ability to generate the capital needed to reduce or eliminate poverty or protect the environment.
Encourages protection of asset value of privately owned property because of pride of ownership and the need to maintain environmental health for continued production, use or investment. Private property rights have generally helped, not harmed the environment in Western nations. Only those environmental features that are owned in common (air, rivers, public lands, etc.) have been harmed by pollution or misuse.	Invokes the Law of the Commons where property is held in common by the state through deed or regulation. No one person, family or organization has a vested interest in protecting the property for the benefits it can provide. Unless specific regulation forces compliance with ever expanding laws to protect the environment, damage to the environment <i>always</i> results because there is no incentive to protect the environment.

Freedom 21	Agenda 21
Property rights and free markets provide incentives to find a better way to meet challenges. Property rights also provide critical capital to create wealth by giving people ownership and pride. Freedom 21 offers the best hope to meet the needs of people and the environment!	Strong, centrally controlled regulatory governance destroys initiative and pride of citizens and leads to corruption in government. Capital is provided by big multinational corporations who reap the profits, not the laborer. Agenda 21 cannot, and will not work. It is doomed to failure!

Used by permission from Freedom 21. The table is condensed to reflect the subject matter in this article.

Many people might take issue with these recommendations. This can be good. As long as the discussion is in the form of a public debate based on the merits of the positions discussed, it will result in a healthy dialog that yields better policy. We must no longer tolerate efforts by international institutions to unilaterally impose their philosophical and religious beliefs on American citizens through international agreements and treaties.

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