

# THE GREENING OF AMERICA

## HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

*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, specifically landowners—that they were at war.*  
By Michael S. Coffman, Ph.D.

Since the 1960s an emerging philosophy based on the belief that “nature knows best” has challenged traditional natural resource management in the United States. This new philosophy attacks the foundational principles of private property rights. Federal land management policy based on this philosophy has caused problems ranging from financial hardship to outright devastation to tens of thousands of American property owners, especially in the western United States. Those Americans who the philosophy harms often ask: “How could this happen in America?” The answer will shock most Americans. It goes back decades and has its roots at the international level, especially within the international environmental community.

### THE IUCN

The greening of America started with the creation of the United Nations (U.N.) in 1945. The following year, an organization called the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was formed to serve as the primary scientific advisor to the U.N. on environmental issues. Since then, two other major international environmental organizations have also been created to serve as U.N. advisors: the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Resources Institute. All three work closely together to achieve common goals.

The IUCN has as members 81 individual nations and 111 government agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and other land- or water-based agencies. Following the first Earth Summit in 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden, membership was opened to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These currently include the Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund and a host of other U.S. environmental organizations. Today these environmental NGO members number over 859, including 84 international organizations.

The purpose of the IUCN, according to its 2006 Web site 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 planning sessions with government representatives, environmental activists and U.N. personnel take place behind closed doors, excluding the media and other interested parties. Although the mission 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 primarily with religious movements. Who determines the meaning of the phrase “to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature”? Who defines what it means “to ensure that any use of natural

resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable”? What is “equitable or sustainable”? Yet the IUCN excludes all but its selected government, NGO and U.N. members from even knowing what the IUCN is planning. (See sidebar 1, page 68.)

People with more traditional natural resource backgrounds have attended public IUCN meetings and been stunned at the nearly religious fervor of the proceedings. These observers see that the meanings behind the IUCN’s stated purpose is not how most Americans would interpret them. The IUCN’s actual purpose becomes clearer when one looks at its Ethics Working Group’s publication, “Earth Ethics,” Wordstrom, 1996:

“promote alternative models for sustainable communities and lifestyles, based in ecospiritual practices 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.”

Many find the concept of ecospiritual practices 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 use 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? And how does it express itself in international law?

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 is often described as the father of sustainable development within the IUCN and worldwide. Rockefeller 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 is professor emeritus of religion at Middlebury College in Vermont. As the son of Nelson Rockefeller, he has powerful connections. He currently chairs the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. He has been fully involved within the IUCN promoting this quasi-religious concept of sustainable development.

Robert Prescott-Allen, senior consultant to the second World Conservation Strategy project in 1990, made the connection between sustainable development and religion very clear. He said 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." The World Conservation Strategy is a project of the IUCN, UNEP (U.N. Environmental Program) and WWF.

Rockefeller and Elder go on to describe the shocking actions needed to achieve sustainable development (see sidebar 2, page 68):

"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; [and] incorporate changes in environmental health and the stocks and flows of natural wealth in national accounting systems."

This vision is at the heart of the IUCN's Covenant on Environment and Development (CED) treaty and Agenda 21. The CED treaty is written but not yet released for ratification. It is the granddaddy of all treaties and is designed to fully enforce Agenda 21. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive 40-chapter United Nations set of goals that was signed by the United States at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It spells out U.N. requirements for sustainable development within every nation, including the United States. Not sur-

prisingly, the IUCN had a big part in writing Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 and its implementing treaties provide a web of interlocking international laws that regulate virtually every aspect of human interactions with the environment. Hence, the IUCN contributes to the writing of treaties and policies that our federal agencies enforce.

Agenda 21 was converted into United States policy in a 1996 policy document entitled "Sustainable America." "Sustainable America" and a host of subdocuments 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 that are also members of the IUCN. IUCN members could therefore heavily influence the decisions of the PCSD to reflect those of the IUCN.

The changes required by Agenda 21 and "Sustainable America" represent a radical departure from America's historic culture and from the lifestyles of U.S. citizens. They 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 sustainable development concept, of course, is a deeply held view for those who believe in the sanctity of Mother Earth. For the past 30 years, the quiet implementation of these quasi-religious policies and treaties has caused inestimable harm to tens of thousands of American citizens. None of that would have been possible, however, without the creation of a new science to justify the need for denying landowners their private property rights.

#### CONSERVATION BIOLOGY

In 1980 the IUCN (in collaboration with UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and the World Wildlife Fund) released the first World Conservation Strategy calling for "a new ethic, embracing plants and animals as well as people." From this evolved the holistic science of conservation biology.

Conservation biology centers on the largely unproven assumption that "nature knows best." Consequently, all human use and activity should follow "natural" patterns within ecosystems. Ecosystems, however, don't naturally coincide with the political boundaries of man. Any single ecosystem

may cross several national, state and local political boundaries as well as many private property boundaries. To be effective, therefore, environmental law must be superior to property rights and political jurisdictions.

This largely unproven science was introduced to U.S. colleges by Rockefeller-aligned foundations. They provided endowed chairs and grants to natural resource colleges. As students began to graduate with conservation degrees in the late 1970s, federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 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. The journal's first issue outlined the purpose of conservation biology.

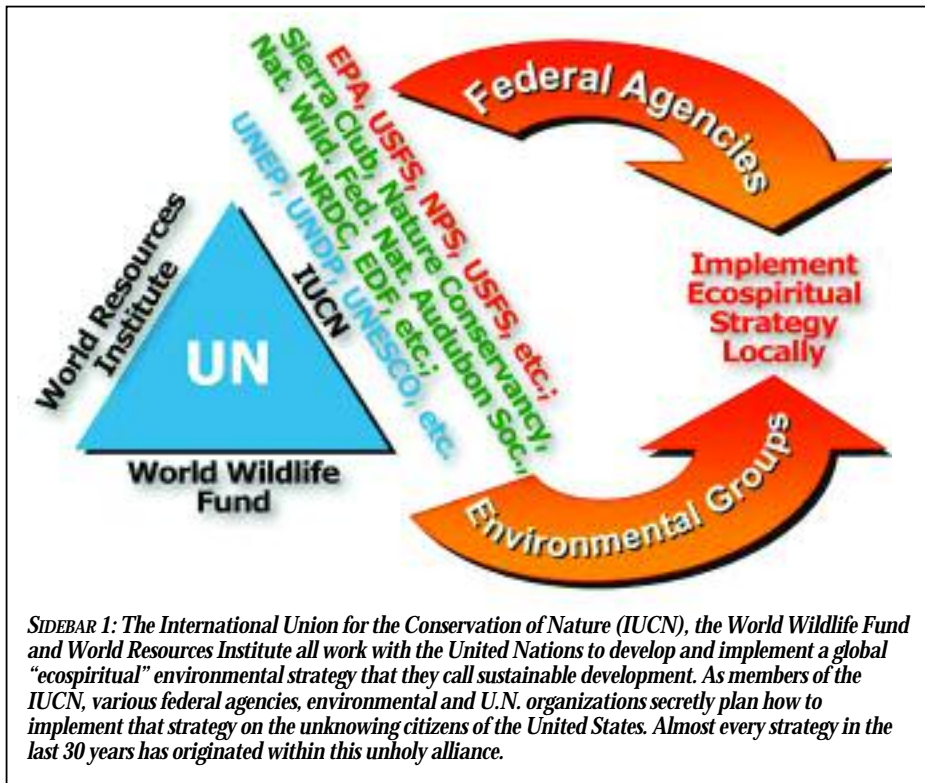
"The society is a response...to the biological diversity crisis that will reach a crescendo in the first half of the 21st century. We assume implicitly that...the worst biological disaster in the last 65 million years can be averted.... We assume implicitly that environmental wounds inflicted by ignorant humans and destructive technologies can be treated by wiser humans and by wholesome technologies."

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."

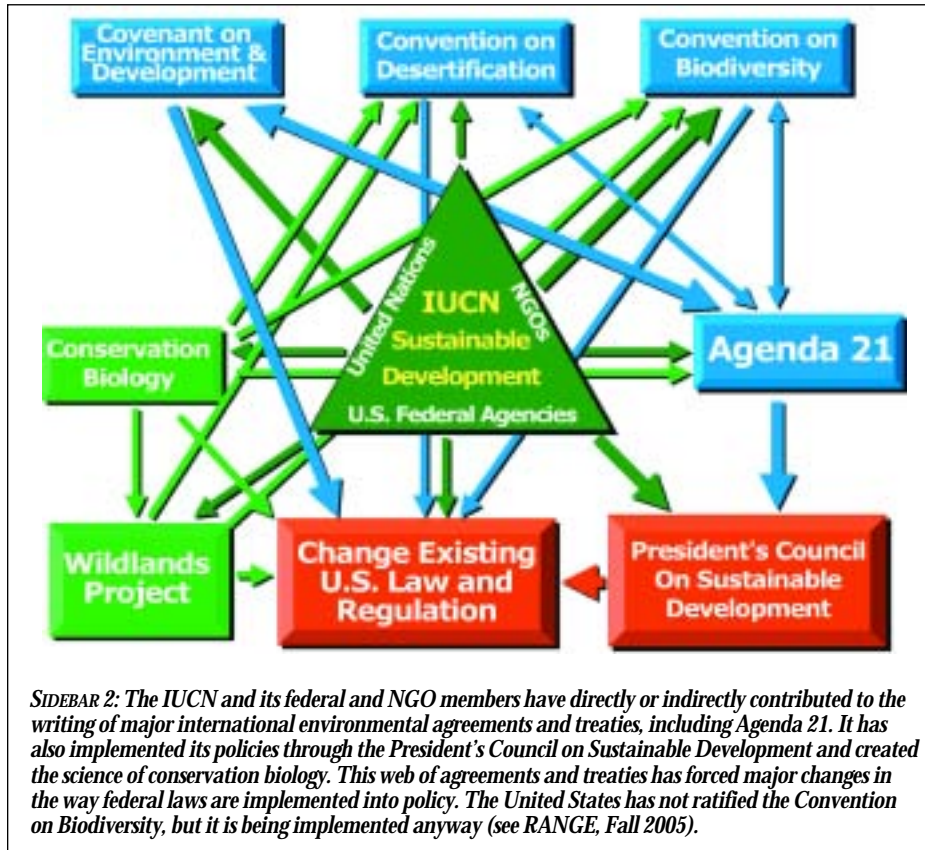
This almost unbelievable arrogance and militancy formed the fundamental understanding of right and wrong for these early conservation biologists. Many graduates holding to these radical ideas were hired by our federal and state agencies. It shouldn't be surprising that these government employees holding such extremist views are quite hostile





to any people using government lands for any purpose. 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 U.N. change agents to advance their agenda. Not only were affected landowners and resource users not included in this process, they were not allowed to even be 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, specifically landowners—that they were at war.

Certainly not all federal resource managers or even many of those who graduated with a conservation degree ascribe to the militant approach taken by Soulé. Nonetheless, various degrees of this mindset have permeated our federal agencies at every level. For instance, a March 30, 1994, United States Bureau of Land Management internal working document on ecosystem management brazenly states: "All ecosystem management activities should consider human beings as a biological resource."

The reduction of humanity to the level of a biological resource has had 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. Nature's welfare becomes more important than human welfare. This explains why these agency employees can often enforce regulations that harm or even destroy the lives of property owners and resource users. 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. Credible scientists, without personal agendas, use methodology derived from conservation biology to investigate natural relationships. Nonetheless, conservation biology is a young science that has been politically forced to become the flagship science used in resource-management decisions. There was, and still is, little justification in the adoption of conservation biology as the foundation for federal policy. Every American should know that the United States is implementing international policy, which has caused not only great but also unnecessary harm to American citizens. ■

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