

# THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

UNTAMED NATURE & THE REMOVAL OF HUMANS. BY TIM FINDLEY

**“WE MUST MAKE THIS AN INSECURE AND  
INHOSPITABLE PLACE FOR CAPITALISTS  
AND THEIR PROJECTS.... WE MUST  
RECLAIM THE ROADS AND PLOWED LAND,  
HALT DAM CONSTRUCTION, TEAR DOWN  
EXISTING DAMS, FREE SHACKLED RIVERS  
AND RETURN TO WILDERNESS MILLIONS  
OF TENS OF MILLIONS OF ACRES OF  
PRESENTLY SETTLED LAND.”**

**DAVID FOREMAN, EARTH FIRST!**

**W**ilderness is a fundamental element of American tradition. At least from the time of colonial settlement, the presence of untamed nature has served as a catalyst not only for American opportunity, but as a source of American dreams. The westward push across the continent offered escape as well as it did challenge. It promised peace as well as adventure. Wilderness became ingrained in the American psyche as among no other population of the world.

So certain of this was a young University of Wisconsin historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, that in 1893 he introduced a sensational thesis suggesting that the unique character of American democracy was defined and developed by the nation's continuous experience with its frontier. Turner, just 31 at the time, marked the independent spirit and adaptability of American society not only to a commonly shared experience with the wild as expressed by men like Boone and Crockett, but to the ideals of reforming thought that could be found in leaders like Washington, Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln.

**“THESE ARE HIGH TIMES, BY GOD, WHEN A  
YOUNG BUCKSKIN CAN TELL A BRITISH GENERAL  
HOW TO FIGHT.” —ENGLISH GENERAL EDWARD**



GRAZING LAND, NEVADA © LINDA DUFURRENA

**BRADDOCK IN 1755, AFTER REJECTING THE  
ADVICE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON**

Ironically perhaps, Turner put forth his thesis at the Chicago Columbian Exposition meant to commemorate 400 years since the voyage of Columbus, but delayed a year by a Wall Street crash. It was also the year in which the frontier was said to have been finally and forever closed. And it was a year near the peak of an episode many thought had already destroyed the nation's wildlands. The plains were conquered, the buffalo nearly wiped out. The northern forests were for the first time being harvested at a rate beyond regeneration. Range wars on grossly overstocked grazing areas of the West threatened destruction of the land as well as the settlements. At least one species each year was said to have been going extinct, due in part to the rapacious and unbridled slaughter of birds just to decorate women's hats. Nevertheless, Turner's controversial thesis captured the public imagination.

**"THE VERY MATERIALISM THAT HAS BEEN URGED AGAINST THE WEST WAS ACCOMPANIED BY IDEALS OF EQUALITY, OF THE EXALTATION OF THE COMMON MAN, OF NATIONAL EXPANSION, THAT MAKE IT A PROFOUND MISTAKE TO WRITE OF THE WEST AS THOUGH IT WERE ENGRESSSED IN MERE MATERIAL ENDS. IT HAS BEEN, AND IS, PREEMINENTLY A REGION OF IDEALS, MISTAKEN OR NOT."**

**—FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER,  
THE PROBLEM OF THE WEST, 1896**

Within a decade, and virtually by chance act of an assassin, Theodore Roosevelt literally rode to the rescue of America's wilderness. Roosevelt, with unprecedented, yet lightly resisted, arbitrary authority, put under federal protection some 230 million acres at a rate of 87,000 acres a day during one year of his administration. He established five national parks and 18 national monuments.

But Roosevelt never preserved land alone without attention to the value of natural resources, and he scoffed at the "nature fakers" who saw no purpose in even managed use of natural resources. To the contrary, as Roosevelt preserved land at a stunning pace, he also opened the agricultural development of land in the West especially with history-making reclamation projects.

**"CONSERVATION IS THE FORESIGHTED UTILIZATION, PRESERVATION AND/OR RENEWAL OF FORESTS, WATERS, LANDS AND MINERALS FOR THE GREATEST GOOD OF THE GREATEST NUMBER FOR THE LONGEST TIME."**—GIFFORD PINCHOT, T.R.'S FOUNDING CHIEF OF THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

With the frontier "closed" in the 20th century the nation melded into a new episode of population shift that brought more and more people into the cities and began the long

steady decline of agrarian existence and industry. Family farms were vanishing, the percentage of the population engaged in agriculture was falling toward two percent or less and the direct touch with real wilderness on the boundaries of home was an uncommon experience. Only a relative few dedicated naturalists, many of them working on behalf of farmers and ranchers for the government itself, ventured far into the still-remote regions of the West.

It was the establishment and improvement of highways and roads related to national defense along with the affordability of automobiles that was responsible for reestablishing a sense of "frontier" that Turner could not have foreseen. Now, Americans were in a sense capable of time travel on weekends or summer vacations back into a romantically primeval and even impressively "savage" land in part left for them by the foresight of Roosevelt and Pinchot. The weekend mountaineers and summer sojourners found much to be admired within the increasingly crowded borders of the national parks, but those pristine and awesome sights often only provided disturbing contrast to resource production in the nearby forests, more and more commonly conducted by unseen and unaccountable corporate

organizations.

“GOING TO THE WOODS IS GOING HOME,  
FOR I IMAGINE THAT WE CAME FROM THE  
WOODS ORIGINALLY.”—JOHN MUIR

Americans had lost that sheltering yet challenging sense of frontier wilderness at their doorsteps, but social custom, particularly among the vast middle class, provided that they could easily reclaim it on a part-time basis called “vacation.” As much as ever, wilderness was a part of the American psyche and declared to be an essential part of their heritage.

In the early 1960s, following another period of concern for the overexploitation of resources that could be seen on Sunday drives near a clear-cut, Congress moved to provide statutory protection for still “unspoiled” lands. The Wilderness Act of 1964 had enthusiastic public support. So much so, in fact,

that although the Act called for a modest nine million acres of new wilderness, politicians eager to capitalize on public sentiment quickly added more.

“IF FUTURE GENERATIONS ARE TO REMEMBER US WITH GRATITUDE RATHER THAN CONTEMPT, WE MUST GIVE THEM MORE THAN THE MIRACLES OF TECHNOLOGY. WE MUST LEAVE THEM A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, NOT JUST AFTER WE GOT THROUGH WITH IT.”—PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON, UPON SIGNING THE 1964 WILDERNESS ACT

Today, more than 104 million acres of the U.S. is designated as wilderness. It is nearly five percent of the total U.S. landmass, and almost three percent of the continental 48 states.

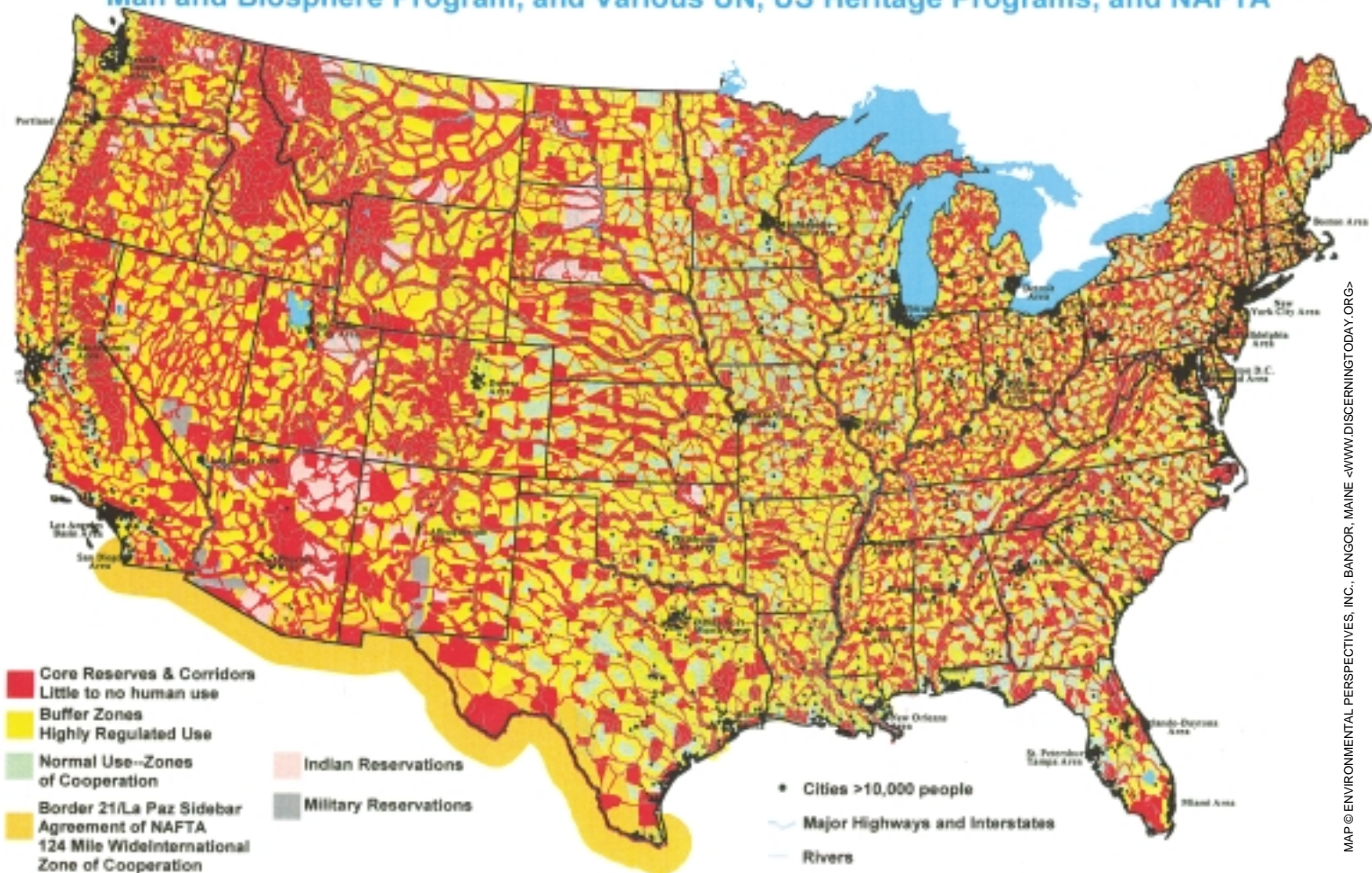
This too was something uniquely American. No other nation in history, certainly no world superpower of any era, has ever set

aside so much of its own landmass as restricted or entirely protected from even the blade of a plow. By the 1970s, even the new American ambassador to the Soviet Union, John Kenneth Galbraith, said he was astonished to discover that more than 40 percent of the United States was still “owned” by federal and state governments.

America did not lack for parks or for wilderness. Indeed, most of the land in the western states—more than 87 percent in Nevada alone—was controlled not by the states, but by the federal government. The map of the West, with its so nearly perfect rectangles seems almost to have been drawn on some eastern dinner napkin. In fact, that is not far from true about the sketchy creation of boundaries during and after the civil war that were drawn for purely political purposes. Western appeals for “equal footing” with

## Simulated Reserve and Corridor System to Protect Biodiversity

As Mandated by the Convention on Biological Diversity, The Wildlands Project, UN and US Man and Biosphere Program, and Various UN, US Heritage Programs, and NAFTA



Taken From: The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8a-e; United Nations Global Biodiversity Assessment, Section 13.4.2.2.3; US Man and the Biosphere Strategic Plan, UNRUS Heritage Corridor Program, "The Wildlands Project", WildEarth, 1992. Also see Science, "The High Cost of Biodiversity," 25 June, 1993, pp 1668-1671 and the Border 21 Sidebar of NAFTA. The very high percentage of buffer zone in the West is due to the very high percentage of federal land. NOTE: Do not use this map for real estate purposes.

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states east of the Mississippi in their autonomy from Washington have always been ignored.

At various times, and for certain purposes, large portions of the West had been given away to the railroads or the big mines, sometimes to the timber companies and—usually with strings attached—to the farmers. Ranchers, though their stock was spread all across the West, were treated more as tenants expected to share in the cost of upkeep on federal lands.

Although wilderness was open to everyone and the visitor numbers surged briefly in the '60s, the truly remote and roadless wild areas were too great a challenge for most. Still politically supportive of wilderness expansion, Americans in general seemed satisfied in just knowing it was there.

**"FIVE YEARS IS ALL WE HAVE LEFT IF WE ARE GOING TO PRESERVE ANY KIND OF QUALITY IN THE WORLD."—PAUL ERLICH, STANFORD UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, EARTH DAY, 1970**

Yet there was a next phase of exploitation, led in the last three decades by groups eager to cash in on public sentiment and fear. The Sierra Club did it for cause—primarily an end to old-growth logging. They were soon surpassed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which disguised its aims behind noble claims to be "saving" great places. TNC and its management by corporate giants did it for land.

In the 1990s environmentalists accomplished a virtual coup over federal land policy, capturing the cabinet role of Secretary of the Interior and placing many former activists in top bureaucratic positions. The Clinton administration responded with admittedly political motives, rivaling Roosevelt in the set-aside of more than six million acres and proposing the roadless protection of 60 million more.

By most surveys, polls, and research, Americans are concerned about the relentless loss of family farms and small community values supported by local industry. Most of us can still trace our own roots to a farm or ranch somewhere, and even those who can't still commonly follow the back roads in search of what Frederick Jackson Turner found to be the American character.

Yet there is confusion in refinding what he described as the "meeting point between savagery and civilization." Americans seem not to want to return to the frontier for its challenges. Rather, they seem to want it preserved as a possible means of escape, both literally and spiritually.

Just last November, voters in 22 states approved ballot measures that committed \$2.9 billion to the acquisition or restoration of still more "public" land and open space. The two largest measures, one in California worth \$1.5 billion and one in Nevada worth nearly

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\$90 million, were both quietly sponsored by The Nature Conservancy.

According to the Land Trust Alliance, 139 successful state ballot measures in 2002 amounted to approximately \$10 billion in conservation-related funding. Again apparently without general voter knowledge, most of the measures were backed by one or more of the hundreds of land "trust" organizations that have emerged since the 1980s and are now linked under the advisory umbrella of the Land Trust Alliance, vaguely considered to be itself a spinoff of The Nature Conservancy.

**"DOES ALL THE FOREGOING MEAN THAT WILD EARTH AND THE WILDLANDS PROJECT ADVOCATE THE END OF INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION? MOST ASSUREDLY."  
—JOHN DAVIS, EDITOR,  
WILD EARTH MAGAZINE**

As The Nature Conservancy shut its doors even to its own members last spring to privately consider the effects of investigations by *RANGE* and *The Washington Post*, the corporate-controlled \$3 billion "nonprofit" organization was under consideration for investigation by Congress. Open hearings on its dealings and practices is the last thing that "Nature's Landlord" wants to see happen, not only because of media scrutiny, but because of long-withheld resentment of the fat cat

land-grabbing organization by other environmental groups.

Many of them still "owe" too much to TNC to be overly critical in public. The Nature Conservancy has spread its money and its influence around in a broad smear to most less-wealthy green-cause groups, with possibly the notable exception of the Sierra Club.

Certainly, TNC "green" helped fund whatever research it took for Reed Noss and David Foreman to come up with their "Wildlands Project." And it is no accident that TNC-acquired properties in the West, as well as Clinton's "monuments," seem to conform quite neatly as dots waiting to be linked up in the "wildlands" dream that would create corridors and core areas of wilderness through as much as half the continental United States, most of it in the West.

The idea already has the backing of at least one congressman, Democrat Rob Andrews of New Jersey, who has introduced legislation that would gobble up most of the northern Rockies as a lynchpin for the plan (see page 43).

Americans believe in wilderness. We in this country need answer to no one in the demonstrated national support for preservation of the environment. It is at the heart of our customs and at the core of our laws, more so than anywhere else in the world.

But that does not make us fools. We may entertain ourselves and indulge our children with the notions of ultimate wild freedom that is embedded in the foundation of our social order. We can have due pride for how we have preserved this continent far beyond the exploitation of doomsayers and opportunists who limit their knowledge to the mistakes made in the process. We can share in the same dream and the same self-sufficiency that Frederick Jackson Turner said defined us. We may by that same democratic system vote as Americans always have for yet more land to be returned to nature. But no American with a heart for his own people, and no politician with courage beyond daft opportunism would vote to deny the liberty that wilderness made possible.

The Wildlands Project would not be a mistake. It would be a travesty that would rip this nation apart with an unimaginable fantasy of "undiscovery." ■

*Investigative reporter Tim Findley has been watching the Wildlands movement for years, and connecting the dots as it quietly reaches for more and more land.*

# RETURN TO EDEN

The man behind the Wildlands Project defends his plans. By Tim Findley

One man's fantasy may be another man's nightmare. In the sparks shooting up from a campfire and floating in red and amber dots against a black sky is primitive imagination born. Some of it is about the future and adventure yet to be had, but more of it calls to mind something primeval and nearly forgotten, crackling

against infinity.

By one account at least it is said to have been in such a setting in Arizona in the early 1980s when David Foreman expressed his Wildlands vision, for emphasis spinning into the air a freshly emptied tequila bottle that witnesses swear was never heard to fall back to earth.

It is a tale no less believable than the relentless project Foreman set in motion that is spinning still on the political horizon, more apparent and even more incredible than any campfire yarn. It would revert as much as 50 percent of the continental United States to a pre-Columbian condition, absent of roads and towns, dominated in their realm by



*"Not this time. You've caused enough trouble."*

predators such as grizzly bears and wolves that would be free to roam in wide corridors from the Yukon to the Yucatán. What few human beings who might find their way into its depth would be intruders, and the least capable of all species at surviving in the savage preserve.

Spinning and spinning, the dream still sends no sound of dropping back to reality. In fact, at least two measures introduced in Congress, and scores of other smaller federal and nonprofit acquisitions have already begun to create a map of the unbelievable, drawing a huge portion of the world's most successful civilization slowly back into at least the 15th century.

Foreman, the founder of Earth First! and the self-identified eco-terrorist for his "monkey wrench" tactics of spiking harvestable trees and threatening other uses of "public" land, could himself be relegated to credibility only among the young extremists who dote on his renegade image. But it was not the blustering, bottle-pitching Foreman who really defined the unimaginable to the susceptible power brokers capable of making it happen. It was Reed Noss.

With a Ph.D. in wildlife and range sciences from the University of Florida, 50-year-old Noss carries a résumé thick as a country phone book, full of publications and academic honors, faculty positions and references from many of the most prominent research facilities and recognized scientists in the United States. If not near the pinnacle of his profession as a conservation biologist, he is watched as a still-young "comer" from his position at the University of Central Florida and his increasingly high-profile role as chief scientist and cofounder of the Wildlands Project.

Not so nearly inclined as Foreman to be tossing tequila bottles at campfires, he nevertheless projects a young and enthusiastic presence in his speeches propounding the "re-wilding" of America. Evidently fit, slim, and eager to coach his students, to this reporter at least, he seems to bear a curious resemblance to "gonzo" writer Hunter Thompson. No one else, he said, has ever made that comparison.

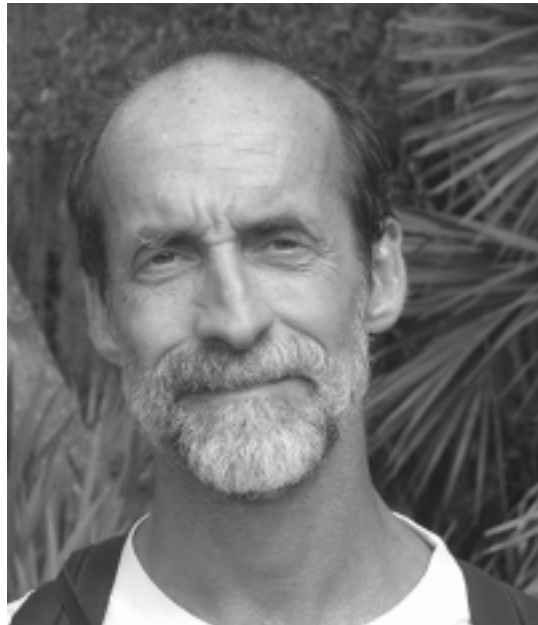
We at *RANGE* don't mean to imply such a mad-genius image. Noss is a serious, recognized scientist. He agreed to answer a series of questions conveyed to him by e-mail about the Wildlands Project and its intentions. We agreed to publish those questions and

answers without editing or internal comment.

Believe it or not, however, the Wildlands Project is a fully staffed and funded organization based in Washington, D.C., that works interactively with other environmental organizations.

"Human activity is undoing creation," says the official mission statement of the

The Wildlands Project would revert as much as 50 percent of the continental U.S. to a pre-Columbian condition, absent of roads and towns. Humans would be the least capable of all species at surviving in the savage preserve.



MYRA J. W. NOSS

Project. Its adherents believe there is underway now a "sixth major extinction event to occur since the first large organisms appeared on earth a half-billion years ago." The only way to halt that "extinction event," the statement suggests, is to dramatically limit human activity.

"We seek partnerships with grassroots and national conservation organizations, government agencies, indigenous peoples, private landowners, and with naturalists, scientists and conservationists across the continent to create networks of wildlands from Central America to Alaska and from Nova Scotia to California."

Dr. Noss does not regard this as a fantasy or a nightmare. We suggest you judge for yourself. ■

## Q&A

Reed Noss discusses the Wildlands Project.

**RANGE:** Let's start with the most difficult aspect of the Wildlands Project. Even a cursory look at the ambitions of the plan suggests that thousands of people, including whole communities in the West, would have to be relocated to accommodate these corridors and cores. How do you think you could accomplish that?

**NOSS:** The most difficult aspect of the Wildlands Project, Tim, is that there are unethical people out there perpetrating ridiculous lies in an attempt to discredit us. The Wildlands Project has never proposed relocating people to accommodate our reserve designs. This has never been part of our plans. Nevertheless, certain folks in the Wise Use Movement have fabricated maps, attributed them to us, and circulated them to rural newspapers, websites, and so on, apparently intending to frighten local people and turn them against conservation. There is even a phony web page posing as the Wildlands Project and making us look 100 times more radical than we ever dreamed of being. After we took legal action, that site can no longer claim to be the official website for the Wildlands Project.

Our proposals for wildlands network designs in the West are focused on public lands. For areas of identified high conservation value within these lands, we recommend increased protection (i.e., wilderness status or equivalent). Those relatively few private lands identified as core areas are lands belonging to The Nature Conservancy, land trusts, conservation-minded ranchers, and other folks who voluntarily manage their lands for conservation. Any other private lands that show up in our designs are labeled "areas of high biological significance," "compatible-use lands," "conservation opportunity areas," or whatever, and are areas where acquisition, easements, or management agreements would be pursued with willing landowners only. The Wildlands Project is no different from other conservation organizations these days, public or private, in the conservation tools we employ or propose. I say "propose" because the Wildlands Project works mostly with local groups, land trusts, etc., to implement our plans. We

don't have the money or the political power to do it all ourselves. We differ from many other groups in the particularly high value we place on wildness.

**RANGE:** "Peer review," as you say, supports the necessity of this habitat restoration in order to head off what Michael Soulé says is the impending "sixth major extinction." Yet your emphasis is on wolves and grizzly bears, neither of which appear to be endangered as a species. Why do you believe it is necessary to

extend their domain at the price of human civilization?

**NOSS:** Actually, although we emphasize carnivores (and not just wolves and grizzly bears) in our literature, our wildlands network designs are based on multiple biodiversity conservation goals. Our plans attempt to accomplish four major objectives: (1) represent all native ecosystems across their natural range of variation in protected areas; (2) maintain viable populations of all native

species; (3) sustain ecological and evolutionary processes within a natural range of variability; and (4) build a conservation network that is adaptable and resilient to environmental change. These goals are very well accepted within the conservation and scientific communities.

We place special emphasis on carnivores and other demanding and ecologically important species for several reasons. First, if you want to maintain all native species in a region, you need to give extra attention to those that are most sensitive to human activities. Otherwise, they'll be lost. At a regional scale of planning, carnivores make excellent focal species because they are sensitive to the area and configuration of habitats. They are also vulnerable to persecution by people. Second, scientific research (and yes, "peer reviewed") has demonstrated that in many cases carnivores function as keystone species, which control the abundance of their prey and contribute to the diversity of the ecosystem as a whole. Third, carnivores are emblematic of wildness, something that is spiritually and aesthetically important to many people, but which is lacking in so much of the modern world. However, it is incorrect to suggest that the survival of carnivores is incompatible with human civilization. Humans have lived with carnivores for millions of years. In some places, however (in particular, most of the conterminous 48 states), we have hunted them to regional extinction. I, for one, think that is morally wrong. These creatures have as much right to be here as we do.

**RANGE:** You have said that these wilderness corridors and core areas would encompass 50 percent of the continental United States, primarily west of the 100th meridian. Doesn't this suggest a cultural bias?

**NOSS:** Fifty percent is an estimate I made years ago of the proportion of an average region that would need to be managed for conservation in order to meet well-accepted conservation goals. The question "how much is enough?" should be answered empirically rather than dogmatically. If we consider empirical research on this question, it turns out I was pretty much on the mark with my 50 percent hypothesis. Studies done by researchers in North America, Australia, Africa, and elsewhere have found that's about what it takes. Most of the estimates fall in the range of 25 to 75 percent. It takes more land in some regions than in others to meet the same goals, because regions differ in their biogeography. For example, regions with high



*Like blobs of melting ice cream, the areas targeted by the Wildlands Project seem to slowly expand and run together to cover ever more land. Why not the center of the country? Dr. Noss says states such as Iowa and Illinois have too little natural habitat left, so "we have to set the standards lower." This map no longer appears on the Wildlands Project website.*

endemism (that is, many narrowly distributed species), such as much of California, require more area to meet the goal of representing populations of all species in a reserve network than a region with more widely distributed species, such as the northern Rockies. And, of course, states such as Iowa and Illinois have so little natural habitat left (only around 2 to 3 percent) that opportunities for meeting conservation goals are limited without extensive habitat restoration. We have to set the standards lower.

The Wildlands Project, however, does not restrict its vision to areas west of the 100th meridian. We and other conservationists have ambitious plans for the East as well. For example, state government agencies in Florida and New Jersey, of all places, are attempting to protect a third or more of their land in conservation areas. That's much more than most western states that have much more public land.

**RANGE:** Such a radical proposal attached to the "shock value" tactics of David Foreman and Earth First! might be put aside as fantasy, but you place substantial scientific credentials of your own in conjunction with what many regard as the demagogic terrorist methods of

Foreman. Are you comfortable with that?

**NOSS:** Well, Tim, the Dave Foreman of the 1980s Earth First! days was a bit different from the Dave Foreman of today. Isn't that true of anyone? His conservation goals remain basically the same (I generally agreed with him then and I agree with him now), but his tactics have changed. Curiously, Dave's a lifelong Republican. He's hardly a terrorist, and I resent your use of that word. Save the terrorist word for murderers like Osama bin Laden and Timothy McVeigh.

I came into the conservation movement as a naturalist, one who studies nature. I saw the beautiful woods I played in as a kid in southern Ohio destroyed by developers. I went to college to become a biologist, hoping to apply my skills to the conservation of nature. Today we call this field conservation biology, which I define as science in the service of conservation. Conservation biology is mission oriented, as are medical science, range science, engineering, and other applied sciences. We are interested in solving problems, not just knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Many prominent conservation biologists and other scholars have served on the board of the Wildlands Project, and many

more (at least thousands, I would guess) are very comfortable with our approach. Indeed, one reason we founded the Wildlands Project was to forge a link between activists and scientists interested in large-scale conservation.

**RANGE:** Clearly the acquisitions of public and private lands appropriate to the Wildlands plan is ongoing by funded conservation trusts led by The Nature Conservancy. Is TNC in part clearing the way for such connectivity and what you call "linkages" in the West?

**NOSS:** TNC has their own ecoregional plans; they don't follow ours. However, it is true that over the last few years, TNC's planning has taken on a regional focus much like ours, and they use many of the same scientific methods. I think it's clear that the Wildlands Project has had a significant influence on TNC and other major conservation groups. In addition, research in conservation biology has demonstrated that a collection of small, isolated reserves (TNC's old approach) just doesn't cut it in the long term—you need large, interconnected networks of protected areas. Small, disconnected reserves lose native species rapidly over time, are invaded by alien weeds, and are more difficult and expensive

## Congressman Rob Andrews

Saving the West while protecting New Jersey.

By Tim Findley

**F**orty-five-year-old New Jersey Congressman Rob Andrews is the kind of Democrat politician/legislator who likes to claim a certain homespun relationship with his constituents. Shunning another residence in the nation's capital, he commutes by train every day from his home in Haddon Heights to his office in Washington, D.C. He has earned a reputation for support of the military, aid to college students, help for the rural poor and at the same time a certain fiscal stinginess to keep government small, the way he says he likes it.

The son and grandson of shipyard workers, Andrews was the first in his family to go to college, winding up with a degree from Bucknell University, a law degree from Cornell, and a stint of teaching at Rutgers before he began his first of eight terms in Congress.

Any comparison of him and his Jersey



PHOTO COURTESY REPRESENTATIVE ROB ANDREWS

linking "primitive areas" in a web of wilderness control across the nation.

The bill calls for "the permanent phase-out of commercial grazing," appropriating \$100 million a year to buy out properties east of Denver and additional millions to be spent for that purpose west of the Mile High City. Andrews implies his aim is to bring eastern wilderness more in line with that already existing in the West, but the bill would serve the very purpose of a vast western corridor suggested by Dave Foreman and Reed Noss. Is that where he got the idea? Here's what Caruso/Andrews had to say:

## Q&A

Congressman Andrews on the Wildlands Project via his spokesman Bill Caruso.

**RANGE:** What's the association of Mr. Andrews and this legislation with the Noss/Foreman Wildlands Project? Is he aware and does he support the ideal notion of WP to set aside as much as 50 percent of the nation for "corridors" and "cores," restricted or even  
*(Continued on page 45)*



to manage. Most private land trusts, on the other hand, have shown little interest in biology—they've been more interested in protecting "open space." But that's beginning to change as these organizations get better educated staffs.

**RANGE:** As you have observed in speeches, the primary danger today even to such major predators as wolves and grizzly bears is not hunting, but roadkills. Are you suggesting in this project that even transcontinental highways be altered in some way or closed to accommodate the corridors?

**NOSS:** In some regions, even surprising places such as the central Canadian Rockies, direct roadkill is the largest documented source of mortality for large carnivores. However, in many other places, human persecution (legal or illegal hunting) remains the major cause of death. But here, too, roads figure prominently in the problem, because they provide access to people with guns. The higher the density of roads, the lower the probability that wolves, bears, and other animals can survive. This has been documented worldwide.

Regarding major highways, we are not so impractical to suggest they be closed. However, we do recommend underpasses, land bridges, and other wildlife crossings be constructed at strategic locations—places where animals regularly get struck—to protect wildlife as they move across the landscape. New highways should be built only if they take the movement needs of wildlife into account. Wildlife crossings have been built in several states, for example Colorado, California, and Florida, as well as extensively in Europe. Yes, it's costly, but not close to the cost of building the road in the first place. Ironically, in some cases building a new road can be a good thing. Near where I live in Florida, the state is proposing to build a new limited-access highway that will be elevated for seven miles to protect black bears, other wildlife, and sensitive wetlands. The new highway will replace a busy two-lane road that is responsible for most of the black bear roadkills in the state.

**RANGE:** Do you not agree that the economic impact of such a project would be disastrous to the western United States and even to the nation as a whole?

**NOSS:** Absolutely not. The cost would be trivial compared to many things our society spends big money on (for example, welfare, missiles, and highways). In many cases

wilderness preservation enhances local economies by stimulating tourism and business investments and relocations. This has been demonstrated convincingly by Professor Tom Power at the University of Montana, among others. Reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone has given the local economy a shot in the arm. The state of Florida has been spending more than \$300 million per year for nearly two decades buying land for conserva-



*Dr. Noss points out that eliminating roads will end roadkill of animals, but roads also provide access to hunters. Only "major highways" could remain, with underpasses and bridges to protect wildlife migration. The dark green areas above would "belong" exclusively to wildlife.*

tion, so that the state will remain attractive to tourists and businesses.

**RANGE:** Assuming such a plan is implemented, who would administer and manage it? The government? Or a nongovernment agency? Who should have police powers in controlling use?

**NOSS:** We're not talking about any kind of centralized administration and management of wildlands networks. Despite the claims of the wise-use alarmists on the internet, we are in no way aligned with the United Nations and their fictitious black helicopters. To the extent that new wilderness areas, national parks, national wildlife refuges, etc., are added to the system, they would be managed by the federal agencies in charge, as they are today. Other lands would be managed by land trusts, other private organizations, or by the same willing landowners (ranchers, farmers, and others) who manage them today. But we think there should be added incentives, such as big tax breaks, for managing land in a way friendly to nature. There would be no "police power" other than the law enforcement system already in place.

**RANGE:** Did you once say that westerners are part of the "slothful and ignorant populace" who disagree with you? Do you not

recognize the elitism contained in the proposal itself?

**NOSS:** I don't remember saying that, but if I did I would have been joking. I wouldn't use the word "slothful" in a derogatory sense, because I like sloths. On the other hand, I do believe that ecological ignorance on the part of the public is one of our greatest problems. Most people, particularly in the cities, don't have a clue how nature operates. However, this problem is hardly unique to the West. In fact, studies have shown that easterners are more ignorant about wildlife, on average, than westerners. As for elitism, if it is elitist to place a high value on ecological education and on compassion for the land and living things, then yes, I'm an elitist. But I certainly don't hold any special grudges against westerners. I've spent most of my professional career in the West and the South, where I feel more comfortable than with uptight easterners.

**RANGE:** What if you're wrong? None of us may live long enough to know, but what if species are more adaptable than you seem to think? What if the growing general acceptance of ecological relationships assures a natural balance in the future

better than any imposed plan could do? And what, conversely, if such enforced intervention as the Wildlands Project leads to ultimately dire consequences on social freedom: do you care about that?

**NOSS:** I do care. The proposals of the Wildlands Project are science based. But even the best science (which we strive for) carries a moderate-to-high level of uncertainty. Sure enough, some research suggests that particular species are more adaptable to human activities than we once thought.

The pileated woodpecker, for example, declined with forest fragmentation across much of the country, but now seems to be doing fairly well in fragmented landscapes, as long as enough big trees are around for foraging and nesting. It adapted. However, probably more species are turning out to be more sensitive to human landscape modification than we thought, but we won't know for sure unless we monitor their populations across many generations. In the face of such uncertainty, scientists recommend following the precautionary principle, where we try to pursue policies and management practices that pose the least risk to nature and human society. Sometimes there are conflicts, of course, and trade-offs must be made. The available

evidence suggests that the extinction crisis is our greatest global problem. Therefore, in the face of uncertainty I would risk erring on the side of protecting too much land rather than too little.

Although this may conflict with economic development in some cases, it need not conflict with personal liberties. Big corporations pose a much greater threat to liberty than conservationists. Like many in the Wildlands Project, I consider myself a conservative—an old-style, Teddy Roosevelt-kind of conservative. I'm libertarian in many of my views, especially with respect to personal behavior. For example, it's my own damn business whether or not I wear a seat belt. But given the high level of selfishness that humans display, we need policies and laws to protect nature, just like we need laws to protect human life and dignity from the deprivations of other humans.

**RANGE:** Certainly as an optional question for you, but one still most troubling for many: statements by Foreman and others have suggested that returning so much area to a pre-Columbian state can only be accomplished by some form of population control, bluntly eliminating some portion of human existence. This is a chilling statement with obvious derivations. Can you comment on it?

**NOSS:** I don't think the implications are so obvious, Tim. Globally, human population growth is the biggest threat to nature and to human liberty and peace. Second in importance is the growing rate of per capita resource consumption. What kind of world do we want to live in? A world with swarming people pressed shoulder to shoulder or a world with wide open spaces and clean air to breathe? Population control need not require draconian measures—in fact, I would oppose such measures. Rather, it's a matter of providing incentives and disincentives. Rather than giving people tax breaks for every additional child they have—which we do now and President Bush wants to increase—I would favor tax breaks for those couples with two or fewer children and tax penalties for those with three or more. I think such a tax policy, combined with strict limits on immigration, would take care of our population problem in the United States. Likewise, destructive technologies (for instance, those wasteful of fossil fuels) should be taxed heavily and sustainable technologies, such as solar and wind energy, should be promoted. "Conservative" and "conservation" spring from the same root, and it's about time today's so-called conservatives figured that out. ■

## CONGRESSMAN ANDREWS

*(Continued from page 43)*

prohibited from human use?

**CARUSO:** Rep. Andrews has no affiliation with Dr. Reed Noss and is not aware of any plan of his to set aside land. Rep. Andrews introduced this legislation because of research presented by Habitat For Wildlife.

**RANGE:** What makes a New Jersey congressman think he can presume to establish such drastic policy over so much of the West? Isn't this rather like the "knowledge" we have in Reno about New Jersey from watching "The Sopranos?" If you were going to do it, why not seek a western cosponsor?

**CARUSO:** Rep. Andrews is currently seeking cosponsors from members across the country, including the western states. Rep. Andrews introduced this legislation because this issue affects the entire nation. As a federal legislator, he is responsible for issues that relate to the entire country, not just the First Congressional District of New Jersey.

**RANGE:** But, bottom line, why do it at all? Legacy? Or are you convinced by some legitimate and verifiable evidence that such protection is necessary?

**CARUSO:** Rep. Andrews introduced this legislation based on the need to protect open space and habitats while balancing the needs of ranchers and business people. The bill applies to the entire nation. In 38 eastern, midwestern and southern states, less than four percent of their land is in federal ownership. Land acquisition in those states is at the heart of the bill.

**RANGE:** Perhaps the congressman is not fully aware of the very serious opposition and resentment to such actions felt by people who actually live and earn their livelihood in the region. Is he willing to set off such a socio/political reaction with possibly broad implications by seeming to please what is an increasingly discredited extreme green movement in the U.S.?

**CARUSO:** Rep. Andrews has chosen to support this issue because he believes it will improve upon the quality of life in this country by setting aside much needed areas of open space. This issue will benefit all Americans and their children by providing cleaner air and water, and preserving recreational open space areas. This legislation will allow for 700,000 acres to be acquired in the East, South and Midwest in states where there is little federally owned land, i.e., four percent. It also provides for the acquisition of 38,000 acres in the West, all of which is current fed-

eral policy to purchase now. There will always be some opposition to any legislative effort; however, Rep. Andrews is convinced that this bill is for the greater good of the country.

**RANGE:** Just tell us in your own words, *why*; and *why you*?

**CARUSO:** Rep. Andrews is a federal legislator and is charged with developing legislative initiatives focused on improving our entire country. Here, Rep. Andrews saw a need to preserve the amount of protected open space in this country. The legislation affects the eastern, northern, southern and western portions of the United States and will benefit all Americans for generations. The congressman believes that more and better quality open space is broadly supported in all areas of the country. This bill pursues that goal by concentrating on the acquisition of private lands in the center of congressionally designated national forests around congressionally designated wilderness areas in the eastern, southern and midwestern areas of the country. As you and your readers know, the federal government owns a much larger share of the land in the West. This bill recognizes that and attempts to bring a small share of existing federal lands up to the same standard as similar lands in the East, South and Midwest. It brings the country together.

The strategy for removing grazing from 400 mostly summer allotments is first and foremost a buyout proposal. There are provisions for a generous buyout through an economic transition payment for every affected rancher. There is also an early-out payment for any rancher choosing to leave his allotment early. The bill also recognizes that some ranchers would prefer to continue to use these allotments for a period of time. The bill authorizes those ranchers to continue to use the allotment from 10 to 14 years before leaving and accepting the economic transition payment. These mechanisms of a buyout and extended continuation of ranching have been used effectively in the Capital Reef National Park and Bandelier National Monument legislation to achieve these goals. However, the congressman is sensitive to the needs of individual affected ranchers and will consider additional ideas that might provide assistance to them.

In summation, this bill makes an important contribution to the national desire for more and better open space, while attempting to recognize the different circumstances existing in the East, South and Midwest versus the West. ■