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Green Politics: The Impact of Grassroots Organizations on Environmental Political Movement

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Green Politics: The Impact of Grassroots Organizations on Environmental Political Movements



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Abstract

This paper discusses how environmental political movements are impacted by grassroots organizations. In this paper, I explore the importance of the involvement of community-based initiatives in 'eco-friendly' political and governmental decision making and the accountability of the American political system in responding to these baseline initiatives. This paper argues for both federal and local policies that are centered around environmental restoration, protection, conservation, and natural resource usage. Chapter one examines a look at the issue of coal mining in the United States and how the residents of Appalachia attempted to combat this threat. Chapter two introduces the Sierra Club, one of America's oldest environmental lobbying groups, and establishes how the philosophical motivations of its founding members led this organization to influence some of this nation's earliest environmental preservation based federal policies. Chapter three takes a look at where exactly our methodology for looking at the natural environment is grounded. Chapter four draws on economics, ecology, and sociology to offer the need for environmentally conscious policies and why there needs to be a shift in America's current political paradigm. This chapter is designed to express the various reasons why these environmental policies should be of interest to the American public. Chapter 5 explores why everyone needs to be part of the movement to combat the threat of climate degradation.

Introduction: Starting at Rock Bottom

“For those who have experienced the joy of being alone with nature there is really little need for me to say much more; for those who have not, no words of mine can ever describe the powerful, almost mystical knowledge of beauty and eternity that come, suddenly, and all unexpected.” --Jane Goodall

How can the American public have a say in the way in which our country is run? How can people who are not legislators or politicians make their mark on the American political system? Political and governmental engagements are not just for those who have studied political science or government, nor is it only for those who are elected a government position. Every American has the ability to have a voice on our government, though admittedly there can be times at which the government seems as if it is operating at its own agenda.

The very first step in being able to change the direction in which our country is headed is to vote. Participation in politics on the electoral level is incredibly important for the ability of the United States government to thrive. Every elected official, whether it be on the local, state, or federal level has the ability to set the direction in which our country is headed. Elected officials have the ability to set legal, judiciary, and policy precedent through their actions and ability to adopt, change and remove political policies. If we elect those who do not align with our beliefs, we can expect there to be a shift in laws, legislation, policies, and societal structures we may not agree with. However, if we ensure that we are

electing officials who are representative of the values and beliefs that the American people hold represent the country we want to be, a firm foundation is set to build an inclusive and environmentally friendly political landscape in this country.

We must keep in mind, however, that political participation on an electoral level is simply not enough. There is no homogeneous answer to what America should look like; thus we cannot expect American voters to be the only representative body in which the values of this country are represented. There will never be any individual we can elect into any level of office that satisfies and well represents every American citizen. The chances are that throughout your own lifetime, you will witness many different people in office whom you feel do not well represent you and create laws and policies that you do not agree with. Though witnessing these events unfold may be frustrating or disheartening, there is still more you can do. You do not just have to wait for the next election cycle and hope someone comes into office that you like; you have the ability to use your voice to put pressure on elected officials to change their voting behavior, their policies, and their proposed legislation.

By taking advantage of opportunities to share your voice and opinions with your governmental representatives, you take the opportunity to influence the current political atmosphere. By taking actions as lobbying, sending letters to your state and federal representatives, and involvement within local community organizations that place emphasis on social change/political advocacy, you begin to develop tools that can be used to hold governmental bodies and representatives accountable for their actions. Additionally, when it comes to swaying the vote of your governmental representatives,

there is strength in numbers. For example, if a state senator only receives one call from a constituent about the state's seat belt policy, that senator may not feel any motivation to change that policy. However, if that senator receives multiple calls from diverse groupings of constituents within their district, that senator would be more inclined to change the current policy. This is where we first begin to see the importance of community-based organizations in the ability to change and shape the American political system and the way in which the American government is run.

Additionally, 'strength in numbers' is also incredibly useful in the areas of government we may not expect to see a lot of movement in. In American politics, it is known that there are political topics that have a long-standing trend of being popular and frequently discussed issues. Topics such as immigration reform, gun control, military spending, and the national debt crisis are topics that are constant headlines in American media outlets. These issues will always have larger corporations, think tanks, professional lobbying firms attempting to sway the future of these policies in their future. The American public typically has some sense of familiarity with these issues. Even if someone cannot give you the political history or context of these issues, they will at least know these are issues often addressed by politicians. The extensive amount of attention that is given to these bigger 'hot button' issues both from the American public, and the country's lawmakers means that these policies receive a lot of public attention and are constantly being revisited and addressed.

However 'smaller' topics such as agricultural laws and regulations or environmental policies often get swept under the rug. Because of this lack of attention to

the environment in America's current political atmosphere, we have seen the control of these policies fall into the hands of big-league lobbying groups that represent large interest groups such as the industrialized farm industry, oil & gas companies, and the manufacturing industry. Because these big league players have gained control of these environmental policies, we need to start at ground zero with these issues. By organizing on the local community level, we (the American people) gain the ability to restructure environmental political movements (or 'green politics') from the bottom up. An individual's biggest ally and tool in organizing around these issues are going to be grassroots organizations. These organizations are born out of community members directly affected by an issue specific to that community who are also experts on these specific issues as well. It is with these grassroots organizations that we will find the strength, numbers, and knowledge to sway environmental policies away from big league players, and put it back in the hands of the general public.

Chapter 1: Appalachian Coal: Grassroots Movements Combating

Environmental Threats

"We are like tenant farmers chopping down the fence around our house for fuel when we should be using Nature's inexhaustible sources of energy - sun, wind, and tide. ... I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that." --Thomas Edison

The United States currently has one of the world's largest coal reserves, accumulating roughly 260.5 short tons of coal as reported by the United States Energy Information Administration¹. These coal reserves are responsible for about 30% of the United States current energy production² although renewable energy resources have become increasingly accessible and new renewable energy technologies are being developed nearly every day. Coal production is incredibly harmful to anyone who may be living around coal processing plants. It is commonly believed among scientists that coal production can result in an increase in the production of smog, a phenomenon when nitrogen oxide reacts with volatile organic compounds and sunlight resulting in toxic fog-like haze), toxic soot, the sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxide released from burning coal, and acid rain the mixture of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide with water in the atmosphere that falls as rain.³ All of these by-products can have overwhelmingly negative

¹ Shaffer, B.N., 2017, Assessing U.S. coal resources and reserves: U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2017-3067, 6 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/fs20173067>.

² Shafer, B.N, Assessing U.S coal resources and reserves: U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet

³ Kallen, Stuart A., ed. *What Energy Sources Should Be Pursued?* Farming Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005.

effects on human health including cardiac and respiratory issues as well as increased risks of cancer.

One of the most cost-effective ways of mining coal is done by the use of surface mining techniques. Surface mining, usually either mountaintop removal or strip mining, is utilized when coal beds are formed close to the Earth's surface. The practice of coal mining is the cheapest way to extract coal due to the fact that there is not a need for the expensive equipment used to drill deep beneath the surface of the Earth. Surface mining also requires less extensive labor and can be done with less personnel making it an even more affordable practice.

Strip mining is one of the most popular forms of surface mining used today, responsible for about 40% of the world's coal extraction⁴. Though it is an extremely affordable practice, strip mining is a highly destructive process. In order to gain access to shallow coal beds or seams, large pieces of equipment such as bulldozers and excavators are used to remove trees, plants, and all topsoil to expose the shallow coal. After exposing the shallow beds of coal, additional excavators and digging equipment are brought in to break up and extract the coal ore that is found in that area. After extracting the top layer of coal, mining companies continue to strip away the remaining layers of soil in hopes of exposing additional coal beds that may be close to the surface. In strip mining, up to 400 feet of soil & rock are removed in hopes of exposing as much coal as possible⁵.

⁴ About Coal Mining Impacts." *Greenpeace International*,
www.greenpeace.org/archive-international/en/campaigns/climate-change/coal/Coal-mining-impacts/.

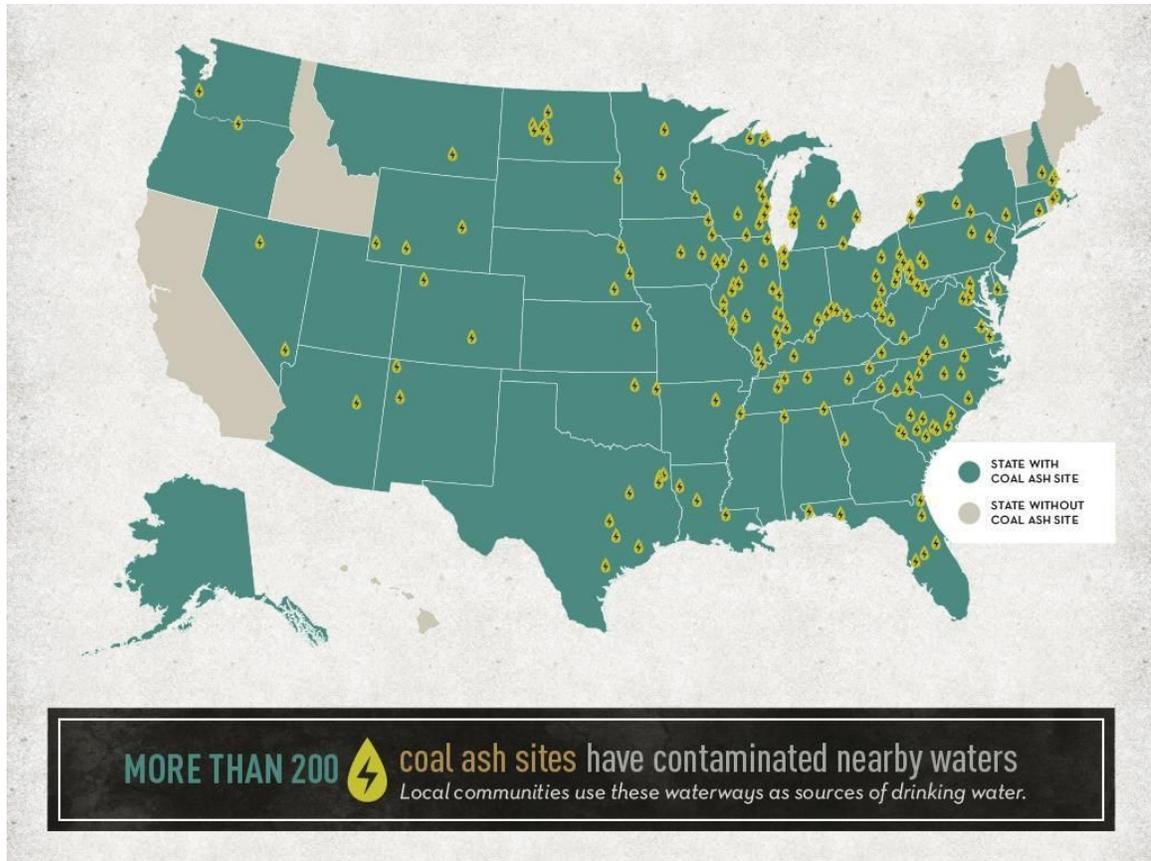
⁵ Hustrulid, William Andrew. "Strip Mining." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,
16 Feb. 2011, www.britannica.com/technology/strip-mining.

There are many negative environmental impacts associated with strip mining. First and foremost, the largest concern of strip mining is the high amounts of habitat destruction. The removal of all plants, trees, and topsoil causes the land that is being mined to be completely uninhabitable to many plant and animal species. Without a viable food source or the ability to create some form of shelter in the natural environment, native species are forced out of the mining sites that were once their natural habitats. Additionally, disturbing topsoil makes mining sites highly susceptible to the negative effects of soil erosion. Soil erosion allows for high amounts of rainfall surface runoff. This occurs when the exposed loose soil is swept away as rainwater flows across the newly-exposed layers of soil which leads to a mass movement of rock and another sediment to lower elevations. The movement of this rock and sediment leads to changes in the neighboring physical landscapes and causes the ground to become unstable and unsustainable for various forms of animal and plant life. Additionally, this loose layer of soil causes the land to become highly susceptible to floods and land/mudslides that could be fatal threats to neighboring communities⁶.

Consequently, the water, soil, sediment(s), and rocks displaced by this water runoff are contaminated by fuel, oil, and other pollutants that were introduced to the environment by the machinery used to mine for coal⁷. This leads to the pollution of the bodies of water in which the runoff water naturally flows too or is absorbed by the ground where the water comes to rest. Figure 1 highlights areas throughout the United States that have lost fresh water sources due to the pollution of coal ash.

⁶ "About Coal Mining Impacts." *Greenpeace International*,

⁷ "About Coal Mining Impacts." *Greenpeace International*,



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Additionally, by exposing coals and other compacted material that had been lying beneath the topsoil that had been removed places these mining sites at high risks of uncontrolled coal fires. These fires frequently burn at very high temperatures and are very slow burns that can last up to several years. In the case that these fires happen, the burning of the unmined coal and other sediments lead to an introduction of methane (CH₄), carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂)⁹. These all are pollutants that many scientists have identified as contributors to the destruction of ozone, the protective layer of Earth's atmosphere.

⁸ Figure 1, Contaminated water sources by Coal Ash, Earthjustice.org

⁹ "About Coal Mining Impacts." *Greenpeace International*,

Mountaintop removal or MTR mining is another extremely affordable form of surface mining typically used to mine coal. In MTR mining explosives are used to remove up to 400 feet of the top of a mountain to gain access to coal that may be beneath the mountain (greenpeace). Though the environmental effects and impacts of MTR mining are very similar to those of strip mining, MTR comes with its own unique risks and impacts. By using explosives to remove the tops of a mountain, thousands upon thousands of small particles of rock, ash, heavy metals, and more are blasted into the atmosphere. These particles then have the ability to enter the respiratory systems of nearby humans or animals causing serious respiratory and cardiovascular issues. Additionally, the removal of mountaintops is a permanent process that cannot be remediated. This results in permanently damaged landscapes and destruction of natural habitats of many different plants and animals that cannot survive at lower altitudes or require the protection of the mountains themselves.

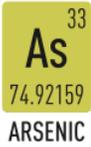
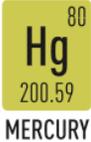
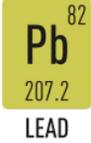
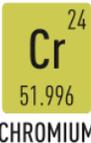
In the United States, there has been a large focus on the areas surrounding Appalachia due to the large investment into the mining of this geographical location. Appalachia is a largely rural mountainous area in the eastern portion of the country. Public health researchers have identified higher rates of cardiovascular, respiratory, and raised mortality rates within the 13 states that are encompassed by Appalachia¹⁰. Many of these threats to public health have been traced back to the coal mining industry that has been heavily investing in this region for decades. Residents of these areas experience high amounts of exposure to contaminated air and water from nearby coal mining operations.

¹⁰ Hendryx, M. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* (2009) 82: 243.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00420-008-0328-y>

The toxins these communities are exposed to included (but are not limited to) zinc, cadmium, lead, mercury, arsenic, and many other highly toxic substances¹¹. Health researchers have additional concerns about the particulate matter from the coal itself that is being released into the atmosphere during the extraction process of mining for coal.

These small particles have the ability to enter the respiratory systems of living creatures, creating various health issues such as asthma and high risk of developing lung cancer¹².

Figure 2 outlines some of the effects the toxins found in coal ash has on the human body.

COAL ASH POLLUTANT	HEALTH IMPACTS					
	INGESTION			INHALATION	ABSORPTION	
	 nervous system damage	 cardiovascular issues	 urinary tract cancers	 lung cancer	 skin cancer	
	EXPOSURE					
	POSES PARTICULAR RISK TO CHILDREN INFANTS, AND FETUSES		 nervous system damage	 developmental defects like reduced IQ and mental retardation		
	EXPOSURE					
	THERE IS NO SAFE LEVEL OF LEAD EXPOSURE, PARTICULARLY FOR CHILDREN	 brain swelling	 kidney disease	 cardiovascular problems	 nervous system damage	 death
	INGESTION				FREQUENT INHALATION	
	 stomach ulcers	 intestinal ulcers	 stomach cancer	 anemia	 asthma	 wheezing

¹¹ Hendryx, M.

¹² Hendryx, M.

In a study performed by Michael Hendryx of the Institute for Health Policy Research at West Virginia University concluded that chronic heart conditions, as well as various kidney and respiratory diseases, were more common in the communities close to the areas being mined in Appalachia when compared to those who were further away from the mining sites. Unfortunately, Hendryx was one of the first researchers to extensively examine the effects of coal mining on the general public health of neighboring communities, so there has yet to be a concrete political and legislative response to prevent companies from mining coal in a way that is so hazardous to human health.

However, in the absence of creating new policies and legislation to combat this issue, Appalachia does prove to be an excellent example of how a grassroots organization may be able to put pressure on political figures to make a change regarding how local government treats the environment. Residents in Appalachia have since used this study, attention from the media, their rights as Americans, and the local constituency in local governments to make large public awareness about the threat of coal mining in their home territory. The community did not wait for some big political bigwig to try to make a change. Instead, the community took matters into their own hands. They turned coal mining from a normal process that frequently occurs in Appalachia to into an incredibly criticized and rejected process in the eyes of the public.

Residents of the Appalachian region anxiously waited for the passage of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation of 1977 in hopes that this federal piece of legislation that was set out to regulate the environmental harm of surface mining and provided provisions on how abandoned coal mines must be run. However, much to the disappointment to the

people greatly affected by surface mining in Appalachia, the SMCRA of 1977 did little to nothing to prohibit the expansion of surface mining in the region. The passing of the SMCRA of 1977, which was criticized publicly as a weak attempt to address the issues of surface mining in the United States, was met with a multi-state grassroots response in the continued advocacy for Appalachia to become free of any and all surface mining. Two grassroots organizations, Tennessee's Save Our Cumberland Mountains and Kentucky's Kentuckians for the Commonwealth both were exemplary leaders in the grassroots efforts to use the SMCRA as a way to fight for continued environmental justice in the region.

Save Our Cumberland Mountains

To begin examining the efforts of Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM), we must first consider Tennessee's role, or lack thereof, in implementing environmental and mining control legislation on a state level. In the early '60s, several states who had been negatively impacted by the expansion of coal mining took the responsibility of creating policies that restricted or regulated surface mining. By the middle of the decade, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky had all passed forms of legislation that place restrictions on strip mining¹³, a form of surface mining commonly used at the time. It was not until 1967 that Tennessee's state legislature saw a bill regarding strip mining in the state. The bill passed through state legislation that year, however, it faced overwhelming amounts of critique for promising weak and vague provisions against strip mining and placed the power of administering the act to the state's conservation commissioner who had the ability draft and adopt additional rules 'as necessary'.

¹³ Montrie, Chad. *To save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Though the state hoped that this bill would help to provide some solace to the state's constituents, many were angered by the lack of responsiveness to the issues of surface and strip mining thus, SOCM was born. SOCM's first major endeavor was the proposal of a surface/strip mining bill of their own in conjunction with the current Governor Winfield Dunn's legislative session. The bill proposed by SOCM to Governor Winfield would provide the people of Tennessee with more clear responses to the dangers of mining. Under this bill, abandoned mines would be reclaimed via a coal severance tax, the requirement of reclamation procedures to begin no later than three months after an operation began, and other mining specific resolutions¹⁴. After over 40 meetings between SOCM members and Governor Dunn, Dunn's original bill passed, but after drawing greater attention to the issue of coal mining from local politicians, community organizers, government officials, and so on. After seeing how much public support SOCM gained during the attention brought to the public debate between SOCM's proposed bill and Dunn's proposed bill, SOCM began their long legacy of political involvement by motivating everyday people to hold government officials accountable to environmentally conscious political policies. Their efforts were continued by continued years of advocating for just policies, lobbying government officials, adopting countless justice campaigns, and ensuring that any and all environmental laws that are passed are enforced to their fullest form.

Kentuckians for Commonwealth

During the morning hours of April 3rd, eastern Kentucky was struck by a 2-day long severe weather system that dumped nearly 15 inches of rain into the region.¹⁵ Though the storm

¹⁴ Montrie, Chad. *To save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia*

¹⁵ Montrie, Chad. *To save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia*

was a natural occurrence, many blame the damage caused by the storm was worsened by the history of strip mining in the region. The storm claimed the lives of 4 people, left hundreds homeless, and cost the state of Kentucky over \$175 Million in damages, destabilizing the region as many cities were left to address remaining flood water. Local authorities blamed the various abandoned open ponds, pits, and mines which had already been overwhelmed with rainwater from previous storms contributed to the flooding of the region, for there was nowhere else for the continued rainfall to be absorbed or drained. Copious amounts of open plots of lands that remained barren and void of any vegetation that would either absorb the rainfall or slow the flood water also allowed for the cities closest to the open mines to flood much faster than they would if the vegetation removed by the strip mining processes remained.

In response to the claims of local authorities in the region, Congress held hearings on July 26th, 1977 to determine whether or not strip mining had caused the floods that caused incredible amounts of damage in eastern Kentucky. Jack Sapdaro, a member of the grassroots organizations the Appalachian Coalition and Save Our Mountains was chosen to speak on the floor of Congress during here hearings. Sapdaro, who was also mining engineer employed by the state of West Virginia to review all draining control plans in regions where strip mining had occurred, warned Congress that strip mining's effects on changing landscapes and watersheds make proper drainage nearly impossible, increasing the risk of flooding and/or mudslides dramatically. Just a few days later, Congress passed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, a bill aimed at addressing the negative effect strip mining has on the environment.

For residents of eastern Kentucky, the passage of the SMCRA of 1977 was a huge public victory in making strides towards reclamation in the region and rekindled hopes of potential abolition of strip mining indefinitely. In the months and years after the passing of the SMCRA, dozens and dozens of additional grassroots organizations had popped up all over the state of Kentucky. One of the most prominent groups, Kentuckians for Commonwealth, was born out of the culmination of various grassroots campaigns that occurred in the eastern portion of the state. The Appalachian Coalition, the organization who supported Spadaro during the hearings, dissolved into Kentuckians for Commonwealth after the residents of eastern Kentucky, began to focus on more environmental issues than just Strip Mining in the late 1980s.

Chapter 2: From Grassroots Campaigns to Lobbying Giants: The Sierra Club

“God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools.”--John Muir

In the United States, it is quite difficult to never come in contact with some form of federally regulated land or eco-service. The National Park Service is responsible for the regulation, management, and maintenance of all of the country’s national parks, national monuments, and other federally owned and operated conservation and historical sites. Whether it be walking alongside the National Mall in Washington D.C or deciding to take the challenge of attempting to climb El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, millions of

Americans have interacted with some type of land regulated by the United States. These parks that serve as recreational destinations for millions of individuals from all over the world every year would not be able to exist if it was not for extensive federal environmental policies and regulations.

Most of us alive today cannot remember a time in which these policies and services that allow for services such as the National Park System to exist. The National Parks Service itself was founded 1916¹⁶, which means that these services have just barely existed for over 100 years. Though our nation has had federal parks since the designation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872¹⁷, we have not always had a deep understanding of the need for regulations to protect these areas.

In 1872, national parks were not necessarily these areas of protected land that we all know them as today. It was not an uncommon practice to have portions of these national parks to be sold off for private or industrial usage, and many argued that the early national parks were actually created as a way to allow the government to have hold of some of the most desirable land in the country. If it was not for the motivation of the American people to pressure the United States government to take over the responsibility of owning and regulating land for recreational purposes, we might have never seen the creation of national parks at all.

The Sierra Club, founded in 1892 with a membership of roughly 182 members¹⁸, has had a large role in supporting countless bills, policies, laws, and regulations since its founding. This organization started by environmental philosopher and American author

¹⁶ <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>

¹⁷ <https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

¹⁸ Cohen, Michael P. *The History of the Sierra Club: 1892-1970*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988.

John Muir is one of the oldest organizations, born out of grassroots movements, to have a hand in advocating for environmental regulations and policies. The Sierra Club quickly began its efforts in campaigning for the environment by adopting its first major move, which was to prevent the federal government from passing a bill that would allow for the reduction of the boundary lines of Yellowstone national park. Club founder and leader John Muir had great concern over this possible change in the boundary of the park. Not only did this mean that after just 20 years of being designated as a park that Yellowstone was facing the possibility of being sold off and no longer available to the American people, but this also meant that all of the dense natural ecosystems and environments within the United States were now vulnerable to being destroyed and developed by private entities.

In order to gain the support needed to halt the government's attempt at reducing the boundary lines of Yellowstone, the Sierra Club was given the challenge of gaining the support of Americans from all across the country. At a time where long-distance travel of solely recreational purpose was not all too common or affordable, Muir and his members had to find a way to spread the word of what great beauty that Yellowstone park had and why it was important to protect this land as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Because of the fact that the Sierra Club was also a new grassroots organization with less than 200 members, taking on the entire American public was a daunting task. In attempting to be able to reach a large audience, the Sierra Club began publishing its own literary magazine, *The Sierra Club Bulletin*. The hopes of creating this magazine were that the club would be able to distribute the bulletin all over the United States in order to let people who may have very little understanding of what the national park was and what the government could

potentially be doing with the land. Targeting the general American public to gain the support of opposing the reduction of the boundary lines of the park was the club's biggest fighting chance. It was clear that solely focusing on politicians and government officials would not be enough. The few voices of the club members would not have been enough to go to these representatives and halt the federal government's efforts to divide this land. Instead, Muir and his colleagues knew that they would have to first get more individuals to be involved in the matter. By sending their bulletin nationwide, the club was able to get larger masses of people to write their governmental representatives. It was no longer just the constituents surrounding Yellowstone who wanted to see the park stay the way it was. Now people who lived on the opposite side of the country had heard of what was happening to the park, putting incredible amounts of pressure of state representatives from all over the nation to oppose this transition.

As of 2019 the Sierra Club still remains as one of the most influential and prominent grassroots organizations, however, it no longer can quite be considered a grassroots organization. According to the Sierra Club 2017 Annual report, membership within the organization has grown to be over 3.5 Million members/or donors.¹⁹ During the 2017 fiscal year, the Sierra Club gained \$82.9 Million USD in revenue and total net assets of \$158.2 Million USD.²⁰ Though the Sierra Club had begun as a grassroots movement, its long history of advocating on the behalf at risk communities experience environmental and social hardships has allowed the organization to grow into one of the largest environmental

¹⁹ *Partnering for Progress: Annual Report 2017*. Report no. 2017. Annual Report, The Sierra Club Foundation. Oakland, CA: Sierra Club Foundation, 2017.

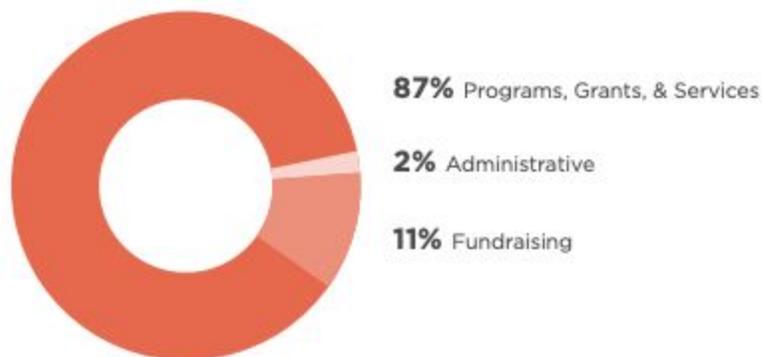
²⁰ *Partnering for Progress: Annual Report 2017*.

advocacy organizations in the world let alone in the United States.

SIERRA CLUB FOUNDATION STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
December 31, 2017 and 2016	2017	2016
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$8,778,992	\$19,364,595
Money market securities	33,319,320	22,072,528
Contributions receivable, pledges and bequests, net	2,083,753	9,299,550
Contributions receivable, other	5,135,090	3,825,789
Contributions receivable, charitable trusts, net	7,149,143	6,252,753
Investments	84,514,114	67,015,643
Assets held under split-interest agreements	14,234,699	13,173,750
Other assets	3,033,593	2,980,713
Total Assets	\$158,248,704	143,985,321

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SIERRA CLUB FOUNDATION SUMMARY OF EXPENSES 2017



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Becoming one of the largest advocacy organizations has become a double-edged sword for the operations of the Sierra Club. With a membership of over 3 Million people, the Sierra Club has gained incredible amounts of power that allow the club to have a large influence on not just state-level policy movement but has the ability to influence American policy on a federal level. The ability to mobilize millions of Americans all across the nations

²¹ Figure 3, Sierra Club Foundation Statement of Financial position, Sierraclubfoundation.org

²² Figure 4, Sierra Club Summary of Expenses 2017, Sierraclubfoundation.org

to take some form of political action on specific federal policies targeted by the executive leadership of the Sierra Club allows the club to place incredible amounts of pressure on Congress that a lone grassroots organization could not. Additionally, having over \$158 Million USD in assets with annual incomes totaling over \$80 Million USD allows the Sierra Club to spend considerable amounts of money on lobbying and educational efforts within the environmental movement. Figure 4 highlights the Sierra Club's expenditure in the 2017 fiscal year. 87% of the Sierra Club's expenses were spent on programs, grants, and services run by the organization in efforts of supporting environmental campaigns. Access to a large operating budget also allows the Sierra Club to financially support upcoming political leaders and campaigns in efforts to place those who would align with the Sierra Club's mission of "work(ing) with other partner organizations, nonprofits, and campaigns to build a diverse, inclusive movement that represents today's American public...know(ing) that environmental issues can't be separated from social justice – because we all breathe the same air and share the same land."

Though Sierra Club's transition to an environmental advocacy giant has granted the organization with many financial and recruitment benefits, it has also presented some challenges to the organization. By becoming such a large organization, the Sierra Club fundamentally opens itself up to many issues that small grassroots organizations do not have to deal with. By accumulating such a large budget, the Sierra Club has been exposed to many opportunities for corruption within the organization. Though it is true an organization of any size has the ability to become corrupt, the fact that the Sierra Club is constantly receiving large and small scale donations from private donors, there are many

opportunities for executive members of the organization to attempt access that money for personal use. It also must not be ignored that an organization as big as the Sierra Club must pay their executive staff competitive salaries to other large non-profit organizations.

According to the organization Charity Watch, it was estimated that in the 2017 fiscal year Sierra Club Executive Director Dan Chu earned a salary of roughly \$238,000 USD.²³ Clearly, small grassroots organizations that are run by community members will not have to dedicate such large proportions of money to pay for their leadership teams. Many grassroots organizations may not even pay its executive leadership team and will recruit staff and leadership as volunteers for a larger cause.

Utilizing a large scale approach to target federal environmental political policy has been a huge portion of the Sierra Club's organizing model in the last few decades. The work that has been done to improve federal environmental policy by the Sierra Club must not be ignored. However, it is also essential that the Sierra Club's long history and tradition of grassroots organizing is not forgotten. Though great work has been done by the Sierra Club, its transition to focus on federal policy with its 3.5 million members, many local state and municipality efforts have been set to the side by the organization. Most importantly, the Sierra Club has not been able to effectively to the many urban environmental movements popping up all over the nation. Big cities like New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, and so on all have countless environmental issues and hazards that must be addressed. However, because these issues are specific to each of these communities, there is not much the Sierra Club can do to support environmental initiatives in this area

²³ "Sierra Club Foundation | Charity Ratings | CharityWatch." Charity Ratings. Accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.charitywatch.org/salaries/sierra-club-foundation/277>.

without slowing their operations on federal policies, something that Sierra Club may never be willing to sacrifice. This means many incredibly important ecological and natural sites that are vulnerable to urban expansion may be completely lost before the Sierra Club even becomes aware of these issues or has the change to advocate for a federal policy that may extend protections to the areas threatened by urban sprawl.

Not only are the issues specific to big cities being circumvented by the new organizing models of the Sierra Club, but small rural communities are also no longer catered to by the Sierra Club like they may have been during its early days as a grassroots organization. When an organization is operating on a scale as large as the Sierra Club, it is nearly impossible to pay attention to the small communities who are still constituents of the club. In order to continue to operate like the Sierra Club has been since its expansion, the Sierra Club must address the concerns of its largest audiences and supporters to keep its biggest donors. This means the Sierra Club is going to be focusing on larger communities who already align with the beliefs of the organization. Larger cities like Seattle or San Francisco that are seen to be 'green cities' would be an easy target audience for the organization for many of the residents of these areas already have some form of environmental consciousness. Small rural communities in places like the Great Lakes region who have been victims of the collapse of manufacturing in the region who have been raised near industrial operations who depend on big industry for employment would not be as easy of a win for the Sierra Club, thus these communities are often ignored.

To give due credit to the operations of the Sierra Club, acknowledgement should be made of their attempts to still have connections to the organization's history of being a

grassroots organization. The Sierra Club does operate with a network of 45+ 'local chapters' of the organization that operate as smaller branches of the larger organization. These local chapters are charged with the direction of advancing the club's mission and values, as well as for gaining support for the policies supported by the larger organization. One of main duties of these smaller chapters is recruitment of additional donors and members for the Sierra Club Foundation, the finance hub of the Sierra Club. These local chapters do also have some freedom to partner with other local grassroots organizations on community-specific platforms, however, those platforms must fit within the greater mission of the Sierra Club. Local chapters also have the ability to sponsor official Sierra Club Excursions, a program run by the larger organization to take American's into the country's wilderness, woods, and mountains. This works to establish a sense of environmental education and homogenous thinking in communities all over the nation.

Though the goal of using these local chapters is to keep a feeling of grassroots organizing within the organization, there isn't even close to enough local chapters to truly encompass the over 3.5 million people who are members or donors. For instance, 13 of the local chapters run by the Sierra Club reside in the state of California meaning $\frac{1}{4}$ of the organizations 'grassroots' efforts are focused on just one state. 13 local chapters is enough to keep the operations of the Sierra Club in its home state of California close to its grassroots roots, but unless we see more chapters being established in the 49 other states, the Sierra Club will continually be removed from true grassroots organizing.

Chapter 3: Where is Our Thinking Coming From?

“If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.” --Pope Francis

To begin to try to build this new framework, we must examine the foundation of our current attitudes to the planet. Prior to the 14th century, our understanding of the world was relatively limited. What we knew about the environment around us and how it came to be was grounded heavily in religion and in the ethic and moral responsibilities attributed to these belief systems. But, beginning with the scientific and technological advances that began in the 14th century, the western world began to see a new story immerge. This new story was grounded in scientific findings, mathematical compositions, and data-based observations. Our understanding of the world post 14th century became incredibly convoluted: how do we make sense of what we once knew (and which many still believe to be the superior story) and what we are now able to understand?

Our old story, the story which we use in our human-centered visions of modern society stressed one major theme: redemption. Redemption was seen to be a necessary focus of human existence. Through a heavily Christian lens, it was extremely important that modern societies were societies that were formed as a way to earn redemption for their sins. This focus on a societal composition focused heavily on the church made way for great social moral and ethical societal development, but it came with a big tradeoff. People became so obsessed with redemption and with living through the values of their respective

churches that the natural world was not only forgotten, but it was not understood. For modern industrialized societies, the earth became a tertiary component of existence. The church and society quickly became the ideals to focus on because it was understood and widely accepted, that humans (and the earth) were a gift from God, and as a result, there was a debt to be paid. God and the church became the integral components of existence, leaving no room for the natural environment. This led to the idea/view that the Earth was nothing more than a resource at the disposal of humans rather than a sustaining higher power. It wasn't until recently that this traditional method of thinking was challenged.

As science became increasingly developed, we began to see a shift in thinking. Slowly but surely it became harder and harder to ignore the science and the facts about natural environments, even in the face of religion. These modern societies that were once so obsessed with their debts to God were now able to understand the world around them. Science became a way to understand what exists and why, and religion became the tool or system we used to navigate what it meant to be human and what it meant to be alive. It is here we began to see what was happening to the Earth and how humans were negatively impacting the planet. People were finally viewing the planet as part of God's creation and understood that the degradation of the planet was a threat to the church. However, we must keep in mind that these advancements did not occur until the 14th century, and in all reality, they were not well understood or developed until much later, around the 18th century.

What this means is we have had thousands upon thousands of years of viewing the planet as nothing more than a resource that exists independently from us, and all of a

sudden and seemingly out of nowhere an academic field (science) offered a completely different understanding. Our biggest problem is that humans have not yet let themselves understand the new story. Though over the past few decades we have seen more and more individuals come to an understanding that science can exist at the same time as religion and that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. One can believe in both science and in God.

On a more philosophical level, consider the idea of self-interest and anthropocentrism. Ethical Egoism, which is the concept that individuals are inherently driven to behave and to make decisions that will maximize their own self-interest, can be used to help determine the personal relationship one may have with nature²⁴.

Anthropocentrism is the belief that humans are essentially the center of the world. Any action taken from an environmental or anthropological lens should be done so in a manner that would maximize human flourishing according to the beliefs of anthropocentrism. Ethical Egoism argues that individuals flourish best when their actions promote the well being of themselves and not external forces. The ethical egoist also not fully adopt a lifestyle or ethical worldview where humans and the environment are not seen as commodities that can be used by an individual to promote their own self-interest.

When you combine Ethical Egoism with an anthropocentric worldview, you establish a society that is comprised of individuals with a "me before anything else" attitude, an attitude that would evidently not hold environmental degradation as a primary concern in that society unless there are an immediate environmental threat that has the

²⁴ VanDeVeer, Donald, and Christine Pierce. *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book: Philosophy, Ecology, Economics*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014.

potential to explicitly harm the individuals of that society. Social Darwinism has an implicit role in Ethical Egoism. Social Darwinism advocates for the 'survival of the fittest' and suggests that there is no duty to give aid to the less fit, for that would inhibit your own ability to progress and evolve. If an individual adopts these schools of thoughts, even if it is done subconsciously, they will feel no ethical or moral duty to address the environmental degradation.

Another ethical theory that we may consider for the United State's general views upon the environment is the Divine Command Theory²⁵. The Divine Command Theory is the thought that God commands us through either divine revelation or through scripture. Under this theory, one may not feel it important to have a moral obligation to the planet, unless they are able to find a clear and explicit call to action on behalf of the planet within their own religion. Theologian Thomas Aquinas questions the validity of the Divine Command Theory²⁶ because of the many moments of contradiction that can be found in just about every religious text. For example, in the Catholic faith, members of the church swear duty to a series of commandments set forth by the church. One of the most well known and widely accepted commandments in the Catholic faith is the commandment of "Thou shall not kill." When you juxtapose this commandment next to the biblical story of when Moses sent Joshua and eleven other spies to Canaan to clear the land of all life to make room take the land for the church and directed the Israelites to murder all those who would distract others from entering God's kingdom. Clearly, in this moment, God was believed to have

²⁵ Murphy, Mark C. "A Trilemma for Divine Command Theory." *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 1 (2002): 22-31. doi:10.5840/faithphil20021914.

²⁶ "Divine Command Theory." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. University of Eastern Kentucky. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/divine-cl/>.

given a command that directly contradicts scripture. The Divine Command Theory suggests that humans gain a rational foundation of moral belief stemming from religion and scriptural interpretation. After receiving a moral foundation from religion, individuals should gain additional beliefs from the commands of God, and through the characteristics of God, we can draw from scripture. However, thinkers like Aquinas will argue that though it is true that we do gain our morals from the teachings of the church, that we must do so with our own levels of interpretation, especially as society continues to advance to differ than that of the times in which the bible was written.

Reverend Dr. Andrew Linzey argues that due to the interpretations that focus on domination that serves the rights of man consequently leads to the abuse of animals and other forms of non-human life. He writes that "Christians have spent more than 10 centuries anathematizing, cursing and revealing the animal world"²⁷. It is argued that modern society has been able to continue with this mindsight because it does not directly go against the word of God. According to scripture, it is essential that both society and the individual does whatever is necessary to make sure that more men can be brought in to the 'kingdom of God' and that 'God's church' continues to hold power within society. Linzey argues that an alternative interpretation of scripture would lead us to an understanding that the whole world needs to be loved, and that the love must be extended to include other species in addition to human beings. He writes that "What has not been seen is that the love of God is inclusive not only of humans but also all creatures"²⁸. This extends on the

²⁷ VanDeVeer, Donald, and Christine Pierce. *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book Philosophy, Ecology, Economics*. Vancouver: Crane Library at UBC, 2012.

²⁸ VanDeVeer, Donald

heavily Christian belief that God is responsible for all creation. Anything that exists on the planet is believed to have been made in the image of God and to be a product of God's love. Under this interpretation people who are only concerned for the well being of humans and not that animals and the environment are taking actions that degrade God's creation. there are three things that he thinks humans should learn: we must not hate even those who hate animals, we must not hate, even the Church, and we must not hate one another.

Theologian Thomas Berry argues that the Earth is primary and humans are only derivatives, meaning that our sense of superiority is false. Our current system of living is at a cost to the Earth. He explains the evolution of the universe and life as a "universe story" with a spiritual component created by God. He argues that nature is the expression of the divine, for all forms of nature are part of God's creation. This supports the belief that humans complete domination and stewardship of the earth is both unethical and goes against the word of God, for it means that we are taking control of God's creation. By taking control of the earth and the natural environment, humans have attempted to take control of creation away from God. Leadership in the Catholic church who have been charged with interpretations of scripture and who give ontological meaning to a modern day church have modeled themselves in the image of God by being masters of the planet.

This connection of humans not being the only product of God's creations, rather that all life on Earth is part of God's creation creates a moral duty to protect the earth, and by extension, to protect all forms of life living on this earth, including the Earth's natural ecological systems. Pope Francis warns "The human environment and the natural

environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.”²⁹ We must not ignore the fact that the Catholic religion is the second most popular religion in the United States³⁰ and the Catholic church did not adopt this stance until Pope Francis released his Encyclical, *Laudato Si*, in 2015. Religion is commonly a centerpiece of many individuals life, and if not, it at least serves as a source for moral and ethical principles. If the Catholic church did not openly and publicly take an explicit stance that is humans duty, under religion, to respond to the threats of a changing natural environment, we cannot expect there to be a widespread societal understanding that caring for a planet is a part of human nature.

Within his same Encyclical *Laudato Si*, Francis writes “Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty, and fullness. The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without the prejudice towards coming generations.”³¹ Here we see that the Pope acknowledges that the needs of humans have not been met by previous leadership to the church due to varying levels of prejudice. Much of this prejudice has been against that of the

²⁹ Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si*: On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical].

³⁰ "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. May 11, 2015. Accessed May 09, 2019. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.

³¹ Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si*: On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical].

planet, for the earth was seen as nothing more than a resource to be used. If we want to establish leadership that does not have prejudices that would prevent the church from “meeting the needs of the present”, we must establish leadership who can cater to the thousands of years of oppression that both people and the environment have faced at the hands of the Catholic church and by other religious orders.

Chapter 4: Why These Policies Matter

“We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation.”--Theodore

Roosevelt

It should be no secret that it is time that the United States changes how our country views the environment. Climate change has become one of the largest threats to not just the people of our country, but for people all over the world. Sustainable actions on the individual level are still incredibly important--it would be unrealistic to place the responsibility of combating climate change, protecting the environment as a whole, and leading environmental preservation efforts to the government. Now more than ever do we still need each individual American doing all they can do to reduce their carbon footprint. Practices such as recycling, composting, carpooling to work, and so on are small steps every person can take to make our planet a much safer space. With that being said, now more than ever do we need to complete and undivided cooperation from our country’s leaders. It

is time that the government officials who are charged with leading our nation take responsibility for the fact that our nation has taken advantage of the resources provided to us by our environment just so Americans could live incredibly luxurious lifestyles and compete most easily with our other industrialized world powers.

It is important that we realize that although we have been using the planet as a tool to create all of these systems that protect our American values and well being, that without a healthy planet, we will no longer be able to live the cushioned lives we have all come accustomed to. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has pointed out that there are clear links between the ways in which we use our ecosystem and how that may affect our overall well being. During the assessment, it was found that roughly 60% of our resources are being used unsustainably on a global scale, which means that the international community is doing much more harm to the planet than good. If we want our future generations to be able to live off of a sustainable Earth, we need to begin to understand what our role in protecting the planet is. America, being a major world power, has a unique position in this responsibility. If America began to publicly take large strides to make our nation a sustainable nation, many other countries would be likely to follow in our footsteps. Not only is this our duty as a world power and as a diverse nation, but quite obviously we are not the first species to inhabit the Earth. Many different types of animals and different organisms have come before us, however, humans have begun to take over the Earth and its resources in the very small amount of time we have been around. In just the short period of geological history that humans have been around, we have caused more harm to this planet than any other species could ever attempt to do. Our first step in protecting the

environment, not just for ourselves, but for our future generations, is to understand what it means to live more sustainably. The Earth has done a wonderful job at sustaining itself by using what environmental scientists like to call 'the three principles of sustainability.' The first of these principles is the sun—we must realize that the sun is capable of much more than just providing a nice warm day at the beach. The sun gives us solar energy, which provides us with wind and flowing water, all of which we can then use to create positive energy resources. It also is what allows photosynthesis to occur—a very powerful and complex process in which plants are able to produce nutrients that most organisms need to stay alive and to reproduce. The next principle is biodiversity, or the overwhelming amounts of different organisms, the systems in which they exist, and the systems in which they contribute to. Without all of these different components of biodiversity, almost all life on Earth would quickly come to a halt. The third principle is chemical cycling. Chemical cycling is the recurring process in which chemicals from the environment are passed into living organisms and back into the environment. Without this process, there would be no food, no air, no water, and no life on the planet. Our entire lives depend on the natural resources and service provided by the very land on which we live. Without a healthy and thriving environment, our economies would collapse, we would have no food or shelter for the world's population, and we would not be able to continue to live as we do today. We need to keep in mind that not all natural resources will always be around for us to use. There are some resources that will restore themselves in our lifetimes as long as we do not consume them faster than they can replenish themselves. These resources (known as renewable resources) are things such as grasslands, fish populations, fresh air, and

freshwater. Additionally, there are some resources (nonrenewable resources) incapable of replenishing themselves in our life cycles. Examples of these resources are oil, coal, copper, sand, salt, and aluminum.

As the human population grows and countries begin to become more developed, humans are beginning to use natural resources faster than ever. We create overwhelming amounts of waste and pollute the Earth faster than we can understand how harmful what we are doing actually is. Ecological footprints are excellent tools in which we can observe how harmful our overuse of the planet's resources is. This tool is used to think about the amount of biologically produced land and water needed to provide us with an indefinite supply of renewable resources and to properly handle the pollution caused by the use of these resources. According to a study performed by the World Wildlife Fund and the Global Footprint Network, the global population would need approximately 1.3 Earths to upkeep our current living conditions. This figure is a rough overall estimate, and it can change greatly depending on what sample size you are examining. If you were to just focus on one area, population, or country (which is called a Per Capita Footprint) you may find a much larger or smaller number. For instance, if the global population were to live like the average American, we would need 9.7 Earths to sustain our living conditions compared to the .8 Earths needed to sustain the living conditions of India. In an examination of my own ecological footprint, I discovered 4.4 Earths to sustain my lifestyle. This was quite shocking to me because I consciously try to live a more green lifestyle. I do not consume meat, try to eat locally sourced foods, recycle all that I can, and try to use public transportation but that is still not good enough. Population growth, wasteful and unsustainable use of resources,

poverty, and the inability to understand the harmful environmental effects of the production of our goods and services are the biggest contributors to pollution.

We cannot create a more sustainable planet without addressing these issues. This then requires the cooperation of just about everyone you could think of. Politicians, environmentalists, scientists, educators, and the everyday global citizen all need to work together to very purposefully and meticulously care for the planet. We need to focus less on profiting off of the land we live on and focus more on creating an environment that is capable of safely and effectively serving the future generations that will inhabit the Earth. Instead of governments giving tax breaks to companies and huge corporations that produce goods and services at the cost of creating more pollution, the government should tax pollution and heavy waste. Movements like this have already begun as there have been great international discussions on the existence of a "Carbon tax."

A carbon tax is a fee imposed on large industries that are responsible for the burning of carbon-based fuels (coal, crude oil, gas). According to the Carbon Tax Center, "...a carbon tax is the core policy for reducing and eventually eliminating the use of fossil fuels whose combustion is destabilizing and destroying our climate."³² The implementation of a Carbon Tax would be placed on the industries responsible for the burning of Carbon based products, however, would be free to pass the cost of the tax along to the larger market, meaning that consumers may pay a small nominal amount of many no more than a few cents per product to be able to pay the tax. Any large facility is using Carbon based products, but does not burn those products, would not be taxed. This would place a

³² "What's a Carbon Tax?" Carbon Tax Center. Accessed May 09, 2019. <https://www.carbontax.org/whats-a-carbon-tax/>.

monetary incentive for manufacturers to recycle products and reduce waste in order to continue paying a Carbon Tax.

The global population must rely more on renewable energy and less on nonrenewable resources. It is important that we do not forget about protecting biodiversity. We may see humans as the most advanced species on Earth, but it does not make us the most important. Without biodiversity, it is guaranteed that life could no longer continue. As warned by the Union of Concerned Scientist in 1992, nearly 1/3 of our known living species could become extinct by 2100, creating irreversible and very serious damages to our environment. We must take the world's scientists very seriously and come together to consciously slow the damage we are causing our planet. The Earth's natural chemical cycles are also being threatened by the extreme amount of pollution we are creating and by our overuse of the systems provided by our ecosystem.

What exactly does one mean when they say they are an environmentalist? What makes an environmentalist different than an anthropologist or a biologist? Those who would align themselves with the term 'Environmentalist' have the basic understanding that there is no one correct way to view the planet. To properly engage, interpret, and understand the planet you need to look at the bigger picture. This means that you require the help of scientists, politicians, businessmen and women, economists, and even philosophers.

There is no one sole professional sector that has the ability to protect the planet. Saving the environment is a process that is going to require an "all hands on deck" approach. With the help of Environmental Scientists, it is possible to identify natural

systems on the planet that are not operating as they should. However, without philosophers or theologians, we will not have an understanding of why humans should care about these issues. Admittedly, chances are no one that is alive today will be around to see the end of the world, so why stress ourselves out about it? These are not questions with easy answers. As we are making more and more technological advances, how can we be sure that the planet is going to continue to thrive after we as individuals are no longer living?

In order to attempt to confront these issues, we move into the ideology of technology & design. This is where we are able to identify what industries that humans have access to can be used to address any environmental issue. We now move on to the social sciences where we find the intersection of stakeholder groups (governments, municipalities, etc.) and policies. This addresses the questions "how can we prevent from these issues we are working to resolve from reoccurring and how can we prevent people from intentionally degrading the planet?" Last, but certainly not least the humanities also become involved with the idea of environmentalism as disciplines like philosophy and ethics allow us to consider why environmentalism is important.

Where many environmentalist and non-environmentalists begin to differ is which environmental worldview they most closely align themselves with. Environmental worldviews are similar to philosophical schools of thought. Most people have human-centered worldviews, with the most popular being planetary management. The planetary worldview is most definitely the most self-centered worldview (though I do not necessarily mean self-centered in a negative way, this just simply means humans put

themselves first.) Included in this worldview is the belief that we (humans) should manage the Earth for our own benefit. We can evaluate other species on the planet on how beneficial they are to us and what we can get from them. By going through this process, we can attempt to control and have a say in the way other species spend their time on the planet.

The stewardship worldview is a view that assumes that since humans are the most dominant species on the planet, we have an ethical responsibility to care for the Earth and the other species that live on it. This worldview also claims that we have a responsibility to maintain the Earth for future generations--kind of like when you visited a park as a child, and your parent or teacher would tell you to leave it better than the way you found it. This school of thought argues that when we are using natural resources, we should be doing so while keeping in mind that our usage of non-renewable resources is taking these resources away from future generations. This then creates the idea that we should balance out the resources we are using so we can save some for future generations.

However, many people can and will argue (including myself) that humans are just another species on this planet, and our duty is to live in harmony with other species on the planet, and not to dominate and control them. What gives us the right to cause other species to become extinct, forced from their habitats, and killed for our own pleasure? What gives us the right to destroy and completely manipulate the planet's natural resources leaving nothing behind for other species that may depend on the same exact resources.

These concerns with human-centered worldviews lead us to our third main worldview. This worldview is the furthestmost away from an anthropocentric (human-centered) stance and is named the environmental wisdom worldview. This worldview takes into account that every species on Earth deserves to be respected and has its own implicit and explicit value. This worldview also recognizes that human economics and other systems are only subsystems of the planet; after all, the planet was not created for or by humans. It is also believed by members of this worldview that all forms of life are interconnected; thus we have a responsibility to protect, sustain, and promote all forms of life.

The idea of using ethics and philosophy to study natural services is no new concept. It wasn't until the latter end of the 19th century where we saw the natural sciences become their own discipline rather than a component of philosophy. Unfortunately, the disciplines of philosophy and natural science began to grow apart from the end of the 19th century to close to the end of the 20th century. In the 1970's the concept of Environmental Philosophy was born, and philosophy and natural sciences became intertwined once again. Personally, I do not see why Environmental Philosophy is a rather new concept. Ever since the time of the ancient Greeks, philosophers have been combating the idea of life. Philosophers commonly deal with the questions of what is life--is human life different than other species? Is there something intrinsic about humans that automatically makes our survival more important than any other non-human species? Additionally, what is the proper

quality of life for both humans and other species? All of these questions require you to use the environment as part of your reasoning.

Outside of the world of environmentalism, the general human population does not give all too much thought towards the conditions of the planet. What I find to be the root cause of this ignorance is the idea of "out of sight, out mind." This means that if an individual does not have explicit personal experience with some type of environmental problem, they tend to act like it does not exist or that it truly is not a problem. For example, many Americans do not worry about food scarcity nor do they tend to know how big an issue food scarcity is. The average American consumes a lot more food than they need to sustain their bodies, whereas entire communities of developing countries do not have access to fresh, sustainable foods that have the ability to properly nourish and support their population. It is my hope that with the rebirth of environmental philosophy, the everyday person is going to be able to become more environmentally conscientious and be able to understand their role as an environmental stakeholder.

Chapter 5: Why We Can't Leave It to the Politicians

"I've learned the importance of changing people's minds at the grassroots level so that whoever does run will have a much better chance of encountering public opinion that reaches a critical mass and brings about a change not only in White House policies but in the Congress and in the state legislatures and all around the world" --Al Gore

The current status of our planet should serve as a clear example as to why politicians cannot be the only response or hope in advancing Environmental Political Movement on the federal and state level. Now more than ever our planet is undergoing a huge ecological crisis. Natural disasters are becoming more and more frequent, sea level rise has become a global threat, ice caps who have existed for hundreds of years are disappearing, and humans keep polluting the earth at devastating speeds. Furthermore, still in 2019 the United States struggles to become a frontrunner in environmental sustainability and protection for our president is not even fully convinced climate change is real and the Environmental Protection Agency has lost incredible amounts of funding during Donald Trump's administration.

The argument here is not that we cannot trust any politicians to address the threats of climate change and to protect the planet's natural systems. It is, however, the argument that we cannot continue to wait around to have politicians in office who align with environmentalist beliefs or at least understand the importance of environmental protection and regulation. If politicians were the only fix we needed, we would not be experiencing the environmental hardships we see today. What is needed to address our dying planet is a new interdisciplinary grassroots movement that aims at creating a social and political system that does not just view the planet as a resource, but adopts an understanding that without a clean and healthy environment to leave in, the lives of future generations of all life, human or not, are at risk.

Grassroots responses have the power to motivate individuals in their home communities to become aware of the issues faced in both their local communities, but as

well as the people of the United States, and ultimately everything on this planet. The emphasis of the individual in a grassroots campaign is what is most needed to protect the environment. If the United States were to luck out and elect a president who is a complete champion for the environment and who implements countless of eco-friendly environmental policies and regulations, our planet would still be at risk. By including the individual in a grassroots response, you not only obtain support for a environmental causes and policies and are able to put pressure on politicians and government officials, but you also have an effect on that individual.

If more Americans were to become involved in local environmental organizations, even if that involvement is just signing up for a newsletter or magazine, more and more everyday Americans will begin to become more environmentally conscious. When an individual joins a environmental grassroots movement, they are exposed to more information about the issues the movement focuses on, they become more aware of the current community specific context of environmental hardships, and they motivated to take action on those issues. The hope is that as individuals join environmentally focused grassroots organizations and learn more about the environment, they will also begin to not only advocate for the larger issues but will adopt new strategies and principles to be a better steward of the earth within their own individual actions.

Additionally, most environmental grassroots organizations have access to more resources about community-specific environmental issues and products. The potential information one could get from a local grassroots organization that they could not find with a large environmental lobbying firm is limitless. Local organizations would be able to

provide community members with easy to follow tips on how best recycle their waste with what fits within the standards of that community's waste management provider. These organizations can often also provide access to excursions into whatever ecological sites are available to that specific community. Grassroots organizations in urban settings are often able to provide community members with the best green spaces available or offers trips to locations that are sequestered in a more nature-heavy area whereas organizations that reside in locations that are less industrialized could provide community members to where the best hiking trails, rock climbing locations, etc. are located.

Access to hiking trails or knowing how to recycle may not at first seem connected to political movement. One may expect federal government to be the key focus of political movement since federal policies set legal precedent for all state and local government authorities to follow. The focus on federal government bodies as sole or even as the most important contributor to political movement is misguided and leads to diluted and slow-moving social and political change.

When an individual interacts with the natural environment, that individual obtains a new understanding of how the planet works. Someone who grew up in the heart of Manhattan in New York City who has never stepped outside the city limits may not feel the need to join a local coalition that is rallying for protection mountainous areas from surface mining, because that individual has no emotional or personal connection to mountains or to natural landscapes as a whole. But if that individual who lived their whole life in New York City were to experience the feeling of hiking through nearby Bear Mountain first hand, they may then feel compelled to protect mountains, something that would have never

occurred to them before. When someone gets to breathe in air that's free of the vehicle exhaust or fumes from an underlying subway line and gets to see feel the morning dew on the grass as they watch the sunrise over a natural landscape, that person gets to see first hand how starkly different a healthy natural environment is from an industrialized and urbanized environment.

Someone who has established an emotional connection with the natural environment and who has a general understanding of climate change, the effects of pollution, and the global threat of environmental degradation is going to be more likely to take some form of political action than someone who has not had the same experiences. It is common knowledge that someone will be more likely to support an issue they feel is important to them and by spreading a general sense of environmentalism into the lives of everyday Americans, it is more likely that more and more Americans will begin to advocate for the planet. Political participation on behalf of the environment can exist on many different. It can be sending a quick email to your local governmental representatives advocating for environmental policies to informing friends and loved ones about the current political landscape surrounding the environment to even advocating for federal environmental regulation on the floor of Congress. Not only would individuals who are members of a grassroots organization serve as key factors in American political movement via environmental political participation, but they would also then begin to serve as a collective of constituents who have the ability to hold elected officials at all levels of government accountable for the impact their policy decisions have on the environment.

It is crucial that we approach environmental, political movement with a 'bottom-up' grassroots approach rather than a top-down approach where the American public follows in the footsteps of the American government. In order to expect future generations of political and governmental leaders to fully protect the environment, it is incredibly important that they already have a strong foundational environmental awareness and education before they even begin to enter office. If through grassroots campaigns, the general American public adopts environmentalist thinking, we could expect that future generations are going to be raised with those same environmental principles. There is the potential that someday there will be politicians who do not see environmental protection and regulations as a partisan issue or a political issue at all but will understand that a healthy and sustainable planet is necessary to fully support the functions of healthy and viable societies.

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