Fall 1992

The Planet, 1992, Volume 22, Issue 01

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This Issue: The Tools of Empowerment

Western Washington University's Environmental Quarterly • Vol. XXII No. 1 • Fall 1992
Editorial:

**Wake up and smell the corruption**

Dissolving the link between money and politics is crucial to making any real headway towards protecting this beautiful planet.

Looking for conscientious, thoughtful, and far-reaching environmental protection from the current governmental system is analogous to seeking sports car performance from a limo - with four flat tires and no gas.

Wishing our dollar saturated political Goliath would respond to the people - and common sense for that matter - is like beating a dead, or at least heavily drugged, horse. This is especially true for funding and legislating environmental protection. Big-business does not give its "hard earned" dollars to politicians for nothing. They want something - disproportionate representation.

I'm not suggesting we stop participating in government - quite the contrary in fact. We do ourselves a favor, though, by realizing the severe limitations of our efforts given the current political climate. Rather than trying to muster the dollars to compete with special interests in the arena of political influence, our energies would be better directed at changing the rules of the game. Social and environmental concerns deserve a level playing field with business and the economy.

How do we acquire this? Vote. Vote for any candidates and referendums that sincerely support extricating PAC's, limiting campaign spending and donations, enacting term limits, and adding accountability to our representatives. They don't call them "Parties" for nothing.

Don't give up or give in to cynicism - which is a breath away from apathy. When individuals loose faith in their ability to affect change, they acquiesce to powerlessness. Individuals are having an impact, whether they choose to recognize it or not. Far beyond voting, the collective choices of individuals shape the world - choices for consumption, transportation, occupation, conservation and political representation.

It takes more than up-front opinions, integrity, and hard work to get elected in this country - sad but true. Our placated public relies heavily upon the media - which is also controlled by big business - to form their political decisions. The appalling effectiveness of "dirty campaigns" stands as a discouraging testimony to this fact. We need to dig out the entrenched system. Voting for democrats is not enough - they are only slightly less bought-out.

We're living in a Rip Van Winkle society lulled to sleep by mindless media and smooth talking politicrats. With big-business and a fundamentally corrupt government scratching each other's backs the public and the environment are left out. This very nasty cycle can only be broken by an informed and involved public.

Perhaps you really don't mind S&L bailouts, budget deficits, incumbent politicking, government waste, and dismal planetary stewardship. If so, just go back to sleep - sorry to disturb you.

If you're awake enough to hear this plea, you know what to do. Educate and empower yourself, those around you - your community. Ask questions. Think, talk, and write about your discoveries. Bury your representatives in a torrent of letters overtly calling for the reforms we desperately need. It's high time to wake up.

This issue of The Planet is dedicated to waking up. We've endeavored to provide the kind of information and inspiration needed to empower one's self. I hope it's helpful.

T.R. Morris

T.R. is still a Huxley outlaw at Fairhaven College, still fascinated by this planet, and still wondering what life will offer after graduation.

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**Words for the wise**

"From a deep, long-range ecology perspective, whatever is to be done, we are the people to do it; the only people to do it."

*Deep Ecology* by Bill Devall & George Sessions

"Nature as grasped by scientific knowledge is a nature which has been destroyed; is a ghost possessing a skeleton, but no soul."

Masanobu Fufuoka

"As man proceeds towards his announced goal of the conquest of nature, he has written a depressing record of destruction, directed not only against the earth he inhabits but against the life that shares it with him."

Rachel Carson

"What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not been discovered."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The truth that is suppressed by friends is the readiest weapon of the enemy."

Robert Louis Stevenson

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The Planet would like to thank its contributors:

The Associated Students' Recycle Center
Providing for the recycling needs of WWU.

Base Camp

The Community Food Co-op
Bellingham's natural grocer.

Hoemann Financial Service
Socially and environmentally responsible investment and financial planning.

J & R Stained Glass
Bellingham's supplier of beautiful stained glass.

Old Town Cafe
Serving Bellingham breakfast Mon-Sat 6:30 & Sun 8:00.

Village Books
The bookshop for browsing in Old Fairhaven.
1  **A Change in Perspective** ---- Brett Lovins
   *Learn how and why to grow your own meadow.*

3  **A Community Voice** ---- Stephanie Cosky Hopkins
   *Whatcom Watch rides to the rescue*

5  **Photo Essay** ---- Michael Wewer & Steve White
   *Photographers plea for preservation*

7  **Is Your Grocer Green?** ---- Wendy Hunziker
   *See how your store rates*

9  **“Moo!”** ---- Michael Rayton
   *The call of the wild?*

11 **$25 an acre** ---- Michele LaFontaine
   *A small price for preservation*

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Jeff Bates and Jim Schuster,
Teresa and Tom at Huxley,
Rachel the building manager,
Carin and my household for helping me through, our readers and supporters and especially to the Sun for making all this possible.

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A "nice" lawn is very different to me today than it was a few years ago. Back then, every week - or so - the mower in the aluminum shed sang the sounds of beauty as I trudged around my yard in straight lines. Then I would weedwack - creating those clear, concise edges where the concrete stops and the holy grass begins. In the crusade to keep my beloved grass alive I used fertilizers and chemicals to keep those "damned weeds" from "choking out the grass."

Sound familiar?

What is so beautiful about cut grass? My father would say something like, "Because it shows that someone cares about their place. A sign of pride. It's part of the package." I embraced that canon for a long time - not any more.

A biology professor’s lecture on the subject of succession changed my perception. Most people never even question the Better Homes and Garden model of how a yard should look. I doubt if many know what grows there. The way I see it, we have simply been brainwashed into going to great lengths to keep our lawns short and "weed-free." Essentially, what we are doing is creating unnatural ecosystems and arresting succession at a certain "acceptable" stage.

Succession is the natural evolution plant communities undergo - sort of land evolution. For example, after a forest fire, the plants quickly refurbish themselves in a competitive yet predetermined order. Depending on the area, grasses and shrubs are part of this process. As succession continues, trees move in, out compete the low growing vegetation creating a climax ecosystem - mature softwood forest. By mowing our grass, spraying weeds, and trimming all of our bushes, we are constraining this process.

How long will we cling to this colonial ideal of land management, I wonder? For the rest of Earth history? When gas runs out, are we going to develop solar powered mowers? Mountains will rise and crumble, canyons will be cut, earthquakes will level cities, continents will drift, glaciers will advance and recede, and our yards? Perfect square plots of even grass?

What about the critters who formerly thrived in these areas? Not much in the way of hiding places anymore. We've effectively dislocated the animals as well, except for our canine friends.

Last spring, I conducted an experiment by not cutting my grass. It was unforgettable. "Weeds" erupted into colorful flowers that invaded the my monoculture lawn in waves.

The earliest pioneer to sprout was the money plant. Its fragrant purple and white blossoms grew in patches all around my house. And, in the early stages of summer, the blossoms were replaced with white semi-transparent seed pods. Keep an eye open in vacant lots for these circular wonders. They're still around.

I was unaware that dandelions, left unshaven, tower to heights of 2 and 3 feet. I marveled at their fluffy seed stalks again like I did when I was a kid.

Wave after wave of different flowers winked open in my yard as the spring rolled on. With the help of other students I identified many of them. And the ones I couldn't, I just made up names for.

I became an amateur naturalist. I theorized and hypothesized and philosophized about all of the plants— their parts, their functions, their need for light and moisture, and more. Perhaps the early botanists must felt how I did, crawling on my hands and knees in search of serendipity.

The grass didn't monkey around either. It fired skyward. Long, fibrous shoots extended from clumps all around the yard. They stretched in the sunshine and bowed their tops in the rain. None feeling the sting of the whipping twine nor the sharpened blade.

As I investigated these grand stalks, it became obvious that three distinct types of grass were present. I had always assumed that there was only one strain. Breaking up these clumps of grass, clover and moss made cameo appearances on the floral stage outside my house. In a normal year, these too would be exterminated by a fluid stored next to the mower - now dormant.

Not this year. This year, the feathery moss spread amongst the grass and beside the clover. The clover revealed globe-shaped flowers of purple and white as it sprang up in bush-like clusters. Wild mustard also grew in my yard. I enjoyed its sour flowers throughout the Spring. I celebrated when new plants emerged from the ground.

Daily I explored my yard in search of changes. Often I would stumble upon new leaves and other greenery and hope that they would bloom into flowers. When buds formed, I eagerly watched for signs of blooms. Purple...
In previous summers, I had tried to get grass to grow in the barren areas of the front yard. My brother and I tried using seed and sod -- neither took hold. The uncontrolled plants, however, rapidly encroached onto the exposed topsoil.

Walking around my neighborhood I began to appreciate vacant lots and "unkempt" yards. I looked for plants we had in common and for the ones growing uniquely in each area.

I was growing a meadow—like the ones you see out in rural areas around farm houses. My meadow didn't require fertilizers, petroleum products, or intensive labor. It no longer contributed to the problem of topsoil erosion. It created a miniature island of wildlife habitat. It retained water like a sponge while teaching me to appreciate the beauty of succession.

One sunny afternoon I came home to discover my folks had had the grass cut. My heart sank like a ball and chain. Gone were the dandelions, the scotchbrooms, the snapdragons, the money plants, the bedstraws, the mustard, and the purple satellite dishes (my invented name). I realized at that pivotal that my perception about lawns had truly changed.

What if an entire city—such as Bellingham—were to let its grass grow? Houses and meadows? Deer, elk, great blue herons, frogs, voles, and coyotes in urban areas maybe? Wildlife habitat and human habitat? Or will we continue to populate the diminishing islands of wild territories left with our people and therein our concrete driveways and streets and therein our tamed yards?

There is beauty in wildness. Having your own meadow is just a perception change away and you literally wouldn't even have to lift a finger.

Brett Lovins, a confused environmental education student, is on the ever-elusive trail of truth and hopes to begin real learning upon his graduation this month.
The lone cowboy stands on the ridge, gazing down into the valley, watching as the dust rises from the outlaw gang which follows. The sun sets behind him, silhouetting the man against the golden brightness of the clouds. A solitary figure, a brave man, a hero...

Quite the scenario for a movie. But if we aren’t careful, this image of someone standing alone against the forces of evil will dominate our way of looking at activism, and we will turn our heads from our most important resource - the community.

By fostering individualism that leads to “Not In My Backyards,” developers and officials can slowly take over a community, wearing people down little by little. If they are run out of a neighborhood by one person, they can move on down the valley and ambush the next. But if a town or a county has created a sense of community - well then - the battle is a little harder fought.

A lone activist against the world is an exhausted activist. Keeping an eye on an issue or a corporation takes time and commitment. You get worn out, sick of sitting alone at meetings, tired of being ignored. If you share your concerns, you’ll find others who care, and slowly you can build a community of empowered individuals. A group of people working together lightens the load by sharing skills and ideas, and everyone gains a broader understanding of issues through discussion of related events.

We must remember that individual empowerment is important, we must not stop there. Taking another step toward community empowerment will allow us to have the greatest affect.

There comes a time in your life when you must gather up a posse, because sometimes a posse is the only way to get the job done.

How is community created? How do you find people with similar concerns? By using empowering resources such as public access television, writing letters to the editor, or working on a newsletter by those such as the local grass-roots organization Whatcom Watch, you can connect with others and start the process of community empowerment.

It’s called disseminating information. Spreading information so that citizens can make informed choices, so that citizens can’t be deceived.

Ron Sorensen, co-editor of the Whatcom Watch, asks, “What good is individual empowerment if nobody listens? We created the Watch as a tool of empowerment to let people reach a wider audience.”

There comes a time in your life when you must gather up a posse, because sometimes a posse is the only way to get the job done.

Bo Richardson, another co-editor of the Whatcom Watch, adds, “It’s publications like the Whatcom Watch that help to undercut the monopoly of the local dailies, forcing them to address issues they might ignore, and then making them give wider coverage to other things they might just touch on.”

It’s tools like these that individuals can use to let a community know what is going on, so more people can be in on the decision-making and make choices on the issues effecting them.

A cowboy can be hung from a tree. A community is a little harder to hog-tie.

Leslie Hamilton, a citizen concerned about the city of Nooksack’s proposed annexation agrees. “The power of involvement is amazing. It demonstrates that the issue is not a light matter and that people are taking it seriously.”

She should know. She and Doris Prather moved the issue of the Nooksack annexation to the forefront of community awareness. They attribute their success in slowing down the annexation process to their willingness to involve others in their activism and by sharing their information using the Whatcom Watch.

It happened like this:

Hamilton attended a zoning meeting of the Planning Department in the city of Nooksack with eight other citizens. She heard about the proposed annexation of over 300 acres of agricultural land by the city in order for Dentech, a Canadian-based company, to put in an industrial facility. This would almost double the size of Nooksack.

In a flash, without any public input, the mayor declared the proposed annexation land to be non-significant. This Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS) declared the prime agricultural land and the top salmon-spawning creek in Whatcom County fit for parking lots and industrial buildings.

The mayor clearly thought that citizens would feel that jobs for the community were worth the loss of the agricultural land and the expense of creating the infrastructure and utilities for the annexed land.
Leslie Hamilton disagreed. She thought it wasn’t right for a project-driven proposal to be whisked through planning stages without public comment only to serve the interests of a company who only wanted access to cheap land and cheap labor.

So Hamilton pulled on her metaphorical cowboy boots and went to work. A believer in joint-effort, she decided not to risk a last stand alone in front of the council. She needed help.

Hamilton called Prather, a previous partner on the Save Our Scenic Highway 9 (SOS-9) project. After a short talk, they decided that this annexation had far-flung repercussions:

“The ramifications of what could and would happen in that part of the county if the annexation went through are tremendous,” Prather said. “The development that will follow will create another re-zoning and we'll have industrial and retail zoning all the way down the Highway 9 corridor, destroying the character of the valley.”

“And,” Hamilton added, “that kind of decision is too important to decide without the city being held accountable for it to the people.”

Hamilton and Prather watched the daily paper, looking for information about the annexation. They didn’t find any. Finally, they decided to spread the word and call for help through the Whatcom Watch. “It was the place to put articles that the daily paper won’t print,” Prather said. They hoped that when the article appeared it would generate interest and people would show up at the next meeting to voice their opinions.

After the article appeared in the Whatcom Watch, the local daily picked up the story. People started calling with questions, and a community became aware.

Eighty inspired people showed up at the public hearing. “People told me they hadn’t even heard about the annexation until the newspaper article,” Hamilton said. “They were concerned about what was going on in their backyards.”

After the meeting, Hamilton and Prather kept working, writing another article to keep the community apprised of what was happening and to explain how the annexation would affect the rest of the county.

Sixty people attended the next public hearing. Citizen after citizen rose and had their say. In the end, the mayor rescinded the DNS. There would be studies made, she had decided, before the annexation would be approved. This gave the city a chance to look at transportational, environmental, and fiscal impacts of the annexation, and gave the citizens another chance to learn about the annexation as well.

The Bellingham Herald reported that Peter Boetzkes, partner in the Dentech Company, said that “the requirement for studies panders to people opposed to the project.”

Pandering? Hamilton and Prather say it’s just good common sense. “Dentech might decide that it’s too expensive to keep with the application,” Hamilton said. “They may go elsewhere to look.”

She hopes so. So does Prather.

“Give the community a chance to find the details and see if these impacts are the things they want to live with,” Hamilton said. “It’s their choice. And the government should listen.”

The Nooksack annexation issue isn’t over. After receiving the environmental and fiscal information, the Nooksack City Council can still decide for the annexation. If that happens, the case could move to the Boundary Review Board. The Board can then delay the action or not. If not, the case can be taken to the State Supreme Court.

Hamilton and Prather haven’t dusted their boots off yet.

“It never ends,” Prather said. She’ll keep writing because “it’s important for the community to get involved and for those concerned about land use throughout the county to hear what’s going on.”

Hamilton also believes in the power of the community. "The Watch was invaluable as a tool of engendering community empowerment because it alerted people, and now county and city officials can see that the annexation issue can’t be kept in the dark.”

By involving the community, Hamilton and Prather were taking the next step; making others aware of their concerns, proving that a community can make a difference.

They formed a posse. And the bad guys had to slink away to the next little valley. For a while, at least. But they’ll be back. And the town will be waiting.

Yippee-yi-yo-ki-yeah. *
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obs were lost during the 1980's - even though the
at national forests increased from 3.6 to 5.5 billion board

employment is more accurately attributed to the

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Learn more about old-growth contact the alliance,
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The Greater Ecosystem Alliance
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Olympia legislative hot-line
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Senator Patty Murray
3206 Federal Building
915 2nd Avenue
Seattle, Wa 98174

Jennifer Belcher
Public Lands Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources
Olympia, Wa 98504

for our future well being.
Grocery store survey
Finding Bellingham's greenest grocer

Wendy Hunziker

Ex-logger Rick Shorey shows off his Co-op card.

Shopping cart, shopping cart, in the parking lot stall, who's the greenest of them all?

This question I sought to answer with a survey of Bellingham grocery stores. Who is the true "green grocer" of Bellingham? Is the belief that supermarket executives are becoming more environmentally-aware a mere fairytale? Would the survey turn up wholesome organic produce, or pesticide-poisoned apples?

I surveyed 10 stores in Bellingham on questions ranging from organic produce to bike racks. The results were surprising. Nine out of 10 stores carried organic produce and most obtained their organics from local sources. While this is a definite step in the right direction, many managers conceded their selection of organic produce was limited, and often marked-up a higher percentage than their other produce.

While peaches go to the grocers for carrying organics, a small rotten tomato goes to Cost-Cutter, Hayden's, Fred Meyer, The Fair, and Clark's which charge more for organic produce. A big rotten tomato goes to Albertson's which was the only store surveyed which did not carry organic produce at all.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Community Co-op was the only store surveyed which not only doesn't charge more, but in fact tries to charge less for organics. Co-op manager Jim Ashby said they tried to keep organics' prices low so more people can afford them.

I congratulate the grocers for unanimously carrying bulk foods, recycled paper products, Earth-friendly cleaners, and for recycling store waste. A tour of the bulk bin and cleanser sections of some stores proved disheartening, however. While most of the stores carried a reasonable selection of rice, pasta products, nuts and seeds in bulk, more rotten tomatoes go to Joe Albertson and Safeway for poor selection. Their bulk foods sections were tiny and consisted mainly of candy and nuts.

As for the Earth-friendly cleanser sections, only the Co-op and Hayden's carried a respectable assortment. All of the others in the survey carried only two or three token items, amidst a sea of heavily-advertised, polluting cleaners.

All of the stores, except Fred Meyer and the Co-op, give cents-off to customers bringing their own sacks. Ashby explained that the Co-op has used sacks available to shoppers. Mark Lawton, assistant food manager at Fred Meyer, was apologetic about his store's policy.

A tour of the bulk bin and cleanser sections proved disheartening; more "rotten tomatoes" go to Joe Albertson and Safeway for poor selection.

Refunds for re-using sacks range from a low of three cents at Hayden's to a high of
five cents at Albertson's, Ennen's, Safeway, The Fair and Clark's.

On the issues of open freezers, which are much less energy efficient than their closed-in counterparts, and bike racks, the results were mixed. All of the stores used open freezers with the exception of Albertson's and the Co-op. Bike racks were available at all but Cost-Cutter and Safeway. Steve Christiansen, assistant team manager at Cost-Cutter, said his store has been trying to get bike racks for some time, but he "can't find a supplier."

Many of the store managers are proud of the steps their stores have taken to become 'greener.' Bill Bates, manager of Hayden's, said they had put in all-electronic ballasts for their fluorescent tubing, which decreases the amount of electricity used. He also stressed the Earth-friendly cleaning products section in the store's health food area.

Doug Skagen, assistant manager at Safeway, fairly crowed over his corporation's first-place ranking in cardboard recycling world-wide. Additionally Safeway's office of public affairs prints up pamphlets, informing customers of ways they can be more environmentally-conscious.

Scott Stone, manager of The Fair, proclaimed that not only did his store offer customers a drop-off for recycling plastic bags, but also a drop-off for cardboard egg cartons. Ashby of the Co-op said his store is working with Puget Power in order to make the lighting and refrigeration systems in their new location as energy-efficient as possible.

The winner in our survey, scoring positively in all categories, was The Community Food Co-op. Not only did it pass all the tests, but it also had the best selection in all categories. It rightfully should have all other Bellingham grocers green with envy!

I could be cynical and say the measures these stores have taken are not in the interest of a cleaner earth and a healthier customer, but in increased P.R. and profits. Whatever the reason, stores in Bellingham are becoming 'greener'. Where they lag behind, I urge you to write, or call the the stores listed. Get them moving ahead.

Maybe you can't chain yourself to a tree, or stand in front of a harpoon, but you can fight for a greener, healthier world, every time you go to the check-out counter! What you choose to buy does make a difference. We can all make improvements in our lifestyles and in our world. Even you Joe Albertson! ☺

Wendy Hunziker is majoring in journalism, minoring in environmental studies, and hopes to graduate before she's 40!!
I spent two moon cycles in Pasayten Wilderness this summer experiencing the solitude, the tranquility, the power, and the changing of seasons in the high country. I was not alone on my wilderness adventure. Thanks to a grandfather clause in the Wilderness Act of 1964, I shared my alpine solitude with cows.

Sidestepping cow pies became a ritual dance; distracting me from the raw strength of glaciated granite, the whisper of the wind blowing through the tamaracks, the collective hum of countless bees, and the squirrels stockpiling white-bark pine cones for the coming winter.

Intent on keeping my bovine neighbors out, I spent the first days erecting a fence around my living area. Though my camp was nestled in a stand of old-growth sub-alpine fir, I found little wood. So I built the fence with anything I could find - food boxes, PVC, rope, twine, and stumps.

Cows trampled the lush meadows surrounding my camp, turning my water sources into fetid cauldrons of mud and urine. Seeing firsthand the muddy springs, the bare ground, and the widespread erosion fanned a smoldering desire within me to fight this legalized violation of wilderness.

Recognizing that grazing impacts the high altitude meadows, the Forest Service is taking steps to minimize these impacts. Tony Basabe, a research associate at Huxley College, taught a seminar on the ecological effects of grazing. He noticed my interest in the topic and hired me to work on an alpine rehabilitation project.

I have been hiking in the Okanogan National Forest for most of my life. When I heard that I could spend the summer working in areas my grandfather visited as a young man - I jumped at the chance.

My official duty was transplanting healthy plants into areas with little or no vegetation hoping to counteract cattle-caused erosion. Unfortunately, I felt like the good-hearted country doctor treating symptoms instead of the cause.

I didn't expect to spend vast amounts of time keeping 70 cows off the ridge top, out of my work areas, and away from other sensitive areas.

Sunsets were punctuated by cows calling to their calves. Some nights sounded like a feed lot as the cattle foraged under the full moon. The cacophony of cowbells, thudding hooves, and cud-chewing often broke the sacred morning stillness.

My free time - away from the cows - was treasured. I spent many hours simply walking in areas my grandfather visited as a

ings on talus slopes, grouse blissfully walking about, red-tailed hawks hanging motionless on the breeze waiting for a chance to catch lunch, mountain bluebirds flashing brilliant color flying between huckleberry patches, water pipets chirping and fluttering at my tent door in the morning, a great horned owl silently stalking prey, a peregrine falcon flying through the commotion of a thousand birds while looking for dinner, and a golden eagle soaring by while I sat at the top of Remmel Mountain.

I could often hear coyotes barking in the distant valleys. Once, I found myself conversing extensively with one of these wild spirits. Another day, I startled a group of ravens drinking from a spring and was surprised to count eleven of these playful and intelligent birds taking wing.

Well before the government implemented the preservation-minded doctrines of John Muir, ranchers from the Okanogan and the Methow Valley drove livestock into the high country. The lush montane and
The Forest Service has reduced the number of animals, shortened the grazing season and now Coleman Ridge is grazed every other year instead of every year. Additionally, salting is no longer allowed in sensitive areas, and excessive broadcast salting is hopefully a thing of the past. Salt acts as a magnet to cows and sheep and has been used in the past to manage livestock.

In 1964, the Wilderness Act brought an end to unrestricted grazing and mining, allowing the government to set millions of acres of land aside that would forever be “untrammeled by man.” At that time ranchers, who traditionally used the high elevation meadows to feed their livestock, were worried that the new legislation would devastate the cattle industry. They blocked the passage of the initial legislation, demanding their “right” to graze on federal land.

Eager to establish Wilderness designation in the Department of Agriculture, Congress inserted a grandfather clause in the Wilderness Act. This provided grazing by permit on traditionally grazed areas. Only a finite number of these permits exist in national forests and wilderness areas, consequently, only a small percentage of ranchers in the United States have wilderness permits. Of the permits granted by the Forest Service nationally, only 1.2% are from Washington state. Only 7.7% of Washington state’s cow-calf industry in 1989 depended upon federal lands.

The Department of Agriculture effectively subsidizes beef production by undercharging the calculated Animal Unit Month (AUM). AUM’s are the base unit used in calculating available forage and its cost to ranchers. Grazing a cow and her calf (cow-calf pair) on federal lands cost permitees $1.97 per AUM. This means that privileged ranchers can transport their cattle into the national forests and wilderness areas and graze a cow-calf pair for $1.97 per month. Compared to the $6-$12 cost of grazing the same pair on private land, permitees are getting a bargain.

In 1991, Rep. Synar (D-Okla.) introduced an amendment to the Interior Appropriations Bill that would have raised the grazing fees on federal lands gradually to $8.70 over four years. It was defeated in Congress thanks to “special interests” such as the Cattlemen’s Association.

The economic returns from high altitude grazing do not merit continued degradation. As long as there are cows in the nation’s wilderness areas, there will always be ecological problems.

There are several things that can be done to improve the situation in the wilderness areas. First of all, the Forest Service needs to update information regarding range type. AUM’s calculated from archaic data and methods is dangerous to the health of the land. In order to properly collect this data, the methodology must be improved.

Limiting livestock grazing in the wilderness, banning them completely, or raising the AUM fee will help reduce the impacts on the land. People need to drive this message into their congressional representatives. This is an ethical issue as it may create economic and cultural instability in communities dependent upon high altitude grazing. We need to weigh the value of unspoiled land versus the value of beef.

The dilapidated state of the land itself calls for an increase in funding for ecosystem restoration. Many areas in the Pasayten wilderness are suffering from overgrazing. Immediate action is needed in order to salvage these remaining intact ecosystems.

Ecologically sensitive areas must be fenced off, including all spring heads, riparian zones, and ridge tops. This will generate dispute as cows need water, and the best forage comes from wet areas.

As individuals, you can visit YOUR wilderness areas, no one will see damage if no one visits these areas. This presents the problem of increased human and horse traffic. Stop by and chat with the local District Ranger or Range Conservationist. Let them know what you think and why.

The most important thing you can do is write to your government representatives. Speak out. Regardless of your position, express your opinion. If you don’t take steps to change YOUR government, someone will change it without you.

Michael Rayton, describing himself as left of center, is an nth year senior majoring in environmental science.
It's time to act; Buy some rainforest

Michele LaFontaine

The Equadoran rainforest; this land faces an uncertain future.

Pete Carmichael

The endangered rainforests need our help. Even a small donation aids in preserving these precious lands. Manual Chan Bor and K'in Bor, two Lacandon Maya from southern Mexico, have contributed to stopping ecological destruction in their native land. These men made the long journey north to address the National Rainforest Conference.

From these efforts, the Adopt An Acre of Lacandon Rainforest Project came into existence.

This project's plan remains simple - and effective. It uses no government loopholes or fancy legal avenues. They preserve the land in the same way the Nature Conservancy does, by purchasing it with donated funds.

They also promote understanding of indigenous rainforest cultures and help natives in their battles to save their homes and life-styles.

This Lacandon Rainforest Project began with the Mexican conservation group ECOSFERA with help from the Lummi Nation, the Seattle Rainforest Action Group (SRAG) and the Florence Kluckhohn Center.

In January 1990, the Lummis and the Florence Kluckhohn Center, a Seattle group focusing on cultural exchange, received a grant to begin work on the Lacandon Project. Two Native Americans, Ken Cooper of the Lummi Nation and Hazel Umtuch of the Yakima Nation, and Lisa Dabek...
traveled to the Lacandon rainforest to see first-hand what was happening in the area - massive deforestation.  

Dabek, of SRAG, brought back video footage documenting the killing of the land.  

Cooper, director of his tribe's Cultural Resource Protection Program, noted that the situation is typical of forest destruction worldwide:  

"There are those who think you can remove the trees and put back wimpy ones in their place," he stated. "But you can't put back God's work and you can't put back the medicine we get from the Earth. It hurts very much to see this."

The sponsors of Adopt An Acre have organized a fund-raising effort by which donors can save an acre of rainforest by making a $25 contribution. You adopt an acre and therefore become its protector. The land is still managed by those who live there. Contributions also promote the Lacandon Maya and newer settlers with alternatives to deforestation.

In the last century, more than half of the Lacandon's 2.5 million acres have been lost to logging, ranching, and extensive development. This endangers numerous bird species and rare plants. Threatened animals such as jaguars, tapirs, and howler monkeys prowl through this rich jungle. The indigenous population has grown from approximately 5000 to more than 200,000, due mostly to immigration from neighboring states.

Although the Mexican government designated 83,000 acres as a biological reserve, the clearing continues at a breakneck pace because the government persists in neglecting this imperative situation.

Tropical rainforest destruction has been going on so long, and the corporations behind it seem so overwhelming that people feel the issue is too big and complicated to understand, let alone resolve.

Facing these gargantuan issues may seem so daunting that we end up doing nothing. We can take action, we must all begin to do our share. No one else is going to save the Earth for us.

Conservation is not a spectator sport. Recently someone said to me, "I'm sure glad you environmentalists are out there saving the planet so I don't have to worry about it." It isn't up to the "environmentalists", it's up to each and every one of us, no matter who we are or what we believe, to stop this headlong rush toward global disaster.

The decisions and choices we make today may well result in the difference between a living, sustainable Earth and some kind of futuristic horror existence where we can't breath the polluted air or drink the poisoned water. I'd rather not leave a legacy like the latter to future generations.

After my first environmental science course, the instructor, Dr. Robert Sager, asked me how I felt. "Well" I said, "I guess I'm not going to save the world, am I?"

"That's true," he answered, "but you can save a little part of it."

He was right. We each can save a little part of the Earth. I don't see that we have another sane option.

How do we start? What can we do? Adopt An Acre would be an excellent way to begin. Because the tropical rainforests are so distant from us, we may forget the significance of what happens there. But isolated events anywhere ultimately affect what happens to the Earth as a whole.

Rainforests sustain life by removing CO₂ from our atmosphere and replacing it with O₂ - waste gas to the forests, the breath-of-life to the animals. People need the rainforests just as much as the Lacandon Maya and other native inhabitants do. They are vital to the functioning of a healthy planet. Without rainforests, the Earth cannot breathe.

Supporting programs like these carries a cost, of course. To some people $25-50 is nothing; to others, it's a lot. But it is money well-spent. So do without that new tee-shirt or book; give up espresso for a few weeks - take a break from the grand American tradition of consumerism. Contact a group listed below and make a donation; save your little part of the Earth.

A Native American tradition, roughly translated, states "In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations." I would much rather receive blessings for our foresight from those future inhabitants than be damned for our blindness and ignorance.

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Do cows really belong in Pasayten wilderness?
- details on page 9

Personally preserve rainforest at a small price.
- see page 11

Who's the greenest grocer of them all?
- find out on page 7

Stop mowing your lawn!
- Why? see page 1

Whatcom Watch saves the day.
- story on page 3

Old-growth images.
- see centerspread

Co-op shopper examines organic juice.

Mark Rosenblume

Brett Lovins presents a natural lawn. Michael Wewer

A self-portrait at high elevation.

Michael Rayton