

# *The Greening of America*

## **How Did It Happen?**

Michael S. Coffman, Ph.D.

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

### ***The IUCN***

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

The IUCN has as members 81 individual nations and 111 government agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and other land or water based agencies. The UN Environmental Program (UNEP), UN Development Program (UNDP) and UNESCO are also members. Following the first Earth Summit in 1972 at Stockholm, membership within the IUCN was opened to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These currently include the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund and a host of other U.S. environmental organizations. Today, these environmental NGOs members number over 859; 84 of which are international organizations.

The purpose of the IUCN according to its 2006 website is:

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

IUCN planning sessions with government representatives, environmental activists and UN personnel take place behind closed doors, excluding the media and other interested parties. An increasing number of people are expressing great concern over this secrecy. Government officials, UN personnel and special interest NGOs should never be allowed meet together in secrecy.

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

NGO and UN members from participation or even knowing what those within the IUCN are planning.

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

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

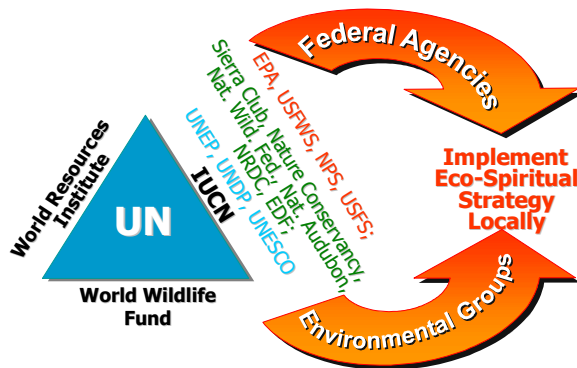
Many find the concept of ecospiritual practices and principles alarming. Most natural resource managers believe that although present resource management practices are not perfect, improvements will be made as better ways are discovered. In the meantime, resource utilization is better than it's ever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

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

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

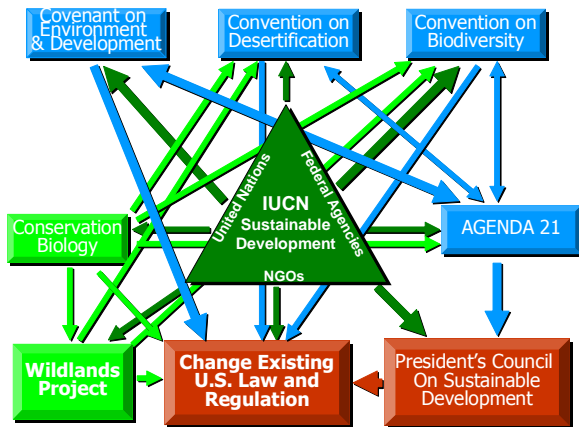
Rockefeller is professor emeritus of religion at Middlebury College in Vermont. As the son of Nelson Rockefeller, and part of the Rockefeller family, he has powerful connections. For example, he currently chairs the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. During his active tenure at Middlebury and following he was fully involved within the IUCN promoting this quasi-religious concept of sustainable development.

Robert Prescott-Allen, senior consultant to the second World Conservation Strategy project in 1990 made the connection between sustainable development and religion very clear. He said that, "Sustainability calls for a *fundamental transformation in how people behave*. Changes in behavior can be assisted by laws and incentives. . . to a *new morality*. . . and a *new moral conception of world*



The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Wildlife Fund and World Resources Institute all work with the United Nations to develop and implement a global "ecospiritual" environmental strategy that they call sustainable development. As members of the IUCN, various federal agencies, environmental and UN organizations secretly plan how to implement that strategy on the unknowing citizens of the United States. Almost every strategy in the last 30 years has originated within this unholy alliance.

order.” (Italics added) The World Conservation Strategy is a project of the IUCN, UNEP and WWF started in 1980.



The IUCN and its federal and NGO members have directly or indirectly contributed to the writing of major international environmental agreements and treaties, including Agenda 21. It has also implemented its policies through the Presidents Council on Sustainable Development and created the science of conservation biology. This web of agreements and treaties has forced major changes in the way federal laws are implemented in policy. The United States has not ratified the Convention on Biodiversity but is being implemented anyway (See Fall, 2005 Range Magazine).

*Agenda 21* is a comprehensive forty chapter United Nations set of goals that was signed by the United States at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It spells out UN requirements for sustainable development within every nation, including the United States. Not surprisingly, the IUCN had a big part in writing *Agenda 21* and most other environmental treaties for the UN.

*Agenda 21* and its implementing treaties provide a web of interlocking international laws that regulate virtually every aspect of human interactions with the environment. Hence, as members of the IUCN, international and national agencies and NGOs have contributed to the writing of treaties and polices that the federal agencies then enforce.

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

The changes required by *Agenda 21* and *Sustainable America* represent a radical departure from America’s historic culture and the lifestyles of U.S. citizens. It would mean a complete shift from the constitutional basis of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” to one of protecting nature at all costs.

This concept of sustainable development, of course, is a deeply held view for those who believe in the sanctity of “Mother Earth.” For the past thirty years, the quiet implementation of these quasi-religious policies and treaties have caused inestimable harm to tens of thousands of American citizens. None of that would have been possible, however, without the creation of a new science to justify the need for denying landowners their private property rights.

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

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

This vision of how economic systems should function is explored many times in IUCN and UN documents. It is at the heart of the IUCN’s Covenant on Environment and Development (CED) treaty and *Agenda 21*. The CED treaty is written but not yet released for ratification. It is the granddaddy of all treaties and is designed to fully enforce *Agenda 21*.

## ***Conservation Biology***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tragically, the change that occurred within our natural resource colleges and government agencies did not come about from a healthy debate based on solid scientific evidence. Instead, it came from an unethical, or perhaps even illegal, collaboration between federal, NGO and UN change agents to advance their agenda. Not only were affected landowners and resource users not included in this process, they were not allowed to even be aware of it. In a very real sense, early conservation

biologists declared war on traditional science and resource management without bothering to inform their alleged enemy – the general public, specifically landowners – that they were at war.

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

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

Certainly conservation biology has matured since Michael Soulé penned his uncompromising words in the 1980s. Credible scientists, without personal agendas, use methodology derived from conservation biology to investigate natural relationships. Nonetheless, conservation biology is a young science that has been politically forced to become the flagship science used in resource management decisions. There was, and still is, little justification in the adoption of conservation biology or other aspects of sustainable development as the foundation for federal policy. Every American should know that the United States is implementing international policy has caused great harm to American citizens unnecessarily.

## The Emerging Earth Religion

In the last issue of *Range* we discussed how an international organization known as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) seems to be the origin of most environmental legislation and regulations in the United States. A web of interlocking environmental treaties and agreements appear to be locking the United States into a regulatory straitjacket as surely as the Lilliputians did to Gulliver. President Clinton acknowledged this during his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1997:

The forces of global integration are a great tide, inexorably wearing away the established order of things.... New global environmental challenges require us to find ways to work together.... [W]e need a new strategy of security. Over the past five years, nations have begun to put that strategy in place through a new network of institutions and arrangements.... Through this web of institutions and arrangements, nations are now setting the international ground rules for the 21st century,...while isolating those who challenge them from the outside.

The first international effort to codify the emerging new values was the World Charter for Nature. The United Nations accepted the World Charter in 1982. The following year, the UN created the World Commission on Environment and Development to develop “a global agenda for change.” Chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Bruntland, the commission issued a report entitled *Our Common Future* that called for humanity to “insure that meeting present needs does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” While seemingly benign, Bruntland revealed in 1989 the extreme nature of

what the commission actually intended by the concept of sustainable development:

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

This in turn required a two step process. First, was the need to change laws and the form of governance to be more ecocentric (nature's needs before human needs), and second, to change the fundamental ethical or religious beliefs of all humanity. The concept of sustainable development became the umbrella for these two efforts and emerged as the guiding force for all nation states at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. This zeal to protect nature at any cost is rooted in the Earth Charter.

## The Earth Charter

Dr. Steven Rockefeller is one of the prime movers of the concept of sustainable development. Son of Nelson Rockefeller of the Rockefeller dynasty, Steven is often described as the father of sustainable development within the IUCN and worldwide. He also was involved in writing the Earth Charter from its inception.

The first Earth Charter made its debut for acceptance at the 1992 Earth Summit. The delegates, however, did not accept it because it was too pantheistic. Pantheism is the religious belief or doctrine that equates god with the forces and laws of nature and the universe, or the worship of all gods. Instead, a watered-down Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was quickly written in its place.

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

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

Strong was the Secretary General for the both the 1972 Earth Summit in Stockholm and the 1992



Private foundations and environmental organizations have spent billions of dollars scaring Americans into believing exaggerated or false environmental catastrophes are destroying the earth.

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

While Steven Rockefeller was the “nuts and bolts” man behind sustainable development and the Earth Charter, Strong was the global organizer. Canadian investigative reporter, Elaine Dewar claimed in her 1995 book *Cloak of Green* that, “Those in the know said he [Strong] deserved a prize for crafting the world’s greatest human network” to implement Agenda 21, sustainable development and the Earth Charter. Subtitled, *The Links Between Key Environmental Groups, Government and Big Business*, *Cloak of Green* details the breathtaking web of deceit and back-room deals Strong used to elevate the environmental agenda as a key program to justify global governance within the United Nations and ultimately the world.

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

The first Earth Charter Benchmark Draft issued in 1997 the only choice before humanity was, “to care for Earth or to participate in the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.” The heavily pantheistic tone and the absolutist language of the Earth Charter were still too alarming for the world. For instance, the 1997 Earth Charter’s website proclaimed its purpose was to:

...set forth an inspiring vision of the fundamental principles of a global partnership for sustainable development and environmental conservation. The Earth Charter initiative reflects the conviction that *a radical change in humanity's attitudes and values is essential to achieve social, economic, and ecological well-being in the twenty-first century....* (Italics added)

This radical change applied to every human being. The Earth Charter is the:

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

The Earth Charter reaffirmed Gro Bruntland proclamation nine years earlier. It forms the basis for sustainable development as defined by the UN, IUCN and other international institutions. The Charter has gone through several iterations from a blatant pantheistic document to a sanitized version.

For instance, in the 1995 draft the Charter started by saying “*Earth itself is alive*. We are part of an *evolving* universe. Human beings are members of an *interdependent community of life* with a magnificent diversity of life forms and cultures. We are humbled before the *beauty of Earth and share a reverence for life and the sources of our being*.” Many actually believe the earth is literally alive and that evolution occurs through reincarnation.

The Earth Charter Commission completed the Charter in March of 2000, and the sanitized final version states: “Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life.... The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.”

While the pantheistic undertone is still there, it is not nearly as obvious. Nor is the mission of the Earth Charter so extreme. The mission of the Earth Charter is now:

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

## **The Role of Foundations**

Although the language in the final Earth Charter is less inflammatory, the occult underpinnings remain. For instance, Ann Roberts, Steven Rockefeller's sister and past president of the Rockefeller Family Fund, told the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA) participants in 1992:

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

The Rockefeller Family Fund created the EGA in 1987 and today is made up of over 250 of the largest foundations in the U.S., including the various Rockefeller Foundations, Ford, MacArthur, Arco and Chevron Foundations, and Pew Charitable Trust. The EGA provides over \$500 million in grants for this agenda annually. Con Nugent, Program Director for the Nathan Cummings Foundation told the attendees of the 1992 EGA meeting:

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

As with Rockefeller and other like-minded people, Roberts and Nugent have a right to believe whatever they want to believe. However, it is obvious their convictions are born of religious fervor that is unlikely to be swayed by facts that are contrary to their own. Nor is their much consideration for the lives and well-being of others who their beliefs and funding may harm. This lack of concern was driven home in another session of the 1992 EGA meeting, when Donald Ross, director of the EGA for the Rockefeller Family Fund said:

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

These candid looks of the fervor of at least some major leaders and funders of this movement clearly illustrate the "take no prisoners" attitude that lead to the decimation of families and entire communities in the 1990s. This is exactly what happened in the Ancient Forest Campaign in the Pacific Northwest in the late 1980s and early 1990s. EGA members funded the campaign. It has also happened, and is still happening, in countless other smaller, less visible efforts across the United States. In one session of the 1992 meeting, speakers went on at length describing how they, along with



federal agencies, have spent tens of millions of dollars engrafting these beliefs “at every grade level and in all subjects” in the U.S. public school system. They also explained how they overcame resistance from teachers who had other worldviews.

At best, most claims made by foundation-funded environmentalists are blown out of proportion to their real risk. Such outrageous claims only serve to create unnecessary fear to con the unsuspecting into giving the organizations money. At worst, they base their claims on trash science and are patently false. Over the years the foundations and environmental organizations have spent billions of dollars advancing their radical environmental agenda in education, the media, lobbying, and litigation. They have even propagandized Christian churches. Steven Rockefeller reports that thousands of organizations have endorsed the Charter, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors among hundreds of other groups in the U.S.

Although most people do not recognize environmentalism as a religion, these well-funded efforts have swayed Americans, especially urbanites, into believing an environmental holocaust is about to destroy the earth. So much so that the July 17, 2006, cover of *Newsweek* proudly proclaims, *The New Greening of America*.

## World Summit on Sustainable Development

Implementing the Earth Charter is no minor task. Led by Mikhail Gorbachev, Maurice Strong and Steven Rockefeller, the IUCN heavily promoted the Earth Charter to receive “endorsement of the Earth Charter by the United Nations in 2002.” The UN’s endorsement was to be made at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Once accepted, it would provide the “ethical framework for a covenant on sustainable development.” Prior to the WSSD, Gorbachev, Strong and Rockefeller organized through the IUCN an international conference called Earth Dialogues. Held in February, 2002, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan



The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 was designed to accept the Earth Charter as the world’s religious ethic.

gave the keynote address. IUCN President, Yolanda N. Kakabadse told the Earth Dialogues attendees, “We must globalise a code of ethics and principles such as the ones contained in the Earth Charter to make globalization work for sustainable development.”

As the WSSD drew near, proponents placed the Earth Charter in a chest called the “Ark of Hope,” intended to be a modern-day occult imitation of the Biblical Ark of the Covenant, complete with carrying rods. Regaled in colorful occult symbolism, they brought the Earth Charter in the Ark of Hope to the Johannesburg, South Africa summit.



The Earth Charter was presented for acceptance by the United Nations at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. The ark is an imitation of the Biblical Ark of the Covenant adorned with a plethora of occult symbols. The photo on the left represents the reincarnation-based wheel of life in which all animals, including humans, are equal. At the instance of hundreds of protestors, the U.S. State Department delegation had the acceptance language removed from the final declaration just before the declaration was accepted as official UN policy.

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

...in the closing days of the Summit, the first draft of the Political Declaration – the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development...included in paragraph 13 recognition of “the relevance of the challenges posed in the Earth Charter.” Unfortunately, on the last day of the Summit the reference to the Earth Charter was deleted from the Political Declaration in closed-door negotiations.

With the failure to get the Earth Charter accepted as the global earth ethic, promoters of the global agenda had no justification for introducing the IUCN’s Covenant on the Environment and Development. Rockefeller’s efforts failed. Be warned, however. They will try again.

## **The Real Danger – Loss of Property Rights**

Interlocking treaties commit signatory nations to a pantheistic (earth is god) legal basis of governance, while the Earth Charter commits the world to an ethic system based on a pantheistic worldview. If the United Nations had accepted the Earth Charter, the IUCN would have advanced a previously written treaty called the Covenant on the Environment and Development. The Covenant on the Environment and Development would have forced every person, company and nation to reorganize their culture around the emerging earth religion.

The real-world danger behind the Earth Charter and the UN/IUCN/US’s vision of sustainable development is the absolute need for government to control property rights and free markets. This is especially true for The Wildlands Project. The Wildlands Project is an integral part of the UN’s Convention on Biological Diversity that this author and three others stopped from ratification by the

U.S. Senate in 1994 (See *RANGE* issues Fall 2005 and Fall 2006). The Biodiversity Treaty, however, is not the only treaty that derails private property rights and free markets. Control of private property rights and the free market is at the core of nearly every UN environmental treaty.

### ***Guiding Principle for the United Nations and US Federal Government***

That international environmental treaties center on the denial of property rights should not be surprising. Government control of private property has been at the heart of the United Nations since the May-June 1976 Habitat I Conference held in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Preamble of the consensus document clearly states:

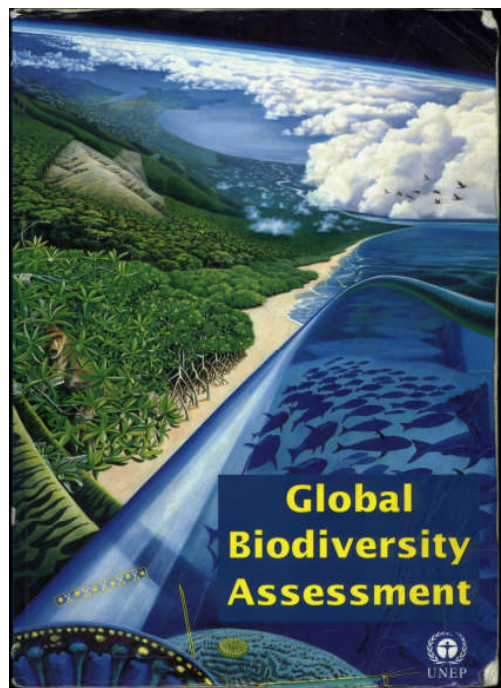
Land...cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principal instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore contributes to social injustice; if unchecked, it may become a major obstacle in the planning and implementation of development schemes. The provision of decent dwellings and healthy conditions for the people can only be achieved if land is used in the interests of society as a whole. Public control of land use is therefore indispensable...."

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

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

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

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



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

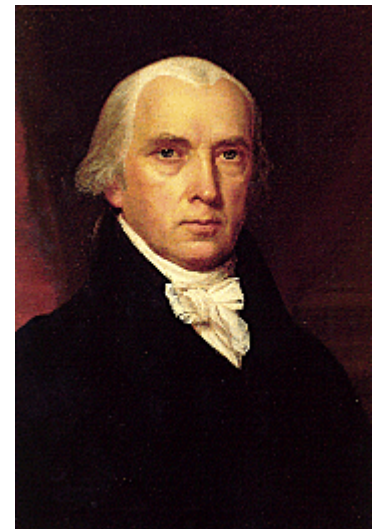
Former Vice President Gore's "reinventing government" efforts created this exact system of non-elected governance for the American Heritage Rivers Program, the Clean Water Initiative and Ecosystem Management Programs in the 1990s. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986, the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) initiated in 1993 and the Northern Forest Lands Study started in 1990 also employ this non-elected governance. Governor Nelson Rockefeller used the same model in creating the Adirondack Park Agency Act (APA) in 1971 in Upstate New York. Likewise, Congress enacted the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve Act of 1978 patterned after the APA Act. After reviewing all these efforts, it becomes glaringly apparent that the APA Act seems to provide the template for the IUCN's model of sustainable development for the entire world.

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

### ***The Importance of Property Rights***

The Earth Charter and sustainable development approach to governance is diametrically opposed to the concept of individual private property rights envisioned by America's founding fathers. Property rights, in turn are the foundation to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" penned in the declaration of independence. Laying out the historical evidence from the Magna Carta to the writings of John Locke, James Madison wrote in the *National Gazette* in 1792:

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



James Madison

The importance of private property rights is easy to understand; whoever owns the land (or water), owns the people. If the people themselves own the land, they are protected from abuse by government or their neighbors and are free to create a life for themselves – as long as those actions do not harm their neighbors. If the government owns the land or has the right to regulate it as they seem fit, the people are at the mercy of politicians and bureaucrats who are merely "doing their job," or bent on empire building. The former Soviet Union is an obvious example. It may surprise many that Madison

and other founders recognized that the greatest threat to liberty and property rights was a pure democracy. Writing in the *Federalist Papers* (10.21-10.22) Madison states:

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

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

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

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

Sustainable Development and the emerging green religion deny this critical freedom- and wealth-building tool. If their implementation continues, the consequences will be devastating.

### ***The Direct Correlation with Poverty***

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

The developing nations of the world perhaps provide the most striking example of how excessive government regulation destroys the wealth-building capability of property. In these nations, the simple act of legally transferring the title to property is extremely costly. It can take years, even decades

because of a sea of bureaucratic regulations. Few people have the time or resources to own property legally. This “extralegal” property therefore has no legal asset value.

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

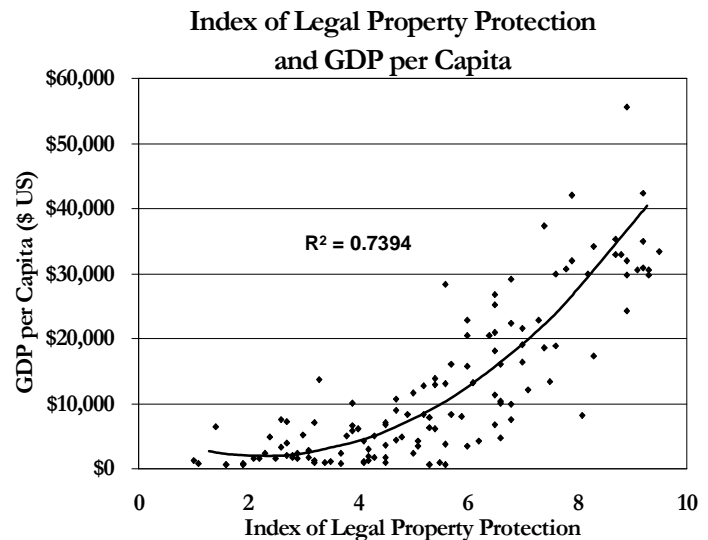
De Soto provides example after example that excessive government regulation breeds corruption, economic stagnation, and if sufficiently severe, poverty. Yet, the United Nations, IUCN and the international community are implementing sustainable development and the green religion. In turn, sustainable development and the green religion systematically prevent citizens in the third world nations from ever attaining the formal property rights that will give them wealth and liberty. Instead of freeing these nations, the United Nations is condemning them to eternal poverty.

Research done at the Fraser Institute of Canada also supports de Soto’s economic findings. Their research shows that property rights play the single greatest role in per capita gross domestic product. Impoverished Third World nations having limited property rights have less than \$8000 per capita income, with those having little to no property rights fall below \$1000. At the same time Western nations having legal property rights have incomes of greater than \$12,000, usually greater than \$20,000. The more regulations imposed by government, the lower the property rights index and the lower the per capita gross national product.

The contrast between the United States, Europe and the Third World is striking. The U.S. has some of the best-defined property rights in the world. CIA World Factbook reports U.S. citizens have a per capita Gross Domestic Product of \$42,000 in 2005. In contrast, the average for socialist Europeans is only \$28,100, and that for Third World Nations is less than \$8,000.

Joseph E. Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics and former Senior Vice President of the World Bank, identifies the desperate need for the poor in the third world nations to have property rights. Stiglitz understands that a free market system “requires clearly established property rights and the courts to enforce them.” He blames the international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for making the plight of the poor even worse. Only the transnational corporations or the wealthiest 10 percent in the nation’s population that invest in factories and business are blessed with property rights. It is the poor and middle class who must have legally protected private property rights to benefit from a market economy. Because the IMF denies the poor this type of protection by giving only lip service to property rights, they become the victims of globalism. The IMF merely creates the perception of property rights without requiring the legal structure that protects them in an equitable manner.

If environmental regulations encumber property rights, there is little to no equity, and therefore little to no capital with which to create wealth. Without wealth, a nation cannot protect the environment. A family whose primary focus is to put food on the table is not going to be interested in protecting the



There is a high correlation between the relative index of legal property rights and per capita Gross Domestic Product of nations. Source: Adapted from James Gwartney and Robert Lawson. *Economic Freedom of the World – 2005 Annual Report*. Fraser Institute, 2005. <http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/shared/readmore.asp?sNav=pb&id=789>. Per Capita Data from the CIA World Fact Book. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>

environment. Tragically, the very policies of international organizations like the UN and IUCN to control property rights and impose green environmental regulations in the name of sustainable development will keep impoverished third world nations impoverished so that they will never have the economic ability to protect the environment. Paul Driessen calls this eco-imperialism in his book of the same name.

Property rights, liberty and a healthy economy cannot long exist under the earth ethic/religious system advanced by the IUCN, the UN, most international/national environmental NGOs and now the US federal government. Sustainable development, however, does not have to be based on naturalism or pantheism. The concept of stewardship – the managing and use of resources while prudently caring for them – provides a valid ethic for conserving the environment. An alternative to the pantheistic philosophy of the Earth Charter and sustainable development is currently under development by the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance ([www.interfaithstewardship.org](http://www.interfaithstewardship.org)), Freedom21 ([www.freedom21.org](http://www.freedom21.org)) and others.

We are at a pivotal point in this nation's history. The United Nations/United States version of sustainable development and its accompanying green religion leads to bankruptcy and poverty. Eventually, it will lead to environmental deterioration. The Constitution's protection of property rights leads to prosperity and wealth creation. In turn, this leads to a healthy environment. This nation must choose which path it will take. So far, it is choosing the path to bankruptcy and poverty. ■

Dr. Coffman is President of Environmental Perspectives Incorporated and CEO of Sovereignty International in Bangor Maine. He has had over 30 years of university teaching, research and consulting experience in forestry and environmental sciences. He can be reached at 207-945-9878 or [mcoffman@adelphia.net](mailto:mcoffman@adelphia.net).