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Kurt Jensen

Warner Creek Blockade

Earth First! Fights Back

Bron Taylor

On a pleasant day in early July 1996, I walked a partially constructed logging road into the Cove and Mallard roadless wildlands in the heart of Idaho's Salmon-Selway ecosystem. By day, the road was deserted, but as dusk fell it sprang to life. Before long, new sounds rose to meet the deepening darkness—picks and shovels, crackling fires, voices. Parts of the road remained shrouded in the night save for sparks flying as metal met stone. Bonfires, fueled by wooden slash left over from trees felled to clear the road, illuminated the work under way. Suddenly I was surrounded by a supply line of environmental guerrillas. It was as though I had stumbled across the Ho Chi Minh Trail of radical environmentalism.

For over a week, activists had been waging war against this road, hoping to deny access to the loggers. Large sections of it had vanished. Metal culverts were cemented into a defiant fortress wall with a banner strung across demanding, "U.S. Forest Service: Straighten Up Your Act." Two tripods and a bipod, thirty feet tall, spanned the road behind the culvert wall. Barrels were cemented into the road, constructed with tubes into which activists could insert their arms and "lock down" inside, preventing authorities from releasing the locks without first using sledgehammers or cement saws. Farther up the road, huge piles of logs were stacked pick-up-sticks style. Some of the structures vaguely resembled log cabins, with barbed wire and yarn woven through the timbers in an effort to hinder workers wielding chain saws.

A row of spearlike logs, pointing skyward at thirty degrees, faced the expected onslaught of bulldozers. These logs were braced into a trench dug out of the road. Pagan symbols, such as a pentagram, a voodoolike straw figure hung in effigy, and skulls of animals atop wooden spikes, signaled danger to intruders. Infiltrated by the FBI, beaten, bombed, and burned out of their homes, their campaigns ignored or trivialized by the media, radical environmentalists were writing across this road a new chapter in their history: *Earth First! Fights Back.*

There is a striking contrast between what I witnessed that night and the earlier blockades of radical environmentalism. In 1983, several activists blocked bulldozers on a logging road in southeastern Oregon's Siskiyou National Forest with only a banner strung between them. Since then, activists have periodically locked themselves to the gates and equipment of logging companies and government resource agencies, spiked trees, and engaged in vandalism. But the resistance on this road and other Western logging sites since September 1995 represents the

crossing of an unprecedented threshold for environmental action in the United States. For the first time, radical environmentalists engaged in *mass* monkey-wrenching in their efforts to stop logging. They have decided that it is better to directly and illegally resist deforestation than submit, civil disobedience style, to arrest. Some activists privately suggest that the time for civil disobedience as a central strategy may be waning and should be replaced with a massive campaign to destroy the equipment of public land managers and loggers. This new philosophy of resistance is intent on making the loggers and their government servants fight for every inch of road and every tree. A new group, calling itself the Environmental Rangers, may be taking literally the idea of "fighting" for the forest and has promised armed resistance if plans proceed for a mine being planned in Montana.

The majority of Earth First!ers distance themselves from such martial posturing. But the resistance is intensifying. In 1996 alone, more than four hundred activists received training in nonviolent direct action at five "Ruckus Society" action camps spread around the United States. Taken together, these ominous developments raise provocative questions.

The Evolution of Radical Environmental Resistance

Earth First! pioneered many new forms of environmental protest since its founding in 1980. The flimsy blockades used in 1983 soon gave way to more creative tactics. Scenes of activist "tree sitters" perched aloft in massive redwood and fir trees, looking comparatively tiny above their long, illegally hung banners, and of activists buried neck-deep in roads to face off huge bulldozers, created a David-versus-Goliath photographic theater drawing media attention and multiplying supporters.

Without such lawbreaking, biodiversity and old-growth forests would not have become public issues to the extent they are today. Earth First! cofounder Mike Roselle notes that until trees were spiked (the most controversial act of "ecotage" employed during the eighties), the media showed little interest in anti-logging protests, and he plausibly argues that without tree spiking itself, forest issues would not have gained national attention.

It is certainly true that until the grass-roots radicals escalated tactics in the eighties, few among the public were aware of biodiversity-related forestry issues; even mainstream environmental organizations like the Sierra Club were strangely indifferent. Indeed, a high official with the Defenders of Wildlife confided to me that harsh criticism of mainstream environmental organizations by radical environmentalists shamed them into a greater focus on biodiversity and habitat conservation.

Yet by the early nineties, after the initial publicity surge these tactics engendered, the media began to focus more on the more radical tactics, sometimes labeling them "ecoterrorism," putting activists on the defensive. Consequently, it became more difficult to keep focusing public attention on habitat destruction and declining species. For these reasons, many activists concluded that tree spiking and other types of monkey-wrenching were counterproductive to their

campaigns, at least if they were regularly employed instead of used only as a last resort when other, less-controversial means of attracting attention had failed.

The media, always hungry for something new, also began to lose interest, and many demonstrations and civil disobedience actions gained little or no media attention outside of the immediate area where they occurred. When coverage was provided, it focused more on the protests than on the ecological concerns spawning it—perhaps, as many activists believe, because mainstream reporters generally leave unquestioned the growth-oriented ideology that drives deforestation.

Taken together, these dynamics left the general public, which organizers hope to mobilize, largely ignorant about deforestation and what can be done about it. Since protesters had succeeded in getting their concerns aired to the larger public through the deployment of new and outrageous tactics in the past, it was reasonable for them to conclude that they would only accomplish their educational mission by attracting media attention with new tactics or massive protests. Since time is short and arousing large numbers of protesters takes years of organizing, novel and even shocking tactics become an understandable, if not always effective, strategy born out of desperation.

During the same period in the nineties when it became more difficult to gain media attention through public protests, civil lawsuits filed by logging companies against protesters significantly reduced the number willing to be arrested and, simultaneously, the likelihood that the media would publicize protester grievances. These SLAPP suits (an apt acronym for *strategic lawsuits against public participation*) hurt environmental campaigns by forcing some of the most effective activists to defend themselves, consuming their time and meager financial resources. SLAPP suits also eliminate many middle-class sympathizers from the pool of potential conscientious lawbreakers, thereby making it difficult to organize mass civil disobedience. In recent years, potential protesters have even been exhorted to divest themselves of assets so they can protest without reservations. Such advice is hardly a recipe for mass action and does not adequately prepare activists for the harsh realities these lawsuits can impose.

The Stakes Involved

If retained as a roadless area, Cove Mallard would continue to contribute to one of the few forest wildlands in the United States that retains substantial interior forest characteristics. It would provide an important corridor for plant and wildlife immigration between the Frank Church River of No Return and the Gospel Hump wilderness areas. As a large intact wildlands within the greater Salmon-Selway ecosystem, it would contribute important acreage to one of the few remaining forests large enough that natural habitat disruptions (such as fire and windstorms) would be unlikely to cause species losses. Specifically, an intact Salmon-Selway would probably be large enough to support viable populations of many rare and endangered wild organisms, including gray wolf, pine martens, fishers, lynx, cougars, wolverines, otters, boreal and flamulated owls, bald and

golden eagles, the northern goshawk, chinook salmon, bull trout, and dozens of plant species. Moreover, if linked to the Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide ecosystems, as the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act proposes, the Salmon-Selway could significantly contribute to the long-term survival of the grizzly bear.

The Cove Mallard timber sales depend on 145 miles of new road to be built to gain access to two hundred separate logging units used to extract eighty-one million board feet of timber. The harvesting was to have taken six years, but after five years, only twenty-five miles of road and five million board feet have been extracted. At this rate, the timber harvest could take twenty-five years.

The delays have resulted primarily from lawsuits and direct-action resistance, which is especially remarkable in light of the remoteness of the area. The resistance has made these timber sales even more heavily dependent on taxpayer subsidies than the initial estimates of six million dollars, in part by adding hundreds of thousands of dollars in law enforcement expenses to the road-building and logging efforts. As of this writing (October 1996), there have been dozens of arrests resulting in over a thousand days of combined jail time for protesters. Activists hope that the Forest Service will be unable to sustain the effort, that the money will run out, or that court rulings or legislation will kill the project. "Even if we lose," one confided to me, "they won't try anything of this scale again."

This may be partly true, but if the protesters are right, there is no place left where a project of this magnitude *could* be attempted again. Opponents of the Cove Mallard timber sales argue that this area provides habitat critical for many species precisely because it is at the heart of the largest remaining unprotected wildlands in the continental United States.

Means and Ends

But what of the tactics being employed and considered? What are the ultimate goals of these activists? Are their tactics effective or counterproductive? Which, if any, of the tactics unfolding or under consideration are morally permissible in a democratic society?

Although their short-term strategy is to destroy and blockade logging roads, their objectives are more ambitious than such short-term goals reveal. A longer-term goal is to foster outrage at current timber harvesting practices that threaten species and to forge the way toward a sustainable forestry that does not erode biodiversity. Some also view their actions as part of an anarchistic assault on the industrial state itself, believing that a noncoercive and nonhierarchical society is required if people and nature are to be reconciled. Whatever their ultimate visions, the campaign on this road and at several other sites represents a significant escalation in the tactics and capabilities of the radical environmental resistance.

The Cove Mallard activists, for example, said that they were "Warnerizing" the road, referring to a blockade of a logging road built into Warner Creek, an old-growth forest in southeastern Oregon's Willamette National Forest. This blockade began on September 6, 1995, immediately after a district court judge

released the Warner Creek area for logging, removing an earlier injunction, indicating that he was compelled to do so by the so-called "salvage" rider. This law, tacked on to unrelated legislation and signed into law by President Clinton on July 27, 1995, exempted public lands logging from existing environmental laws and eliminated the public's right to challenge harvesting plans. It even mandated logging in areas that previously had been protected and where litigation was pending.

Warner Creek provides a typical example of the effects of the rider. In June 1990, after years of illegal delays, the Fish and Wildlife Service finally listed the northern spotted owl as a threatened species. The agency had been forced to make a decision when Washington district court Judge Zimmer ruled, in *Northern Spotted Owl v. Hodel,* that the Fish and Wildlife Service had illegally refused to list the owl under the Endangered Species Act. Another lawsuit, *Northern Spotted Owl v. Lujan,* forced the Forest Service and other government agencies to comply with the Endangered Species Act and other forest-management laws and to designate critical habitat for the owl after it was listed as a threatened species. In both cases, the judge rebuked the agencies for their foot-dragging, stating that their actions were an abuse of discretion, "arbitrary and capricious, and contrary to law." After these rulings, the Forest Service designated Warner Creek a Habitat Conservation Area for the owl, seemingly immunizing this watershed from logging.

Protection seemed further ensured after Washington District Court Judge William Dwyer's landmark 1991 decision in *Seattle Audubon Society v. Evans.* This owl-protection lawsuit was based on the National Forest Management Act. In his ruling, Dwyer declared that Fish and Wildlife and the Forest Service illegally and deliberately refused "to comply with the laws protecting wildlife" and concurred with the plaintiffs that the existing forest plans were not based on sound science; consequently, the government revised further its forest plans, dramatically reducing logging in the Pacific Northwest. The new plan, dubbed "Option 9" because it

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Skulls hung in effigy

was the ninth alternative considered, designated all but two thousand acres of the Warner Creek watershed a "late successional reserve" for the owl.

Grass-roots environmentalists considered the plan inadequate, but on December 21, 1994, Judge Dwyer upheld the plan as legally sufficient, a decision later affirmed by the Ninth Circuit Court. In choosing Option 9, the Clinton administration and the Forest Service claimed the plan would protect both the owl and timber jobs. Shortly after the passage of the salvage rider, however, their professed concern for the owl evaporated, and they resurrected plans to log Warner Creek. An October 1991 fire, caused by arson, provided the excuse.

The official rationale for the rider (and for salvage-logging Warner Creek) was twofold: It would provide timber-industry jobs and prevent waste by allowing the harvesting of dead and dying timber. It would simultaneously promote forest health by eliminating diseased trees from the forest and would reduce the potential for catastrophic fires by removing the fuel load. Although embraced by both the timber industry and the U.S. Forest Service, this rationale conflicts with contemporary forest ecology. Many studies have demonstrated that the presence of dead trees and fires are essential to forest health and that logging and fire suppression are the two greatest contributing factors to excessive fuel buildup. Consequently, such practices can be blamed for intensifying fires and thus causing long-term forest damage. Put simply, the "forest health" rationale for salvage logging does not withstand ecological scrutiny. Moreover, the bill allowed the harvesting of trees that were merely "susceptible" to disease—a huge loophole through which hundreds of logging trucks stacked with perfectly healthy trees drove.

As if this were not bad enough, the logging of Warner Creek would also set a terrible political precedent. By allowing arson to pave the way into otherwise protected groves, the salvage rider provided an incentive for pro-logging arsonists. Apart from all this, the very ecological reasons that make the logging of Cove Mallard ill-advised also apply to Warner Creek. Habitat fragmentation in the Willamette National Forest is already so pronounced that several old-growth-dependent species are at the brink of extinction, and further fragmentation increases the likelihood of species losses. Yet one can condemn the logging at Cove Mallard and Warner Creek and still legitimately wonder about the moral permissibility and political effectiveness of the tactics deployed by activists at these sites.

Assessing the Blockades

When the bulldozers arrived at Warner Creek in September 1995, they met what would soon become the largest campaign of direct-action resistance to a logging sale in U.S. history. The blockade began as activist Mick Garvin lay in the road, locked to a concrete-encased steel drum bolted to the logging road gate. The bulldozers turned around and left. Over the next eleven months, hundreds of protesters invested untold hours dismantling the road and preparing for the arrival of law enforcement personnel.

Among the most intricate obstacles was the *doghouse*—a long, human-sized horizontal tube cemented into the road, complete with small lock-down boxes

within it, and surrounded by a wooden blockade built up around it. This innovation was designed not only to prevent authorities from cutting the lock protected in the lockbox, but also to insulate the protester from the pain of compliance holds commonly used to force activists from their positions. It was also hoped that the doghouse would prevent law enforcement from seizing the activist's clothes, food, and water.

The effort and size of the obstacles placed on and in the roads at Warner Creek and Cove Mallard were impressive. But how effective were they? After a nearly year-long occupation, the authorities stormed the Warner Creek blockaders early on August 16, 1996. Perhaps because a rumored victory had put them off guard, the activists were taken by surprise, and no one had time to go to the doghouse. One activist had hoped that this contraption alone would delay the authorities for a full day or longer. As it happened, three activists farther up the road refused to unlock until 5 P.M., and then only did so when the workers began to bulldoze a road around them, threatening more old-growth trees. "Once the activists were removed," a blockader told me afterward, "everything else in the road was pushed aside quickly and very easily by a D9 [bulldozer]. It was hard to watch and not be sickened after all the work we put into all this."

Likewise at Cove Mallard, when the authorities arrived on August 7, 1996, in this case after a five-week occupation, it took only a day to arrest the five remaining blockaders and another day or two to rebuild the road. Certainly more than the "two minutes" estimated by a Forest Service official, but a few days, in the great scheme of things and after hundreds of person-hours of labor, is not much of a delay. With current techniques and activist numbers based on these and other 1996 blockades, it seems that the maximum achievable disruption by road "decommissioning" will be the stalling of logging for several days to a few weeks under most circumstances.

With these recent experiences in mind, I am tempted to agree with an Earth First! activist who said that she had prioritized education and legislation because "when it's time to lay down in front of the bulldozers, we've lost." This is usually true, but several times over the past fifteen years direct action has stalled logging while injunctions or lawsuits were won or political concessions gained. Such cases may be enough to justify extralegal direct action, given the importance of the ecological values at stake and the irreversibility of extinction. Still, this begs an important question: Is the amount of energy going into such efforts misplaced? This question becomes all the more pointed when one notes that while dozens of people were at Warner Creek and several other sites, environmentally destructive logging continued elsewhere with little opposition.

Setting Priorities

I have become convinced that the most successful biodiversity defenders are ecologically and legally literate activists (often uncredentialed) involved in "forest-watch" groups scattered around the United States. These activists monitor logging plans on public land, challenging them with administrative appeals,

threats of litigation, and lawsuits. These strategies are based on our current corpus of environmental law and often depend on ecological science or on arguments that the government has shirked its duty to provide it.

Forest Activists, especially radical ones, claim that democracy has been overturned by corporate power and that environmental laws do not work, which helps explain the premium they place on direct action. Such sentiments are understandable. Environmental laws did not prevent or significantly slow deforestation in the United States even before the salvage rider suspended them. Moreover, corporate power does erode and threaten democracy, even though it is an exaggeration to claim, as does one widely circulated brochure, that "corporate rule has replaced democracy."

It is also true that current biodiversity-related environmental laws are anemic and in jeopardy and have been seriously eroded. (The most important example regards the amendments to the Endangered Species Act passed in 1982, which allows developers to kill threatened species and destroy their habitat after they receive approval from the Fish and Wildlife Service of "habitat conservation plans" designed to provide long-term species protections; unfortunately, the Clinton administration's 1994 "no surprises" policy essentially locks in such plans, even if they are proved to provide insufficient protections.) There is also little likelihood our environmental laws will be prudently updated to reflect contemporary ecological understandings. Some environmentalists themselves resist efforts to reform these laws, fearing they will be worsened. It is an ironic reality, however, that our forests and the species that depend on them are now so fragile that our existing laws, scrupulously applied and informed by current ecological understanding, can still provide significant legal leverage. As William Alverson and others argue in *Wild Forests,* "the Forest Service already has ample statutory authority to manage for biodiversity," and public pressure is slowly beginning to budge the agency, at least in some of its domains, toward this end.

In two specific ways, then, activists should commit themselves to the very democratic processes that

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Metal culverts cemented into a fortress wall at Cove Mallard

many of them have abandoned as corrupt. First, citizen vigilance is needed to ensure that government and industry adhere to existing environmental laws, since these institutions have proved repeatedly they cannot be trusted to do so. This requires that more individuals gain the ecological literacy and legal skills needed to collaboratively engage in the kind of forest-watch activism already mentioned. There is far too much ecologically destructive logging going on with little or no public scrutiny, but it is simplistic to blame corporate "rule" and to lament the disappearance of democracy. The problem is not that democracy has evaporated but that too few citizens are practicing it and gaining the necessary ecological and legal expertise to hold government accountable. Of course, to deploy science-dependent and law-based strategies requires a studious temperament that often seems rare in radical environmental subcultures. Besides, protesting in the woods is (usually) more fun.

Second, activists should redouble their electoral and legislative efforts, in part because forest-watch strategies depend on adequate environmental laws. Sometimes the best that can be accomplished is thwarting efforts to weaken environmental laws. In June 1996, there were two important legislative counteroffensives that failed by only one or two votes. One would have repealed outright the salvage rider; the other would have banned taxpayer-subsidized logging. The subsidy repeal would have prevented a huge amount of environmentally destructive logging.

Even when legislative battles are primarily defensive, we should remember that the majority of Americans want strong environmental laws. It is facile to eschew participation in such political battles because corporations have disproportionate influence or because most green ideology disdains nation-states and centralized authority. The most significant biodiversity-related environmental victories have either been won outright or consolidated through *federal* legislation and judicial rulings. This is an inconvenient fact for those who view legislative and legal processes as mere fronts for corporate interests or for those who believe that direct action is the only or best way to fight environmental degradation.

Certainly corporations have too much power and enjoy absurd legal protections (for example, as fictitious "persons"), but it is inaccurate and disempowering to assert that they have assumed control. Such cynicism ignores how most environmentally beneficent law is *the direct result of grass-roots political pressure* and that it is popular pressure that repeatedly restrains efforts to overturn such law. Such cynicism is also self-fulfilling—if activists believe they cannot win legislative and legal battles, surely they will not. Anarchists and others who disdain participation in democratic processes fail to grasp that enforceable law is perhaps the last bastion against corporate greed. Rather than being viewed as an impediment to sustainability, the law should be viewed as an evolutionary adaptation uniquely able to bridle corporate power.

Conscientious Lawbreaking: Impacts and Necessity

I offer this argument—that electoral, legislative, and legal strategies are properly the heart of the biodiversity conservation movement—as an antidote to the per-

vasive cynicism I have found within America's ecological resistance movements about such processes. Yet, on the other hand, civil disobedience and other extra-legal tactics are also an important part of, and even *reciprocally related to and mutually dependent upon,* electoral, legislative, and judicial objectives. Conscientious lawbreaking has publicized grievances, educated and aroused ordinary citizens, and pressured officials to change the "constitutive rules" (by enacting administrative and legislative changes) by which everyday decisions affecting ecosystems are made. By drawing attention to forest management, such lawbreaking has made it more difficult for government agencies and the judiciary to render decisions inconsistent with law. And in some cases, it has provided time for litigation to halt environmentally destructive practices.

For example, the five-year-direct-action campaign at Cove Mallard has slowed logging and bought time for environmental litigation. The Idaho Sporting Congress began filing lawsuits in 1992; by September 1996, on the evening before they were to seek another temporary logging injunction, they had negotiated a moratorium on timber harvesting at Cove Mallard until June 1997. One of the reasons they were able to get the moratorium is that they had assembled strong scientific evidence against the faulty science being used to justify logging the site. Cove Mallard activists ardently hope the litigation works, in part because their energy and resources have been depleted by a SLAPP suit filed against them by Highland Enterprises, one of the logging contractors in the Cove Mallard sales. Sued for damaging road-building equipment during the demonstrations in 1993, on October 30, 1996, they were found liable for $1.15 million in damages.

The Warner Creek blockade, in contrast, bought time for a broad campaign that helped foster public disenchantment with the administration's environmental stewardship and embarrassed President Clinton for signing the salvage rider, forcing him to modify its implementation. A July 2, 1996, memorandum from Agriculture Department Secretary Dan Glickman to the Forest Service (which he oversees) demanded that the Forest Service document and justify the harvesting of live trees during salvage operations. (Glickman later estimated that his directive had quashed 160 sales totaling 650 million board feet of timber, eliminating 15 percent of the planned salvage sales.) Carefully read, the memorandum confirmed what critics had been saying: that the salvage rider enabled logging that otherwise would have been illegal. It also demonstrated that the resistance to salvage logging was having an impact.

The Warner Creek campaign similarly illustrates the potential synergy between direct action and other forms of political pressure. The Glickman memo immediately halted one of the two planned sales, and soon an outright victory was added when in August 1996 the government agreed to pay Thomas Creek Lumber Company $475,000 not to cut trees in the entire nine-thousand-acre Warner Creek watershed. Although the area has yet to receive permanent legal protection, existing environmental laws will probably be sufficient to prevent logging in this badly fragmented region that provides one of the few remaining havens available for old-growth-dependent species.

To underscore how grass-roots resistance, including blockades, pressured the administration to yield concessions, one need only observe how Secretary Glickman defended his memorandum to timber-sympathetic senators. The revised guidelines were needed, he said, to "prevent a war in the woods." Further demonstrating the political heat generated by the protests, James Lyons, the Department of Agriculture undersecretary overseeing the Forest Service, complained that his agency "is under siege and fighting for its very life." He also admitted that salvage logging had devastated his agency's reputation and urged citizens not to "demonize" it.

(Clearly, some extremists refuse this advice. Early on October 30, 1996, a group calling itself the Earth Liberation Front burned to the ground the Willamette National Forest's Oakridge Ranger Station, which oversees Warner Creek. Earth First! and other Warner Creek activists denounced the act, and one grass-roots group, the Oregon Natural Resources Council, offered a reward for information identifying the perpetrators. Activists with the Cascadia Fire Ecology Education Project lamented the destruction of scientific data they needed for their own forest-defense arguments and possible litigation. Yet unmistakably, a few activists, while denying knowledge of the act, privately condoned it, hoping it presaged the coming devolution of industrial society, apparently unconcerned about the negative fallout from such tactics and how it might even undo the Warner Creek victories.)

While we must condemn violence against federal employees and resist demonizing them in evaluating the moral permissibility of specific illegal tactics that have evolved, it is important to ask if resource agency officials have done their jobs in a scientifically credible way that coheres with environmental laws. Unfortunately, often they have not.

In fairness, sometimes this is because they have insufficient funds to conduct mandated research, which makes land managers inappropriately dependent on industry-commissioned research. But these officials often have had too cozy relationships with the industries they are supposed to scrutinize, and they have repeatedly failed to conduct or utilize the best available science. Perhaps the strongest evidence of this is when judges, who generally are reluctant to second-guess agency managers and scientists, have nevertheless found on many occasions that federal officials have violated environmental laws and ignored the best scientific data, as these laws demand.

The resistance campaigns at Cove Mallard and Warner Creek contributed to pressures that forced election-year concessions from the Clinton administration. To provide one more critical example, the battle over ancient redwood groves within the Headwaters Forest of northern California seriously tarnished the administration's environmental profile in the crucial state of California. While more than nine hundred citizens were being arrested in a mid-September demonstration (the largest number of arrests in an environment-related protest in U.S. history) and another three hundred were jailed in the following thirty days as the resistance continued in the woods, a government-brokered deal was announced.

Although the scientific evidence cast doubt that the deal would prevent species losses, the agreement did spare two critical old-growth groves from the axe and established a process for contesting the remaining acres. Despite its flaws, the deal represented a significant concession that would not have been forthcoming without Earth First!'s decade-long campaign of public outreach and civil disobedience. True to form, however, many activists failed to see any concession in the deal.

Many also failed to recognize how their direct-action campaigns contributed to other important election-year concessions—including President Clinton's September 1996 decision to designate 1.8 million acres of southern Utah as a National Monument. (Incidentally, this designation provided another example of how federal power can play an environmentally beneficent role. Clinton's decision was made possible by the 1906 Antiquities Act, which authorizes the president to unilaterally designate and protect "objects of historic or scientific interest." In the Utah Monument case, Clinton's decision was opposed by the entire Utah congressional delegation.)

Final Lessons from the Front Lines

Although the concessions gained in 1996 are, from an ecological perspective, inadequate, activists tend to exaggerate their defeats and downplay their victories. This is poor strategy. When Greens cannot acknowledge their accomplishments, they reinforce perceptions that they are unreasonable and can never be satisfied. It would be more empowering and effective to trumpet victories, however small, and seize them as an opportunity to educate citizens about why the concessions do not go far enough, urging them to join the next phase of the struggle.

Similarly, activists need not engage in ad hominem attacks on politicians or resource agency officials to convince the public that political processes and these agencies need fundamental reform. Nor should these agencies be abolished, as some radical environmentalists demand, as forest chief Jack Ward Thomas apparently fears, and ironically, as many anti-environmentalist sagebrush rebels would also prefer. More than a century of U.S. environmental history has demonstrated repeatedly how utterly dependent conservation victories are on federal executive orders, congressional legislation, judicial rulings, and, last but not least, law enforcement. Bioregional philosophies assuming that local people can better care for their places may be inspiring and theoretically plausible, but citizens concerned with biodiversity and sustainable human economies should recognize that before localities are empowered to care for the land, there must be a substantial deepening of ecological concern and literacy among local citizens. Dismantling federal control and management of wildlands would have a disastrous impact on many places that presently serve as a last refuge for endangered, wild organisms.

If the conservation of biological diversity demands that we take seriously electoral politics and legislation, recognize the importance of forest-watch-related citizen vigilance, and appreciate the political value of extralegal resistance, the question logically follows: Why should environmentalists expect corporations and the government to obey the law if they exempt themselves from

it? How can civil disobedience, let alone sabotage, ever be justifiable if, as I have argued, the prevention of species loss is utterly dependent on enforceable environmental law?

I certainly value democracy, and my respect for the potential and necessity of law has *grown* through my encounter with radical environmentalism and its anti-extinction campaigns. Yet I also believe, with scores of other nonviolent activists, that it is possible for extralegal action to promote respect for just laws. Moreover, I would also argue that the often-stated guidelines for conscientious lawbreaking—that it be carried on as a last resort and preceded by good-faith efforts to negotiate a solution or that it be undertaken under exigent circumstances to prevent an immediate and irreversible injury—certainly can be applied to extralegal tactics in defense of biological diversity.

Nothing makes more obvious a case based on exigency than the truism "Extinction is forever." One can always seek to repair damage that conscientious lawbreaking might do to our collective democratic life, but once species are gone, we cannot restore them or repair the ecosystem processes from which they have been extirpated. Along these lines—and informed by a clear understanding of the social forces precipitating deforestation and species extinctions—a strong case can be made that some environmentalists must resist extralegally. Although more people and movement resources should focus on developing the ecological and legal expertise to fight biodiversity-related battles in courts than has as yet occurred, not everyone has the temperament or talents for that kind of work, and there is a niche for all activists whatever their natural talents.

If the preceding analyses are compelling, then we are left with a reformist rather than a revolutionary agenda—at least if by "revolution" we mean an effort to rapidly dismantle existing political structures. A reform-minded agenda need not preclude conscientious lawbreaking or utopian dreams. Idealism can force concessions and inspire activism. But too often utopian dreams and revolutionary hopes reflect the very hubris that their proponents purport to eschew.

Radical environmentalists persuasively argue that ecosystems are too complex for humans to know fully, and they conclude that we should leave enough habitat alone to ensure that all life forms and processes can flourish. They recognize that when we must actively manage ecosystems, we should do so infused with a deep sense of humility. Yet many environmental radicals fail to bring a similar humility to political life. Political systems, like ecosystems, are also complex. If we refuse to conceptually sever humans from their ecosystems, political systems will be seen, properly, as aspects of these ecosystems. We would consequently recognize that, as with all ecosystems, it is difficult to identify and calculate which variables are most responsible and which would best be targeted to produce desired changes. Similarly, as strategically helpful as it might be to be able to allocate proportional responsibility for environmental deterioration, the ability to do so will likely evade our grasp.

Given the complexity of political systems that, on the one hand, are intertwined with each other and, on the other hand, are embedded in even more complex ecosystems, we should retain a humility about efforts to construct so-

cially just and environmentally sustainable societies. Through the lens of geologic and evolutionary time, we are here but for moments, and cannot be considered particularly important.

The overwhelming likelihood is that just and sustainable societies will remain elusive. What else could we surmise from history? Yet this ought not deter us from pursuing these goals. Perhaps with a deepened sense of humility we can view our participation in social movements more as Gandhi did, as experiments in truth, and perhaps we can see popular struggles as mutations within the planet's body politic that millennia from now may well have proven adaptive, yielding flourishing life on Earth. In the meantime, such an understanding could help us take ourselves a bit less seriously, celebrate the everyday miracles of life, and act with greater kindness to our comrades and adversaries. An environmental movement infused with such perspectives would be more creative, produce more effective political theater, and serve as a more powerful life force than if distracted by rage, simple answers, or utopian dreams.

Kurt Jensen

Warner Creek Blockade

Who You Gonna Call?

Grass-roots Groups Defending Cove Mallard and the Salmon-Selway Ecosystem

Alliance for the Wild Rockies, PO Box 8731, Missoula, MT 59807; (406) 542-0050

Cove-Mallard Coalition, PO Box 8968, Moscow, ID 83843; (208) 883-0898

Native Forest Network, PO Box 8251, Missoula, MT 59807; (406) 542-7343

Grass-roots Groups Defending Warner Creek

Cascadia Fire Ecology Education Project, 955 12th St., Arcata, CA 95521; (707) 826-3011

Cascadia Forest Defenders, PO Box 11122, Eugene, OR 97440; (541) 465-8971

Grass-roots Groups Employing Legal Strategies in Defense of Biodiversity

Biodiversity Legal Foundation, 2004 8th St., Suite F, Boulder, CO 80302; (303) 443-5518

Idaho Sporting Congress, PO Box 4264, Boise, ID 83711; (208) 336-7222

Missoula Ecology Center, 1519 Cooper St., Missoula, MT 59802; (406) 728-5733

Southwest Center for Biological Diversity, PO Box 17839, Tucson, AZ 85731; (520) 624-7893

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