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REBUILDING AFTER COLLAPSE

By John Davis*

Let's face it: we've lost. Despite decades of valiant efforts on the part of conservation, environmental, peace, and social justice activists the world over, the extinction crisis continues to broaden and deepen. Rates of loss in the natural world continue to accelerate at all levels, from genes to species to ecosystems. In the human realm, cultures, languages, and ways of life are being exterminated nearly as quickly. Our efforts to save the world may have slowed the extinction vortex, but countless life forms keep slipping away even as we stave off the latest assaults on our few charismatic champion species and communities.

Nothing short of a world-wide revolution could save the world now, humanity miraculously deciding all together that after 10,000 plus years of making our living by wrecking wild Nature, we must now base our livelihoods on restoring and preserving wild Nature, and human communities compatible therewith.

It is time for activists, teachers, and leaders to start plotting conservation for the apocalypse: exploring how to make conservation durable come what may. It is also time for those of us laboring to save the world to think about how to restore the world after the industrial global growth economy finally crumbles.

Friends, we can't turn this titanic ship around. It is already beginning to sink, and threatening to pull under with it everything not safely remote or steadfastly secured.

Far from this being reason to surrender, however, the imminence of industrial collapse gives us still more reason to protect every bit of wild Nature we possibly can. My thesis is not that we in the conservation and environmental communities have failed; my thesis is that forces largely beyond our control will continue wrecking the natural world, despite our defensive efforts, until the industrial economy collapses, and that we in the conservation and environmental communities need to extend our efforts, to expand and durably protect natural areas and other parts of a whole Earth through Armageddon and beyond. Drawing from three decades of work

trying to understand and end humanity's war on Nature, I am reluctantly concluding that people will not awake in time to avert catastrophe and that conservation efforts should stop assuming that the status quo will continue. We need to begin factoring in the likelihood of economic and social, as well as ecological, cataclysms.

The future is unlikely to be much like the present. For a time, it will be frightfully bleak. Some years back, even before the full implications of the extinction crisis and global overheating were understood, deep ecologist Arne Naess presciently said he was a pessimist for the 21st century, an optimist for the 22nd, and that's a view more of us should consider.

Climate will destabilize, rising seas will flood much of peopled and arable land, extinctions will cascade, wars will erupt over dwindling resources, plagues will douse exploding populations, and people wracked with fear will terrorize each other and turn to dictatorial demagogues as leaders to save them from a world out of control. . Few, if any, readers of this essay need to be told why we're losing the battle to save the world. With hopes a few outside our all-too-insular conservation community will turn to it, however, I'll quickly identify some of the reasons why the ruination of the natural world continues apace.

Why We've Lost

Population

We modern humans are orders of magnitude too many. With a few million *Homo sapiens* gently sprinkled across several continents 50,000 and more years ago, we may actually have functioned as a keystone species, disturbing natural communities just enough to diversify them. With six and a half billion people rapidly multiplying and consuming more and more resources, less and less habitat is left for wild creatures. If the conservation and environmental movements are partly to blame for failing to reign in industrial civilization, that blame should largely be focused on our failure to boldly confront the fundamental problem of too many people, consuming too many resources.

Every conservationist knows that expanding populations with growing appetites, employing technologies increasingly efficient at exploiting Nature, spell trouble for life on Earth. Yet the population crisis has become virtually a taboo topic, with few groups willing to confront it. Moreover, it is seldom considered that the sheer numbers—of people, groups, businesses, and other aspects of society—render vanishingly small the likelihood of accomplishing peaceful

transitions to truly sustainable ways of life. Yes, phones, TVs, and computers now allow nearly instantaneous communications with people around the world; but no volley of communications or team of performers is likely to be able to convince six and a half billion people that they need to change their ways and restore harmonious relations with the natural world. The human enterprise is way too vast and complicated to turn around. Nor would a turn of much less than 180 degrees suffice. For several centuries, national economies—and now one global economy—have been based on robbing Nature. Only an economy based on giving back to and restoring Nature could save the day now. Where are the messengers who could convince six and a half billion people of this? They are lost in the multitudes.

Technology

Another causative and self-reinforcing factor in the degradation of the natural world is mega-technology, technologies big and powerful enough to speed our exploitation of natural resources, technologies that tend to concentrate power in few and greedy hands. Scholars of technology such as Jerry Mander, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Andrew Kimbrell, Stephanie Mills, and Wolfgang Sachs have been arguing persuasively for years against the popular assumption that technology is neutral. Mander, especially, has shown that technologies predispose themselves in certain ways—too often, toward greater and more harmful exploitation of the natural world and less fortunate peoples. By now, most conservationists and environmentalists would acknowledge that automobiles, televisions, and pesticides have harmed the biosphere, yet opposition to these technologies is seldom heard, and the computerization of the world proceeds virtually unchallenged.

The "technological imperative" is taken for granted. Billions of people have become addicted to modern "conveniences." No critical review process is in place to carefully assess new technologies before they are unleashed on the world. Perhaps the most alarming aspect of mega-technology is how it has facilitated the concentration of information power in the wires and boardrooms of a small number of transnational corporations. Jerry Mander warns in his upcoming book on media megalopolies that most of the world's people now receive their news and their commentaries, and thus increasingly their views, from roughly ten huge corporations. Notwithstanding the supposed decentralization of the Internet, efforts to save the world will continue to run up against these powerful media corporations (oft now merged with resource

extraction corporations), whose vested interests are in converting natural and cultural resources into profits.

Myopia

Paradoxically and tragically, human nature predisposes us to focus on short-term rewards for ourselves and our families, not to worry about long-term or distant problems. Marvin Harris warned us decades ago in Cannibals and Kings that societies seldom if ever consciously change directions. For books on the extinction crisis that they are currently writing, colleagues Dave Foreman and David Johns have been combing the literature of anthropology, history, sociology, and psychology. Seeking reasons for optimism from these fields, they are finding precious little. We *Homo sapiens* are not inherently bad, not inevitably greedy, but we are creatures of habit and immediacy. Entrenched habits—such as dependence on cars, central heating, refined foods, and electricity—are very hard to break. Due largely to the influence of the afore-mentioned media, well-being, for most of the world's people, has come to be perceived in terms of material affluence. It is our nature to seek security for ourselves and our families, not to be concerned about the whole biosphere. Expanding people's minds and hearts so that they see security and well-being in terms of planetary health would constitute a paradigm shift that no subset of humanity is likely to have the power to produce.

Trapped in the System

Compounding the above factors in our losing battle to save the world is the extent to which we are all caught in the system (or at least think we are). Making the sorts of changes that would be necessary to reconcile our species with the rest of the biotic world would be very difficult at the individual, as well as the societal, level. Many of us have jobs that require commutes, family members needing medical attention or living far away, children clamoring for the latest toys, and avocations that make this crowded world bearable but exact a heavy toll on it. Sure, switching from gas guzzlers to hybrid cars, recycling, using energy efficient appliances, better insulating homes, and so forth are relatively painless steps to take us in the right direction, but we have not even succeeded in persuading Americans to take these tiny steps.

In reality, there is little if any evidence to suggest that internal combustion engines, firearms and explosives, biocides, or large-scale industrial and agricultural production in general

can be made compatible with the protection and restoration of biological diversity. A society at peace with the natural world would be small in numbers of people and rates of consumption and would be powered with muscles and sunshine, not motors and fossil fuels. Yet who among us is ready to renounce cars, airplanes, computers, appliances, and central heating? Who among us can, without greatly disrupting the lives of our loved ones? Bill McKibben noted years ago in his blockbuster book, *The End of Nature,* that it is one thing to call for factories to clean up their emissions; it is quite another to call for these factories to be shut down. Even among life-long conservationists and environmentalists, few are calling for such drastic changes; still fewer are personally making them. To varying degrees, we are individually and collectively trapped on that doomed titanic ship.

Looking Inward

To our credit, in the conservation and environmental movements, we are soul-searching as never before. The disastrous U.S. elections of 2004 have spurred a spate of provocative papers and talks by activist leaders and scholars. Carl Pope, head of the Sierra Club, has been delivering trenchant analyses of why progressives keep losing elections. Dave Foreman, head of The Rewilding Institute, has issued a clarion call, in his essay "Nature's Crisis," for conservationists to stand strong by their principles of protecting wild Nature for its own sake. The most controversial of recent papers is probably "The Death of Environmentalism" by Michael Schellenberger and Ted Nordhause. The "Death" paper is notable as much for what it does not say as for what it does say. It does argue persuasively that environmentalists have too narrowly defined their cause and that's largely why we've been unable to deal effectively with global warming. What they do not say is that higher fuel efficiency is not the solution to pollution, eliminating cars and factories is. Of course, saying this would virtually guarantee dismissal as politically unrealistic. How sad that destroying life on Earth is not instead viewed as politically untenable.

Some excellent new books are also challenging people to consider the fate of the Earth. E. O. Wilson's *Future of Life*, Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, Richard Wright's *Short History of Progress*, the updated *Limits to Growth: 30 Years Later*, are among the most insightful and informative in the Cassandran genre, yet none of these nor any popular work by a conservationist reaches the obvious, politically unacceptable conclusion: **industrial globalization is**

incompatible with wild Nature. Perhaps the closest a recent popular author has come to reaching this discomfiting conclusion is James Kunstler in *The Long Emergency.* His analysis of the perils of dependency on foreign oil and warnings about the impending breakdown of the oil economy are trenchant and convincing, but his focus is on human society. He mostly leaves for others the study of what industrial collapse could mean for Nature.

In short, I do not see the conservation and environmental movements themselves advocating the sorts of changes that would be necessary to make civilization compatible with wild Nature, much less making those changes in our own lifestyles, still less convincing others to make the needed changes. Conservation and environmental activists are doing great work and they should continue it—it will save many lives and alleviate much suffering—but that work won't be radical enough or broad enough to save the world.

Why Our Loss Is Not the End

Our failure to save the world, however, is not the end of the world. Gaia, the Creation, Mother Earth, the dance of Life—however we wish to describe Planet Earth-- will not allow one haughty member of its community to destroy all the rest. Mother Earth has been surprisingly lenient with her unruly child, but the increasingly erratic climate, stronger storms, spreading epidemics, and recurring famines foreshadow harsher treatment if *Homo sapiens* continues to misbehave, as seems all too likely. We humans will not win the war against Nature. We have done and will do terrible, unforgivable damage, extinguishing countless other life forms in our foolish quest for supremacy; yet still, I take as a matter of faith Jack London's immortal words: "The wild must win in the end."

This faith can keep us going, working tirelessly to save every bit of wild Nature we possibly can. The wild places we save today will serve as the seeds of recovery tomorrow.

This faith is not groundless. It is based on the durability, unity, renewability, and—most of all—the goodness of life. Even as conservation biology has been showing us the parlous state of the world's larger creatures, microbiology is revealing a whole realm of tiny creatures, from archaeans and bacteria to nematodes and mites, that remains relatively unfazed by the rampaging naked ape. Granted, the thought is not very cheery that after all the big cats and dogs and bears and whales and birds and reptiles and the like are gone, microbes will still be thriving. Rightly, we want a world with charismatic megafauna, as well as enigmatic microflora. Still, the

durability of two of the three domains of life on Earth, archaea and bacteria, should be some consolation for the loss of our nearer kin.

The resilience and renewability of life are manifest especially in those landscapes that humans have abandoned or allowed to recover after earlier exploitation. To cycle through the abandoned farm country of northern New England and New York, for instance, is to see Nature healing, rewilding, at a remarkable pace. Vermont has gone from 80% agricultural fields to 80% wooded in a matter of a few human generations. The regenerating forests are not as rich and intact as the original forests, but they do retain much of the region's native diversity and they do demonstrate Nature's powers of renewal. If humans can find the wisdom and humility to step back from large parts of the planet, wild Nature will rebound vigorously. Again, this is reason for securing every bit of wild Nature we possibly can, especially those pieces still of original, or primal, quality.

Making Conservation Durable and Resilient

Given the prospect of coming cataclysms—we Nature advocates need to be 1) giving increased thought and action to ensuring the protection of natural areas and their creatures come what may—through hell and high water, Armageddon and apocalypse; and 2) we need to be carefully planting the seeds of recovery, spreading good ideas that might help the survivors of industrial collapse rebuild in ways harmonious with Nature. While continuing our present campaigns, especially campaigns to expand and reconnect protected natural habitats, we should also be working to make conservation more durable and recovery more achievable. This longer range thinking and planning is ever more important in today's destabilizing world. In twenty-first century conservation, it may be unsafe and unwise to assume that the institutions upon which we've predicated much of our work will last beyond our lifetimes—or even *through* our lifetimes. When the walls come crumbling down, our conservation institutions, values and stories will be tested as never before. Here are some preliminary thoughts on preserving remaining pieces of wild Nature through the apocalypse and restoring much more beyond.

Durability

Forming strong alliances based on shared life-affirming values should be a top priority for all who seek a better world. In his next book, Michael Soulé, co-founder of the Society for

Conservation Biology and the Wildlands Project and one of those rare scientists who understands people and politics, too, will make the case for a lasting alliance of what he terms the "life-affirming movements," which he identifies as humanitarianism, animalism, and naturism. Michael argues persuasively that if the three main life-affirming movements join forces, we'll be unstoppable. Michael Soulé's call for not just acceptance of but active cooperation with other life-affirming movements is one of our great callings today. We need to listen to, talk with, share stories and values and find common ground with good people of other good causes; then we need to stand and defend that common ground, through the coming chaos. Tell what really matters to you, speak your heart honestly, the father of conservation biology tells us, and you will find friends in unexpected places.

Meanwhile, back at the range, forest, river, and lake, we must *save every acre* we possibly can, employing all the tools already in our belt and others we may add as we broaden our outreach. The remnant protected areas today will be the seeds of recovery tomorrow. Although we conservationists and environmentalists probably cannot save the world, we can save significant acreage. If we think long term and harden our protective measures against the forces of destruction, at least some of the natural areas we secure now will survive the industrial melt-down.

Every acre secured constitutes at least a small victory. Every shred of the original fabric of life on Earth is worth saving. Indeed, every wild place is worth fighting and dying for. Nonetheless, we need to set priorities, given that wild Nature is being extinguished at rates far faster than we can match with our land saving. Thus, top priorities should include these:

We must preserve, expand and reconnect all large roadless areas worldwide, and the bigger the better. We must protect the Earth's few remaining intact ecosystems: the boreal forests in North America and Eurasia; rainforests in the Amazon, the Guianas, southern Chile, Central Africa, New Guinea, and British Columbia and Alaska; grasslands of Patagonia; savannas of southern and eastern Africa; deserts of Australia, southwestern US and northern Mexico; remote mountain ranges, including much of the Andes, Himalayas, Pamirs, Alaska Range, and Rockies; polar regions; wetlands of Iberá and Pantanal in South America, and Okawango Delta of Botswana; coral reefs of Belize, Australia, Indonesia, and Malaysia; any major estuaries still remote from commerce routes; circumpolar great lakes; and deep sea ecosystems. Very top priority might fairly be given to the five great frontier forests—Canada

and Alaska's boreal, Russia's boreal, Amazon and Guianan rainforest, Central African rainforest, and New Guinean rainforest—and intact coral reefs and estuaries, as the lungs and nurseries of the planet. Still, provided the conservation measures are strong and durable, even a small preserve in a mostly humanized landscape may contribute to the ultimate rewilding of the planet. Especially important among smaller areas are the biological hotspots as identified by Norman Myers, Russ Mittermeir, and E. O. Wilson, of which thirty or so, comprising but a small fraction of Earth's surface, are thought to support nearly half the species in the world. These should be fully preserved forthwith, and the affluent nations should pay the less developed nations of the tropics (where most of the hotspots are) to do so, through debt forgiveness, appropriate technology support, training of rangers, and so forth. Also highly worthy of special conservation attention are sparsely populated or partially recovering landscapes such as the Great Plains, remote parts of the Pacific Coast, and the Adirondacks and Northern Appalachians of North America.

Closely related to the imperative of securing every savable acre is *enlarging and reconnecting existing parks and wilderness areas*. Ghost Bears by Ed Grumbine, Saving Nature's Legacy by Reed Noss and Allen Cooperider, Continental Conservation edited by Michael Soulé and John Terborgh, and Rewilding North America by Dave Foreman, are among the books explaining why and how we should expand and reunite protected areas wherever possible. These books and the Wildlands Project's regional reserve designs should serve as guides for present and future generations.

Another major step toward durable conservation entails *strengthening and better enforcing conservation easements* that allow continued commercial exploitation or that are not strictly enforced. Easements should aim for the highest possible level of protection—Forever Wild wherever possible—and should be carefully monitored and enforced, on the ground.

Politically difficult though it will be, another necessary step toward durable conservation is *closing roads* and other motorized access points and routes into wild areas. The surest way to keep an area Forever Wild is to forever exclude the machines. Roads bring off-road vehicles, guns, traps, pollutants, alien species, poachers, and other problems. In general, the bigger and less accessible a wild area is, the more durable will be its conservation.

A happy irony could be in store: As the industrial global economy starts to crumble, road closures may become more feasible. When money and fuel are scarce, maintaining remote roads

is a burden to taxpayers. Indeed, in general, much of the economic activity and infrastructure that passes for useful and productive in today's bloated economy may be recognized as expensive and frivolous, economically, as well as ecologically, as oil and other natural resources are exhausted. Such recognition could create opportunities for ecological gains, even amid economic ruins.

Emotionally difficult as it may be, another important step toward durability and resilience is *acknowledging our past mistakes*. Countless books have been written on the ills of modern societies, and we should heed the truthful of these (including works by Ed Abbey, Wendel Berry, Barbara Kingsolver, Bill McKibben, Stephanie Millis, Scott Russell Sanders ...). Much has been written on the conservation and environmental movements' weaknesses, yet much has been overlooked. Again, I contend that the conservation and environmental movements have been surprisingly successful given the general anti-Nature bent of civilization. We have not lost this war for lack of effort or intelligence. We've lost the war because we don't have the support or resources necessary to mount the resistance to stop the industrial juggernaut. We've lost because a few thousand—or even a few million—idealistic Earth defenders are not enough to halt, much less reverse, humanity's 10,000 year march against wild Nature.

Still, though it's not primarily our fault, we in the conservation and environmental movements do have some failings to acknowledge, if we are to engender better ideas for a better world in the future. As suggested earlier, these failings include neglect of overpopulation, uncritical acceptance of technology, and tardiness in recognizing the importance of working with people of varying backgrounds, and myopia. To these must be added creeping resourcism and timidity.

Many conservationists have increasingly and uncritically accepted the "working landscape" model of conservation. The notion that we can have our forest and log it too flies in the face of evolution, science, and common sense. To make conservation durable, and to rewild the matrix after the collapse, conservationists must honestly state what the land needs--huge truly wild areas off-limits to all commodity extraction and motorized transportation. Managed timberlands and rangelands may suffice as buffers in some places, but the basic green infrastructure should consist of big wild cores connected by wildways.

Finally conservationists today should no longer suggest that modest reforms will suffice. We should acknowledge that economies need to be fundamentally reoriented—from exploitation

to restoration—and individuals need to be infinitely more ecologically sensitive than we have heretofore been. Better gas mileage and more recycling will not save the world, and much loftier ideals should guide a rebuilding world. If we want biological diversity to blossom again, we must relearn to use our own muscles, not rely on dead dinosaurs. The survivors of industrial collapse will need to honestly assess what technologies, livelihoods, modes of governance, and means of procuring the basic necessities of life are truly compatible with the full range of life. Those ways that do not clearly measure up to such a land ethic ought to be abandoned.

Resilience

Bolstering the resilience of wild Nature is largely an extension of the work of enhancing the durability of our conservation efforts. Most of the suggestions for durable conservation apply also to the recovery part of the process, however far in the future that may be.

Emphasis in planting seeds of recovery should be given to identifying, mapping, and protecting the green infrastructure of a rewilding world. This should be the first big outward task of the survivors of industrial collapse, if it has not already been done. Better, we current day conservationists will complete the task before the crash, though a rapidly overheating climate may force modifications in plans. For current and future conservationists, the precautionary principle should be followed: In the absence of certainty, an area should be assumed to be ecologically vital; and the burden of proof should always be on those who would deny an area full protection.

Indeed, in a post-industrial world, the aim should be to rewild the matrix. The planning might actually be reversed, with people carefully delineating the minimal areas that they need to meet their subsistence needs and letting the rest return to wild Nature. In such a distant better world, the corridors become footpaths; and the nodes, human settlements and gardens. The green infrastructure would then be the wild matrix, constituting the vast bulk of both land and sea. Part of the process of completing greenprints for each region is calculating just how many people a region can support, while still meeting the needs of all the native denizens. We should commence these calculations now.

Of course, a better, wilder future world will be possible and sustainable only if good stories and sound ideas and generous values have been spread and adopted. These good stories and ideas and values, which we present-day people need to be planting now, would inculcate in

survivors and rebuilders a strong awareness of limits—particularly in terms of population, technology, and consumption. Again, these limits can be at least roughly calculated today, using information technologies that may no longer be around after economic or social collapse.

To plant these seeds of future recovery, a new genre of literature and other arts and sciences is needed, to realistically yet idealistically describe and depict what paths post-petroleum peoples might best follow. Yes, some fine ecotopian novels have been written, and plenty of works on the perils of today's dominant industrial global economy; but the field of prophecy is wide open. More exploration is needed to determine what forms of social organization, subsistence, economy, governance, law, custom, and habitation are truly ecologically just and sustainable. The artistic and other media needed to communicate such findings lastingly into the future likewise constitute new territory for most people in the life-affirming movements. In short, though we advocates for the natural world are already overworked, we need to add two areas of focus to our agendas: durability and resilience—helping Nature survive the coming chaos and spreading the good ideas that will allow human communities to rebuild more sensibly after collapse, even while Nature is rebuilding the green infrastructure.

Personal acknowledgements

Coming to terms with the unlikelihood of our success—the improbability of environmentalists saving the world—has been extremely difficult for me. I'm of the Earth Day generation: I distinctly remember my mother taking my sister and me to the first Earth Day, when I was seven. That event combined with my family's encouragement, supplemented by early readings, turned me into a young advocate for Nature. My determination as an environmental activist grew in high school and college, despite the severe blow of Ronald Reagan's election. Through those years, I remained naively optimistic that saving the world was a matter of good education. My faith in reason survived *Silent Spring, Fate of the Earth,* and *The Sinking Ark*, but it began to erode with *Sea of Slaughter* and *The Overkill Hypothesis*, and the erosion accelerated with *Song of the Dodo, Confessions of an Ecowarrior, Wilderness on the Rocks, Requiem for Nature* and other newer and deeper accounts of humanity's war against Nature. My grounding was speeded, too, by working with such conservation veterans as Dave Foreman and Nancy Morton, Doug and Kris Tompkins, Jerry Mander, Reed Noss, John

Terborgh, Stephanie Mills, Barbara Dean, Randy Hayes, and Michael Soulé, all of whom have dedicated their lives to saving the living world yet have been forced to admit, the ark really is sinking.

My coming to terms with not just the extinction of species but the extinction of possibilities was nearly completed after a few years of working in San Francisco and living in Mill Valley, California. If these well-educated and affluent people of leisure cannot be convinced to forego their sport utility vehicles, what hope have we, really? What happens as the billions of less fortunate people aspire to our living standards? What if the massive economic growth in China and India enables their peoples to adopt our unearthly ways?

I read the statistics and follow the trends on species extinction, deforestation, global warming, and the other modern calamities. The conclusion seems to me inescapable: The ignorance, indifference, greed, and poverty that fuel the population, technology, and consumption that are killing the wild world far outweigh the noble efforts of the few million people on Earth who care enough, know enough, and have enough to dedicate their time to saving this world. Industrial civilization is fundamentally at odds with wild Nature; and we would-be world savers have not the time or resources to turn it around.

Crushing as this realization has been, however, I've lately begun to sense liberation after depression, hope on the far side of collapse. My generation has not elected to save the world, sadly; but we can still help prepare the way for the world to save itself. Doing so means working still harder to save every possible acre, but also working more diligently and more hopefully to make sure this protection can survive the sinking of civilization. It also means spreading keen insights and wild visions in ways that may endure fire and flood, war and famine, collapse and chaos.

My generation, impressionable and hopeful when the first Earth Day brought environmentalism into the mainstream, has proven no more resistant to the trappings of industrial civilization than have been our parents. Nonetheless, even if we cannot abide by them ourselves, instilling in our children good, ecological, generous values will bear fruit, for the extinction crisis will soon be impossible to ignore, and the ecologically minded and informed youth of the late industrial world may beget the leaders of a rewilding world. With a little more help from us voices for the downtrodden, Wild Earth can survive—albeit, in a badly wounded state—humanity's sacrilegious war against other life forms, and then begin rebuilding, re-evolving, with

a much smaller number of people, who will be wiser and more generous if we alive today have done our work.

In the end, then, what we should do is all the good work and none of the needless consumption that we've been doing. Let's add to that work careful long-term planning to increase the odds that wild places and creatures and processes will stay forever wild and to ensure that good ideas and values and visions will likewise carry on through the crashing seas ahead.

I do not expect to see the world whole and healed, alas. I do retain hope that my nephews' children or grandchildren will be fortunate enough to see the healing well underway. To them, and others of the future, I leave this urgent plea: ***Be fair and generous to all life forms. Carry your own weight and that of your elders. Keep your numbers low, your technology simple, and let the world be wild!***

--Westport, New York, August 2005

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