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### *Biodiversity in the Age of Big Money Environmentalism*

## **Big Greens and Real Greens**

By MICHAEL DONNELLY

"The real history has yet to be written."

---Mike Roselle

**A**s a grassroots activist involved in the environmental campaigns of the last four decades, of course I'm going to be interested in histories written about them. Especially one that mostly comes thru, with one thesis-killing lacuna, on its promise to delineate the taxonomy of green activism.

So, I've read another one...and, I'm still waiting for an accurate, complete one that celebrates the victories and explains the defeats of committed citizen activists instead of merely providing hosannas to paid, non-profit professionals - of whatever genus.

Maybe it's a function of time and distance and real journalism - someday, we'll get a real history - but "[The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear](#)" a dissertation-turned-book by Douglas Bevington falls into the same sad mix of hagiography and self-promotion as one of his main sources - Kathie Durbin's beyond awful "[Tree Huggers](#)."

### **No Pay; No Count**

"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

---Upton Sinclair

In both books, the wrongdoings of the Big Green/Democratic Party lapdogs are decried and then the very same sins of the Mid-market Greens are not just overlooked, but deemed positives. Instead of telling the tales of the highly-paid green factotums in DC, Bevington tells the tales of lesser-paid folks in the hinterlands who suffice for "grassroots" to such authors. In either case, the interests of the institution - mostly a perpetual money chase to pay staff and rent posh digs be they in DC, San Francisco, Portland or some small town - come before those of any underlying protection campaign.

Non-paid citizen activists are nowhere to be found. An entire genus missing in Bevington's taxon. Yet, show me any effective movement - large or small - that consists solely of professionals; one that ever succeeded without the synergy of a mass of regular citizens rallying to the cause and paid staffers who take direction from the larger group. The top-down nature and utter lack of grounding in a wide-spread, active-participation, place-based citizenry is precisely what's wrong with environmentalism today and why we keep losing. Not only is a citizen underpinning missing; the professionals undermine, drive out or co-opt any such assemblage that arises despite them; usually taking credit for any gains the citizens have achieved. To the non-profit pros, the function of any "membership" consists of writing donation checks, swallowing/parroting false victory claims, signing Petitions and voting lock-step for Lesser Evil Democrats.

### **A Compromise is a Compromise is a...**

Bevington begins by noting that "The institutionalization of the nationals tied them to a process of deal-making that would sacrifice some biodiversity protection in order to broker political compromises."

He quotes Mark Dowie, "Compromise; which had produced some limited gains for the movement in the 1970s, in the 1980s became the habitual response of the environmental movement...These compromises have pushed a once-effective movement to the brink of irrelevance."

He then goes on to produce a tome that snarkily dismisses the No Compromise philosophy and Civil Disobedience (CD) efforts of the volunteer activists of Earth First! as not "influential." And, while spending considerable time on the Ancient Forest issue, he fails to even note our true grassroots Ancient Forest victories in the Oregon Cascades (at least Durbin deigned to give Opal Creek/Breitenbush one sentence in her "comprehensive history"). He then proceeds to celebrate a series of smaller groups that started strong yet went "mainstream" and fully adopted the Big Green trade-off game plan as their coffers and bureaucratic empires expanded. He does feature some who stayed true to their roots; saw others claim credit for their efforts, when not sabotaging them; and, ultimately withered or now teeter on the brink from lack of support.

### **Bio-Diversity Stars**

Much of the book is devoted to polishing the reputation of the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD). CBD is indeed a praise-worthy group. Almost 400 species have gained some level of protective status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to CBD's efforts. CBD is also the leading group in addressing carbon pollution and how it impacts species.

But as CBD has expanded from a few hard-core activists into a giant multi-million dollar budget group with dozens of employees, it, too has adopted the compromise mind-set. CBD not only has actively worked against the Zero Cut Campaign to end all logging on Public

Lands, it is now writing logging plans for the Forest Service, as are a number of the groups the author deems "grassroots."

CBD never was a grassroots group with a membership with democratic rights. It was and is a litigation mill – a damn fine one, but not at all an example of a replicable grassroots effort, despite Bevington's claims of CBD as future "role model."

### **Where have you gone, John Muir?**

Bevington features the John Muir Society/Project (JMS), an former insurgent group within the Sierra Club. He fails to disclose that he was on the JMS payroll for most of a decade, with salary paid by the Foundation for Deep Ecology - an organization with over \$200 million in assets and a pattern of giving huge seven-figure+ grants to big groups and the occasional \$5000 grant to grassroots groups - no unsolicited proposals need apply.

The author vastly overstates the import of JMS and mentions but completely fails to analyze the grassroots-killing betrayals of Jennifer Ferenstein, Charlie Ogle and Betsy Gaines, after they were elected to the Sierra Club Board of Directors as JMS-designated candidates.

He does recount the excellent efforts of David Orr, Chad Hanson, Margaret Hayes-Young and others in getting JMS Initiatives supporting Zero Cut on public lands on the Sierra Club ballot, with the second time garnering a victory. This made the Sierra Club, however reluctant at the top, the first Big Green group to call for an end to commercial logging; though the Club bureaucrats did/do everything they could /can to undermine any meaningful effort in that direction.

He also fails to recount the "mainstreaming" of JMS and the internal JMS purge that saw Orr and other "no compromise" activists ousted; coinciding with Bevington's own employment with the organization.

### **From the Spotted Owl...**

The book deeply covers the Redwood Campaigns of Northern California, including an account of the bombing of Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. He presents the facts of the bombing, but fails to delve much into any of the many theories of who did it and why.

As I was not involved in those campaigns, I'll have to take his word for it. But, given the sorry state of his analysis of the overall Ancient Forest Campaign in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) - which I was/am intimately involved with - I'd sure like to hear some of the actual Northern California grassroots' take on his account.

But, as I note, I was/am involved in the PNW stuff, though you'd never know it from reading the book, which gives me an interesting fly-on-the-wall perspective. So I'll concentrate on this major part of the book.

I was the VP of the Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC) when we elevated the issue to one of national concern. I was the plaintiff in the Cumulative Effects lawsuit, which was the first successful Old Growth lawsuit. The lawsuit led to the throwing out of the existing forest plans. For a piece heavy on appeals and litigation, it's amazing he missed this seminal event, as he did Dinah Ross' first ever Old Growth Appeal. Opal Creek champion George

Atiyeh, ONRC Executive Director James Montieth, my and many others many trips to DC to shame the nationals into supporting us (in retrospect, a mixed blessing) get no recounting.

He gets some things right. He does give Montieth overdue credit on a number of occasions. However he misses perhaps James' top strategic move – coining the term Ancient Forest. Bevington does note that Montieth was first to call for protection of ALL remaining Roadless Areas on Public Lands. This biodiversity necessity was met by the Big Greens with self-fulfilling bleats of "we're too weak." Too weak to challenge their funders or their Democratic Party cronies/future employers was/is the case. In my history of the movement, Montieth is the top strategist. That he was ignored and ousted is the movement's greatest tragedy.

Bevington also gives righteous credit to the Heartwood and Dogwood coalitions and their monumental efforts at protecting forests in the Heartland. The Zero Cut Campaign also gets a fair telling. But a long-time grassroots presence in DC, Save America's Forests (SAF), gets no mention at all.

### **The Green/Democrat/Foundation Revolving Door**

The author spends time on the Option 9 resumption of Ancient Forest logging and even gets many of the players straight on the arm-twisting that led to the dropping of the hard-won Injunction against old growth logging and the embrace of Clinton's Spotted Owl Extinction Plan. However, he fails to connect the dots on Durbin's hero Andy Kerr's movement-killing self-aggrandizing and the resulting morphing of ONRC from a democratic grassroots coalition of small local groups into yet another foundation front group with a self-selecting board of directors with a since-unbroken record of "deal-making that would sacrifice some biodiversity protection in order to broker political compromises."

As Jeffrey St. Clair has noted, ONRC, as a grassroots entity, is the poster child example of "suicide by grant."

ONRC, now renamed Oregon Wild, pushed hard the last few years for Sen. Ron Wyden's (D-OR) Mt.Hood Wilderness Additions Bill. Wyden's Bill designated some worthy Wilderness (though often out of areas that already had some level of protection), while, at the same time, in a classic case of "sacrifice(ing) some biodiversity protection in order to broker political compromises" contained a provision for increased logging in the area and a \$3 million subsidy to Big Timber to conduct the logging. Grassroots groups dedicated to protecting Mt. Hood, such as [BARK](#), opposed the giveaways, but were stem-rolled by the Foundation/Democrat/Green cabal and, like with the rest of ONRC's recent victories, vast areas of stumps were sanctioned.

In classic examples of the Green/Democrat Revolving Door, Jay Ward, ONRC, er, Oregon Wild's architect on the deal, moved on to a \$70,000 per year job as Sen. Wyden's Director of Business Outreach. Another ONRC staffer, Marcus Siegel was rewarded with a job as Oregon's other Democrat Senator, the invisible Jeff Merkley's Deputy Communications director.

The only difference between the Green/Democrat Revolving Door and the Resource Industry/Republican one is that the staffers that go from resource firms to Capitol Hill actually produce for their constituents. Though, I guess you could say these revolving door "greens" always have and continue to produce for their real bosses.

## Real Grassroots Success

The original ONRC took on Ancient Forests precisely because it had a board elected by representatives of the many small groups making up its Governing Council – small groups dedicated to protecting their favorite places. That volunteer board even refused major foundation grants when they came with policy-setting strings attached. In my experience, solely such democratic coalitions deserve the nomenclature “grassroots.”

While analyzing the strong-arm tactics of the foundations, Kerr and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (yep, “fund”) lawyers, there is no mention at all of how each of the eleven groups that agreed to surrender the Injunction and sign on to Option 9 were rewarded with six-figure foundation grants. He does twice mention that a desperate measure intervening to try and stop Option 9 was launched by John Talberth, Tim Hermach, Montieth and me (though my role has again been expunged.)

Talberth’s critical role in monitoring and appealing ALL timber sales gets due recognition, as does Hermach’s tireless efforts on behalf of Zero Cut. Hermach’s Native Forest Council (NFC) and its publication Forest Voice get acknowledgment, as well.

Mention is made, though not by name, of the Sugarloaf Timber Sale protest in Southern Oregon and Audubon VP Brock Evans’ - the one national leader who got it (thank Gaia for Brock!) – first-ever arrest for Civil Disobedience alongside of Earth First! co-founder Mike Roselle - around arrest # 35 for Mike, who was instrumental at Bald Mountain and Millennium Grove/Middle Santiam, which Bevington correctly notes was the first-ever tree sit. But, nowhere is there any analysis of how Sugarloaf was a “chickens-coming-home-to-roost” debacle as the local groups there were some of Option 9’s biggest foundation-paid cheerleaders. Bubba, of course, saw the weakness and stuck it to them (and more importantly, the Ancient Forest ecosystem) with his signing of the Salvage Rider, which suspended all applicable environmental laws in order to abet ever more Ancient Forest liquidation.

As I noted, our actual grassroots Ancient Forest successes, specifically Opal Creek and Breitenbush get no mention at all. The 500 people who signed statements vowing Civil Disobedience should they try and cut Opal Creek; the over ten thousand folks that George Atiyeh and I gave presentations for; the invaluable audio-visual presentations of Mark Ottenad, Tryg Steen and Paul Hanson; the unrelenting efforts by Susan Gordon arranging all those presentations and outings to the area; the volunteer trail construction work of Julio Viamonte, Dave Hunt, Tom Upchurch, Sheri Louvre, Gretchen Carnaby-Hall, Steve Spahr, Bart Smith and many others; Tony George’s seminal writings on Opal Creek and guidebooks to hard-won protected areas; Sue Nugent’s citizen botanical surveys of the areas; the Cumulative Effects lawsuit and the two blockades/2nd tree sit/60 non-violent CD arrests complete with photos of Leo Hund buried to his neck in a rock blockade that were published around the world, drawing international attention to the fate of our Ancient Forests - all of which collectively stopped the North Roaring Devil Timber Sale in the South Breitenbush drainage and led to 49,000 acres being set aside for Spotted Owls and other species - the most densely-populated Spotted Owl habitat outside of northern California; Freda London, Karen Wood and Marybeth Nearing’s CD trainings attended by hundreds; US Rep. Mike Kopetski’s staunch support for Opal Creek; the Opal Creek lawsuit; the Bill in the Oregon Legislature to protect Opal Creek; the Wilderness designation of Opal Creek...these people had other jobs! They still do. This was no stepping-stone to a sinecure on some green payroll. These were true grassroots efforts, literally involving thousands, and a roadmap of

how to win --- but obviously not as sexy as writing about the evolution of green bureaucracies.

## **The Eco Big Lie**

Bevington at least notes, though downplays the efforts of Earth First! He overplays the effectiveness of the now-defunct National Forest Protection Alliance (NFPA) - a worthy coalition attempt that never gained traction because it never got adequate funder support.

Worst of all, he underplays the severe cost of the worst of the sell-outs, the foundations' phony Roadless Rule – the eco-Big Lie which in my opinion did more to undermine Public Lands' activism (and still does) than any other neo-lib effort to date. Not to mention, it didn't establish a single inviolate acre despite wild claims of "Clinton saves 58.5 million acres!"

This Al Gore 2000 Greenwash, pimped by Ken Rait, yet another foundation toady recycled thru the ONRC shop, is still, a decade later, causing major harm and still siphoning resources. Some estimates are that this fraud has received over \$20 million in funding, providing permanent employment for lobbyists and attorneys. Yet, despite Rait's false protection claims, Roadless Area logging continues a decade after the "victory" and in-boxes constantly overflow with "Defend the Roadless Rule; send us money" bleatings. After declaring (a very hollow) victory like that, it's almost impossible to get the protection souffle to rise again.

A case can be made that the Option 9 collapse was made in naive good faith. But once that and the Salvage Rider were on the data chart, there is no way to forgive the Roadless Rule scam. When any green - big, mid-market, small or volunteer - says that they "saved" an area; the proper response is not elation, but, "Show me the acres."

## **Premature Obituary**

As Mark Twain once noted when it was reported that he had died, the reports of Environmentalism's death "are exaggerated." But a couple decades of reaping the results of cultivating a grassroots movement vanished overnight with the Roadless Rule "victory." ONRC, which once could fill Portland's Pioneer Square with thousands at rallies supporting saving Ancient Forests, now couldn't rouse a citizen turnout that would fill a phone booth for any of their recent trade-off "victories."

Bevington writes of Michael Shellenbarger and Ted Nordhaus, the self-promoting authors of [The Death of Environmentalism](#), "Perhaps if those authors looked only at the behavior of the national environmental organizations, one could see how they might have reached such a dire conclusion."

Well, no perhaps about it. And, in Bevington's case, he also only looked at the efforts of paid enviros, attorneys and funders (mostly not nationals, but certainly not citizen "grassroots" either) and bought a lot of self-promotional crap, so "one could see how" he reached rosy conclusions where none exist and completely missed actual victories. Or, like the magnificent physical and legal stand at Warner Creek, missed the true importance of such victories.

Bevington states he interviewed 62 people and lists them. By my count, only five (and that's counting Brock Evans) were on the front lines in the PNW.

### ...To the Polar Bear

Carbon rightly warrants a chapter and CBD's efforts to combat it are detailed. Right now the two biggest threats to biodiversity are mining/burning of coal and Biomass - burning forests to make electricity. Pretty much any group that has any foundation grant funding is on board promoting Biomass. And, they are doing it in the name of combating atmospheric carbon!

You'll find little opposition from the foundation-dependent groups to burning our forests for electrons - 13,000 tons per megawatt plus more carbon output than any other fuel source - in their rhetoric and on their groups' websites. But you will find deceptive tracts claiming such burning is "renewable" and, even more ludicrous, "carbon neutral."

While the book notes that all the various stump-creation models of "Forestry" combined are the "second -largest source of carbon emissions globally," and it spends worthy time debunking Carbon Trading schemes, it never does address Biomass. Yet, the foundation greens can't support tree-removal for Biomass fast enough. Using reasons proven false by scientists at Big Timber U - Oregon State! of "thinning for biodiversity" and "thinning to prevent wildfire" as rationales coupled with the carbon neutral lie, the foundations have forced support for Biomass on their grant recipients; not unlike the Option 9 stump-creation debacle.

Big Timber firms also know a new gravy train when they see one and, facing little demand for saw timber given the Recession, are leaping to rebrand themselves "renewable/sustainable" as they race to build more Biomass electricity burners and collect the considerable tax credits that go along with this "renewable energy" scam. Recently, we were treated to the spectacle of a now revolved to his preferred habitat in DC Kerr, ONRC, the Democrats, the foundations AND Big Timber lovefest announcing a plan to "save" what little remains of the Eastside Oregon old growth forests and "fire-proof" the forest with massive thinning consigning any tree under 21 inches in diameter to the [Biomass burners](#).

In wording virtually identical to the Salvage Rider, existing laws are suspended in the efforts to "get out the 'new' cut." One has to slog to page 59 of the proposed legislation to find that it's really all about Biomass: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law (including regulations) relating to the use of biomass energy, in accordance with each purpose and goal of this Act, and any applicable recommendation of the advisory panel, the Secretary shall take such actions as are necessary to further enhance the use of woody biomass in the covered area." --- said covered area being all of Eastern Oregon.

Immediately, the massively-polluting Boardman coal-fired steam electricity plant announced plans to [add forests to the fuel mix](#), gaining tax credits and sham carbon emissions drops. A [trees-to-ethanol plant](#), subsidized of course, is also proposed next to the Boardman power plant.

Even Al Gore addressed the fallacy of "thinning to prevent wildfire and insect outbreaks" at a Congressional Hearing on Biomass earlier this year. As Big Timber's Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR) touted the benefits of such thinning and demanded "renewable" tax credit designation for using the resulting "product" for Biomass burners in his District (read: the Boardman Plant), Gore rebutted: "In Canada, they have this kind of management approach, and yet their forests are being devastated (by fires and insects). I think the record of what's happened when (forests have) been opened up in the past has given a lot of people pause."

In another example of the Green/Democrat Revolving Door, Jeremiah Baumann arrived from DC in 2005 for a job with Environment Oregon (OSPIRG). The job consisted of pushing a "Renewable Energy" standard thru the Oregon Legislature. The Bill passed requiring Oregon to obtain 25% of its energy from "renewables" by 2025.

This has led to a massive \$200+ million state tax subsidy program for Wind, Solar and Biomass power, over 40 times what Baumann assured the Legislature it would cost, which led to a recent rollback of the tax subsidies. Not only have a number of aides of lame duck Oregon Democratic Governor Ted Kulongoski been rewarded with jobs with the very wind power firms the governor shoveled tax money to; Baumann, himself, garnered a job as Sen. Merkley's Energy and environment Advisor.

The foundation greens - large and small - are as dead wrong on Biomass as they are on Carbon Trading; yep, if the Democrats/Funders support it, then they support it, too. You'd be hard-pressed to find a volunteer environmentalist who supports either. My documentary film-maker/musician buddy Jeff Gibbs has written the [definitive piece](#) on this scourge.

### **The New Grassroots**

In the face of the "carbon crisis," Bevington predicts a rise in new grassroots groups to combat it - though he mistakenly believes they should look to CBD as model. Already new grassroots groups, such as [Rising Tide](#), have come forth to combat Biomass and Carbon pollution; Roselle and [many others](#) are taking on Big Coal. As you read this, dozens of activists are gathered in West Virginia putting their lives on the line against the abomination of Mountaintop Removal coal extraction. I look to these young anti-Biomass/anti-Carbon Trading/anti-coal/pro-biodiversity activists as the future. This the New Movement. It may be too late for Spotted Owls, but if these new grassroots can somehow avoid being defanged by the Foundation/Big Greens and stay true to the cause and make the institutions that spring up around it work for a greater whole; polar bears and many other species, and yes homo sapiens, may just have a fighting chance.

In the end, this book is hit and miss. Like Shellenbarger and Nordhaus' book, at times it seems part echo chamber/part job application. I'm pleased that the author didn't just regurgitate Durbin's Kerr hagiography as movement history. But, I certainly wish he (or his dissertation committee) had noticed how his lack of non-paid sources skewed his "history." As a sociologist, he missed the way salary concerns and self-promotionalism undermines entire movements - big, medium or little. Upton Sinclair didn't.

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