

CHAPTER 1



STRATEGIC MONKEYWRENCHING

By Dave Foreman

In early summer of 1977, the United States Forest Service began an 18 month-long inventory and evaluation of the remaining roadless and undeveloped areas on the National Forests and Grasslands of the United States. During this second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II), the Forest Service identified 2,686 roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more totaling 66 million acres out of the 187 million acres of National Forest lands. Approximately 15 million acres of roadless areas were not included in RARE II because of sloppy inventory procedures or because they had already gone through land use planning after the first RARE program in the early '70s. All in all, there were some 80 million acres on the National Forests in 1977 retaining a significant degree of natural diversity and wildness (a total area equivalent in size to the state of New Mexico or a square 350 x 350 miles).

About the same time as the Forest Service began RARE II, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) initiated a wilderness inventory as required by the Federal Land Planning and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) on the 189 mil-

lion acres of federal land that they manage in the lower 48 states. In their initial inventory, BLM identified 60 million acres of roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more (a total area approximately the size of Oregon or a square 300 x 300 miles).

Along with the National Parks and Monuments, National Wildlife Refuges, existing Wilderness Areas, and some state lands, these Forest Service and BLM roadless areas represent the remaining natural wealth of the United States (though much of the roadless acreage inventoried in the 1970s has been butchered). They are the remnant of natural diversity after the industrial conquest of the most beautiful, diverse, and productive of all the continents of the Earth: North America. Turtle Island.

Only 150 years ago, the Great Plains were a vast, waving sea of grass stretching from the Chihuahuan Desert of Mexico to the boreal forest of Canada, from the oak-hickory forests of the Ozarks to the Rocky Mountains. Bison blanketed the plains—it has been estimated that 60 million of the huge, shaggy beasts moved across the grassy ocean in seasonal migrations. Throngs of Pronghorn and Elk also filled this Pleistocene landscape. Packs of Gray Wolves and numerous Grizzly Bears followed the tremendous herds.

In 1830, John James Audubon sat on the banks of the Ohio River for three days as a single flock of Passenger Pigeons darkened the sky from horizon to horizon. He estimated that there were several *billion* birds in that flock. It has been said that a squirrel could travel from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi River without touching the ground so dense was the deciduous forest of the East.

At the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, an estimated 100,000 Grizzlies roamed the western half of what is now the United States. The howl of the wolf was ubiquitous. The California Condor sailed the sky from the Pacific Coast to the Great Plains. Salmon and sturgeon populated the rivers. Ocelots, Jaguars, and Jaguarundis prowled the Texas brush and Southwestern mountains and mesas. Bighorn Sheep ranged the mountains of the Rockies, the Great Basin, the Southwest, and the Pacific Coast. Ivory-billed Woodpeckers and Carolina Parakeets filled the steamy forests of the Deep South. The land was alive.

East of the Mississippi, giant Tulip Poplars, American Chestnuts, oaks, hickories, and other trees formed the most diverse temperate deciduous forest in the world. In New England, White Pines grew to heights rivaling the Brobdignagian conifers of the far West. On the Pacific Coast, redwood, hemlock, Douglas-fir, spruce, cedar, fir, and pine formed the grandest forest on Earth.

In the space of a few generations we have laid waste to paradise. The Tallgrass Prairie has been transformed into a corn factory where wildlife means the exotic pheasant. The Shortgrass Prairie is a grid of carefully fenced cow pastures and wheatfields. The Passenger Pigeon is no more; the last one died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. The endless forests of the East are tame woodlots. With few exceptions, the only virgin deciduous forest there is in tiny museum pieces of hundreds of acres. Fewer than one thousand Grizzlies remain. The

Strategic Monkeywrenching

At least three condors left in the wild were captured and imprisoned in the Los Angeles Zoo. (An expensive reintroduction effort has since been started.) Except in northern Minnesota and northwestern Montana, wolves are known as scattered individuals drifting across the Canadian and Mexican borders. Four percent of the peerless Redwood Forest remains and the ancient forests of Oregon are all but gone. The tropical cats have been shot and poisoned from our Southwestern borderlands. The subtropical Eden of Florida has been transmogrified into hotels and citrus orchards. Domestic cattle have grazed here and radically altered the composition of the grassland communities of the West, displacing Elk, Moose, Bighorn Sheep, and Pronghorn and leading to the virtual extermination of Grizzly Bear, Gray Wolf, Cougar, and other "varmints." Dams choke most of the continent's rivers and streams.

Nonetheless, wildness and natural diversity remain. There are a few scattered grasslands ungrazed, stretches of free-flowing river, thousand-year-old forests, Eastern woodlands growing back to forest and reclaiming past roads, Grizzlies and wolves and lions and Wolverines and Bighorn and Moose roaming the backcountry; hundreds of square miles that have never known the imprint of a tire, the bite of a drill, the rip of a 'dozer, the cut of a saw, the smell of gasoline.

These are the places that hold North America together, that contain the genetic information of life, that represent sanity in a whirlwind of madness.

In January of 1979, the Forest Service announced the results of RARE II: Of 80 million acres of undeveloped lands on the National Forests, only 15 million acres were recommended for protection against logging, road building, and other developments. In the big-tree state of Oregon, for example, only 370,000 acres were proposed for Wilderness protection out of 4.5 million acres of roadless, uncut forest lands. Of the areas nationally slated for protection, most were too high, too dry, too cold, too steep to offer much in the way of "resources" to the loggers, miners, and graziers. Most roadless old-growth forest was allocated to the sawmill. Important Grizzly habitat in the Northern Rockies was tossed to the oil industry and the loggers. Off-road-vehicle derbies and the landed gentry of the livestock industry won out in the Southwest and Great Basin.

During the early 1980s, the Forest Service developed its DARN (Development Activities in Roadless Non-selected) list, outlining specific projects in particular roadless areas. DARN's implications are staggering. The list is evidence that the leadership of the United States Forest Service consciously and deliberately sat down and asked themselves, "How can we keep from being plagued by conservationists and their damned wilderness proposals? How can we insure that we'll never have to do another RARE?" Their solution was simple: Get rid of the roadless areas. In its earliest form, DARN projected nine thousand miles of road, one and a half million acres of timber cuts, 7 million acres of oil and gas leases in National Forest RARE II areas before 1987. More recent figures from the Forest Service are far more disturbing: *The agency plans over half a million miles of new road, and up to 100,000 miles*

of this will be in roadless areas! In most cases, the damaged acreage will be far greater than the acreage stated, because the roads are designed to split undeveloped areas in half, and timber sales are engineered to take place in the center of roadless areas, thereby devastating the biological integrity of the larger area. The great roadless areas so critical to the maintenance of natural diversity will soon be gone. Species dependent on old growth and large wild areas will be shoved to the brink of extinction.

The BLM Wilderness Review has been a similar process of attrition. It is unlikely that more than 9 million acres will be designated as Wilderness out of the 60 million with which the review began. Again, it is the more scenic but biologically less rich areas that will be proposed for protection.

By 1990, Congress had passed legislation designating minimal National Forest Wilderness acreages for most states (generally only slightly larger than the pitiful RARE II recommendations and concentrating on "rocks and ice" instead of crucial forested lands). In the next few years, similar picayune legislation for National Forest Wilderness in the remaining states (Montana and Idaho) and for BLM Wilderness will probably be enacted. The other roadless areas will be eliminated from consideration. National Forest Management Plans emphasizing industrial logging, grazing, mineral and energy development, road building, and motorized recreation will be implemented. Conventional means of protecting these millions of acres of wild country will largely dissipate. Judicial and administrative appeals for their protection will be closed off. Congress will turn a deaf ear to requests for additional Wildernesses so soon after disposing of the thorny issue. Political lobbying by conservation groups to protect endangered wildlands will cease to be effective. And in half a decade, the saw, dozer, and drill will devastate most of what is unprotected. The battle for wilderness will be over. Perhaps 3 percent of the United States will be more or less protected and it will be open season on the rest. Unless . . .

Many of the projects that will destroy roadless areas are economically marginal. For example, some Forest Service employees say that the construction costs for a low figure of 35,000 miles of roads in currently roadless areas will exceed \$3 billion, while the timber to which they will provide access is worth less than \$500 million. It is costly for the Forest Service, the BLM, timber companies, oil companies, mining companies, and others to scratch out the "resources" in these last wild areas. It is expensive to maintain the necessary infrastructure of roads for the exploitation of wildlands. The cost of repairs, the hassle, the delay, and the downtime may just be too much for the bureaucrats and exploiters to accept if a widely-dispersed, unorganized, strategic movement of resistance spreads across the land.

It is time for women and men, individually and in small groups, to act heroically in defense of the wild, to put a monkeywrench into the gears of the machine that is destroying natural diversity. Though illegal, this strategic monkeywrenching can be safe, easy, fun, and—most important—effective in stopping timber cutting, road building, overgrazing, oil and gas exploration, mining, dam building, powerline construction, off-road-vehicle use, trapping,

ski area development, and other forms of destruction of the wilderness, as well as cancerous suburban sprawl.

But it must be strategic, it must be thoughtful, it must be deliberate in order to succeed. Such a campaign of resistance would adhere to the following principles:

MONKEYWRENCHING IS NONVIOLENT

Monkeywrenching is nonviolent resistance to the destruction of natural diversity and wilderness. It is never directed against human beings or other forms of life. It is aimed at inanimate machines and tools that are destroying life. Care is always taken to minimize any possible threat to people, including the monkeywrenchers themselves.

MONKEYWRENCHING IS NOT ORGANIZED

There should be no central direction or organization to monkeywrenching. Any type of network would invite infiltration, agents provocateurs, and repression. It is truly individual action. Because of this, communication among monkeywrenchers is difficult and dangerous. Anonymous discussion through this book and its future editions seems to be the safest avenue of communication to refine techniques, security procedures, and strategy.

MONKEYWRENCHING IS INDIVIDUAL

Monkeywrenching is done by individuals or very small groups of people who have known each other for years. Trust and a good working relationship are essential in such groups. The more people involved, the greater the dangers of infiltration or a loose mouth. Monkeywrenchers avoid working with people they haven't known for a long time, those who can't keep their mouths closed, and those with grandiose or violent ideas (they may be police agents or dangerous crackpots).

MONKEYWRENCHING IS TARGETED

Ecodefenders pick their targets. Mindless, erratic vandalism is counterproductive as well as unethical. Monkeywrenchers know that they do not stop a specific logging sale by destroying any piece of logging equipment they come across. They make sure it belongs to the real culprit. They ask themselves what is the most vulnerable point of a wilderness-destroying project, and strike there. Senseless vandalism leads to loss of popular sympathy.

MONKEYWRENCHING IS TIMELY

There are proper times and places for monkeywrenching. There are also times when monkeywrenching may be counterproductive. Monkeywrenchers generally should not act when there is a nonviolent civil disobedience action—e.g., a blockade—taking place against the opposed project. Monkeywrenching may cloud the issue of direct action, and the blockaders could be blamed for the ecotage and be put in danger from the work crew or police. Blockades

and monkeywrenching usually do not mix. Monkeywrenching may also not be appropriate when delicate political negotiations are taking place for the protection of a certain area. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. The Earth warrior always asks, Will monkeywrenching help or hinder the protection of the place?

MONKEYWRENCHING IS DISPERSED

Monkeywrenching is a widespread movement across the United States. Government agencies and wilderness despoilers from Maine to Hawaii know that their destruction of natural diversity may be resisted. Nationwide monkeywrenching will hasten overall industrial retreat from wild areas.

MONKEYWRENCHING IS DIVERSE

All kinds of people, in all kinds of situations, can be monkeywrenchers. Some pick a large area of wild country, declare it wilderness in their own minds and resist any intrusion into it. Others specialize against logging or ORVs in a variety of areas. Certain monkeywrenchers may target a specific project such as a giant powerline, a road under construction, or an oil operation. Some operate in their backyards, while others lie low at home and plan their ecotage a thousand miles away. Some are loners, and others operate in small groups. Even Republicans monkeywrench.

MONKEYWRENCHING IS FUN

Although it is serious and potentially dangerous, monkeywrenching is also fun. There is a rush of excitement, a sense of accomplishment, and unparalleled camaraderie from creeping about in the night resisting those "alien forces" from Houston, Tokyo, Washington, DC, and the Pentagon." As Ed Abbey said, "Enjoy, shipmates, enjoy."

MONKEYWRENCHING IS NOT REVOLUTIONARY

Monkeywrenchers do not aim to overthrow any social, political, or economic system. Monkeywrenching is merely nonviolent self-defense of the wild. It is aimed at keeping industrial civilization out of natural areas and causing industry's retreat from areas that should be wild. It is not major industrial sabotage. Explosives, firearms, and other dangerous tools are usually avoided; they invite greater scrutiny from law enforcement agencies, repression, and loss of public support.

MONKEYWRENCHING IS SIMPLE

The simplest possible tool is used. The safest tactic is employed. Elaborate commando operations are generally avoided. The most effective means for stopping the destruction of the wild are often the simplest. There are times when more detailed and complicated operations are necessary. But the monkeywrencher asks, What is the simplest way to do this?

MONKEYWRENCHING IS DELIBERATE AND ETHICAL

Monkeywrenchers are very conscious of the gravity of what they do. They are deliberate about taking such a serious step. They are thoughtful, not cavalier. Monkeywrenchers—although nonviolent—are warriors. They are exposing themselves to possible arrest or injury. It is not a casual or flippant affair. They keep a pure heart and mind about it. They remember that they are engaged in the most moral of all actions: protecting life, defending Earth.

A movement based on the above principles could protect millions of acres of wilderness more stringently than could any congressional act, could insure the propagation of the Grizzly and other threatened life forms better than could an army of game wardens, and could lead to the retreat of industrial civilization from large areas of forest, mountain, desert, prairie, seashore, swamp, tundra, and woodland that are better suited to the maintenance of native diversity than to the production of raw materials for overconsumptive technological human society.

If logging firms know that a timber sale is spiked, they won't bid on the timber. If a Forest Supervisor knows that a road will be continually destroyed, he won't try to build it. If seismographers know that they will be constantly harassed in an area, they won't go there. If ORVers know that they'll get flat tires miles from nowhere, they won't drive in such areas.

John Muir said that if it ever came to a war between the races, he would side with the bears. That day has arrived.

POSTSCRIPT (1993)

Events in the years since the above was originally written (1985) and revised (1990) have underscored its message:

- ✓ Wilderness legislation proposed since 1990, like the infamous 1992 Montana bill, has focused on "rocks and ice," ignoring critical habitat;
- ✓ The Supreme Court has severely restricted "standing" for conservationists to sue the federal government;
- ✓ The Forest Service has tried to deep-six its appeals process because forest defenders use it to slow timber sales and road building in roadless areas;
- ✓ Resource extraction industries are gearing up for a major attack on the Endangered Species Act;
- ✓ Powerful members of Congress, at the encouragement of the timber industry and with the acquiescence of some conservation groups, have slipped through legislative "riders" preventing legal challenges to timber sales in roadless areas . . .

The list goes on and on.

While public outcry from grass-roots conservationists has turned some of these assaults on due process around, the last wildlands on the public lands are under attack as never before. The final mopping-up action of industrial society against the ecological richness of North America (and the world) is now occurring. Yet . . . our hands are tied only if we allow them to be tied.