

We started to think about, who were our natural allies. People in cities tend to be more liberal than people in the countryside and also tend to be more supportive of environmental protection. When we looked at voting information we wanted to see what areas of a city were the most liberal and who tended to vote for the most pro-environmental candidates. So, at the same time that we were working to build a diverse coalition of supporters and while we were out trying to convince conservative people why wilderness was good for them, we were also activating our core supporters. Because, while cooperation is the preferred route we were not going to rule out a strategy of simply destroying the people we saw as enemies of wilderness.

Then there is the simple truth that there is more money in urban areas and we wanted to access that money. So we were activating our friends and at the same time taking their money. Again, we wanted people to know where these places were. But we also wanted to make sure the maps were correct. Did this road end here? Were there actually any legal roads? How was the land being used? By answering these questions we were able to actually make the case to expand the boundaries of wilderness areas quite significantly in some cases.

The goal here was to develop a core group of people who saw themselves as the "protectors" of individual wilderness areas. We wanted them to get to know the area inside and out. To spend a lot of time on the land and to report back. We also wanted them to be able to be a spokesperson for that area. Simply we wanted people to know where these places were and what they looked like.

Many times this did not have a direct connection to Wilderness but it benefited ecosystems and wildlife and build good relationships: we help you, you help us.

Economics.

We simply started talking economics. Money! We found out that outdoor recreation was a one billion dollar industry for our state, supporting tens of thousands of jobs. Of course it wasn't just about money, we made alliances with all sorts of people. Of course the traditional ones like bird watching groups and archaeologists but also the type of people who we used to think

was our enemies. People who hunt and fish. Business people. Town governments. When we were pushing for the protection of the Valle Vidal we eventually had over 400 businesses as part of our coalition and we had resolutions of support from local town councils, mayors, county commissions and eventually the governor of the state.

I am happy to be able to say that from about 1998–2006 we saw a societal sea change in the way both New Mexicans and Coloradoans perceive and appreciate wilderness. I think that there were large societal forces at play but I do like to think that our work over those years changed the narrative...

But now back to Europe and your job...by way of history.

In October of 1492 when Columbus arrived in the Caribbean there were somewhere between 50 and 100 million people in the Americas. Within 100 years, 90% were dead. Think about that. Perhaps upwards of 90 million people died in 100 years. The world had never seen anything like it before and hopefully never will again. My point is that by the time the United States was born, huge tracts of North America were empty. Not completely empty but comparatively devoid of people. The ones who remained, well, we just killed off most of them to clear the land. And so by the time the philosophy of “wilderness” was born in America about 120 years ago there were large chunks of land that really could be considered Wilderness – or nearly so. That means that compared to what you Europeans are facing, we had and have it easy. Europe hasn’t had wilderness for perhaps 2000 years. Maybe more. And there are 745 MILLION people living here. You have a very difficult task ahead of you.

What you all are trying to do is not only protect biodiversity and create wilderness in Europe. You are actually trying to re-configure the entire European cultural relationship with nature. You are battling at least 2000 years of cultural momentum here. Do not be fooled. You’ve undertaken a massive and noble task. Be patient. Never give up. Never. History will remember you as heroes...