**Biodiverse Preservation**

In reading this week’s material, I found myself in disagreement with many of the assertions put forward by the authors. I could better sympathize with William Cronon, who suggests a redefinition of the term wilderness, but then he refers to the Hetch Hetchy Valley as “a wasteland like this…” and I know he has missed the point. I see the point made by J. Baird Callicot that we have a tremendous need for Biodiversity Reserves, but I believe these should be additions to the current holdings. In contrast, I wholeheartedly discount the opinion of David Harmon that National Parks can practically exist solely in affluent societies, that they are an elitist concept. I also have little sympathy for the disregard with which many densely populated countries treat their environment. Harmon points to the overreaching demand on resources in areas like Japan and India to illustrate the hardship placed on humanity by misplaced wilderness preservation. What he steadfastly ignores is the simple and obvious fact that all natural resources are FINITE. Once depleted, they cannot be recovered or replenished. We are exhausting these materials at an alarming rate, with no discernible plan regarding the calamity that will ensue when they are simply absent.

The very humanity he defends has repeated the same overly consumptive behavior so incessantly throughout history that the pattern should be staggeringly obvious, even to the most obtuse observer. Instead of developing practical solutions to the disturbing, gluttonous behavior of our forefathers, Harmon seeks to draw sympathy for those who are denied a similar orgy of excess. We spend billions upon billions of dollars on ourselves in the shallow pursuit of baldness cures, weight loss fixes, cellulite reducers, cosmetic cover-ups, high fashion, orthodontia, hair color… and the manufacturers spend equal amounts to convince us of their necessity. Couldn’t this money be better spent finding REAL solutions to air pollution, water pollution, waste disposal, deforestation, species loss and hunger? The true problem is not a lack of acreage, it is a mismanagement of the land civilization already inhabits. Instead of begrudging the restriction of National Parks, celebrate the sanctity and sanity they embody. Their strength lies in the justified protection and intended preservation that they provide.

The single viable argument against the creation of National Parks resides in the rights of indigenous populations. (I use the term Harmon provides, as it is defined by the World Bank) The designation of National Parks and the subsequent restrictions on habitation and hunting do adversely affect those who know no alternate way of life. However, even the consequences of traditionally harmonious interspecies cohabitation in these environments can have devastating consequences in light of modern realities. Just as it is impossible to seal off a biological preserve and disconnect it from ecological damage, it is equally unreasonable to expect anthropocentric isolation. Whether injurious or undesirable, all of humanity is subject to the repercussions of existing in a modern world. As a case in point, consider the Inuit population of Alaska.

Salmon habitats have been severely reduced due to the building of dams in rivers throughout North America. Commercial fishing has further decimated the once abundant species. Neither of these actions were caused by the Inuit, who have sustainably fished for salmon since the very beginning of their existence. As an indigenous population, they are permitted to continue the salmon harvest using traditional methods. The problem, once again, is the finite nature of this resource. The fish are being consumed faster than they can repopulate. When there are no more salmon, the Inuit population will be forced to adapt their traditions. This adaption is unjust, but unavoidable, inevitable. I propose that a preemptive adaptation would be more feasible, preserving both cultural and biological diversity. If an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, a modicum of preservation is worth an abundance of rehabilitation.