

“WE SHOULD PUT OUR BEARS IN THE HANDS OF EXPERTS”: THREE EXPLANATORY CUTS AT AN UNCRITICAL EMBRACE OF SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY

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ABSTRACT: *Worked through an empirical case study of a well-documented debate, this paper assesses a pervasive trend within North American environmentalism: the uncritical embrace of scientifically-touted solutions to incredibly complex sociopolitical-ecological problems. In the case study, a substantial cohort of environmentalists opposed an innovative, inclusive, citizen-based management plan for grizzly recover in the Bitterroot Mountains in favor of a rather standard expert-management model. This essay undertakes a retrospective analysis of the basis for their opposition to citizen management and the resulting divide within the environmental community.*

Keywords: *Environmental politics, Grizzly bears, Wildlife conservation, Wilderness, Activist*

INTRODUCING THE DEBATE: GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVER IN THE BITTERROOTS

In early 2000, in the waning months of the Clinton presidency, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt rubberstamped the most ambitious grizzly bear recovery plan ever proposed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Beginning in the summer of 2002, the FWS would translocate, from stable populations in Canada, three to five grizzlies per year for five years into the large wilderness areas in the Bitterroot region of central Idaho and extreme western Montana. This region comprises the largest federally protected intact, yet unoccupied, grizzly bear ecosystem in the contiguous U.S. Establishing a population in the Bitterroots could, it was argued, substantially improve the long-term viability of the grizzly bear population in the lower 48 states. Eventually, it was hoped, grizzlies from the Bitterroots could even reestablish linkages with existing populations in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, and northern Idaho. The reintroduction proposal was the culmination of two decades of research and recovery planning by FWS bear biologists. The success of the project, however, proved short lived. As her first major directive as Interior Secretary under the Bush administration, Gale Norton shelved the reintroduction plan,

effectively halting altogether recovery efforts in the region.¹

Through a case-study of the decade of this debate prior to its termination at the hand of the Bush administration, this paper undertakes a critical, empirical assessment of a pervasive trend within North American environmentalism: the uncritical embrace of scientifically-touted solutions to incredibly complex sociopolitical-ecological problems. This following quote, from a proponent of grizzly recovery speaking at the public hearings held as part of the environmental impact statement process, exemplifies the spirit of this trend:

My ... concern is with this so-called Citizen Management Committee. What may sound like a great bottom up strategy on paper would actually be a quasi-political committee appointed by public officials who are heavily influenced by the timber industry. Wouldn't it make more sense to put the management of bears in the hands of scientists and bear biologists who are sensitive to the needs of grizzlies rather than citizens who know little about grizzlies and are appointed by politicians more sensitive to bureaucracy than bears? *We should put our bears in the hands of experts* (USFWS, 1997c, p. 109, emphasis added).

The specific dispute referred to in this quote, and assessed throughout this essay, was *intra*-environmental: a divide *within* environmentalist supporters of Bitterroot grizzly bear recovery. The divide was substantial enough that it leads one to ponder how much the stark (and public) disunity on the part of grizzly bear recovery supporters enabled the ultimate success of their mutual opponents. The bulk of the public debate took place during the 1990s. In 1997 and 2000, the US Fish and Wildlife service (FWS) culminated nearly two decades of assessment of grizzly recovery potential in the Bitterroots with the publication of draft (1997) and final (2000) environmental impact statements (EIS). In the EISs, two contrasting recovery proposals were codified as official “recovery alternatives.”

The first – the FWS’s “preferred alternative” – was the “Citizen Management Alternative.” This alternative – originally drafted by a coalition of national environmental groups and regional timber industry organizations – proposed the reintroduction of three to five bears per year for five years to the Bitterroots. The reintroduced bear population would be managed by a “citizen management committee” (CMC) consisting of fifteen “citizen” members appointed by the governors of Idaho and Montana and the Nez Perce Tribe. Some committee members, no doubt, would have direct ties to timber interests. It is difficult to imagine the governors of Idaho and Montana wanting to snub timber interests from gaining representation on this committee. But it is equally improbable, I would argue, that the committee would be loaded with pro-timber/anti-grizzly ideologues who simply wanted to see grizzly recovery fail (even though such people do exist). This was, after all, a coalition backed by most timber companies in the region. They had very pragmatic reasons for wanting to see it succeed.

The other EIS alternative that actively promoted Bitterroot grizzly bear recovery was the “Conservation Biology Alternative.” The Conservation Biology (CB) alternative was drafted and presented to the FWS by regional environmental groups, most notably the Missoula, Montana-based Alliance for the Wild Rockies. Unlike the CMC alternative, the CB alternative marked no compromise with the timber industry or the Forest Service. The CB alternative proposed full Endangered Species Act protection status for recovered grizzlies within all federal lands in the region. This included the four million acre wilderness core area that served as the CMC recovery area, but also thirteen million additional acres of surrounding Forest Service lands (and adjacent private lands). It also included provisions for ecological restoration projects to re-link the recovered Bitterroot population

with existing populations in Northern Idaho. Another stark contrast to the CMC alternative was that under the CB proposal, recovered grizzly bears would be managed by a “scientific” (rather than “citizen management”) committee.

The methods I used in preparation for this paper included a combination of interviews and document analysis. For the interviews, preliminary telephone interviews were made with representatives from eleven regional and national environmental groups that had offices in Montana or Idaho and that had also published position statements on the Bitterroot grizzly recovery debate. They included some groups that supported the CB alternative and some that supported the CMC alternative. In Montana and Idaho I conducted longer, semi-structured interviews with about twenty environmentalists and government officials in the region. In addition to the interviews, I did extensive analysis of documents associated with the debates. Primary were the draft and final environmental impact statements and the transcripts of the public hearings that took place during the EIS process. Additionally, I examined several pieces of promotional material published forth by proponents of each recovery proposal. I have made every effort to use quotations in this paper that are examples of what I judge to be *representative* sentiments on these issues. There was, of course, a diversity of viewpoints within each “camp,” but patterns and representative sentiments clearly emerged during my research. The vocal, vehement opposition to citizen management by CB alternative supporters, for one, was striking. Indeed, I argue that mistrust toward the citizen management committee itself may have been the single most prominent objection to the CMC alternative by advocates of the CB alternative. In this paper, I will critically assess and explain the simultaneous opposition to the citizen management committee and the uncritical embrace of “scientific” management of the recovered grizzly bears. I make no claim to be putting forth a “balanced” analysis of the entire debate here. The point is not to assess all the various pluses and minuses of each side of the debate. As I argue throughout the paper, I feel that there were several problematic components to the CB alternative, and these are the focus of my critique.

THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND THE PERSISTENCE OF HIERARCHY

The primary objects of analysis for this paper come from the two components of the Draft EIS public comment component: statements made at the public meetings as well as formal letters written

to the FWS. I will also draw on a promotional handbook published by Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR) in support of the CB alternative.

The ubiquitous disdain on the part of CB supporters toward the citizen management committee is rather easy to empirically establish. In the Draft EIS public hearing testimonies, many CB supporters voiced opposition to the citizen management committee, often on the grounds of an objection to the infiltration of politics into science. In addition to the quote above that opens this essay, representative examples include:

Alternative 4 [the Conservation Biology Alternative] is good science. It's not politically motivated. It's motivated by the best interests of the animal, you know, the grizzly bear... Alternative 1 ... is a politically-driven management committee. Again, this is a decision that has been made *based on politics, not on science* (USFWS, 1997a, p. 117, emphasis added);

[The citizen management] alternative allows politically-nominated, extractive-industry staff to decide the management and the fate of the bruins. Those decisions need to be made by independent scientists and good, objective science, not for bottom-line profit, and not for political interests (USFWS, 1997a, p. 38);

Concerning [the CMC alternative], a proposal submitted by a *biased* extractive industry and supposedly environmental organizations that once worked with the best interest of wildlife at their roots... (USFWS, 1997b, p. 29, emphasis added);

Alternative Number (the CMC alternative) one is not only inadequate in effectively protecting and restoring the grizzly bear and its habitat, it is a bureaucratic and political operation where those who lose are the citizens and their expectations of thoughtful government, the environment, the grizzly bear and other species of animals and plants that are already threatened by the destruction of their natural habitat (USFWS, 1997c, p. 41);

I am not idealistic enough unfortunately yet to believe that we can allow a group of citizens with strong political and financial interests to agree on what's best for the

future of the grizzly bear (USFWS, 1997c, p. 82);

The so-called Citizens' Committee will not be made up of citizens like you or your neighbor, but rather appointees of the governors of Montana and Idaho ... Management decisions about grizzly bears should be based in the best available science with input from all interested citizens, not just a small politically-driven management committee (USFWS, 1997c, p. 97);

These statements nearly speak for themselves: CB supporters were not "idealistic" or optimistic enough to entrust the management of a reintroduced (or recolonized) bear population to lay citizens. Although some proponents of both alternatives voiced critiques of or apprehension toward certain specific aspects of the alternative they were supporting, in the Draft EIS public testimonies only one supporter of the CB alternative even remotely challenged the management structure presented in the CB alternative. So what management did the CB alternative propose?

In the AWR promotional pamphlet (and mirrored in the EISs), the CB alternative intentionally countered the citizen management committee model by establishing a ten member

Scientific Committee ... to carry out additional research, implement translocations of grizzly bears, and monitor the results of the project. This interdisciplinary team shall have participants employed by state and federal governments and members from the non-governmental, independent scientific community (Bader & Bechtold, 1996, p. 12).

The "interdisciplinary"-expert character of the committee was to be fulfilled through the following mandate:

Each [member will be] an acknowledged expert in one or more of the following disciplines—

- A) the design and implementation of grizzly bear recovery plans (private sector appointment);
- B) economic analysis of forest ecosystems (private sector appointment);
- C) landscape ecology;

- D) grizzly bear habitat requirements and habitat use patterns;
- E) plant ecology and the remote sensing/GIS based analysis of vegetation on a regional scale;
- F) population viability analysis;
- G) fire ecology;
- H) conservation genetics;
- I) restoration of fire ecosystems; (Bader & Bechtold, pp. 11-12)

Three other components of the Scientific Committee proposal are worth noting. First, committee appointments would be made by the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the National Academy of Sciences. Secondly, the membership of the committee was to consist of “not more than 5 ... employees of any Federal or State agency or from any agency involved in resource extraction [and] not less than 5 ... persons from the non-governmental, independent scientific community and academia” (p. 12). Lastly, “sole authority and responsibility for implementing recovery efforts pursuant to the Endangered Species Act” shall reside with the Secretary of the Interior, who will act “in good faith” on the recommendations of the Scientific Committee (p. 12). This committee very clearly countered every skepticism, fear, and admonition that CB supporters voiced toward the FWS-proposed citizen management committee. The exclusively expert-scientific membership; the National Academy of Sciences appointment consultation mandate; the inclusion of “independent” scientists (and the resultant guarantee that bureaucrats could never hold a majority) – all of these components ensured the scientific purity of the management committee.

Even as the CB model was engineered to reflect standards of scientific purity, it is my contention that the CMC alternative was perceived by CB supporters as a manifestation of what Frank Fischer (2000, p. 92) calls “technocratic” environmental management. (I draw heavily from here out on the model Fischer establishes in his book *Citizen, Experts and the Environment*.) Technocratic management is, of course, a term of derision (nobody self-identifies as a “technocrat”!). For its critics, technocratic management is most closely associated with high level bureaucracy, case in point here, with the CMC through the US Fish and Wildlife Service. According to its detractors, technocratic management is a model perceived to be more complicit in causing and continuing environmental problems than in ameliorating or solving them. The CB movement, however, exhibited ambivalence and even contradiction because it failed to offer a viable

alternative to many of the perceived deficiencies in the dominant technocratic model.

Neither of these features of the Bitterroot debates (the tension or the resulting ambivalence) is new to environmentalism:

Tensions between science and politics have been intrinsic to environmental struggles from the outset. On the one hand, science and technology have been identified closely with the major causes of environmental degradation; on the other, they have served as the primary methods for both detecting environmental problems and searching for effective solutions (Fischer, 2000, p. 89).

There is a history to the development of this tension. In its first-phase (rising to real prominence in the 1960s), environmentalism was a grassroots movement, where the demons and dangers were obvious (e.g., nuclear power, automobile emissions) and perceived as rooted in science and technology run amok. The second phase of environmentalism, however, is characterized by less visibly and intuitively obvious environmental problems. As such, the newer problems (e.g., the ozone hole, global warming, biodiversity decline) needed articulation by scientists to make them known to the public. Moreover, their attendant solutions were no less science-dependent. “The result has been an increasingly technocratic environmentalism, in the environmental movement as well as the corridors of governmental decision making.” What in the 1960s smacked of a “street politics” saw its discourse increasingly articulated “through the languages of environmental management” (Fischer, 2000, p. 93). Once environmental issues became part and parlance of the national political scene, “the struggle over environmental policy shifted from the public arenas of protest to the institutional [governmental, academic] arenas of expertise” (p. 94). That is, *activism* morphed into bureaucratic-technical problem-solving.

This transition resulted in an enormous environmental growth industry, but many problems accompanied this growth. Most profoundly, the initial euphoria over the promise of the technoscientific fix for environmental problems quickly abated as science proved unfit, as Fischer puts it, to “answer questions in such a way that would eliminate or at least significantly reduce potential conflict among affected parties” (p. 94). As such, the new technocratic model “opened up – unintentionally – the space for the politicization of science” (p. 95). Environmentalists and sagebrush rebels alike have

been quick to debunk – as politicized and therefore bogus – science that does not suit their objectives.

Another parallel development was “professional specialization, [where] each group of specialists came to know more and more about less and less” (p. 95). Different specialties studying, for example, biodiversity decline or groundwater contamination, articulated different but equally challenging (and expensive) remediation programs. This made it more and more difficult for environmental science and environmental activism to speak in a unified voice – even as ‘the opponent’ pro-growth industry – did not suffer from this same problematic lack of unity. For example, different environmental specialties/disciplines now had to compete for both scarce government funding dollars and public support (in the form of monetary contributions and activism). The result? As an increasingly professionalized and specialized environmentalism splintered, a more unified opposition – armed with the very same tools, and much deeper pockets – effectively obviated much of the political change environmentalists desired.

This historical narrative of the development of contemporary environmental science and activism helps explain three important components of the Bitterroot debates, each of which is given representation in the quotes above. The first is the persistence of a rigid science/politics divide and a resultant reproduction of dominant roles for science and politics (with politics as *everything-else*) in the CB model. The second is ambivalence toward this very reproduction of the dominant model. Finally, Fischer’s model helps explain the CB supporters’ disdain toward the CMC alternative as well as their general unwillingness to view “compromise” as an acceptable path.

Initially, Fischer’s historical explanation as summarized above points to a genealogy of environmentalism that connotes two divergent, but (significantly) not mutually exclusive, paths which different environmental movements have taken. The first is a move away from technocratic explanations and programs of action toward (or *back* to) more openly progressive, citizen-activist, *grassroots* environmentalism. The environmental justice movement provides the classic example of this renewed grassroots environmentalism (e.g., Bullard, 1990).

The other path is environmentalism that sticks more to the second-phase technocratic-expert model, digging in its heels beneath the authority of scientific argumentation. For both models of environmentalism, “the main job of the movement, as with any movement, is to organize people to get involved” (Fischer, 2000, p. 110). A sharp contrast

between the two, however, is found in the role of the citizen-advocate within the movement. The environmental justice movement seeks to develop a base of “lay expertise” (p. 121) from which nonprofessional citizen-advocates can articulate the complexities of the situation and effectively *lead* campaigns. Promoting and courting lay expertise is not exclusive to the environmental justice movement, of course. Andrew Light sees community-based ecological restoration projects as one vehicle for invigorating what he calls “ecological citizenship”: “A direct participatory relationship between local human communities and ... nature ... is at least a necessary condition for encouraging people to protect natural systems and landscapes” (Light, 2002, p. 157).

The technocratic converse of these participatory models is one where citizen-activists serve as mere mouthpieces for professionalized organizations, giving a public face to a company line. Now it would be extremely unfair to characterize the entire conservation biology movement so harshly. There is considerable literature promoting the benefits of local, lay ecological knowledge for conservation (e.g., Fairhead & Scoones, 2005; Myers, 2002; St. Martin, 2001), and many if not most lay advocates of conservation biology are no doubt fairly well versed in ecology. But when assessing the CB alternative, it is difficult to judge it as anything other than an example of the crudest form of *non-participatory*, technocratic expert management. This is most explicitly represented by the makeup of the Scientific Committee – an exclusive domain of credentialed scientific experts.

Judging from the formal letters written by regional ENGOs to the FWS in support of the CB alternative, a simultaneous endorsement of the Scientific Committee and opposition to the citizen management committee was consistently central to their justification. I will highlight two representative examples. Friends of the Bitterroot, a local conservation activist organization headquartered in Hamilton, Montana, no less enthusiastically drew a science/citizen line in the sand: “Reestablishment of a viable grizzly bear population can occur within this habitat preservation program subject to scientifically-based information from a committee of scientists” (USFWS, 2000a, p. 5-124). On the role for local citizens: “Local input, yes; local control, no” (p. 5.125). The line is drawn at the devolution of authority. The letter even admits that this is as much an objection on grounds of precedent as it is specifically an objection to the Bitterroot CMC. The centralized *model* itself must be kept in place.

The Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute (CWWI), headquartered in Missoula, based their

support of the CB alternative “on our opposition on philosophical and scientific grounds to management by a local citizen committee” (USFWS, 2000a, p. 5-129). (They never, I might add, defend the “philosophical” component of their objection). Apparently, the work of grizzly bear management was completely beyond the grasp of the non-scientist: “a lay committee cannot identify and keep pace with the best available science nor is such a committee likely to identify the need to *develop* the best ‘available’ science” (p. 5-12, emphasis in original). On the former point, empirical evidence refutes this claim. Fischer, for example, drawing on case studies from citizen groups involved in nuclear power and toxins epidemiology campaigns, argues that citizens are quite capable of “mastering the necessary science, at least if they are willing to devote sufficient time and energy to it” (Fischer, 2000, p. 149). On the latter point, it could be argued that even as “citizen managers” might not *develop* new “best available science,” the presence of the CMC would by no means slow the wheels of conservation science. Consigning the role of non-scientists to pre-implementation-activists, the letter states that “We have no objection to encouraging citizen involvement in endangered species recovery programs ... Some of the ESA’s most notable successes ... owe much to the efforts of the civilian *proponents* of recovery” (USFWS, 2000a, p. 5-129, emphasis in original). Noting the very intentional emphasis in this passage, it is clear that – for these proponents of the CB alternative – the role for the public is to be a mere proponent (read: *mouthpiece*?) for the experts. I am quite confident that if asked “are you an environmentalist or do you work for a living?” (White, 1995), staff scientists at CWWI would reply “both, of course.” Yet apparently missing the irony of their own assertions, or feeling immune to the charge of hypocrisy, these *professional* bear biologists believed that “citizen participation in recovery (whether advisory or otherwise) ... should not include those *with direct economic interest* in these lands” (USFWS, 2000a, p. 5-129, emphasis added).

The professional scientist-activists at CWWI (and several other regional science-based ENGOs) are examples of what Bromley (1999, p. 11) calls “professional and managerial elites.” Elites have a choice, more or less, between openly acknowledging or quietly exploiting their positionality. Proponents of participatory environmentalism (e.g., Frank Fischer and Simon Bromley) promote the former, more “open” stance. If, as such, experts employ a reflexive, self-critical attitude toward the elitism inherent in their knowledge production, they acknowledge and openly account for their “segregation ... from the majority of the population” (Bromley, p. 11). Elites

operate within “spaces of flows,” wired (in this case) into institutional methods and networks of knowledge validation while the majority of regional residents are “confined to the space of places,” arguing (very subjectively), for example, that they should have a stronger voice in federal lands management decisions (all quotes from Bromley, p. 11). Following this line of argumentation, I would argue that it is radically uncritical, perhaps even *undemocratic*, to exploit this elite positionality to argue – as did so many of the regional ENGOs in the grizzly debates – for exclusive (rhetorical *and* practical) authority on the subject.

The CB proposal attempts to establish and maintain a position of privilege by “segregating” its knowledge from subjective, place-based reasoning; this is the source of (and the literal power behind) the exclusionary claims of so many CB supporters. Yet, all the while championing the *need* for a solely-scientific management structure, countless CB supporters echoed their opponents by establishing their credibility to speak on the subject via claims of place-based knowledge and experience. As one testimonial at the Missoula Draft EIS hearing put it, “my family has lived in Montana for four generations. Having established *that questionable bit of credibility...*” (USFWS, 1997c, p. 64) (and then she went on to argue for the CB alternative). “Questionable” indeed! Because *if* local experience *counts* (no matter how and to what degree), then the argument for exclusive scientific authority is (in some manner and to some degree) compromised. And so here we find another source of tension and ambivalence within the conservation biology movement. Tim Luke economically sums up this tension:

The action of expert elites inside of formal organizations ... remakes ... contradictions by presuming the inaction of lay populations outside of these complex organizations. The elites’ presumptions about mass acquiescence before their scientific and managerial authority, however, have never held entirely true (Luke, 2002, p. 304).

The CB alternative was not, then, the replacement of a hierarchical model with a non-hierarchical model, but rather the replacement one hierarchical model (politics over science, the citizen management committee) with another (science over politics, the Scientific Committee). Science and politics are represented (through the CB alternative and its supporting constituency) in both the Citizen Management and Scientific Committee models as

separate, discrete entities. The sole role of the lay public in the CB proposal – *once implemented* – is the opportunity for public comment on the Interior Secretary’s committee nominations. Apparently, this rather authoritarian management structure made few CB proponents uneasy; at least, few felt compelled to vocally object to it. The doctrine of “science knows best” seems to be foundational to the conservation biology movement. The activists, I do not think it is unfair to say, toed the company line very effectively. The conservation biology movement, in this case at least, spoke in a surprisingly singular voice.

THE UNCRITICAL EMBRACE OF SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY: THREE EXPLANATORY CUTS

In this section I will attempt a degree of explanation for both the existence of and the uncritical stance toward the hierarchical (science-over-politics) model. There is no doubt some continuation of the historical lineage of Fischer’s second-phase scientific-technocratic environmental management to the contemporary conservation biology movement in the Rocky Mountain, but the conservation biology movement is not a mere relic of 1970s technocratic management (and mouthpiece activism). There has been a development of this movement through time – and, more specifically, of this movement in this region – that has somehow enabled the persistence of a culture wherein what is considered by many to be a rather outmoded method of politics could be so uncritically embraced (e.g., it seems reasonable to deduce that the Scientific Management committee stands as the ideal model for participation/management within this movement). In this section, I will make three “cuts” at explaining the existence and persistence of this institutional culture.

My first avenue of explanation considers the question of how this model could be so widely and uncritically embraced by so many. Part of the effective appeal of the CB alternative, its apparent intelligibility as well as its “obvious” superiority to the CMC alternative, was that it spoke in only one language, one “genre” – scientific conservation biology. Framing the issue of grizzly bear conservation as primarily (or solely) a scientific problem obscures the fact that it really is an incredibly complex social issue. As Keulartz argues,

In both environmental philosophy and nature policy, a social dispute is constantly in danger of being smothered by scientific argumentation, with the result that all considerations not based on ecology are

systematically brushed aside. But argumentation is repressed as well, since [environmental advocates] base themselves one-sidedly on the image of nature emanating from ... ecology (Keulartz, 1999, p. 95).

Speaking in the (seemingly consistent) language of scientific ecology, the CB alternative can rather easily be judged favorably because it follows only one set of (interpretive-methodological) rules. Trans-generic rhetoric, such as that of the CMC alternative, is not so easily or fairly judged due to the absence of trans-generic rules, that is, a language or a method that would make such a judgment clear. As long as the problem of grizzly bear conservation could be continually reframed in scientific terms, the result was going to fall out in favor of the CB alternative.

My other two routes of explanation appeal more directly to the previously-mentioned trends of specialization and professionalization within environmentalism. Timothy Luke writes about the relatively recent proliferation of university environmental studies undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and the incredible growth industry of professional environmental management. Luke finds most environmental studies programs remarkably bereft of reflexivity and lacking a self-critical culture. Moreover, he finds “the environment” is consistently theorized in thoroughly reductionist and mechanistic yet highly complex terms: “[these programs consistently] reframe ‘the environment’ as a highly complex domain far beyond the full comprehension of ordinary citizens or traditional naturalists” (Luke, 1999, p. 105). If Luke is correct (and I think he is) then the culture of hubris and the “technoscientific discourses” (Luke, p. 104) that dominate university environmental studies curricula would certainly find their way into an increasingly professionalized environmental movement. The result would not, it is fair to say, clash with the Scientific Committee management model espoused in the CB alternative.

My third and final stab at explanation centers on the widely-held environmentalist disdain toward compromise. The CMC was perceived by CB supporters as an unacceptable compromise for Bitterroot grizzly reintroduction. Environmentalists have well-founded reasons to be skeptical of purportedly middle-ground paths that smack of compromise. Probably the most famous case comes from the early 1960s, very early in American establishment environmentalism, when David Brower, then-executive director of the Sierra Club, brokered a deal with the federal Bureau of Reclamation. Brower agreed to have the Sierra Club

rescind its opposition to the damming of Glen Canyon on the Colorado River if two rivers in Dinosaur National Monument received permanent protection from damming (Dowie, 1995). Shortly before the Glen Canyon dam was built, Brower floated for the first time through Glen Canyon and was awestruck by its magnificence. He later said that he instantly regretted his decision to compromise away such a natural wonder and – in what has since become a legendary admonition – urged environmentalists to reject compromise as a tactic. With the rise of professionalized environmentalism in the 1980s, some groups held fast to Brower's plea while others found it idealistic and impractical.

For mainstream national ENGOs, on the other hand, compromise is (literally) the way their business works. Unapologetic regarding compromise, Jay Dee Hair of the National Wildlife Federation once stated "We're not selling out, we're buying in" (Dowie, 1995, p. 75). What were they buying into? A seat at the table in Washington, DC. By the end of the 1980s six of the ten largest US environmental organizations had moved their headquarters to DC. At the same time, their memberships and budgets swelled, as they hired professionally trained financial specialists, marketers, and advertisers. The Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, and the National Wildlife Federation, for example, all saw their budgets grow tenfold or more during the decade (Dowie, 1995). Lobbying – for policy and issue-resolution compromise – became the model.

This transition has opened up a wide rift between a national-scale institutional environmentalism on one "side" and local and regional groups on the other (with the latter perceiving their power as intentionally and increasingly marginalized by the former (Dowie, 1995)). CB supporters didn't have to look far, or far back in time, to see evidence they might be wise to greet the CMC coalition with skepticism. The National Wildlife Federation, with attorney Tom France as its spokesman, helped broker with Clinton administration officials the notorious "Option 9" plan in the Pacific Northwest spotted owl controversy – a compromise perceived nearly unanimously as unacceptable to Northwest forest protection activists (Proctor, 1995). This was the same Tom France who would just a few years later be touting the CMC alternative for Bitterroot grizzly bear recovery as "the radical center" (NWF film). Like Option 9, the CMC alternative was a compromise deal brokered between national environmental NGOs and the timber industry.

For many CB supporters, this was evidence enough that the CMC was yet another deal with the devil. Montanans and Idahoans, to be sure, have good

reason to be wary of compromise plans that have loopholes big enough to drive a logging truck through. For most environmentalists in the region, it seems, there was no real choice to deliberate.

With the luxury of 20/20 hindsight, however, lamenting the ultimate (and persistent) derailment of the recovery efforts, I would argue that the CMC alternative may have deserved more widespread support from environmentalists. Granted, hindsight is never a luxury when in the throes of a present controversy. And this is not, by any stretch, to say that compromising is always preferable or desirable, either. Perhaps the broadest lesson that can be gleaned from the Bitterroot grizzly debates is that it provides yet another strong piece of evidence that, until environmentalists can more effectively "find unity in what they are against" (Norton, 1991, p. 206), anti-environmentalists will continue to exploit their divides and conquer the earth apace.

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¹ At the time of this writing (February 2009) the grizzly recovery program still stands as it did in 2001 after Norton's tabling of the reintroduction proposal. Some environmentalists in the region are hopeful that the shift in presidential administrations might lead to a reconsideration of the proposal, but also acknowledge that it is unlikely to emerge as a high priority issue early in the Obama presidency (French, 2009).