

## Destroying biodiversity

The greatest threat to species is not modern technology -- but environmentalists

Paul Driessen

The Soviet Union's demise helped usher in manmade catastrophic global warming as the new "central organizing principle of civilization." Now, global warming is giving way to a growing recognition that: climate change is primarily natural, cyclical and moderate; China, India and other countries will not sacrifice CO<sub>2</sub>-generating economic growth to prevent speculative climate crises; and carbon taxes strangle competitiveness, destroy jobs and send families into fuel poverty.

Thus, while not recanting predictions of disastrous climate change, environmental activists and the United Nations are already launching a new campaign. The real threat to the planet, they now assert, is the impact of modern energy technologies and civilization on *biodiversity*. The case for saving species, they insist, is even "more powerful" than the need to address climate change.

They seek to preserve biodiversity by controlling people's energy use, economic activities and population – through new regulations and taxes under the auspices of the United Nations and global treaties. These efforts, they claim, will generate benefits "worth \$4-5 trillion per year" (based on questionable studies and computer models that underscore the intrinsic value of species and biodiversity).

To accept these claims, one would have to ignore the sordid history of Climategate and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – and believe a larger, more powerful United Nations will somehow ensure honesty, transparency, accountability and actual consequences for misfeasance, misrepresentation, intimidation, and adverse impacts on people and economic growth. One would also have to ignore a growing body of evidence that:

***The greatest threats to the world's species are misguided environmental and anti-technology policies.***

Among the policies adversely impacting biodiversity are these.

\* Intense opposition to coal, gas, nuclear and hydroelectric plants for generating the electricity that two billion people worldwide so desperately need. Not only does this force people to rely on open fires for heating and cooking – perpetuating poverty, lung disease and premature death. It also destroys mountain gorilla and other wildlife habitats, as people cut trees for fires and charcoal.

China and India are self-financing hundreds of power projects, to avoid conditions placed by wealthy countries on World Bank and other international loans. But poor countries must still rely on such loans – and thus must run gauntlets laid down by regulators and environmental activists who oppose critically needed power plants and the economic growth and middle class living standards the plants generate.

\* Steadfast promotion of expensive, unreliable wind and solar power. Wind turbines slice up birds and collapse bat lungs. Turbines and solar arrays would have to cover millions of acres to provide power for cities. They require ultra-long transmission lines and backup gas generators, and consume millions of tons of concrete, steel, copper, fiberglass, polymers and rare earth (lanthanide) minerals – all of which have to be extracted from the Earth and processed into finished products, burning fossil fuels and generating mining wastes and air and water pollution.

Con Ed had to generate some 13,500 megawatts to meet New York City's air conditioning and other electricity needs during the recent July heat wave. The 600-turbine Roscoe wind farm blankets 100,000 Texas acres to generate 780 MW at full capacity. That means NYC would need a wind farm 1.6 times the size of Connecticut (5 million acres or 2 million hectares), if the turbines are running at an average 30% of capacity. But during the heat wave, there's barely a breeze.

Now multiply that habitat demand times the world's biggest cities, and calculate the biodiversity impact. No wonder the wind industry wants exemptions from endangered species rules and environmental impact studies that hyper-regulate fossil fuel and nuclear companies. No wonder Senator Diane Feinstein has

introduced legislation to prohibit solar installations in the super-sunny Mojave Desert, where developers want to install millions of acres of photovoltaic panels.

\* Equally passionate advocacy for biofuels, especially ethanol. Every 7 billion gallons of corn-based ethanol requires crops grown on an area the size of Indiana (23 million acres) – and Congress now wants the USA to produce 20 billion gallons of EtOH annually by 2020. In addition to expropriating vast crop land and wildlife habitat, ethanol production requires billions of gallons of water, millions of tons of fertilizer and insecticides, and enormous quantities of natural gas and diesel fuel to power tractors, tanker trucks and conversion plants – to distill a fuel that gets 20% fewer mpg than gasoline.

And yet, President Obama told a Ghanaian audience in July 2009 that malnourished Africa should forego even gas-fired electricity generators in favor of wind, solar and biofuel power. The continent and its arid, nutrient-depleted soils already cannot feed their populations adequately, and the President wants them to divert cropland and wildlife habitats to biofuels. Meanwhile, environmental activists continue to ...

\* Oppose biotechnology, genetically engineered crops and even hybrid seeds. These specialized crops survive better during droughts, increase farm family incomes, improve nutrition, and reduce the need for insecticides. They offer the best hope for growing more biofuel crops on less acreage.

The *New York Times* says we can ill afford “not to make the best use of genetic engineering.” If we “allow propaganda to trump science, then the potential for global agriculture to be productive, diverse and sustainable will go unfulfilled.” The late Dr. Norman Borlaug warned that forcing the world to rely on organic and traditional farming to feed even current populations would require plowing under nearly every remaining acre of forest and grassland habitat. That’s without factoring in biofuels.

And yet, environmentalists and EU bureaucrats threaten African nations with punitive boycotts if they plant biotech crops. Radical greens want Third World farmers to rely on “traditional” seeds and agricultural methods, and oppose the use of seeds that have been “touched by corporations.”

\* Environmentalists also oppose timber cutting and even tree thinning and mechanized fire suppression on vast acreage of US national forests. Too often the result is fiery conflagrations that incinerate trees, wildlife, soil and streams, causing extensive erosion and long-term habitat loss.

\* Topping it off, the Environmental Protection Agency’s recent endangerment decision, low-carbon fuel standards, and power plant emission rules will force even greater expansion of wind, solar and biofuel use, further impacting habitats and biodiversity.

It is bad enough that “biodiversity stabilization” is a reprise of past government-environmentalist eco-scares. Like its predecessors, the new program offers horrifying predictions of a dying planet – backed by little more than dubious theories, assumptions, assertions and statistics, fed into fancy computer models that generate ominous scenarios and graphics. It also proposes the same tired “solutions” – more taxes, regulations, and government control over lives, energy development and economic growth.

The far greater problem is that the UN, EPA, “mainstream media” and political establishment are ignoring the real threats to habitats, species and biodiversity: the anti-energy, anti-technology, anti-people agenda of radical green ideology.

We now have an opportunity to make Earth a better place for people and the natural world. We need to reject this agenda, demand sound science and solid evidence that a treat exists, and recognize that modern technology actually offers the best hope for protecting the diversity of species.

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Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow ([www.CFACT.org](http://www.CFACT.org)) and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green power – Black death*.