Gender power and the environmental movement: A critique and model for change

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GENDER, POWER AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT:
A critique and model for change

by
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I. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the power structure of the environmental movement in the United States, and particularly in the northern Rockies, with specific regard to gender. Arguments will be offered to support the hypothesis that some sectors of the population, particularly women, people of color and the poor, have been marginalized in the environmental movement and that their exclusion has had a profound impact on the effectiveness of the movement to challenge the dominant paradigm and bring about real social change. I will explain why new environmental organizational models are needed, and in the second part of this paper, how I put such an organization together and the lessons learned from that experience.

Having worked and been an active volunteer for environmental organizations for over ten years, I have spent the majority of my time in the last decade intimately involved in the conservation community in the Northern Rockies region. During this time, I have observed three major problems with the movement: the failure to appropriately and adequately include women (and people of color), the tendency to "preach to the converted," and an inability to understand or present environmental problems in a broader social, political and economic context. It is my contention that the latter two problems are a symptom of the first--the lack of diversity in the movement.

At almost every environmental meeting or conference I have attended, women and people of color have been a distinct minority and have rarely played a leadership role. Over the years, I have seen many women come to environmental gatherings, conferences, meetings etc. and then
disappear. Often, when I encountered these women elsewhere, I would ask why they were no longer involved in environmental issues. Most told me they did not feel welcome or appreciated and that their opinions were not considered important. Many told me they were now volunteering or working for other worthy causes, such as women's shelters. There were many times when I felt so frustrated with the movement I wanted to quit. It was a struggle to stay involved and it was only my passion for the issues that kept me going.

Janet Henderson, a former environmental activist from Montana shared many of my experiences. "I was really often the only woman at meetings or involved in a project" she claims. Henderson states that she "was treated disrespectfully by the men involved" and they would tell her she should "bake the cookies." During that time, Janet was just "learning about feminist issues and was keenly aware of sexism when it happened, but her inability to effectively address it was often paralyzing for her." By the time Henderson finished her graduate work and had worked for an environmental organization for quite some time "she had had enough negative experiences with environmental groups that she did what the job required of her, but did not involve her spirit or soul in the work. At the same time, she was volunteering at Women's Place, a women's shelter. Janet eventually went to work at Women's Place full-time, where she was able to regain self-confidence that she partially lost during her work with environmental groups. She now feels that she may be ready to tackle the environmental activist world again."

This was not isolated incident but rather the similar experiences of many women. "We all had stories to tell about our experiences that had turned us off, or that had kept us from being more involved" said Henderson when she gathered women on the University of Montana campus to talk
about why so few women were active in the environmental movement.\textsuperscript{5} Henderson's experiences reflected those of many of the women I have spoken to over the years. Some women had experiences that were so negative they actually had to leave their jobs with environmental organizations.

**Finding Common Ground: Gender, Justice and the Environment**

During my tenure as a graduate student in the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana, I had many discussions about sexism in the environmental movement with one of my professors, Dr. Bruce Jennings. Part of this discussion revolved around the lack of women speakers, and opportunities for women to speak, at environmental conferences in our region. Throughout my years as an activist, I had tried, without much success, to convince local conference organizers to invite more women speakers.

In the spring of 1994, in response to my frustration, the Environmental Studies Program (EVST) offered me a small grant to organize a women's environmental conference—the first of its kind in Montana. I had only eight weeks to organize the conference. I invited Lila Cleminshaw, another master's student in the Environmental Studies Program at the time, who shared some of my frustrations with the environmental movement, to join me in organizing it. We gathered an informal organizing committee and the group started a series of meetings to decide the format and content for the conference. All but two of the committee were women, and while most were students in the EVST program, we did invite women from the Missoula community and from the larger environmental community to participate in the meetings.
These meetings were significant because the ensuing discussion was to have a great influence on, not only the conference, but also the formation of a new environmental organization, Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE), which we were to establish. While developing the agenda and deciding which issues to cover, the discussion kept going back to the links between environmental degradation and other social problems and how this link was rarely included in environmental groups' agendas or conferences. Links, for instance, like those between overpopulation and women's reproductive rights or the link between rural poverty and local resource depletion. Aside from focusing on women's contributions to the environmental movement, everyone agreed that we needed to include these links. To reflect our purpose, we named the conference Finding Common Ground: Gender, Justice and the Environment. Contrary to claims by other conference organizers about the lack of qualified women, we had difficulty narrowing our selection of speakers. In the end, we invited nineteen speakers, from a range of social issues including the environment, to give presentations and facilitate workshops. (Appendix A)

The conference was a tremendous success. Over 100 women (and a few men) participated and feedback was very positive. Many women expressed their excitement about finally having a forum for their ideas and voices. "The 'Finding Common Ground' conference held earlier this month was superb" wrote Mary Birch, a professor in the Department of Social Work. "I am particularly pleased at the prospect of this sort of gathering around women and the environment becoming an annual event." Caren von Gontard from Whitefish wrote "...thanks so much. It was very worthwhile for me and the two others I brought along."
Throughout the meeting there were informal discussions about how women had felt excluded from the environmental movement... stories that sounded much like those described in part I of this paper. It was clear from the dialogue and enthusiasm at the conference that our efforts needed to be ongoing.

Founding Women's Voices for the Earth

In the early fall following the conference, I convened a series of meetings, inviting some of the same women who had attended the conference, to discuss the possibility of creating either a coalition of progressive groups (particularly groups working on women's issues) or a new organization that would address women's environmental concerns and make the link between the environment and other social issues.

We met nearly every week and, by October 1994, had decided to form a grassroots organization that would: give a voice to women and other marginalized groups whose environmental concerns had not been addressed by existing organizations, reach a broader audience and present environmental problems in a broader social, political and economic context. We decided against a coalition because we felt that we needed to do more than connect environmental issues to other social issues by building coalitions. After all, if these coalitions were comprised of a variety of groups that simply replicated the power structures of most environmental groups we would not have accomplished much. We felt strongly that we needed a new organizational model that would challenge the dominant paradigm. In January 1995, we officially "opened the doors" of Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE).
Throughout the first year of operation, fellow activists and funders constantly asked “Why create a women’s environmental organization...why do we even need another organization? -- there are already thousands of existing groups?” The answers to these questions are multiple and complex and serve as the focus of this paper.

The decision to create a "women’s" environmental organization was not an easy one because many of us would have preferred to continue working with the groups with which we already had an affiliation and see real change come from within them. However, I, and many other women, had tried for years to implement "change from within." The problem, for many of us, was that we had to expend so much time and energy on challenging the structures and situations that excluded women and others, that it left little time for us to work on the environmental issues we cared about.

Personally, the decision to leave a secure and hard-to-come by job in a well established environmental group for such a risky venture was equally difficult for me. However, the culmination of my own experiences, and those of other women, lead me to believe that I had no other choice but to work outside of existing environmental organizations to create real change. As the founding members of WVE, we were certainly not the first group of women who felt forced to make this decision. "When women's issues or feminist principles are continually excluded from agendas or operating principles women frequently have no choice but to organize separately." This happened in British Colombia in 1988 at the general meeting of the Greens when "twin proposals to include feminism as a Green value in the constitution and to continue to use consensus decision-making were defeated." According to Joni Seager, author of Earth Follies: Coming to Feminist Terms With the Global
Environmental Crisis, the "British Colombian women are doing what women alienated from male political movements have always done--they are forming a separate feminist Green caucus. Separate organizing is increasingly proposed as a viable option for German Green women too." But as she points out, "Everyone will pay a price for the alienation of women from Green parties. Women will end up being once again marginalized in political arenas. The Greens will jeopardize their base of support. The Green agenda will lose its analytical acuity and saliency if its feminist commitment is reduced to symbolic gestures of equality. And the Green parties will have a hard time maintaining their credibility as ushers of radical and genuine change."

Aside from the exclusion of women, there were other problems with the movement that we needed to address. The goals, missions and strategies of other environmental organizations, especially in the northern Rockies region of the US, did not adequately address our concerns. By concerns, we did not simply mean toxic pollution per se but rather how environmental problems are addressed...who are the players, who makes the decisions and how are they made, and how are the issues framed? In other words, we felt that meaningful analysis and resolution of environmental problems needed "to be rooted in an analysis of the social, cultural and political institutions that are responsible for environmental distress." We wanted to address environmental problems in a way that seriously considered the types of critiques and perspectives coming out of the feminist movement.

In part I of this paper I will discuss my own experiences, those of others and the critical readings that led me to realize the need for a new organizational form. I will examine the inadequacies of the environment movement and specifically examine the ways in which gender enters into
environmental issues and the ways in which environmental issues are shaped by gender-specific constructs. I will describe how "environmental realities are shaped by institutional realities that are, in turn, shaped by distinctive gender assumptions and dispositions." In part II, I will describe the history and structure of our new grassroots organization, WVE, how we put such an organization together and examine how it addresses the concerns presented in part I. In Part III, the conclusion, I will discuss the lessons we learned from the WVE experience, what challenges we face in the future and make recommendations for others in the environmental movement.

I think it is important to say that, before I founded WVE and even well into my graduate studies, I had read very little about feminism, or feminist analysis of environmentalism and was barely even aware of the term ecofeminism. My concerns about all the "isms" within the environmental movement, were rooted squarely in my own experience and that of my friends and fellow activists. It wasn't until a few years ago, when someone described me as an "ecofeminist," that I started to explore ecofeminist philosophy and some feminist analysis. Reviewing this literature has not been the source of my discontent with the environmental movement but has, rather, supported and created context for my experiences.

Method

The method of inquiry for this paper was an attempt at participatory research because much of this work is based upon my own experience as an environmental activist over the last decade. Well before entering environmental "academia" or encountering the term "ecofeminism" I had some serious reservations about the environmental movement. Through
research and a review of some of the literature, I had come to understand the cause and effect of what I have experienced on a personal level. This paper combines examples from some pertinent critiques of the environmental movement and participatory research (my own experiences, interviews with fellow activists and an evaluation of the organization I founded).

"Participatory research may be characterized in terms of three key words: people, power and praxis. The basic tenets of participatory research include the meaningful involvement of people in addressing the concerns that affect their lives; recognition of knowledge as power; and commitment to a process of critical action and reflection."\textsuperscript{11} The process is "people centered (Brown, 1985)...is informed by and responds to the experiences and needs of oppressed people... [and] challenges practices that separate the researcher from the researched and recognizes the importance of local knowledge and experience. The researcher joins as a committed participant in a process of co-learning."\textsuperscript{12}

Aside from participatory research, I also reviewed some of the pertinent literature on the power structure of the environmental movement. To fully appreciate why it was necessary to create a new organization and why it was impossible to work within existing organizations, it is essential to analyze the power structure of the movement. "An understanding of power demands an appreciation of history (Wulff & Fiske, 1987; Fernandes, 1989; Freire, 1970). Research needs to be contextualized in terms of the current sociopolitical environment in which it is conducted and the historical conditions that contributed to this situation (Fernandes, 1989; Freire 1970)."\textsuperscript{13}

For a contemporary insight into the power structure of the environmental movement, I interviewed five women who play a significant role in WVE: Bethany Walder, Gail Gutsche, Marcy Mahr, Julie Mae Ringelbergh and Lila Ceminshaw. All of these women were founding
members of the organization and continue to serve on the steering committee. I have also drawn from the experiences and conversations of other women activists in Montana contained in Lila Cleminshaw's Voices from Within: An Oral History of Women Environmental Activists in Montana. Cleminshaw interviewed eight women ranging in age from 30 to 74 with a broad diversity of backgrounds. One of those women, Christine Kaufmann, serves on the Board of Directors of WVE and was one of the founding members.

I also drew information from a survey sent to WVE members eighteen months after the organization formed, a series of focus groups with Native American women for WVE and a two focus groups conducted with WVE members by Terry Kendrick from Woman's Opportunity Resources, Inc. (WORD).
PART I

The state of the environment.

The extent of environmental degradation at the close of the twentieth century threatens the existence of life on earth as we know it. Global warming, toxic pollution, resource depletion and the loss of biodiversity are problems symptomatic of an unchecked, unsustainable use of space and resources by humanity. Harvard conservation biologist E.O. Wilson estimates the current global rate of species loss at 10,000 species per year compared to 1,000 species per year in the 1970's. Theo Colborn, a senior scientist with the World Wildlife Fund warns that over “the past fifty years, synthetic chemicals have become so pervasive in the environment and in our bodies that it is no longer possible to define a normal, unaltered human physiology.” Such rapid change threatens a collapse of earth's ecosystems, a scenario with staggering social and biological implications. Yet, despite millions of dollars spent every year by an ever-growing environmental movement, the state of our environment continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Why? It is my contention that, while much of the blame lies on an ever growing, increasingly demanding human population, we must ask if environmental organizations themselves are on the right track. The protection and restoration of our environment will require fundamental shifts in values and behavior, not only from the public at large, but also the very movement formed to protect it.

The failure of the environmental movement to engage people and move issues.
Over the last decade, environmental issues such as global warming, reductions in atmospheric ozone, destruction of the tropical rain forests, species extinction, acid rain, water and air pollution, and exploitation of natural resources have certainly captured public attention. However, the "tendency to conceptualize environmental problems in their physical form" such as the number of species lost, the acreage of deforestation or the extent of toxic pollution, "has a number of implications" writes Seager. Primarily, they leave the question of "agency" out of the picture. Contemporary scientific analysis and media coverage of environmental issues rarely examines the "social and economic processes" that create these problems. The "environmental crisis is not just a crisis of physical ecosystems. The real story of the environmental crisis is a story of power and profit and political wrangling; it is a story of the institutional arrangements and settings, the beauracratc arrangements and the cultural conventions that create conditions of environmental destruction."^16

While "large scale environmental degradation--not litter on the streets, but the really major environmental problems that may well kill us all--is the product of large institutions that include, prominently, militaries, multinationals, and governments" it is the "eco-establishment" that Seager describes as "a handful of large, powerful, and very well-funded environmental groups" that are setting the environmental agenda, and framing the ways in which we perceive environmental crisis.^17

Therefore, to evaluate the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the environmental movement we must understand how its power structure works or "the institutional arrangements and settings" and "the cultural conventions" that define the power structure.

Joni Seager explains ...
"to date, debates between reformists and radicals within the environmental movement have fueled a robust introspection. Environmentalists wrangle with each other over tactics, style issues, campaigns, leadership, finances, publicity—everything seems grist for the mill in the environmental debate over growing pains in the movement. Everything, with one exception: what environmentalists are not asking are questions of gender relations within the movement. Does it matter that the leadership staff and structure of the environmental establishment in Europe and North America is increasingly male, and white? Does it matter that this leadership structure replicates the structure of the corporations, militaries, and governments that are often their environmental adversaries? Does it matter that, as it "matures," this progressive movement apparently cannot sustain a progressive vision of gender and power relations? Does it matter that the schism in the environmental movement is increasingly between a mostly male-led professional elite and a mostly female-led grassroots movement?18

The failure to appropriately and adequately include women in the environmental movement.

Mark Dowie, in his analysis of "American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century" wrote "American land, air and water are certainly in better shape than they would have been had the [environmental] movement not existed, but they would be in far better condition had environmental leaders been bolder; more diverse in class, race, and gender; less compromising in battle; and less gentlemanly in their day-to-day dealings with adversaries." (Emphasis added).19 Dowie has written extensively about the failures of, or as he often sees it, the "irrelevance" of, the mainstream environmental movement. Dowie claims:

The mainstream movement responded to Reagan by forming the harmless and stubbornly elitist Group of 10 (later named the Green Group), creating its own irrelevance by remaining middle class and white, pursuing "designer issues" expedient to
fundraising, focusing on Washington, lobbying the wrong committees, failing to move women and minorities into top jobs, building ephemeral memberships with direct mail, ignoring the voice of vast constituencies and, eventually--cozying up to America's worst environmental violators.20

Dowie supports his position with dozens of examples throughout his book.

When asked whether the perspectives of women have been adequately included in the environmental movement, Former Congresswoman Bella Abzug, now the Executive Director of Women's Environmental Development Organization, said "You're not going to get women attracted to this movement unless they have full participation and with their deepest concerns considered. We still have these organizations run by men, organized by men."21 (Women's environmental interests often start with concern for human health and habitat, issues that the large environmental groups have been slow to take on).

A "common perception exists that women's involvement in the environmental movement began only during the past few decades" writes Lila Cleminshaw in her thesis Voices from Within: An Oral History of Women Environmental Activists in Montana. But, she says, to "the contrary, women have worked on behalf of the environment for most of this century. Part of this misconception stems from the historic and current lack of recognition afforded women for their work in the environment. "22 Another misconception stems from a limited view of what constitutes "environment" -- issues of health, safety, community life conditions have long been at the fore of women's collective struggles. Cleminshaw adds that "Women's roles in the environmental movement have been overlooked by many historians of that topic...Indeed, Stephen Fox, in his book The American Conservation..."
Movement, an in depth look at the history of the movement and its key players, only profiles in detail one woman -- Rosalie Edge -- who challenged the status quo in the Audubon Society."23

Even when women's work is documented, as in Sally Ranney's article Heroines and Hierarchy: Female Leadership in the Conservation Movement their "names may be familiar to some, they are probably less familiar than those of the men involved in the same efforts." This leads to "a continuing perception that few women are leaders or even participants in the environment."24

A fact that is critically important to establish from the outset is that women are interested in environmental issues, do play a very active role in environmental activism at the grassroots level but are excluded from leadership in the "eco-establishment" which is really setting the environmental agenda. "The existing power structure of the environmental establishment in North America and Europe is ubiquitously male, and mostly white. While grassroots groups everywhere in the world are primarily run by women, virtually all of the large international and major national environmental organizations are run, and have always been run, by men."25

In Washington where most national environmental organizations are headquartered, leadership in the environmental elite -- the 'Group of Ten'-- has almost exclusively been male and white. Until 1993, the executive directors of all ten had been men, and no women had ever held the top post in any of these organizations. Even Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (FoE) which "consider themselves to be the most progressive of the large environmental organizations," never had women presidents until then and "Greenpeace especially prides itself on being outside the eco-establishment 'inner circle'."26 Barbara Dudley, the first woman executive director of
Greenpeace resigned from that position in May 1997 partly due to pressure from some of the male leadership in Greenpeace. Mike Roselle, who was recently elected as a dissident candidate to the board of Greenpeace stated that he "promised to bring increased scrutiny to the group's top staffers, particularly executive director Barbara Dudley." Friends of the Earth, USA, now has a woman executive director.

Seager's research revealed that "women predominate in traditionally female occupational slots—they work in 'Membership Services' or in 'Administration and Support.' One woman who works for an American environmental group observed that men seem to be more comfortable with women in support roles, and very uncomfortable with women in leadership roles." For instance, a former biologist with the Nature Conservancy, Joan Bird, said that when she worked for the organization, all the core management were male except for a female director of human resources which she described as the "pink collar track" of the organization. According to Bird the "organization would have said it believed in the democratic process in the workplace and yet when it came down to it there was a lot of hierachial power manipulation." The organization had apparently been criticized for the lack of women working for it and yet the ironic fact is that, according to Bird, "75 percent of the people who work for the Nature Conservancy are women! They just are all in support staff."

In Montana, even though the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) now employs more women than men, women have been hired more often into assistant positions and the executive director has always been a man. Even though the board has been gender balanced in the past, recently "women have made up less than one quarter of the board...GYC also has a Science Council made up of 16 men [and no women]." One man, Mike
Bader, has always been the executive director of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies and the leadership, board and advisory board, have always been disproportionately dominated by men. While the Clark Fork Pondereille Coalition, currently has a woman executive director, only two women have ever served as a board president. John Gatchell, conservation director of the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) told Cleminshaw that "women have been in leadership positions on the board since the 1960's and the board is and has been gender-balanced over the past decade." However, my research showed that from the years 1958 to 1983 (the only documentation I could find) only 2 women chaired their council and of the eight founding council members only one was a woman. Although the Northern Plains Resource Council has a woman executive director, and their board and staff are fairly gender balanced, few women have ever held the position of board chair. The Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) and the Montana Audubon Society probably have the most gender balanced staff and boards. However, only three women and one couple have received MEIC "Conservationist of the Year" Awards since 1978.

Sexism in the movement is also well illustrated in the ratio of male to female speakers at environmental conferences and workshops. Diane Valentine, Joy Belsky and Sally Cross document and discuss this aspect of the problem in their paper One Small Step: Combating Sexism in the Environmental Movement. According to Valentine et al. "The 1994 [Environmental] LAW Conference (an organization dedicated, at least on paper, to environmental law and justice) listed two men as invited speakers to every woman." They noted that "Instead of the conference being true to its 1994 theme, "Raising our Voices for the Earth," it should have read "Raising our Mostly Male Voices for the Earth." Valentine et al. gave other examples
including conferences sponsored by agencies such as the US. Forest Service
and the Bureau of Land Management and several western universities.
Examples cited were "Sustaining Rangeland Ecosystems" - six invited women
out of 55 speakers; "Ecosystem Management in Western Interior Forests" -
three women out of 54 speakers and "Forest Health and Fire Danger in Inland
Western Forests" - five women out of 54 speakers. These ratios are similar to
those of the conservation conferences I have attended over the years in the
Northern Rockies.

While conferences are not the only place sexism is evident, they often
provide a visible and concrete place to initiate change by challenging
conference organizers to address the gender inequity in ratio of speakers.
Valentine et al., in letters to conference organizers, pointed out that "under
representation of women in the symposium perpetuates the myth that only
men have the training, the ability, or the interest to participate in
management of our public lands. It also demonstrates a past and continuing
problem with admitting women into the field." They added that "[your]
conference prevents the public from recognizing the important roles already
played by many women, and denies other women the opportunity to gain
recognition and achieve prominence in their fields." (copies of letters
received from Belsky et al) Responses from conference organizers ranged
from indignant denial to reprisal while letters from recommended female
speakers "spoke about the pain and frustration of being left out of conferences
and ignored by their peers." (Valentine, et al) Valentine et al. describe the
letters as "indescribably sad, and familiar--educated, talented, productive
women who had received little recognition for their work and slow career
advancement--because only their male colleagues were invited to speak at
prestigious conferences. It is at these conferences that men achieve name
recognition and network with leaders of their fields, and women should be allowed equal opportunity." (Valentine, et al)

Valentine, Belsky and Cross wrote "As seasoned environmentalists at the Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC), we had the rewarding experience of working together to attack deeply entrenched sexist attitudes in the environmental movement...Our conference "actions" were just the latest in a series of fights by Northwest women activists to gain respect and recognition in the environmental movement."36

The women at ONRC were not the only ones to take action with regard to sexism at environmental conferences. In 1993, at a popular forest conference in Ashland, Oregon, women participants, frustrated with sexism at the conference, and in the movement as a whole, formed a caucus to talk about the issue. What resulted was the Ashland Principles. The document is comprised of a statement, and two sets of guidelines, one for conferences and the other for organizations for "Eliminating Sexism and Racism and Facilitating Diversity in the Environmental Movement." These principles reflect much of the focus of this paper:

Out of concern for the energies and commitment of people working to replace an ethic of abuse and domination of the Earth with an ethic of compassion and interconnectedness and to replace that destructive behavior with meaningful restoration of ecosystems, we make this statement.

To fail to address the problem of sexism in the environmental movement is to continue to perpetuate the systems that have brought about the abuse. This would imply a complicity agreement with the domination culture that has driven ecosystems to the brink of extinction. We must understand the relationship between the destruction of our environment, the oppression of women, and the denial of so called "feminine values". Those who would abuse one are by definition participating in the continuation of the other, for both are dominating, hierarchical, and antithetical to the inherent worth of each and every living being. The environmental
movement has been subject to the same dysfunctions of all institutions in America. The problems of sexism, sexual harassment, lack of equal pay for equal work, marginalization, and violence are draining the movement of critical energy.

Out of respect for our work, for what sustainable cultures may teach us, for our daughters and sons, and for the diversity we wish to protect, sexism must be addressed immediately in the most serious manner. The rewards of ending sexism in the environmental movement are great. With all of us working at our full potential we can bring about a holistic ecosystem in which women and men are respected and honored for their differences, talents, skills, and strengths. A complete text of the document is attached. (Appendix B).

* This statement was written, in consensus, to specifically address sexism in the environmental movement. We acknowledge that racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination stem from the same deeply rooted attitudes, and that until all are addressed no one is free.

Sexism is not only measured in organizational representation or gender ratios of speakers at conferences but also by the way women are treated by their fellow activists, workers and employers. Cleminshaw recounts the stories of two women who had to leave their jobs because of sexism. Louisa Wilcox was working at the Teton Science School when they hired a new director. Wilcox said that "he was very threatened by me because I was accepted in the community and a lot of people knew me in Jackson."

Cleminshaw writes that "Louisa finally left her job because working with this man was so difficult. Initially, she had 'taken it personally and hard, but then I realized it was a generic problem ... He got rid of all the women eventually in administrative positions ... and the stories were very similar.' She said that the women were not trusted, not given credit, and not given the room to creatively do their jobs."37

Dr. Joan Bird, a former biologist with the Nature Conservancy "filed a gender discrimination grievance based on her experiences in the [Nature Conservancy] office, being denied the promotion for which she was well
qualified, and the backdoor hirings in which it was not possible for a woman to apply. The headquarters of the Conservancy defended all of the state director's actions as legal and in line with personnel policies.  

I have spoken to dozens of women over the years, and many shared similar experiences. Most felt that their concerns were not considered and that they were shut out of any decision-making process within other environmental organizations.

Co-founder of Feminists for Animal Rights, Marti Kheel notes that "Repeatedly, women who join men in progressive movements have been silenced or relegated to traditionally feminine, supportive roles." But as Kheel says "A movement that sees the concerns of women-- or any other oppressed group-- as something "extra" to be "integrated" cannot hope to enlist our energies or address our needs."  

Chris Kaufmann, co-director of the Montana Human Rights Network, and a member of the Board of Directors of Women's Voices for the Earth who held a policy staff position with the Montana Environmental Information Center, "feels that women in the environmental movement are not taken seriously, and are often doing the work that makes the men's ideas happen." Her position is supported by another veteran activist, Janet Ellis, the executive director of Montana Audubon, who recounts a time when she had worked closely with the Department of State Lands on an issue during the legislature, but later during the special session, they did not contact her about a hearing on the issue -- they instead contacted Jim Jensen at MEIC, and Janet felt 'shut out of the process'... Montana's so full of good old boy systems that that gets really frustrating to me," says Ellis "and I don't know what to do about it ... It's just sort of, 'well it's always been done this way' sort of attitude;...it's this wall that you walk up against and you feel like you would
be treated differently [if you were a man]." 41 Ellis "related examples of working very hard on certain issues, while other people, usually men or male-led organizations, received the credit. Joanne Big Crane, an Indian activist from the Flathead Reservation, says that "women have to work twice as hard as men to be taken seriously." 42

According to Kaufmann, many people in the environmental movement "just won't do anything in terms of making the movement work for women to assume positions of leadership ... You almost never see women being spokespersons for environmental stuff." And if they do, "they tend to be cast in a role of concerned mommies." Kaufmann "knew that she wanted to be the executive director of an organization, but never applied for that position in an environmental group because she 'just had the feeling that there was a boys' club there' and that she would not have been able to be as effective as she is in her work in human rights. 'Men are the people that are dictating [the environmental] movement and deciding where it's going.' She feels that, because the Human Rights Network is a young organization, that she is the first executive director, and that it takes a unique angle on issues, 'I don't have to buck the whole history of what's been going on in the state.'" 43

My own experiences with sexism in the environmental movement have been numerous. While sometimes subtle, many have been blatant. While raising money for one organization, I helped secure a significant gift for the organization from a male donor. The donor arranged to take the organization's management (who were all male) out to lunch to present the gift. Even though I was largely responsible for the gift, I was not invited to lunch. This event was what finally pushed me into leaving the job.

In 1994, the women in the environmental organization I was working for, were asked to help organize a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the
Wilderness Act. The idea was the brainchild of several male conservation leaders who had played a pivotal role in the passage of the Wilderness Act. Activists, responsible for the passage of the legislation thirty years prior and those currently working on wilderness issues, were invited. The plan was to divide the celebration into two sessions, with the morning dedicated to celebrating passage of the Wilderness Act with stories from the 1960's and the afternoon dedicated to discussing strategies for future wilderness designation. When the guest list was presented to me, I was dismayed to find that it comprised a total of 90 men, only eight women activists and two wives of male activists. To add insult to injury, the list included all of the organization's male staff even though most had no "wilderness" affiliation, yet none of the female staff, who were responsible for organizing the event, were listed. Having been an outspoken wilderness activist for a number of years, I suggested the names of women, both young and old, whom I thought should have been included. My suggestions were dismissed with comments like "oh, she's a crazy old...or, she is eccentric and no one takes her seriously."

The event itself did not prove to be any less sexist. The afternoon session was chaired by environmental writer and historian, Michael Fromm. Fromm opened the afternoon session by individually asking recognized "male leaders" to discuss what we could do to increase public support for wilderness designation. Wishing to participate in the dialogue I raised my hand. After being ignored for twenty minutes, I finally interrupted. I pointed out the lack of gender, racial and social diversity at the event and throughout the movement as a whole. I suggested that diversifying the movement and examining the issue of wilderness in the context of other social issues would perhaps broaden public support for wilderness. After a short discussion, Fromm called for a break. Upon regrouping, Fromm suggested, in a very
condescending manner, that before moving on with the discussion we should finish discussing "Bryony's problem."

In 1995, grassroots environmental leaders from around the country were invited by the executive director of a group called Voices for the Environment for a weekend strategy session or "think tank" in Montana. There was no set agenda, but after a day's intense discussion, several issues were identified as critical. We then broke into small groups to discuss these issues. While the majority of the people at the meeting were white men, I found it interesting that the few women and Native Americans present chose the same small discussion group on 'community organizing.' Only one white male chose to join this discussion group.

As the group began its discussion, one Native American man said that before we could discuss community organizing we had to address racism in the environmental movement because it was a major barrier to successful organizing. As the discussion evolved the issue of sexism in relation to organizing was also addressed. At the end of the group discussion, the group elected me to report back to the gathering. Afterwards, Howie Wolke, one of the founders of Earth First!, and several other white men chastised me for bringing up racism and sexism, complaining that it wasn't relevant and why did I always have to create a problem when there wasn't one.

These were not the first nor the last times my concerns about diversity were dismissed. Encountering the same problem in the Green Party in Europe Seager noted that:

Men often justify their unwillingness to question patriarchal ways of conducting business by claiming that a more urgent agenda takes precedence. Women are often told that 'their' issues will be dealt with later, 'after the revolution' as it were. But men who hide behind this procrastination are implicitly presuming

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that relations between men and women don't have bearing on the changing socioecological order that they see as their first priority—that ecological issues take priority, and that gender issues can somehow be dealt with later, both in a vacuum.44

Dismissing women's concerns are only part of the problem. Sometimes women exacerbate the problem by buying into the system themselves. The problem, Seager explains "with masculinist institutions is not primarily that men are in charge, but that structures can be so rooted in masculinist presumptions that even were women in charge of these structures, they would retain the core characteristics that many feminists and progressive men find troubling."45 "Too often by the time women reach the senior management level of male-run organizations, their values have been co-opted in exactly this way."46 The problem is that when women are invited to share power with men it is on their terms within the constraints of their conditioning.

When women at ONRC criticized organizers of a conference on "Forest Health and Fire Danger in Inland Western Forests" held in Spokane, Washington in 1994, for including only four women out of a total of 48 speakers. Idaho State representative Judi Danielson, a conference organizer and one of the four women speakers, said the real issue is not the exclusion of women but the poor health of federal forests. "It never occurred to me that we had to be balanced with men and women. It occurred to me that we had to deal with the [forest health] issue" said Danielson. "The issue is so big, I'm going to be more concerned about forest health and catastrophic fire and how it affects my district."47

Women are not the only group excluded from the environmental movement. A survey of mainstream environmental groups in 1992 revealed that one third of them had no people of color on their staff, and over one-
fifth had none on their boards. "American environmentalism is a secular religion of the white middle class." wrote journalist Richard Rodriguez. Mark Dowie, in his book *Losing Ground: The American Environmental Movement at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, describes the board make-up of mainstream environmental groups as "mostly male, white, and patrician." He adds that "Board members of either gender are generally selected for their connections to money or power, or both. When minorities, non-wealthy women, Native Americans, and activists expressed displeasure at their exclusion, they were given token representation on some boards." "Mainstream power," Dowie adds, "resides to this day in a "white men's club," a reality reflected in the agendas and priorities of the national environmental organizations."

While a comprehensive discussion about environmental racism is beyond the scope of this paper, it is essential to mention it because the ideology which supports sexism is the same ideology that sanctions racism. It is important that these relations and practices of inequality be recognized or addressed mutually. We must work to end all oppressions writes ecofeminist, Greta Gaard, as "no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" or vice versa.

Racism within the environmental movement is a serious problem and much has been written and documented about environmental racism and the lack of racial diversity in environmental groups. Understanding how environmental racism works gives us insight into the issues of "agency" and "power" mentioned earlier.

For example, the US. General Accounting Office (GAO) conducted a study of hazardous waste sitings and found that African Americans
comprised the majority of the population adjacent to these sites. In response to these findings Civil Rights leaders conducted their own study through the United Church of Christ, Toxic Waste and Race: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous-Waste Sites, and found that communities of color were disproportionately targeted for commercial hazardous waste and uncontrolled toxic-waste dump sites. 53

A classic example of this situation is Chicago's Altgeld Gardens with its oil refineries, chemical plants, sewage treatment plants, steel mills and smelters, 50 landfills, half a dozen incinerators, 100 abandoned toxic waste dumps. All of these sites are within a 3 mile radius of a population of 10,000 people where less than half of whom are healthy, half the pregnancies have ended in miscarriage, birth defects or sickly infants and almost all are African Americans.54

Not all criticism has come from writers, analysts or scholars but it has also come from activists of color within the movement itself. A letter from the Southwest Organizing Project in Albuquerque charged mainstream environmental groups with racist hiring practices and also pointed out that the lack of diversity in the movement actually hurt the movement's effectiveness... "Racism and the whiteness of the environmental movement is our Achilles heel. You must know as well as we do that white organizations isolated from Third World communities can never build a movement."55

Excluding women from decision-making in the environmental movement essentially ignores the concerns of more than half of the world's population. Excluding people of color makes the problem significantly worse. The lack of racial and gender diversity also effects both the way organizations
function internally and the way in which the environmental message is manifested in public. For example, many working class Americans and people of color see environmentalists as a self-serving group of elitists and view traditional conservation groups as being exclusionary along class or racial lines. Gender inequity, though less well documented or recognized, is equally as debilitating to the movement as racism. Sexism not only affects women or their access to environmental decision-making but it affects the very nature of the work itself. Some studies reveal a difference in the way many men and women view issues. For example, a 1996 Roper Starch poll reported that 51% percent of women think environmental laws have not gone far enough, compared to 38% of men.\textsuperscript{56} Another example is a report entitled *Attitudes, knowledge and behaviors toward wildlife as affected by gender*, published in the Wildlife Society Bulletin, in 1987. The report stated that "Male vs. female differences in attitudes toward animals were dramatic. The strength and consistency of male vs. female differences were so pronounced as to suggest gender is among the most important demographic influences on attitudes toward animals in our society."\textsuperscript{57} The studies showed that "men showed a much greater willingness to exploit animals, to usurp wildlife habitat for increased human gains" and as Seager observes, "this skew in priorities has interesting gender implications" as these are attitudes that "would have a profound bearing on conservation strategies."\textsuperscript{58}

Seager, in her analysis of the power structure of the institutions that "create conditions of environmental destruction" (militaries, multinationals, and governments) and the "eco-establishment" writes:

... the first thing I notice, as a feminist, is that these are all institutions of men. These institutions and groups are controlled by men (and a mere smattering of women). The culture of these institutions is shaped by power relations between men and
women, and between groups of men in cooperation or in conflict. Institutional behavior is informed by presumptions of appropriate and necessary behavior for men and for women. Their actions, their interactions, and the often catastrophic results of their policies cannot be separated from the social context that frames them. And, on twentieth century Earth, the large scale social frame is one of gender difference. Everywhere in the world, men and women lead different lives; everywhere in the world, men have more institutionalized power, more autonomy, more money, and more privilege than their female counterparts; even when the "pie" of social power is small, women's share is smaller still.

The institutional culture that is responsible for most of the environmental calamities of the last century is a masculinist culture. The "expert structure"—of scientists, environmentalists, and bureaucrats—that interprets and assesses the state of the earth is, for the most part, one of men. As a feminist then, the first environmental question to ask is whether or not it "matters" that the institutions that for the most part control our collective environmental fate are constructs of male culture.  

My experiences as an environmental activist over the last decade and more lead me to believe that gender definitely does matter and as Seager says "common sense suggests that a skew of power and representation in favor of men within these institutions has to 'matter'; feminist theory and women's history tell us it matters." There are a number of ways that this gender imbalance effects the outcome of environmental activism. Men and women appear to have different priorities in terms of issues, strategies and outcome. According to Seager:

Men and women have different relationships to militaries, multinationals, governments, and large environmental organizations. Similarly, the implications and experience of environmental decay are often different for men and women, rich and poor, elites and disenfranchised. The task for feminists is to unravel the ways in which gender operates as a structuring condition within the institutions that hold the balance of power on environmental issues."
It is critical at this point to make the distinction between a discussion about "gender" as opposed to "men versus women." I want to avoid any misconceptions about essentialism. While there may be biological differences between men and women, there are no universal cultural or social differences. What I am talking about here is *hegemonic masculinity* which Seager describes as "a type of culturally dominant masculinity that, while it does not correspond to the actual personality of the majority of men, sustains patriarchal authority and legitimizes a patriarchal social and political order."^62 Kline, when discussing sexist conditioning writes "I am not talking about men. Men are wonderful. I am talking about male conditioning. The two things are very different." Kline explains that men and women frequently share many fine qualities but, she says that "male conditioning, on the other hand, is rigid, predatory, controlling and disconnected (emphasis added)...We can see that male conditioning is not the same as men because women can also suffer from it."^63 Seager, in her analysis of the ways in which gender and gender relationships enter into environmental issues says that although we "all know individual women in the institutions" she criticizes and "we all know individual men who suffer the predations of this institutional culture [that] does not undercut the saliency of the argument that these institutions are structured around masculinist presumptions and prerogatives."^64

There is often a difference in priorities and values based on gender. According to Seager:

> Sexism is measured not only in organizational representation, interpersonal relations but also in the setting of priorities and agendas. Despite their apparent philosophical differences, the agendas of the 'new' environmental groups share surprising affinities with the agendas of the older conservation groups. The early conservation groups directed their efforts to saving wildlife primarily in order to maintain 'stock' for recreational hunting and fishing; for many conservation groups, this continues to be a
primary *raison d'être*. The prominence of wildlife/wilderness issues on the agendas of the "newer" environmental groups essentially grew out of the same male-oriented fishing/hunting tradition as the older conservation groups. A recent comprehensive survey of American environmental groups, the first of its kind, makes clear the extent to which wildlife-nature concerns dominate the environmental agenda. 65

The movement itself has become so divided along class, racial and gender lines that it has left many women and minority groups feeling disenfranchised and this exclusion adds to the failure to gain broad public support. The discussion about inclusion and diversity is not just an ethical or moral issue, but is also about the ability of the environmental movement to achieve its goals. Even if environmental activists choose to ignore the ethical aspect of this argument, the practical aspect of successful organizing demands that diversity be addressed. If women are not deeply involved in the movement then the movement is unlikely to address issues in a way that appeals to women and it will lose their support--more than half the world's population. Many people, including psychologists and sociologists, believe women often communicate, problem solve and make decisions differently.66

Political commentator and journalist, William Greider wrote:

The environmental movement, though its broad values are almost universally shared by the public, is unable to mobilize its potential impact because it cannot resolve its own differences. The movement is splintered into many different pieces, including different social classes that do not even talk to one another, much less try to work out a common agenda. On the one end are Ivy League lawyers, urbane and well educated and completely comfortable in the inner circles of government. On the other end are the thousands of home-grown neighborhood activists, utterly skeptical of government and engaged in "rude and crude" politics at the factory gates."67

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Gail Gutsche, WVE's pesticide project director thinks that women "can be more effective because they're better negotiators, they're better facilitators, they're better moderators. And by that I don't mean that they compromise their principles all the time. What I mean is that they're better at actually getting people to bring all their issues to the table and then trying to find the common ground there, in general...these are generalizations." Gutsche adds that "women want to bring people into the process as opposed to trying to exclude people from the process so they're always trying to build some kind of -- not necessarily consensus, but build coalition for folks and I think that's a really positive aspect. I think that is inclusive rather than exclusive and brings more people in." Or as Renee Askins, founder of The Wolf Foundation says "building bridges instead of building trenches."68 Gutsche goes as far as saying "[Women] tend to be generally better listeners, actually hearing what the problems are and actually -- then feeding back, oh, so then A, B, and C are the issues you bring to the table. Is that correct? Right. And you've got D and E. Can we talk about some common kind of ground here."69" Bird felt that women in the [Nature Conservancy] put energy into developing and sustaining relationships, while the men were more individualistic, goal driven, and competitive."70

Seager, Dowie and many of my fellow activists are concerned about the professionalization of the movement. For Seager there is a "Clear trend toward professionalism in the environmental establishment and emergent "ecobeauracracy" [in Washington].71 She observes that as we move toward globalism "community women have been edged out by business men--a classic example of the gender-based process of environmental "professionalization."72 For Seager this shift to a more professionalized movement has important gender implications:
Despite the resilience and recent proliferation of grassroots environmentalism, it is the large eco-establishment groups who are on the foreground of setting the environmental agenda. This sector of the environmental movement is changing rapidly. It is becoming professionalized and bureaucratized, a trend that has wide-ranging ramifications. The professionalization of an ecology group brings changes that are not only in its headquarters' address, logo, stationery; it also brings changes in its tactics, priorities, and politics. These changes are controversial; issues of changing style, substance, priorities are now being debated, somewhat reluctantly, often heatedly, in environmental circles. What is not being debated, what is overlooked time and time again, is the fact that these changes also alter the gender politics of the movement; and in turn, that changing the politics between men and women inside the movement will change the nature of environmental activism.73

By excluding women and people of color, the movement loses the opportunity to explore a range of ideas and potential solutions. An example of how including people of color may affect the outcome of an environmental problem was evident when Bethany Walder, director of Wildlands CPR (formerly Road Rip) and WVE member, held a workshop in Alaska in 1996:

We brought "an unbelievable number of people together... [and] had a strategy session and it was half native people and half white people, and we sat around and talked about what roads mean in these isolated communities and why if roads go to them it's going to destroy their way of life. That wasn't what we went there to talk about, but that's what we did talk about, and we developed a campaign that we wouldn't have developed if those people [the natives] wouldn't have been there. They're the ones who are going to be most affected by this road construction proposal... There's now a lot of people in Alaska working on roads who weren't working on it before. So that felt really effective."74

An important aspect of understanding what is lost when women are excluded from environmental decision-making is recognizing the different
"conditions" men and women are raised under and the different expectations our society has. Nancy Kline, author of *Women and Power* explains:

...I think we would find that what is needed most of all in today's public leadership is the very ability women have been encouraged to develop in private - the ability to think interactively and, in so doing, to create a *thinking environment*.

I believe that creating a thinking environment, the set of conditions under which human beings can think best, is one of humanity's most important leadership tasks. Without it we do stupid things, irreversibly deadly things. Without it, leaders control rather than create, they conquer rather than empower, they incarcerate rather than encourage. Without a thinking environment, we eventually destroy each other.

With it, we thrive.

There may be nothing more important than this. And yet the world's devaluing of everything in 'women's sphere' means that we do not see these interactive skills as leadership skills, nor do we usually see ourselves as leaders. This constant, underlying devaluation of women is one of the biggest internal barriers between us and power.

The key still in creating a thinking environment is interactive thinking, a skill women are encouraged to develop and men are steered away from. Women are taught from their earliest years that their excellence as women will be judged by the way they interact with people and by whether or not people flourish in their care. Men are taught that their excellence as men will be judged by the way they control people, by how well they promote themselves, and by whether or not they stay 'on top'.

Male conditioning steers men away from interactive thinking. Men's conditioning encourages them to think in terms of win or lose, all or nothing, us or them. It puts great emphasis on being right, on getting credit, on being 'objective', on argument and debate. It also encourages sidestepping, deflecting attention from the real issues, and skimming the surface. Men are encouraged to be good at interactive thinking in relation to things (when inventing new products and systems, for example) but not in relation to people. Women, on the other hand, are encouraged to think interactively with and about people from the minute we are born.

These two messages create very different cultures and approaches to problems; they also create very different kinds of leaders. Controlling leaders keep people from thinking; their purpose is to herd others. Interactive leaders ignite people's thinking; their purpose is to launch others.
Kline explains that obviously these traits and conditionings are not universal. There are individual women who "behave badly" and women who have "put a stop to people's thinking." However, Kline explains that women "are not, as women, required to do this. Our identity, as women, our most fundamental sense of who we are, is not threatened by our helping others to think and achieve."
Preaching to the converted.

Another problem with the environmental movement is its inability to build a broad base of support. Over the years, as I have attended hundreds of environmental meetings, conferences and public education events, I have noticed the same faces over and over again. Environmental groups are constantly "preaching to the converted." The issue of "turf" is another problem. Some environmental leaders appear more concerned with "getting credit" and defending their turf than with the environmental issue itself.

For example, much of my experience as an activist has been with wildland and wildlife conservation issues. One of the great successes of conservation history in the west was the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. However, since then, broad public support for setting-aside large areas seems to have evaporated.

In Montana, the struggle to protect the remaining wildlands, some six million acres, has been going on for almost two decades with little progress. Since 1984, we have seen over ten proposed wilderness bills come and go. Although some of these efforts have been unsuccessful because of external political pressures, conservation groups are also to blame. The conservation community has been unable to come together to find a way to preserve these critical lands. There are two distinct camps on wilderness preservation. One camp, headed by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR), advocates for the preservation of all remaining roadless lands in the Northern Rockies (ID, MT, WY, and eastern WA and OR) and they have introduced legislation, the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA), to accomplish this. AWR and friends believe that wildlands must be protected as whole ecosystems regardless of political boundaries. For a number of valid reasons they also take an all or nothing approach.
In the other camp are groups like the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA), which initiated and supported efforts to protect wildlands, area by area. While each group had reasons why they believed their specific strategy was the right one, both camps spent a great deal of time and energy trying to undermine the others' efforts. On several occasions, individuals from both sides would tell me, privately, that they thought the other camp had a good plan or idea but would never admit it in public or agree to work with them. There was so much ego, competitiveness and turf involved that the issue, wildland preservation, often took a back seat. WVE member, and director of Wildlands CPR, Bethany Walder felt that:

...speaking regionally, speaking nationally, ... the movement is really disjunctive and I think the main way that the movement fails—not failed but fails and continues to do so—is that people in the environmental movement are too tied to their own very individual cause and too often we don't work together. Too often we spend way more of our time fighting against each other than fighting against the people who are screwing up the environment... I think about groups like Defenders of Wildlife or the National Wildlife Federation or even the Sierra Club, so much effort and energy is put into glossy direct mail that's going to reach the average American but I feel there's a loss of message. Or, what is the cause we're really fighting for? Is it to keep our organization going? I would be so ecstatic if my organization didn't need to exist anymore. You know, my goal is not to perpetuate my job, it's to make my job useless, pointless. And I think that too many people in the environmental movement don't look at it that way anymore. It is a job and it's something they want to do and I think in this region especially there is outrageous infighting and inability to cooperate and work with people, and I think it really, really hurts our causes in the long run."

This is just one example where environmental efforts may have been more successful had a more diverse group of people been involved or had the ability to influence the process. Decisions in AWR, for instance, are made almost exclusively by one person, the executive director and founder, Mike
Bader. While some of the problems with wilderness preservation are caused by external or political pressures, there are a number of internal problems within the movement itself, like this, that have hindered its success. Lack of public support for wilderness protection cannot be attributed solely to external political forces. Anyone attending conservation meetings on this issue cannot help but notice the homogeneity of the group of participants; mostly white, male, well educated middle class. In all the years I attended meetings or conferences on wildland preservation I was often the only woman or one of a few women. I can only recall a couple of occasions where there were people of color in attendance.

The conservation community has focused its message too narrowly. Public opinion reflects the belief that the only people who benefit from the preservation of wilderness are local recreationists, affluent elitists and counter-culture participants. Conservationists have been unable to dispel these myths. Campaigns in the last decade appear to lack the emotional appeal and moral force to convince more people to embrace wildland preservation as their issue, critical to their children's long-term survival. Conservation biologists, Lee Metzgar believes that "today, we enjoy no such broadly-accepted vision. Why, after all, should an African-American man in Detroit, a WIC-supported mother in LA, or even a white male accountant in Kansas City support the wilderness movement? Additions to the [wilderness] system may serve local recreational desires but the ways such set-asides might serve broader interests remains obscure."

Whether sexism, racism or classicism are intentional or not, some sectors of the environmental community appear to intentionally separate themselves from mainstream society. Given the despair and subsequent rejection of mainstream America's consumerist philosophy by many in the
environmental movement, this desired separation is understandable. However, I believe it unfortunately creates another reason why environmental campaigns have not always been successful. Groups or individuals who have "marginalized" themselves, have failed, and will continue to fail, to gain broad public support. Organizers who want to convince people to support an issue must be able to create an atmosphere where their audience can identify with them and develop trust. (I must add here, that I believe the media has played a major role in marginalizing the environmental movement. More often than not, the media will single out individuals in a crowd at environmental events who frequently do not represent the make-up of the group. They will also tend to give greater media coverage to more "sensational" events and individuals polarizing environmentalists in the process). The public already sees conservation as a "special interest" championed by a small minority, and unfortunately, this enhances the view that environmentalists are a "fringe element," or a group of "radicals," "tree huggers," "hippies," "counter culture participants," or young "delinquents" not really committed to the cause but looking for an outlet for their rebelliousness.

Bethany Walder relates an incident that happened to her in 1994 at the Native Forest Network conference in Missoula that was influential in persuading her that a new kind of organization was needed:

I found that conference to be one of the most demoralizing experiences I had ever had, and disillusioning, and at some level ineffective in terms of a conference, way too much preaching to the converted. The preaching to the converted was the obvious part of the conference that was problematic for me, but it was more so because of the lack of understanding that, again, if we want to get anywhere with fixing any environmental problems at some level we just have to think like people who don't think like us. And we have to look like people who don't look like us. And one of the things that really
frustrated me about that conference was the way people looked and the fact that they were at some level wearing a costume. My favorite example of this was when I was sitting at the check-in desk and I checked in this guy who had, I'm trying to remember, I think he had a stick through his nose or something. And I just looked at this guy and, sure, I'm glad he's here, but he's never going to be able to talk to anybody about what matters to him and why the environment is important because they're never going to listen to him because there's no way they could ever identify with him. Unless they looked just like him, and if they look just like him they already think that way.

Aside from losing public support for the issues at hand, this marginalization of the environmental movement leads to a lack of involvement of ordinary people who actually do care about the issues, but do not want to be labeled or cannot identify themselves with those involved. In addition, actions by some environmental activists are often ineffective because the traditional power structure does not view them as representing a significant voting block.

To avoid preaching to the converted and to broaden public support, we must broaden the environmental movement itself. We must include a more diverse range of people within our organizations. We must also include and empower the people we are trying to reach. For instance, organizing on Indian reservations will be far more successful if the organizing is done by Indians from within their community and not outsiders. By diversifying our organizations and really sharing power, we will avoid the hierachial, elitist decisions that only serve to alienate others.

A Separate Agenda

Another weakness of the environmental movement is its inability to understand or present environmental problems in a broader social, political and economic context. This is evident in the way environment groups
address issues and the fact that they rarely work in coalition with other progressive organizations. Social and ecological problems are interrelated and lasting solutions to environmental problems can only be found in the context of a commonly-held vision of an improved future that addresses all social issues. For instance, environmental degradation is often connected to poverty. Indian tribes in the US have often felt that they have had no choice but to accept radio-active or toxic waste in exchange for economic incentives. Low-income communities are often the targeted sites for toxic facilities because they are often not powerful enough to resist. Walder believes that environmental issues are tied to poverty:

I wrote my essay to get into the environment studies graduate program on the fact that what we needed to fix, if we wanted to fix the environment, was poverty. And that we are never going to get anywhere if we didn't get rid of poverty in this country or worldwide, because my feeling is when we look at social problems, and I would throw population into the whole issue of poverty, as well--I think that one of the things that happens is, environmental problems aren't the root. It's a symptom of a much larger issue. And the more we work to fix a small environmental problem that affects our health, that affects our recreation, that affects our water, whatever, those fixes are band-aids because we're looking at a symptom of a much larger disease. And the disease, in my opinion, at some level is an unequal distribution of wealth... as long as we have the disparity that we do in this country and worldwide... that no matter what we do, we're not going to be able to fix the environment. Personal survival [becomes] more important than whether you can go hiking or than whether your air is clean enough to breathe, because you don't always realize... the fact that you have asthma is because your air is polluted. And if the person who might be providing you a job, even if it's a $5.00 an hour job, says you're gonna lose your job if we clean up the air, your job is more important... I think there isn't enough recognition of, or even an understanding of, what is really causing the problems...
An example of this is the effort to save old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. Environmentalists, having tried a number of different strategies to stop logging, such as filing administrative appeals of federal timber sales and even direct action (physically blocking logging trucks, etc.), ultimately filed lawsuits under the Endangered Species Act in 1990 to protect the habitat of the threatened northern spotted owl. While there is no question that the owl was, and still is, threatened by the logging of old growth and that environmental groups were successful in stopping much of the logging, the root problem of unsustainable forestry practices by large corporations was not resolved and the strategy used may have, in fact, exacerbated the problem. The timber industry effectively used the associated job losses and localized economic downturn to their advantage—a tactic that is certainly not new. While environmental groups exposed industry's over-cutting practices in their publications, there was no serious attempt by the major groups to reach out to the affected workers. Instead, industry rhetoric was able to distill the issue down to "jobs versus owls" and avert public attention away from the real issue of a unsustainable industry.

It has been my experience that many environmental groups appear to be either unwilling or unable to look at environmental issues in a broader social, economic or political context. On many occasions several of my fellow male activists have told me that they do not think issues such as race, gender or poverty play a role in environmental issues and they are, therefore, unwilling to build coalitions with other progressive groups. Co-founder of Earth First! Howie Wolke once told me that I was in fact making a foolish mistake trying to work with groups working on other social issues. I disagree, and think if the environmental movement is to be successful it must be part of a much broader progressive agenda.
While working to prevent the passage of disastrous wilderness legislation, I organized a meeting with Congressman Pat Williams. The goal of the meeting was to try and persuade Williams to oppose this legislation and, instead, support a conservation proposal. One of the main problems with the conservation proposal, according to legislative staff, was that it appeared to have limited support -- supported by only some conservation groups. To counter this perception, I specifically asked women leaders who were not recognized as "environmentalists" to attend the meeting with Representative Williams. These women were recognized leaders on welfare, reproductive rights and other women's issues. The women told Williams that, while their primary focus may be on their respective issues i.e. welfare, they all chose to live in Montana for the quality of the natural environment and the associated lifestyle and therefore supported the conservation alternative. Williams appeared genuinely surprised about the broad support for the conservation proposal.

I realized the tremendous power in "cross pollinating" our issues and the potential in building broad-based coalitions. Yet, I had rarely witnessed the environmental movement give any attention to other issues let alone actively seek the support of other progressive activists...especially female.

Conclusion Part I

Factors that have clearly limited environmental organizations from achieving their goals have been: their failure to include women and people of color, the fact that they have not been inclusive enough and their tendency to speak only to their own constituencies, and the fact that they don't link the environment to issues that are of primary concern to most Americans, like jobs or their economics welfare.
The women who founded WVE wanted to create a new organization that would address environmental issues in a broader social, economic and political context. We realized this meant not only addressing environmental issues in this context but also developing an internal organizational structure that reflected the socially just and ecologically sustainable principles we envisioned for the world. So creating a new kind of organization that would actually challenge the dominant paradigm and not become just another environmental group meant seriously addressing these questions. It meant ensuring that sectors of the population, like women, who historically have had little power in affecting environmental policy were meaningfully included in decision-making. It has always been the contention of WVE founders that, for significant environmental protection and social change to take place, the environmental movement must include and empower all sectors of the population regardless of race, religion, economic status, sexual orientation or gender. Prior to starting a new organization, we embarked on a mission to evaluate the shortcomings of the environmental movement and then address them in the development of this new organization. When we founded WVE, we specifically set out to try to put together an organization that overcame these limitations by providing a voice for women, reaching out to non-traditional constituencies and making the link to other social issues.
PART II

Women's Voices for the Earth: A new grassroots organizational model

1. How WVE was organized

As mentioned before, creating a new kind of organization that would actually fill a niche, rather than be just another environmental group, meant not only addressing the gender issue, which was our primary concern, but also meant evaluating other aspects of success or failure on the part of other environmental organizations.

In our early discussions, we spent a great deal of time evaluating the policies or structures of other organizations to determine how they either excluded or discouraged women from participating. We also discussed what other organizations did well, where they made mistakes and what we could do differently to avoid making the same mistakes.

While we all came to the process with similar goals, each of us had our own priorities and it was a challenge to incorporate them all into a cohesive vision. What I really wanted to create with WVE was a place where people, especially women, who had been left out of decision-making or leadership, could come and feel welcome to express their ideas. I was eager to see what kinds of issues and strategies "the rest of the population" would come up with. I wanted to create a place where women could work on issues that were important to them and have the freedom to design strategies that they felt comfortable implementing. Lois Gibbs, mother turned environmental activist when she discovered that her community was built on a toxic waste dump at Love Canal (Buffalo, NY), often talks about her experiences learning to be an environment leader. Gibbs explains how people need to find their own level of comfort with activism. For instance, a person who has never
challenged authority may be uncomfortable standing in a picket line but happy to write a letter. I wanted to create an empowering environment where everyone, regardless of who they were or their level of experience, was valued.

Walder told me what she envisioned for WVE was:

...the idea of developing a network that could be as grassroots as environmentalism once was back in the ’70s and that could counteract the incredible sophistication of the radical right infiltration in local and community government and politics, which has then moved up to national politics...The extreme right has been very effective at getting their people on the school boards, getting their people on the city councils, in the county commission, mayors, up into the state government and then into national government. And until we provide an answer to that, we will continue to lose. And my vision for WVE and my interest in WVE from the start was starting to create the answer to that. 

Walder expressed hope that:

We would create a network through the women of Montana, where we can educate people through women, through wives, and moms, and working moms and working wives, and everything else, to really develop a community of women who can educate their other community members, who can educate other people to at least offer them more insight into understanding their thoughts or their actions, and not all these ditto heads of Rush Limbaugh. Which unfortunately there’s such a push to escapism right now and towards blaming things and towards kind of mass thought, that we’re [environmentalists] the ones losing. I don’t think I want to brainwash people the other way, but I at least want them to have information so they can make educated choices. And right now I don’t think they’re making good choices and at some level that’s what you need.  

Marcy Mahr, WVE member and biologist with the Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute, felt that:

...in those dialogues that we had...[our goal] was looking at the possibility for women to be able to empower themselves, thinking in a group setting, group process, making connections that were supported and heard even if not agreed upon, and I just felt like that opportunity,
given my background and what I've experienced, that opportunity, was something I really wanted to be a part of. So I just saw a huge possibility, even though we never laid out what our agenda was going to look like or what we were going to do. It just sounded like a perfect opportunity to really see if there was such a thing as a paradigm shift when it comes to gender stuff with respect to the environment.

Name and Mission Statement

Designing a mission statement that expressed all our values was incredibly challenging and time consuming. So, too, was creating a name for the organization. We spent a considerable amount of time discussing whether or not to use "women" in the name and about how and when to include men. While many of us did not want to create an "exclusive" organization, we also wanted to be clear that we were creating a vehicle for women's views and values. There is yet to be consensus on the role of men in the organization. While we do not, as yet, have any men in leadership positions, we do have a growing male membership. Some women suggest that once there is gender equity throughout the environmental movement at large, we will no longer need our organization. But until that time, WVE will be a women's centered organization providing a vehicle for women's voices.

We also spent a great deal of time discussing and creating a name. We eventually came up with the acronym "weave" and everyone liked that because it reflected the way we wanted to weave together environmental and social issues. However, we could not come up with a name to fit the acronym that wasn't too long. So we decided to shorten it to WVE and still pronounce it as "weave." We had a long discussion about whether to use the word "environment" or whether to use "earth." We eventually decided on using earth because we felt there was too much baggage with "environment." Our original mission statement read as follows:
Women's Voices for the Earth is a diverse, grassroots group of people, especially women and minorities, who historically have had little power in affecting environmental policy. WVE members believe that for significant environmental protection and social change to take place, the environmental movement must include and empower all sectors of the population regardless of race, religion, economic status, sexual orientation or gender. WVE unites people working on a broad spectrum of issues including health, peace, conservation, justice, women's rights and Native American rights. As we build bridges with each other, we will strengthen our collective voice and work to create a society that is ecologically sustainable and socially just.

Goals

Our specific goals were to create an organization that would:

1. Through a genuinely democratic process and non-hierachial structure empower its members to make decisions that effect their lives.

2. Truly represent the public interest by enlisting the meaningful participation of all sectors of the population by specifically including and empowering people who have not normally been included at the table — women, Native Americans, and other minorities.

3. Recognize that social and ecological problems are interrelated and that lasting solutions to environmental problems can only be found in the context of a commonly-held vision of an improved future that addresses all social issues. Therefore we needed to actively build coalitions of people working on a broad spectrum of progressive issues, including health, peace, conservation, justice, and women's and Native American' rights.

How WVE is "structured" to create a voice for women, reach out to include non-traditional constituents, and link the environment to other social issues

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As mentioned before, we recognized that there were internal reasons as to why environmental groups were not able to empower their constituents. Many groups had developed hierachial structures that have either intimidated or excluded many people from participating. According to Seager "women feel especially comfortable" with a "decentralized structure" and an "emphasis on consensus decision-making, and the absence of rigid hierarchies." Kline explains:

We think best with peers. there is something about holding each other in mutual respect that keeps our minds purring. Conversely, to feel 'inferior to' someone or 'better than' someone can keep our minds from venturing out into new, creative territory. If we already feel lacking, we will, in the presence of 'higher rank', feel even more so and we will hardly believe that the other person cannot operate at our 'higher' level, we will not bother to solicit good ideas from them. Nor will we allow them to help us think and - suprise, surprise - they won't. Judging each other in this way aborts hundreds of good ideas.

For this reason we decided to create a non-hierarchical organizational structure that would ensure the meaningful participation of all sectors of the population. Our intent is well described by Suzanne Pharr, founder of the Women's Project, "In our community and nation our demand is for equality and justice, for shared power and resources, for opportunity and participation, for individual and group responsibility and freedom. In search for political integrity, the challenge has been to create an internal philosophy and a structure and practice that reflect the vision of the world we seek for everyone." What we did not anticipate, however, was how hard it would be for us to go against the status quo. We originally did not want to create a board of directors, but both state and federal laws require corporations, including non-profit corporations, to have a board with a minimum of three members. They
also force a hierarchical structure within the board of directors itself by requiring officers: a board president, treasurer and secretary.

Even though we were legally required to have a board of directors, we still tried to create a new organizational structure that would address hierarchy and inclusive decision-making. Our original organizational structure was comprised of: a board of directors, a steering committee, project committees, staff and membership at large. Each committee is comprised of volunteers who share our principles. The relationship between the staff, board, committees and general membership is illustrated by the following diagram:
The board, as required by law, has fiscal responsibility for the organization but, unlike other organizations, does not have the power to independently or unilaterally decide policy. Until summer of 1996 our directors were all activists who have not only a commitment to environmental protection, but to other social issues such as human rights. In the fall of 1996, a local business woman with no prior experience in the environmental field joined the board. Our board now has five members and meets bi-annually. Board members are selected, using the consensus process, by the general membership at either the annual meeting or via the mail. Board members hold a two-year term and may be selected for three consecutive terms. Individuals may be re-nominated after one term of absence. Members may be removed from the board upon the recommendation and consensus of the board and general membership. Currently no staff serve on the board. (For a list of board, steering committee and staff see appendix C)

The steering committee is responsible for organizational and policy decisions. It is comprised of individuals who are intimately involved with the organization. Currently the committee has seven members and meets every two weeks. Any WVE member who wishes to may serve on the steering committee and currently the two WVE staff serve on this committee.

Project committees are comprised of any WVE member who wishes to be more actively involved in an issue.

The staff is responsible for carrying out the mission and goals of the organization. The mission and goals of the organization are determined by the board and steering committee with approval from the general membership. All staff earn the same hourly wage and we are committed to paying our staff a livable wage.
To maintain a non-hierarchical structure any WVE member may serve on any committee she or he wishes. If no one comes forward to volunteer then the existing committee will put forward nominations, ask the nominee if she or he wishes to serve and then seek approval from the general membership. To ensure that no individual or group can have power over another or the whole, each committee or body (whether it be staff, board of directors, steering committee or project committee) relates to another in a "dualistic" manner. This means accountability is horizontal rather than vertical. A decision made by any committee must have the approval of the general membership. This avoids a situation where the board could dictate a decision that is not acceptable to the membership or staff, for instance. All major decisions, such as taking on a new project or shifting organization focus, must be approved by all of the committees and general membership.

How WVE makes decisions

Another factor in creating a non-hierarchical organizational structure that encourages all members, whether they are staff, board, or volunteers, to feel equal and empowered, is how decisions are made. It was important to us to create an organization where our members have a sense of ownership and a mechanism by which their voices are heard equally. For this reason we decided to use consensus as a decision-making mechanism. WVE has, to date, used what is commonly known as the formal consensus process, which incorporates a three level decision-making process. After an issue or proposal is introduced there is broad discussion about the proposal, then the facilitator will "call for consensus" by asking if there are any unresolved concerns. The concerns are then listed and addressed by the group. A second call for consensus will be called. In the third part of this process any outstanding
concerns will be clarified and addressed. At this point if an individual still has a concern there are three options for dealing with it. The person may be asked to voluntarily withdraw their concern if the rest of the group are in agreement, the concern or proposal can be sent to committee to find a way to resolve the issues or the proposal may be blocked and placed for consideration at another meeting.

Although this process may be cumbersome at times, we felt that it was important because it allows each person the opportunity to be heard and acknowledged. It also allows for a comprehensive discussion of the issues and concerns and avoids a small majority "dictating" their will on the group.

To facilitate and maintain access to decision-making by all WVE members, the organization shall, whenever possible, adhere to a non-hierarchical structure. This means that no individual, committee or group shall have unilateral power of another. All major or policy decisions shall be "bilateral," meaning that they must have the approval of the board of directors, pertinent committee members, and general membership. By major decisions, I mean, organizational policy, taking on a new project, changing the organization's focus or mission.

What follows is an example of how this type of decision-making works. As a member of the Missoula County Weed Board, I was asked by the rest of the board whether the members of WVE would protest a plan by the county weed district. When I answered that I had no idea what WVE would do, the board members looked perplexed. One member said "Surely, as director, you must have the authority to decide what the organization's position and actions would be." I explained to the Weed Board, that we had a non-hierachial structure and that the issue would be addressed by the pesticide
committee and that even though I was the director, I did not have the authority to decide or speak for the group.

Program and projects

Most grassroots organizations are organized or form around a specific environmental issue. Frequently it may be a group of citizens who banded together to protect a forest or watershed, or themselves from the siting of a hazardous waste incinerator etc. I remember talking with Brock Evans, one of the lead staff people at the national Audubon Society, about starting WVE. Brock asked me what issue we were organizing WVE around. I told him that WVE did not form in response to a specific environmental issue, in the traditional sense, but rather as a response to exclusion...women who may have been interested in protecting a specific place or working on issues found themselves excluded from real participation in existing environmental organizations or were frustrated with the way these organizations operated. I explained to him that we founded WVE to create a support system for women wanting to work on environmental issues. Our goal was to empower women and provide them with the tools needed to affect change within their communities. Evans responded by saying it was not possible to organize under these circumstances and that we had to have "an issue."

To allow women to work on issues that were important to them we wanted to have a broad mission statement that would incorporate both conservation and environmental issues, in other words, issues such as wilderness protection and toxic pollution. In the last decade, a division has developed in the movement between environmental and conservation issues. "There are really two movements" says Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First! We wanted to avoid this division and not limit our work to
one or the other, but rather see all the issues in a broader framework. We used two of Greenpeace's goals as a framework. "Greenpeace's goal is to ensure the ability of Earth to nurture life in all its diversity. Therefore Greenpeace seeks to: protect biodiversity in all its forms; prevent pollution and abuse of Earth's oceans, land, air and freshwater..." WVE's program goals are to protect the biological and social diversity of the planet by reducing and eliminating toxic pollution and preserving endangered ecosystems.

Given that the mainstream environmental movement has systematically withheld access to and participation from women, we knew that we would have to initially create a program that would have specific appeal to women to get women involved. The fact that the toxics and environmental justice movement has a far more diverse make-up is no coincidence. (There are considerably more women, people of color and poor people involved in the toxics and environmental justice movement. Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, works with 8,000 grassroots groups and 80 percent are headed by women. Aside from the fact that this movement is more diverse and democratic, women are clearly attracted to environmental justice issues for other reasons.

Barbara Dudley, executive director of Greenpeace says "As the environmental movement has come to include an environmental health movement, it has come to include women in leadership" and as Barbara Bramble, National Wildlife Federation's international office director explains "...most women join causes because of concerns over health-related problems (which have traditionally been neglected by men)...When chemicals in the atmosphere affect fertility issues, that strikes a personal chord." So many women's lives are directly affected by toxic pollution--breast cancer rates have risen to one in twenty from one in eight in just two decades and seventy
percent of these cases are thought to be environmental—not related to known risk factors such as lifestyle or genetics. When these issues became personal, women's involvement increased, and according to Lois Gibbs, they began saying "What a minute, that's my backyard. Maybe that's why my kids are sick." Gibbs, a housewife and mother, mentioned earlier, became involved in the movement when she worked to relocate her community after she discovered they were living on a toxic waste dump. Gibbs certainly had, until then, never considered herself an environmentalist.

Understanding how to involve people in an issue is an important aspect of organizing and we had to figure out how to attract women to our new organization. I felt that talking about issues like biodiversity, species viability or island biogeography would be lost on the average person. In my presentations on grassroots organizing, I like to use the example of approaching a busy mother in the street and asking her why it is important to protect biodiversity. It is not difficult to imagine the response you would most likely receive. But ask the same woman if she cares about something that would have a more direct or measurable affect on her child's well being and you are likely to get a very different response. Its not that women, or any member of the public for that matter, do not care about an issue like biodiversity. Its just that most are not familiar with the concept or cannot make the direct connection to their own lives. We believe it is critical for us to make that connection with them.

Many conservationists will argue that this approach is anthropocentric and that it is precisely this focus on humans that is destroying the environment in the first place. I would argue that connecting an environmental issue to human health in order to rally public support for an issue is not in itself anthropocentric. In fact, it is critical to do so for
another reason...addressing the issue of “agency.” We cannot ignore the fact that we have over five and a half billion people on the planet, a third of whom live in abject poverty and humans are largely responsible for damaging the environment and therefore need to be part of the solution.

Even though the founding members of WVE knew that toxic or health related issues would more likely attract women to WVE, we still wanted to hear from women in our community. So we invited a group of about 30 women to a meeting. After introducing WVE and its mission, we asked people to tell us what they felt were the two or three most pressing environmental issues. After listing all these issues, we divided them into categories and used this information to guide our decision on which projects to work on. We also took into consideration how many other organizations were already working on these issues and tried to avoid taking on issues that a lot of other groups were working on. We also considered whether it was feasible for us to address the links to other social issues.

We chose to initiate our work around a group of toxins that are having a profound effect on women's health, and the reproductivity of both humans and wildlife -- dioxins and other chlorinated compounds. We have subsequently taken on two other major projects -- protecting the Blackfoot River near Missoula from a proposed cyanide heap-leach gold mine and pesticides (which include chlorinated compounds). Both of these projects were initiated in response to concerns expressed by women in the Missoula community.

To help us determine what projects the group would take on in the future, we established a set of project selection and evaluation criteria. They are as follows:
WVE's projects must be consistent with its mission and fit within the organization's available resources. WVE's projects and actions will aim to protect biological and social diversity or work toward creating an ecologically sustainable and socially just society. WVE's projects must incorporate a diverse group of people. This diversity should be reflected in project planning, implementation and in the constituency we wish to reach. All projects should be designed to empower the people involved.

We also decided that every project the organization took on did not have to have the same level of involvement or commitment. We delineated four fundamental levels of involvement: acting as a resource or clearinghouse; supporting existing efforts by other organizations; being a partner in new or ongoing efforts; or catalyzing new actions with concerned citizens.

**WVE's Toxics Campaign: Stone container**

"Dioxin is the most toxic synthetic substance ever studied. It now contaminates the air, water, and food chain of the entire planet. A growing body of evidence suggests that unless society effectively curtails dioxin generation and its environmental release, the long-term health, reproductive capacity and biological integrity of the human species may be seriously harmed" (Greenpeace).

Organochlorines, a family of chlorinated chemicals, of which dioxins are the most toxic, are the byproducts of many industrial processes that use chlorine. The largest sources of these compounds come from the production and incineration of PVC plastic, the bleaching of pulp for paper and some pesticides. Aside from causing a host of serious health problems including cancer, dioxins mimic or block natural hormones disrupting the reproductive
systems of both humans and wildlife. Our goal is to work both locally, and in
collaboration with national organizations, to eliminate the industrial use of
chlorine. Nationally, WVE collaborates with many other health and
environmental groups on a chlorine campaign that includes a massive public
education component to expose the growing body of evidence that suggests
environmental contamination from chlorinated chemicals may be an
important link in the breast cancer epidemic.

Locally, WVE is working to pressure Stone Container Corporation's
Missoula mill to stop producing dioxin and other organochlorines. This mill
is one of the largest liner board plants in the world and the most profitable of
Stone Container's operations, yet it has the worst environmental record of
any pulp mill in the country. The mill produces these toxic compounds in
two ways: using chlorine to bleach their pulp and 2) by incinerating PVC
plastic waste in their waste fuel boilers. There are alternatives to chlorine
bleaching and less toxic ways of disposing of plastic wastes.

While addressing toxins associated with the industrial use of chlorine is
an issue that many environmental organizations have taken on, and not in
itself unique, WVE's strategy is unique. There have been many attempts to
address the hundreds of environmental violations at the mill by many
environmental organizations. These attempts have, however, been thwarted
by a deliberate and much-used strategy by the corporation to pit the workers
against environmentalists. The mill is one of the largest employers in this
community, pays wages significantly higher than most local industries and
generates millions of dollars in the local economy. In the past, when
environmental groups challenged pollution at the mill, the company would
threaten closure and community leaders, fearful of the economic impacts,
would side with the company.
WVE members realized that we would never convince the company to change its bleaching sequences or stop burning plastic waste on our own. We knew we had to close the "job loss" door the company used to escape public pressure and convince community leaders that the company could make these changes without closing its doors, let alone losing money. We believed it was in our mutual self-interest for the workers, represented by the United Paperworkers International Union, Local 885, environmental activists, and citizens to work together to find solutions to these problems, while protecting jobs at the mill. This strategy is in line with WVE's mission to build alliances with other progressive movements, in this case, organized labor. To facilitate this we hired a labor organizer with experience in labor issues and who understood the environmental issues.

So, rather than take the usual confrontational approach used by most organizations to deal with the corporation, WVE's strategy has been twofold: WVE members have organized a campaign designed to build bridges of consensus with the local union and break industry's "jobs versus the environment" impasse and to enter into a community dialogue with the company. We believed that, with broad public participation, it would be difficult for the company to make choices that were not good for the workers or the community.

To accomplish this, WVE members and staff held dozens of meetings throughout 1996, with citizens and community leaders from a broad cross section of the community. In collaboration with the Missoula chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, WVE also sponsored a presentation on dioxin and its health effects by WVE Board member, Dr. Mary O'Brien, a nationally recognized expert on toxics. We used these meetings not only as an opportunity to educate people about the issues, but also to solicit their ideas.
about how to approach Stone Container. We believe that for a community to be invested in an issue, they must have meaningful participation. It is not enough to simply "educate" them, they must be a part of the decision-making process and solution. At the same time, we had several meetings with the management of Stone Container and the union and toured the mill on several occasions. During this time, we managed to secure two proclamations, one from the Mayor of Missoula and one from the Missoula County Commissioners, calling for a phase-out of the industrial use of chlorine.

On April 17th, 1996, WVE held the first community "Dioxin Roundtable." In attendance were; WVE members, an array of community members, a regional representative from the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU), Local 885 representatives, Stone Container management, the Mayor of Missoula, two County Commissioners, City Council members, representatives from the State Department of Environmental Quality and the governor's office, and members of the medical community. This meeting was unprecedented. Never before had the company participated in a public dialogue with an environmental group. At this meeting Stone Container acknowledged that its manufacturing processes produce dioxin, something they had denied in the past. They agreed that dioxin is a public health hazard and they also agreed to continue discussing ways to reduce or eliminate dioxin emissions.

A small committee, including company representatives, was formed to format further forums for addressing the issue. After subsequent meetings, the committee agreed to hold more roundtables to address sources of dioxin in the community. A roundtable on dioxins and pesticides was held on August 22nd, 1996, and a second dioxin/Stone Container roundtable was held on August 29th. Both events were well attended and very successful. WVE
brought in two experts to testify at the Stone Container roundtable -- Dr. Rudra P. Singh, President and CEO, Emerging Technology Transfer, Inc. and Archie Beaton, President of the Chlorine Free Products Association. Dr. Singh is an internationally recognized authority on the chlorine-free bleaching process for pulp mills and worked for Scott paper for 23 years.

In conjunction with the Stone Container roundtable, WVE, in coalition with several other environmental groups and businesses, held "Chlorine Alternative Days." This two-day event featured, among other things, a chlorine-free products fair and several presentations by Dr. Singh and Archie Beaton. In a letter sent to WVE after their visit, Archie Beaton wrote "[Dr. Singh and I] both feel that the approach taken by this Montana Coalition is one of the most productive and worthwhile courses taken in the country. I believe this same approach should be shared with other organizations working on chlorine compound bleaching issues in pulp and paper mills nationwide."

It is important, at this point, to make clear from WVE's perspective, the difference between collaboration and compromise. In our efforts to address toxic pollution from chlorinated compounds at the mill, we embarked on a process of collaboration between various parties: the mill management, the union, and the Missoula county community. Some people in the environmental community have expressed concern that this collaboration would lead to a compromised result. WVE members disagree. We have been willing to bend and accommodate in the "process" but at no time were, or are we, willing to compromise on our position on protecting the environment and public health. The bottom line has always been and will always be "no dioxin" emissions; chlorine must be eliminated from the bleaching sequence and the mill must halt its incineration of plastic waste.
Another unusual aspect of our strategy has been our efforts to build bridges with the union. While we have incorporated more orthodox means of communication, like formal meetings with union leaders, we have also engineered some informal meetings. A 'friend' in the union hall advises us when Local 885 is holding a meeting. These meetings are usually held in the late afternoon and the union members often socialize over a few beers in the union hall bar afterwards. Over the last year, I have walked the block from my office to the union hall and "dropped in" at the bar. On many occasions I have stayed, talking to union members, until the early hours of the morning. These dialogues have been far more useful than any we have had in formal meetings and have helped build an unprecedented level of trust. That is not to say that the level of trust is universal or complete but it has moved our campaign forward significantly.

**WVE's Toxics Campaign: Pesticides**

Another source of dioxin and organochlorines is pesticides, and specifically 2,4-D, which is often contaminated with dioxin. WVE first became involved in the pesticide issue when we were alerted by the community that the Missoula County Commissioners were going to award a bid for spraying county roadsides to potential contractors. After trying various means, including writing letters and meetings, to persuade the commissioners that they needed to delay their decision and investigate the potential health effects to the community, WVE members organized a protest of their meeting. Over 50 women and children, carrying signs, protested the weekly public meeting demanding that the Missoula County Commissioners stop authorizing the use of toxic herbicides for roadside weed management and seek alternative control measures.
As a result of this action, the Commissioners established a Citizens Weed Task Force. The task force, comprised of pesticide users, environmentalists (including two WVE members), landowners, government agency representatives and other stakeholders, met weekly for six months to discuss alternatives to herbicide use and their dangers to public health. During this time, WVE continued its public education efforts and WVE members kept a constant flow of "letters to the editor."

In the spring of 1996, the Task Force recommended that the County Commissioners implement an Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Plan. The plan called for the phase-out of herbicide use over 5 years and for their use only as a last resort. As a result of WVE's efforts the county use of herbicides to treat roadsides was reduced by at least 90%. The county commissioners also agreed to set-up an additional citizen task force to monitor implementation of the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.

While the WVE members on the task force would have preferred to have an immediate ban on the use of pesticides, they knew that, given the makeup of the task force, this was not possible and that the best they could hope for was a phase-out period and that chemicals be used as a last resort. This position brought WVE into conflict with one task force member, a very headstrong opponent of pesticides. This man took an "all or nothing" position and fiercely criticized WVE. However, the WVE members knew that, even if they had joined his position, they did not have the numbers to change the outcome and they believed they would have ended up with nothing. WVE members believe that issues like this one will take a long time to resolve and that to accomplish the goal "no pesticides" you must address the larger issue as well. People don't choose to use pesticides because they want to, they do so
because they believe they have no other option. To gain a lasting solution you cannot ignore this aspect of the problem and a workable long-term solution must be sought to address weeds. If not, the issue will arise time and time again.

This particular issue presented some other interesting challenges for WVE. The way in which the issue arose forced us to be reactive as opposed to proactive. It also presented an excellent organizing challenge for many WVE members. Those WVE members who had some activist experience did not want to, as they perceived it, "waste their time" writing letters or "jumping through the hoops." They were ready to protest the meeting from the beginning. However, other WVE members, particularly those who had no experience with confronting authority believed that the commissioners would "listen to reason" and were not willing to protest. As a result, the group was split on strategy. They finally decided to take the time to write letters and meet with the commissioners. When this strategy did not work, the newer "activists" became so angry and disillusioned they were first in line to protest. A valuable organizing lesson was learned by both sides. Those less experienced learned that elected officials do not necessarily represent the public's best interest. The others learned, that by allowing the less experienced folks to use what they perceived as the "legitimate" channels and fail, they ended up with a much more committed group.

WVE members also successfully protested a weed management plan by the University of Montana to aerial spray 2,4-D and other herbicides over Mount Sentinel, land adjacent to the campus and a residential area. As a result, the University has abandoned its plans to aerial spray. A WVE member and graduate student in the university's Environmental Studies
program is now redesigning an integrated vegetation management plan for these lands.

While WVE's strategies for stopping the spraying of pesticides were not unusual other aspects of our efforts were. The university had planned a public comment period for their plan during the summer and had made little effort to inform the public. WVE members not only protested the use of chemicals but also the university's process of holding a public meeting at a time when the affected population could not attend. In response to our criticism, the university held another public meeting during the fall semester but again failed to adequately inform the public and students. A notice of the meeting was published in the newspaper the morning of the meeting. This did not allow the public time to either read the plan or prepare for the meeting, which, again, excluded the public or students from having any meaningful participation.

WVE is continuing to work with public interest groups and agencies to find alternative ways of managing weeds.

WVE's Endangered Ecosystems Campaign: The Blackfoot Mine

A corporate conglomerate called the Seven-Up Pete Joint Venture is proposing to build a cyanide heap-leach gold mine (the seventh largest in the world) one quarter mile from the Blackfoot River near the rural town of Lincoln, Montana. The Blackfoot River, finally recovering from years of historic mining waste on its tributaries, is a much loved river for many Montanans. It was made famous by Robert Redford's film "A River Runs Through It" based on the novel by Norman McLean. Aside from the anticipated environmental damage to the watershed from the mine and the cyanide used to extract the gold, large mining projects such as this have
historically created numerous social and economic problems due to their boom-bust economic profiles. In addition, Phelps Dodge, the major corporate partner in the project, has a notoriously bad reputation with organized labor, environmentalists and state regulators.

WVE is working in coalition with a number of groups to stop the development of this mine and even though we have joined them in litigation against the mine, our main focus has been public education. WVE became involved in the project when we were approached by a group of Missoula women who wanted to stop the mine. These women had never been involved in environmental projects before but were so angry about the proposed mine they wanted to do something about it. They called several other environmental organizations to volunteer their time and energy but were told there was nothing they could do to help these organizations. When they approached WVE, we helped them design a campaign and form a project committee.

In May of 1997, we launched our consumer campaign called "Mine Your Jewelry Box, Not the Blackfoot." WVE members are distributing a brochure that illustrates that gold is not an essential product—84 percent of the gold mined in the world is used for jewelry while only five percent is used for industrial purposes. The campaign encourages people to donate their gold jewelry to be recycled. The money raised from the recycled gold will be used for public education and litigation against the mine. As people donate their gold, their stories illustrating why "clean water is more precious than gold" will be placed in a book and distributed to the decision-makers—the governor and state land board. In the two months since launching the campaign, we have collected over 80 donations of gold jewelry and several couples have bought the recycled gold for wedding bands.
However, aside from these campaigns, there have been dozens of other events and activities aimed at educating and alerting the public of the threats to their health and the environment from toxic pollution. In short, our accomplishments in the two and half years that WVE has been operating can be summarized as follows. We have:

- Organized three annual *Finding Common Ground: Gender, Justice and the Environment* conferences. (Keynote speakers have included Lois Gibbs, of Love Canal fame, and Dr. Helen Caldicott of Physicians for Social Responsibility).

- Sponsored an all-day women's empowerment workshop titled "Women Without Limits." (Twenty women participated and continue to meet).

- In conjunction with National Cancer Industry Awareness Day, WVE sponsored a vigil/march calling for an end to the silence surrounding the link between toxic pollution and cancer.

- Collaborated with two other groups and filed a precedent-setting lawsuit against the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in order to protect the Blackfoot River and the nearby Lincoln community from a proposed cyanide heap-leach gold mine.

- Organized "Real Montanans sharing Real Stories about Real Mines" to help Lincoln residents learn first hand about the potential impacts to their community.

- Hosted two annual ('95, '96) public education events to mobilize public and political opposition to the Lincoln gold mine. The *Blackfoot Jubilee*, a public educational picnic, mobilized Blackfoot Valley residents and their children.

- Organized two Stone Container Dioxin Roundtables to address toxic pollution at our local pulp and paper mill.

**Alberton Chlorine Spill**

On April 11, 1996, an 18 car train derailment next to the Clark Fork River west of Alberton, Montana (a small town about 30 miles west of Missoula) ruptured three cars containing chlorine gas and a tanker of potassium crystal
forming a toxic gas plume that forced 1000 people to flee their homes. At least 352 men, women and children were hospitalized and one man riding the train was killed from inhaling the toxic gas. The Montana Rail Link derailment released an estimated 15,000 gallons of cresol and 59 tons of chlorine -- the second largest chlorine spill and the largest mixed chemical spill in US history. Hundreds of rural citizens in the greater Alberton community were exposed to dangerously high levels of toxic chemicals including chlorine gas and phenols -- precursors to the formation of organochlorines such as dioxins. Affected residents experienced a wide array of ill effects including difficulty breathing, headaches, chemical sensitivity, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, skin rashes, memory loss, anxiety, depression, vision impairment and other injuries.

During the 17-day evacuation, WVE helped residents of Alberton form *Alberton Community Evacuees (ACE)* to assist their community in obtaining medical testing and treatment, health effects information, and environmental testing to determine the true extent of toxic contamination. WVE provided ACE with assistance in developing basic organizing skills and emergency fundraising. We have also assisted them in: securing medical testing and treatment and securing proper environmental testing for toxins (including dioxins); building a community support network to share health, environmental and legal information; enforcing state and federal government cleanup of the spill; overseeing Montana Rail Link's treatment of evacuees (including seeking full compensation for the long-term costs of people's injuries).

WVE also organized a meeting with Lois Gibbs of Love Canal fame and the Alberton citizens. After offering advice to the Alberton citizens, Lois participated in a press conference with them organized by WVE.
Snow Goose Memorial

In November, 1995, 342 Snow Geese died in the Berkeley Pit (part of the largest superfund site in the nation) in Butte. The pit had been mined for copper from the 1950's to the early 1980's, but on Earth Day, April 23, 1982, ARCO shut off the pumps that had dewatered Butte's mines for 100 years. The 1-mile-by-1\(\frac{1}{2}\) mile pit now contains over 25 billion gallons of toxic water with a pH of about 2.5 and high concentrations of dissolved metals. Despite public opposition and concern for potential contamination of the ground water, the EPA has decided to allow the water level to increase until about the year 2025. EPA documents show that local residents warned of the dangers to migratory birds. Those warnings were ignored until the death of the 342 snow geese in 1995. To bring attention to the issue, the Helena chapter of Women's Voices for the Earth organized a "Snow Geese Memorial" on February 26, 1996. Despite a blizzard, 200 people attended the event which started with a Chippewa-Cree Prayer Pipe Ceremony for the geese. The "reception" after the ceremony, provided a forum for the public to learn about the environmental problems associated with the pit and ways to get involved.

Cancer Awareness

On July 26, 1996, WVE members participated in a 24-hour walkathon organized by the American Cancer Society (ACS). WVE members have been pressuring the American Cancer Society to publicize the links between cancer and toxic pollution but unfortunately the ACS remains consistently silent about cancer's environmental links. So WVE members handed out
information about toxic pollution to hundreds of cancer victims' families and survivors.

**WILD Women**

Another project of WVE's is the Wilderness Institute for Leadership Development in Women (WILD Women). WILD Women provides women an opportunity to experience a positive and safe wilderness experience. During these trips we provide extensive environmental education and leadership development. In 1996, we offered a wolf ecology trip in Glacier National Park, a marine ecology and desert ecosystem trip in Baja, a winter ski and camping trip in the Sawtooth Wilderness in Idaho and a Young Women's Outdoor Leadership Trip on the Salmon River. The Young Women's Outdoor Leadership Trip was especially successful. Ten young women between the ages of 15 and 18 spent 6 days on the Salmon River learning about wilderness ecosystems and leadership skills.

**Russian Environmentalists**

At the request of the national organization, Peace Links, WVE hosted a meeting between four visiting Russian environmental activists and scientists and Montana women environmentalists. The women spent an afternoon exchanging stories and discussing how we might assist them in their struggles in Russia.

In all of WVE's projects, we have tried to address the three major concerns expressed in this paper: creating a voice for women, building a broader constituency and linking the environment to other social, political or economic issues.
• **Creating a voice for women:** Women have been the decision-makers, deciding which issues to take on and the strategies used.

• **Building a broader constituency:** We have tried to reach a broader constituency and not just preach to the converted. With the Stone Container/Chlorine project, we specifically created "a community dialogue" bringing people in from the health, education, scientific, legal and religious sectors of the Missoula community. With the pesticides project we accomplished this by pushing the county government to create a citizen's task force comprised of a diverse group of people from all sides of the issue. In the Blackfoot Mine project, we did not have to set out to accomplish this goal because it was a group of women who had already been rejected by other environmental organizations for their lack of experience in environmental issues that approached us. However, by addressing the consumer end of the project and not just the regulatory portion of the project we are providing the average citizen who has no experience in regulatory matters with an opportunity to get involved.

• **Linking the environment to other social, political or economic issues:** Working to build an alliance with the union and dealing with labor issues have been major parts of our Stone Container/Chlorine project. In this project we did not simply look at the environmental pollution at the mill but linked it directly to economic issues. By building a relationship with the union we hoped to educate the workers that there were alternatives to the processes that produce organochlorines (that threaten not only the environment but also their health) and show the union that the issue is
not simply a question of jobs versus the environment. We also wanted the union to know that organized labor and environmental issues are both part of a progressive agenda and compliment one another. By linking our campaign to economic issues we also hope to show Stone Container that they could protect the environment, their workers and save money at the same time. Aside from looking at economic issues, this project also brought in health issues. In fact, we focused most of our discussion around health rather than environmental issues to bring in people who would not necessarily come to the table over environmental issues.

With the pesticides project, we tried to broaden the discussion to include health issues. Most of the time, the issue is framed as purely environmental, weeds versus the loss native grasses or wildlife habitat. Sometimes, the issue is considered simply as an economic issue, weeds versus the loss of crop yield. The reality is that it is all these issues and more. The problem also is environmental justice. Does one individual have the right to use chemicals to protect their interests at the expense of another individual's health? WVE has been working with a number of people who suffer from multiple chemical sensitivity. Some of these people are unable to use public recreation areas because they have been sprayed, some become prisoners in their own homes in the spring when other people or local government spray pesticides. Worse yet, some of these people are forced to abandon their homes for several months to avoid pesticides. While WVE members fully appreciate the complexities of the problem of weeds we do not believe the issue can be solved in isolation from all these factors. Solutions must be found that address all of these issues, the loss of native plants, wildlife habitat, crop yield, economic and public health factors.
Aside from linking the potential environmental degradation from the proposed Blackfoot mine to the consumption of gold jewelry, WVE is also looking at other issues. In our initial plans for this project, the WVE project committee also wanted to address the social impacts to the community from the proposed mine. As resources permit, we plan to take on this aspect of the project and look at the social impacts to the Lincoln community adjacent to the mine site. The Phelps Dodge corporation has a notorious history in the southwestern part of the US, in states like Arizona and New Mexico. Their blatant disregard for organized labor and community stability has been well documented in two books. Our goal will be to educate the mine's permit decision-makers and the Lincoln community about Phelps Dodge's history.
EVALUATION: Changes and challenges

To evaluate its successes and failures, WVE sent a survey to its members in early 1997 and then, in May, held a series of focus groups in the spring. The goal of the focus groups was to get feedback from our members as to how WVE was doing with respect to its mission and goals. We also wanted feedback about how we could involve our members more and what WVE could do to improve outreach. To ensure that we did not influence the process we contracted another organization, Women's Opportunity and Resources Development (WORD), to design and facilitate these focus groups. For the purposes of this paper I also interviewed a few of the founding members of WVE who are still active.

How has WVE succeeded or failed in providing a voice for women on environmental issues?

There is no question that WVE has certainly been successful in providing a voice for women. "WVE gives folks who have not participated in the environmental movement on any significant level a chance to have their voice heard, especially women," says WVE member and staff person, Gail Gutsche. According to WVE member, Marcy Mahr, "WVE provides...an avenue for women to feel like their concerns are validated and expressed...it's an opportunity for connection...there's a place that we hold that I think is different than a place that other groups hold at the table...given our name...our mission and what we speak for and who we speak for." As Bethany Walder explains, "WVE supplies an atmosphere...that allows people to challenge themselves to learn more and be more effective activists and advocates...in a way that helps those people grow and work on the issues they want to work on...with guidance and with help in understanding how
to do things effectively but with the ability to have your own soul in it, and to have your own creative ideas and not have those squashed." In the focus groups, some women said they joined WVE because they were interested in belonging to an organization run by women and that the issues WVE was working on were very important. Others said they had been involved in organizations that had been run by men and found these groups to be very polarizing. Some said that WVE offered an opportunity to listen to people's stories and they enjoyed the combination of mixing work with social activities.

WVE still faces many challenges on this front. According to Kline, "The stakes holding women down seemed to be deep inside of us, driven into our hearts and minds before we were even aware of politics, fund-raising or leadership of any kind." Kline explains that barriers come in two forms:

- **External oppression** - laws, policies and structures that keep women from power
- **Internal oppression** - sexist conditioning that causes us to hold ourselves back... Even the idea of chairing a local committee, or speaking in front of a crowd, or putting forward an idea in a departmental meeting, even just saying what they really think to a man in authority, can terrify some women into silence.

Creating a safe and empowering place for women to express their concerns and ideas is only the beginning. It will take time for some women to overcome the years of conditioning from oppression and exclusion. WVE needs to do more to empower women and find ways to ensure their voices are heard.

**How has WVE succeeded or failed in its mission to be inclusive and diverse?**

WVE has been reasonably successful at including a broader spectrum of the public in its projects and program. According to Gail Gutsche, WVE has not only created a way for women to become involved but has also " aimed at
low income folks and people of color and labor folks and just in general those who would not conceive themselves to be a part of the environmental movement [because] environmental issues affect these folks on a daily basis." In our survey of WVE members we asked them to list other organizations that they are members of and we were encouraged to find that many have not been members of other environmental groups. We also have women on our staff, steering committee and board who have never been directly involved in environmental issues before. We have specifically reached out to "non-environmentalists" with regard to our projects.

WVE has also made some attempts to include people of color. In 1996 WVE, in collaboration with the Missoula Indian Center and a number of other groups, sponsored a public education forum called *Indian Speak Up/Speak Out*. The objective of the forum was to address racism experienced by urban Indians. The event was a great success and is now developing into a long-term campaign to address racism in Missoula.

In the spring of 1997, three women graduates students in the communications department approached WVE about doing a graduate project for us. After some discussion we asked them to look at what WVE could do to include more women of color. The women then conducted a series of focus groups with Indian women to determine: whether or not WVE is even addressing issues that were relevant or of interest to Indian women; what issues, environmental or social, were significant to them and what steps WVE could take to encourage them to participate in WVE? The report found that water pollution, health issues, poverty, discrimination and cultural insensitivity were the issues that were of greatest concern to the women in the focus groups. We will use the findings of their report to work on broadening our relationship with Indian women. As Gutsche explains,
"Currently we don't really have -- well, there's not very many folks in Montana who are people of color. But we're not reaching the Native American folks in the way that...WVE would really like to, and it's not for lack of interest, certainly. It's definitely for lack of ability on how we can help them deal with the issues that they are working on."

Throughout our discussions about sexism and gender inequity in the environmental movement we were acutely aware of other "isms," especially with regard to race and class. There was complete agreement that we could not address sexism without addressing racism and that we needed to encourage and solicit the participation of women of color. While our intentions have been sincere, our efforts in some areas have been less successful. Although we have some women of color as members, and have actively sought women of color to speak at our conferences, we have not, as yet, invited any women of color to join our board.

We have discovered a number of difficulties with regard to including women of color. In Montana, Native Americans comprise the second largest racial group. Unfortunately, and probably due to a complex set of reasons, Indians and whites do not frequently socialize together. This has made making contacts and developing trust a challenging issue. Also, Rose Main, a Native American woman from the Fort Bellknap Reservation and a keynote speaker at our second annual conference, explained that tribes have been taken advantage of by white environmental organizations in the past and are now naturally suspicious of advances by white groups. We have been acutely aware of how some Native American women are sensitive to be seen as "tokens."

For this reason, we have been slow and cautious about building relationships with Native American women. However, we felt that it was
important to express our intentions and our caution in a position statement.

WVE board member, Christine Kaufmann, wrote the following "draft" statement:

Throughout its mission statement and in many discussions, WVE speaks of its concern for inclusion of people with diverse experience, perspectives and backgrounds. It actively seeks participation of people of color and sexual minorities in its programming and on its board of directors and committees.

While WVE has done well achieving such participation in its programming, and has always had lesbians and bisexuals on its board, people of color have been notably absent from its governing board. WVE recognizes that its work is not as informed or effective because of this lack.

The importance of having people of color on its board is two-fold. First, their active presence can inform the work of WVE in ways impossible to achieve without their presence. Their life experiences and perspective is critical to achieving WVE's mission of unifying diverse people for a progressive vision of a world that is socially just and environmentally sustainable.

Secondly, it is important for the larger community to see persons of color in leadership positions in WVE. This will further encourage participation of persons of color in all aspects of WVE's program and will model the vision of WVE to create an inclusive movement.

The difficulty of inviting people of color to participate with an organization that has been started by white activists, has an all white board and a "white" image is also two-fold. First is the problem of racism. White activists are a product of social institutions infused with systemic racism. Until these activists acknowledge their racism and work to "unlearn" it, their racism will be evident to people of color. It is an exceptional person of color who willingly enters this world.

The second problem is tokenism. In fact, the person of color is being asked to participate because they are a person of color--not because of the color of their skin, but because of their life experiences can inform the work of WVE. That distinction may not be apparent to the persons of color being asked to serve on the board. As a result, they may understandably feel they are tokens for their race.

WVE will address these problems in the following ways. WVE will sponsor programs that help white activists understand institutional racism and economic injustice, and confront their own racism. WVE will continue to invite persons of color to participate in and to lead program initiatives. Emerging project activists and

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leaders will be given an open invitation to participate on the governing board of WVE when they feel comfortable doing so. WVE staff and board members will have an honest discussion about racism and tokenism with prospective board members. Efforts to achieve geographic or any other kind of diversity will take a back seat if two or more persons of color from the same project and location wish to join the board at the same time.

As an organization addressing exclusion in the environmental movement based on gender, race and class, WVE has adopted the principles of environmental justice to ensure "the ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction...that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all people, free from any form of discrimination or bias...the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things."99 (For a complete text of the principles see Appendix D)

How has WVE succeeded or failed in its mission to link the environmental to other social, economic or political issues?

WVE member, Julie Ringelberg, feels that WVE: "really recognizes, thankfully, the interrelationships between social and environmental issues and that, I'm afraid, a lot of the other large organizations don't have that concept yet ... [they are] very focused on either specific species or [are] issue specific."100 Gutsche too feels that WVE "reaches out to people from different social issues."101 Some of the women in the focus groups feel that the fact that WVE connects environmental and social issues makes it unique.

While WVE has tried to address the three areas of concern discussed in this paper, other issues of difficulty have arisen for the organization that do not fall within these three criteria. One of the greatest difficulties for WVE
has been the separation between goals and resources. WVE members have a vision of what it is they want to create but it has not always been possible to meet those goals because the organization does not have the staff or money. When asked how WVE could be more effective Ringelberg said "More money... [with it] comes a better organization and therefore ability to go do some things like internally create a structure...to handle things... continue to create a direction that people can follow, you know, continue to be seen as a leader or a group of leaders... I think that's important.102 Gutsche agrees, "If [WVE] had three times the amount of money...WVE could be more effective by diversifying further and that's the trickiest part to the whole formula."103 By money, WVE is not talking about budgets that compare to national organizations. In WVE's first year of operation the organization's budget was only $20,000 which supported one and one quarter staff positions. That figure increased to $60,000 in 1996 but supported one full time and three part time positions. WVE steering committee member Mahr describes her vision for WVE if we had more resources available to us:

I think a lot of the effectiveness that I dream about for WVE has to come through expanded staff...I wonder sometimes if we can get further [if we] enroll more people in our mission, and rather than thinking that we're new... stop getting hung up on the newness and start to see how we can incorporate what we've been doing, how we operate as groups and bridge builders...And I think the only way you do that is by having more people out there with the same values in different arenas and working on different issues. It starts to shift how people actually deal with each other. And I think right now our effectiveness is on policy and thinking well on our feet and being in the right places at the right time and part of the coalition building that we're involved in, but I think it's going to be a matter of more people with same perspective just getting out there and having the mission really start to come alive rather then just the limited staff that we have.104
Every WVE steering committee member has, at some or another, expressed their desire to put this new vision into practice. As Walder says,

> We've talked about this a lot, and we've never come up with a way to do it. Part of this is doing it through an issue, because it seems like you can't do it not through an issue. But I guess my feeling is that to be really effective at getting into local communities and world communities...[it takes] an army, pardon the war metaphor. Anyway, an army of women going door to door and sitting down and having teas and... you know, Tupperware parties and all the other stuff that has been done to get people to at least listen to you. And to be able to make a personal connection so that the people we want to reach will realize that we’re people too and will at least read what we give them to read or listen to what we have to say, and make their own choices. But make those choices based on good information.\(^{105}\)

Personally, this has been the most frustrating part of creating not only a new organization, but a new vision. The ideas and vision, and the history to support that vision are there, but we are so limited by resources. So much of my time is taken up with administrative details and fundraising that it leaves little time to go into the communities working with women, building diversity and coalitions. It is especially difficult when the mainstream organizations, who often have no connection to the people on the ground, spend multi-million dollar budgets on flashy campaigns and fancy offices.

**Structure**

After working with the structure outlined in this paper for nearly two and half years we decided that we need to restructure. While we have a Board that is comprised of remarkable individuals, they are, for the most part, activists themselves and do not have the time to fulfill all the needs of the organization. Their involvement in WVE has also been constrained by
geographic distance. It has also been difficult to clearly define the different roles and responsibilities of the Board and Steering Committee. At times, their functions overlap but at other crucial times they do not. For instance, neither the current Board nor the Steering Committee have played a major role in fundraising, a function that is sorely needed by the organization.

The Steering Committee has spent many hours discussing potential ways to solve the problems with our current structure. We discussed the pros and cons of many different ideas and while we could find no perfect solution, we came up with a proposal that we presented to the membership: Eliminate the Steering Committee and replace it with a larger, more active Board of Directors and establish a Board of Advisors. If they wish, current Steering Committee members, with approval from the general membership, may serve on the Board of Directors. All Steering Committee duties will fall under jurisdiction of the Board. Current Board members may continue to serve on the Board of Directors or serve on the Board of Advisors. What follows is a description of how the new proposed Board of Directors and Advisory Board will function.

**Board of Directors** - The Board of Directors will be responsible for: financial planning and management, bylaws, membership development (volunteerism and empowerment), policy development (including organizational mission, personnel and project policy), some fundraising, and strategic planning. The Board will also be responsible for reviewing long range needs and plans for the organization. The board should also address specific needs of the organization which include, but are not limited to, legal concerns and community diversity.
To address these various needs and functions the Board will be divided into the following (and possibly other) ad hoc committees: fundraising, policy, strategic planning and membership. In our efforts to create a diverse organization that truly represents the public interest, we will actively seek people of color, people with disabilities, youth, seniors and people with diverse social and economic backgrounds. We will also seek individuals with expertise or experience in fundraising, financial management, legal concerns and other areas of social change. The Board of Directors will be comprised of 10 - 15 members. Each board member shall serve a term of two years and may serve up to three consecutive terms. Board members may be renominated after missing one two-year term. (To avoid all members' terms expiring simultaneously, we will ask new members to commit to a one or two-year initial term). Board meetings will be held quarterly and members are expected to attend at least three meetings per year and serve on at least one committee.

As WVE staff members are more familiar with the organization than any other entity they should participate in the decision making process. Therefore two positions on the Board should be reserved for staff. The Board will be responsible for supervising the Director. All other personnel decisions will be the responsibility of the Director with input from the Board.

**Board of Advisors** - The Board of Advisors will be comprised of individuals that are committed to the mission and vision of WVE but who may not have the time to serve on the Board of Directors. These individuals serve as “ambassadors” providing the organization with expertise and credibility. Advisors will be encouraged to attend WVE events and meetings when possible but will have no specific responsibilities. The Board of Directors will
serve as a “nominating committee” for the advisors. Nominations and approval for Advisors will be sought from the general membership.

To avoid a hierachial structure, WVE will continue to make decisions by consensus. All major policy decisions must be ratified by the general membership.
CONCLUSION

Over the years, as I have tried to refine my philosophical positions, I have frequently found myself in the awkward position of straddling an ideological fence—a position shared by many women environmental activists. I am both a feminist and an environmentalist...an ecofeminist and a deep ecologist. The roots of my activism are in civil rights, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. My concern for and commitment to civil rights have not changed. But how do I reconcile my philosophical position with the misanthropes of the environmental movement. Throughout my time as an environmental activist, I have been made to feel that I had to chose one position or the other. For instance, defend women's reproductive and human rights or support "population control." To advance a truly progressive vision we should not be making such a choice. Addressing one issue without the other simply reinforces the notion that our environmental and social problems can be solved with simplistic band aids that do not address the root causes of the problem. To assert that there exists an either/or solution, or in the case of population control, for instance, that the problem can be solved without addressing women's rights, is to continue to misrepresent the totality or complexity of the issues.

While it is certainly important to embrace deep ecology's "positive or constructive task of encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans toward all entities in the ecosphere"106 it is equally important to examine the sociopolitical environment and the historical conditions that have contributed to the current ecological crisis. Environmental degradation, racism, sexism, classicism and poverty, are intertwined and inseparable. The environmental movement cannot solve one without attending to the other. As Robert Bullard, professor of sociology at the University of California,
Riverside says "...It's about environment and economics. It's about peace and social justice and civil rights and human rights. They're all part of the environment." Even though he may not have thought of himself as environmentalist, Martin Luther King understood these connections. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" said King, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." Environmental problems do not exist in isolation of other social problems and attempting to solve them in such a vacuum is delusive. It is critical that environmental activists not only understand these connections but that they "make the link."

Some people would argue that deep ecology has already addressed this weakness in the environmental movement. As deep ecologist, George Sessions wrote:

By failing to take an ecocentric integrated long-range perspective, by failing to be guided by realistic visions of ecological sustainable societies, and failing to adequately address the root causes of the ecocrisis, [the major reform environmental organizations] have managed only to delay some of the worst of the environmental degradation. Overall their strategies and efforts are failing to stem the tide of global environmental destruction.  

While deep ecologists may share many of the same concerns about the state of the environmental movement expressed in this paper, I believe they have not given significant consideration to the other social variables such as gender, race or class. In the words of Warwick Fox, "this charge is not directed at deep ecology's positive or constructive task of encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans toward all entities in the ecosphere, but rather at deep ecology's negative or critical task of dismantling anthropocentrism." Deep ecologists have been criticized by ecofeminists
for asserting that a gender-neutral 'anthropocentrism' is responsible for environmental degradation whereas ecofeminists maintain that androcentrism is "the real root" of the problem.

Ecofeminist, Ariel Kay Salleh maintains that while both deep ecology and ecofeminism share a common goal -- overcoming the traditional division between humanity and nature, deep ecologists are "constrained by political attitudes meaningful to white-male, middle-class, professionals whose thought is not grounded in the labor of daily maintenance and survival." While both schools of thought recognize that the separation of humanity and nature is the cornerstone of patriarchal ideology, overcoming that division holds a different significance for ecofeminists than for deep ecologists. Salleh claims that deep ecology fails to examine fully its environmental ethic both on a social and political level, and in particular, fails to incorporate or discuss the oppression of women. Salleh claims that while some deep ecologists claim to see the oppression or exploitation of women, "ideology works to protect men from seeing the actual nature of social relations under patriarchy."

Adoption of an "ecocentrism" ethic is not sufficient to address the concerns expressed by feminists and deep ecologists fail to recognize the shortcomings of their own ethic in the context of their culture. "Constructed by a class of men that is serviced by both patriarchal and capitalist institutions, deep ecology with its valuable move to "ecocentrism" remains out of touch with the material source of its continuing existence."

I, too, believe that examination of our ethics must go beyond those expressed by deep ecologists and we must examine "domination" in the context of not only the natural world, but in terms of gender, race, and
class. While "feminists are not the only ones to point to the structures behind the environmental symptoms...the analysis that feminists offer--an analysis rooted in uncovering the workings of gender--is unique, and as of yet, not widely applied to environmental questions." There is much that the mainstream movement can learn from a feminist environmental critique and one would have thought that the environmental and feminist movements would be closely allied because they both challenge the current political and power structures. Sadly, in my experience and that of many other women "Resistance to feminism seems to be as firmly entrenched in the environmental establishment as it is in society at large, perhaps only taking more surprising and more subtle forms."  

Contrary to what some men in the movement might fear, a feminist environmentalism does not have to exclude men and feminists are not out to attack men per se but rather hegemonic masculinity. There are many men who find patriarchy equally as offensive as do women and they too can not only reject the "institutions that are wreaking environmental havoc" but also reject the patriarchal power structures within the environmental movement.  

While "Feminism, and feminist transformations of environmentally instrumental institutions, is not a magic balm--it will not solve all environmental problems, and it will not save the Earth" writes Seager "it is perilously evident that 'salvation' will not come through the masculinist structures that have brought us to the brink of environmental collapse." Seager illustrates her point with the words of the African American poet Audre Lorde who, when speaking of women's multiple oppressions (of homophobia, sexism, and racism), reminds us that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."
If the environmental movement continues to exclude sectors of the population like women and people of color, "preach to the converted," and fails to understand or present environmental problems in a broader social, political and economic context, it will remain on the periphery of social change. To be successful, the movement needs to build a much broader base of support than it currently has and become institutionalized into every facet of our society. To accomplish this, environment groups need to broaden their own memberships to include a more diverse group of people whom realistically represents the population at large. At the same time, access to power and decision-making can no longer remain in the hands of a few privileged individuals but must be accessible to this diverse membership. The structures of our organizations need to be truly democratic. We must create an inclusive movement that recognizes the strength in diversity and the connection between civil, social, economic and environmental justice. We must also broaden our view of what constitutes the environment from the protection of wilderness, forests, endangered species to include human health and human rights. The movement can no longer afford to be divided.

Women's Voices for the Earth was founded with these concepts in mind and while we do not claim to have all the answers, we do believe we are asking the right questions. We are also aware that these are ambitious goals and will not be accomplished overnight. We also know that our process will require constant vigilance and that we must continually re-examine our mission and actions. One of the hardest but most valuable lessons we can learn is to always be open to critique.
NOTES


2 Ibid., p. 61.

3 Ibid., p. 17.

4 Ibid., p. 18.

5 Ibid., p. 61.

6 Letter to Bryony Schwan & Lila Cleminshaw, 5/24/94.

7 Letter to the Environmental Studies Program, University of Montana. 9 May 1994.


9 Ibid., p. 3.

10 Ibid., p. 9.


13 Ibid., p. 27.


Ibid., pp. 2-4.

Ibid., pp. 185-186.


Ibid., p.xiv.


Ibid., p. 177.

Personal discussion from friend in Greenpeace who wishes to remain anonymous.

Unable to secure a nomination to the board, Roselle lobbied 10% of Greenpeace's membership thereby gaining a position on the board.


32 Ibid., p.36.

33 Ibid., p.43.

34 Ibid., p.40.


36 Ibid.


38 Ibid., p. 69.


41 Ibid., p. 59.

42 Ibid., p. 77.

43 Ibid., pp. 58-59


Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid., p. 146.

1996 Roper Starch poll reported in Greenwire, (The poll was commissioned by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation).


Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Ibid., p. 6.
61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., p. 8.


65 Ibid., p. 179


69 Interview with Gail Gutsche, February 1997.


72 Ibid., p. 179.

73 Ibid., p. 168.

74 Interview with Bethany Walder, February 1997.


76 Ibid., p. 14.

77 Interview with Bethany Walder, February 1997.
From rhetoric expressed in either letters to the editor or at public hearings on wilderness in the Northern Rockies.


Interview with Bethany Walder, February 1997.

From personal conversations and workshops with Lois Gibbs.

Interview with Bethany Walder, February 1997.


"As the mainstream, conservation-oriented movement grew and prospered, a parallel movement was developing in the United States. At first, operating as an adjunct to the labor, public health, and civil rights movements, it was not seen as an environmental initiative. The two environmental movements could not be more different, or separate: saying that they are different as black and white is truer than it sounds. The mainstream movement has always been about as white as any social movement in the country’s history, whereas the grassroots anti-toxics activism that rose in its shadow succeeded, where the mainstream failed, in drawing into the environmental struggle people of every color. The two movements also differed in gender—mainstream leadership being predominantly male, the grassroots predominantly female."


Ibid., p. 222.


Ibid.
The Copper Crucible and Barbara Kingsolver

Interview with Gail Gutsche, February 1997.

Interview with Marcy Mahr, February 1997.

Interview with Bathany Walder, February 1997.


The principles of Environmental Justice. These principles were adopted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, which took place October 24-27, 1991, in Washington, DC.

Interview with Julie Mae Ringelberg, February 1997.

Interview with Gail Gutsche, February 1997.

Interview with Julie Mae Ringelberg, February 1997.

Interview with Gail Gutsche, February 1997.

Interview with Marcy Mahr, February 1997.

Interview with Bathany Walder, February 1997.

"THE LONG-RANGE DEEP ECOLOGY movement emerged more or less spontaneously and informally as a philosophical and scientific social/political movement during the so-called Ecological Revolution of the 1960s. Its main concern has been to bring about a major paradigm shift—a shift in perception, values, and lifestyles—as a basis for redirecting the ecologically destructive path of modern industrial growth societies. Since the 1960s, the long-range Deep Ecology movement has been characterized philosophically by a move from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, and by environmental activism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


FINDING COMMON GROUND: GENDER, JUSTICE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Friday, May 6th & Saturday May 7th
University of Montana
Social Sciences Building, 3rd Floor

Our purpose is to bring together women activists with a variety of interests — health, peace, justice, women's rights, and the environment — to find common ground and to strengthen our collective political voice. The workshop will focus on process rather than issues: How can women activists help to shape a society that is both environmentally sustainable and socially just?
FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1994

7:00 p.m.
• Keynote Address: Patricia Blau Reuss, Senior Policy Analyst NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, Washington, DC

8:00 p.m.
• Potluck Dessert & Coffee: Room 352

SATURDAY, MAY 7, 1994

8:00 a.m.
• Registration and Coffee: 3rd floor

8:30 a.m.
• Panel Discussion: Gail Gutsche, Planned Parenthood; Chris Kaufmann, Human Rights Network; Janet Robideau, citizen activist

10:00 a.m.
• Workshops: TBA

12:00 p.m.
• Lunch and Open Microphone TBA

Conference participants are encouraged to introduce themselves by giving a brief description of who they are and what issues they are working on.

1:00 p.m.
• Panel Discussion: Building Bridges
   Renee Askins, The Wolf Fund
   Jean-Marie Souvignier, Greater Yellowstone Coalition
   Teresa Erickson, Northern Plains Resource Council

2:30 p.m.
• Workshops: TBA
   From the Streets to the Halls of the Capital: Being Effective in the Political Process. • Diane Sands (Montana Women's Lobby).

Building Bridges with Diverse Groups • Mary Sexton (Nature Conservancy)

Nobody Said It Would Be Easy: A Workshop on Communicating with People Who See Things Differently Than You • Mary O'Brien (Professor, UM EVST)

Practicing Conflict Resolution • Mary Birch (Professor, UM Social Work)

Dinner on your own

7:00 p.m.
• Closing Remarks: Room 352

8:00 p.m.
• Entertainment TBA

If Media Won't Come to You, Create Your Own • Terry Kendrick (WORD); Lin Smith (Mountain Moving Press).
THE ASHLAND PRINCIPLES
March 7, 1993

Out of concern for the energies and commitment of people working to replace an ethic of abuse and domination of the Earth with an ethic of compassion and interconnectedness and to replace that destructive behavior with meaningful restoration of ecosystems, we make this statement.

To fail to address the problem of sexism in the environmental movement is to continue to perpetuate the systems that have brought about the abuse. This would imply a complicity agreement with the domination culture that has driven ecosystems to the brink of extinction. We must understand the relationship between the destruction of our environment, the oppression of women, and the denial of so called "feminine values". Those who would abuse one are by definition participating in the continuation of the other, for both are dominating, hierarchical, and antithetical to the inherent worth of each and every living being. The environmental movement has been subject to the same dysfunctions of all institutions in America. The problems of sexism, sexual harassment, lack of equal pay for equal work, marginalization, and violence are draining the movement of critical energy.

Out of respect for our work, for what sustainable cultures may teach us, for our daughters and sons, and for the diversity we wish to protect, sexism must be addressed immediately in the most serious manner. The rewards of ending sexism in the environmental movement are great. With all of us working at our full potential we can bring about a holistic ecosystem in which women and men are respected and honored for their differences, talents, skills, and strengths.

* This statement was written, in consensus, to specifically address sexism in the environmental movement. We acknowledge that racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination stem from the same deeply rooted attitudes, and that until all are addressed no one is free.
Assumptions and Purpose

We recognize that most of the barriers to achieving an inclusive and diverse movement have not been constructed deliberately with the intent to exclude or discriminate. In our efforts to remove these barriers and facilitate diversity we do not wish to cast blame or assign ulterior motives. However, it is vitally important that we work to identify and change those structures and dynamics which have the effect of excluding groups of people, regardless of intent or lack thereof. This document is based on the assumption that we all have good intentions, and is an attempt to lay a practical groundwork for translating our good intentions into real change.

Introduction

This outline is broken into two parts. The first is a set of basic goals and guidelines that could be immediately adopted, in whole or in part, by any organization. This first section reflects the need to begin moving quickly on the problems. However, these guidelines are far from comprehensive, and cannot replace the need for each organization to implement its own goals, strategies and guidelines on an ongoing basis. Thus, the second part of this outline recommends that each organization create its own internal committee or task force to address gender and racial issues, and describes the possible structure and functions of such a committee.

Guidelines for Organizations

I: Goals and Guidelines

Goal 1: To achieve proportional representation of women and minorities in all areas of organization, including leadership positions.

A: Hiring:
Qualified women and minorities should be actively and aggressively recruited to apply for all positions. This process should include, but not be limited to:

1. Contacting other organizations, both inside and outside the environmental community, for their ideas and suggestions.

2. Utilizing personal and organizational networks to publicize positions and recruit applicants.
3. Advertising with alternative publications and job listing services to reach a broader and more diverse audience, and using language that specifically invites women and people of color to apply.

4. Advertising across a wide geographical area to reach the largest possible pool of applicants.

5. Allowing a long enough time frame to pursue these various avenues in a meaningful way.

6. Continually working to identify individuals who are potential recruits of future job openings.

B. Leadership Development
Women and minorities already within the organization should be encouraged and aided to move into leadership positions. This can be accomplished by:

1. Operating from the assumption that advancement is not only possible but expected within the organization and the movement.

2. Encouraging, assisting, and expecting all staff to be knowledgeable on the issues, and making all staff privy to the latest information and strategic thought.

3. Encouraging staff to be knowledgeable about each other's job descriptions, day to day routines, salaries, and background experience, so that those with an interest in advancement will have something concrete to aspire to and some notion of the type of preparation required.

4. Encouraging staff and board to acquire new knowledge and skills, and providing them with the opportunity, direction, encouragement and support to do so.

5. Encouraging mentorship between experienced and non-experienced group members by developing a formal or informal "mentor" program.

6. Offering more structured education and training to interns and volunteers.

7. Identifying useful training opportunities outside the organization, such as classes, workshops, internships, and even employment with other organizations, and encouraging individuals to take advantage of these.
8. Looking for individuals with leadership qualities at all levels of the organization, and encouraging and assisting them to take on more responsibilities.

9. Identifying up-and-coming leaders, and involving them in the appropriate discussions, meetings, forums, conference calls, etc.

10. Encouraging individuals who are ready to apply for leadership positions to do so, both within the organization and with other environmental organizations.

**Goal 2: To create an atmosphere where everyone feels included, respected and valued, and each individual has an equal opportunity to be heard.**

**A. Meetings:**
Meetings should encourage comfortable and equal involvement from all attendees. This can be accomplished by:

1. Soliciting complaints, suggestions, and other feedback from meeting participants, particularly those who rarely speak.

2. Inviting an outside individual or team to attend meetings in order to make independent observations and suggest additional changes.

3. Implementing structural changes, where possible, to address problem areas. (In addition to requesting personal changes from individual participants.)

**B. Office Atmosphere**
The work atmosphere should be one of respect for and inclusion of each individual. Such an environment can be fostered by:

1. Operating from the assumption that everyone's time is equally valuable.

2. Creating specific and clear job descriptions which represent a fair division of labor.

3. Creating a fair salary structure, with equal pay for equal work.

4. Making job descriptions and salary structure open information among staff, to encourage fairness, allow complaints, and ensure that all differences are justifiable.
5. Keeping everyone informed of what's going on, so nobody feels like an outsider.

6. Introducing visitors or guests to everyone present, rather than to only "selected" people.

7. Using inclusive and respectful language, terminology, and humor.

8. Requiring each staff member to clean up after him or herself, and preventing personal chores and favors from becoming part of anyone's written or unwritten job description.

9. Ensuring that office rules apply equally to all.

10. Giving credit where credit is due, both personally and publicly.

Section II: Diversity Committee

The process of identifying and changing deeply rooted attitudes, behaviors and structures which exclude certain groups of people from full participation is obviously a long-term effort. To ensure a real and ongoing commitment to this effort, and avoid getting sidetracked by day to day crises, organizations should consider the creation of a board level committee to promote gender and racial diversity within the organization. The committee should seek the participation of individuals with relevant ideas and experience outside the organization, as well as board and staff. The functions of such a committee would be:

1. To identify the problems, from general attitudes and assumptions to specific behaviors and structures,

2. To set both long term goals and short term objectives for expanding diversity and eliminating sexism, racism, and homophobia.

3. To prioritize objectives and develop a plan that should then be incorporated into the organization's overall plan.

4. To present the plan to both board and staff members, explaining its purpose and importance, and the role of each individual in making it work.

5. To monitor the implementation of the plan, and set up guidelines for measuring its success.

6. To provide diversity training to board and staff.
7. To monitor organizational communications, from meetings to mailings, for exclusive language and behaviors and suggest improvements.

8. To provide a clearing house for complaints and suggestions, and to aid in the resolution of disputes that may arise.

Guidelines for Conferences

I. Speakers and Panelists

1. Develop a resource list of women and people of color who are potential conference speakers.
   * Compile a "starter list from a variety of past conference agendas.
   * Network with other individuals, groups, and conference organizers, locally and nationally, both inside and outside the environmental community. (Including women's groups, community groups, tribal groups, etc.)
   * Circulate a survey to organizations, conference attendees, etc. to solicit ideas.
   * Allow enough lead time to seriously pursue these avenues. (If an annual conference, pursue them year-round.)
   * Actively share the list with other conference sponsors and organizations.

2. Identify individuals whose participation as speakers or panelists is especially important, and make a point of creating a place on the agenda for them. Involve them early in the process, allowing them input into the content and structure of the conference, rather than asking them to fit into a predetermined mold. All persons of color and/or women who leadership positions in the environmental community should always be asked to speak as a matter of course.

3. Challenge invited speakers not from under-represented groups (especially those who have abundant opportunities to speak) to:
   * Suggest an alternate speaker.
   * Personally recruit an alternate speaker, assisting her/him with preparation if appropriate.
   * Invite someone to assist with a joint presentation.

4. Consider providing some financial resources, if necessary, to assist members of under-represented groups to participate in the conference.

5. Ask conference speakers to use inclusive language and avoid jokes that are sexist or racist.
II: Structure and Content

1. Schedule at least one panel, workshop, or presentation dealing with racism and sexism. Ideally the subject would be addressed in a variety of panels (perhaps all within the same time slot to encourage participation), or in full session of the conference. Speakers and/or panelists should have the appropriate training and experience to address the issue. Discussion should focus on positive and concrete steps to change.

2. Schedule more "free time" for extra-curricular meetings and gatherings. This would allow people who were not part of the planning process to still have some influence on the content of the conference, and not be marginalized by having to compete with previously scheduled activities.

3. Broaden the conference appeal by scheduling a wider range of panel/workshops. Consider inclusion of artistic, spiritual, and hands-on sessions, and sessions dealing with children and education.

4. Include panels and workshops which provide leadership training, possibly specifically geared to women and people of color.

5. Consider sponsoring a conference with "Women and the Environment" as the overall theme.

III. Other

1. Make sure that the organizing committee reflects the diversity desired in the conference at large.

2. Provide childcare and otherwise cater to the needs of families and children.

3. Include materials on sexism and racism in the conference packets.

4. Solicit criticism, praise, and suggestions pertinent to these issues on the evaluation forms.
1997 Board of Directors

Terry Tempest-Williams
Terry is a well-known author and Naturalist-in-Residence at the Utah Museum of Natural History. She was the recipient of a 1993 fellowship from the Lannan Foundation and has been an outspoken voice on nuclear issues and in defense of wilderness. She was hailed by Newsweek as one of the region's "striking new writers...one of 20 movers and shakers who will shape the future of the West." (Served on the board since 1996)

Mary O'Brien Ph.D.
Mary has a Ph.D. in Botany and works as the Ecosystem Policy Analyst for Hell's Canyon Preservation Council (HCPC) and as a technical consultant for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. She serves on the Boards of Directors of Pesticide Action Network (PAN), the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) and HCPC. Amongst other committees, she also represents the United States on the methalbromide Technical Options Committee for the Montreal Protocol. (Served on the board since 1995)

Dr. Mary Rohlfing Ph.D.
Mary is a professor of communications at Boise State University in Idaho. She has been an outspoken activist on gay and lesbian rights and the environment. Under her leadership, the "No on 1 campaign" defeated one of the ugliest anti-gay initiatives in Idaho. (Served on the board since 1995)

Chris Kaufman MS.
Chris has a master's degree in Environmental Studies and is currently Co-director of the Human Rights Network in Helena, Montana. (Served on the board since 1995)

Jeannette Whitney Williams
Jeannette has been the CEO of a small business in Montana for 23 years and is a well recognized small business community leader. She has many years of experience as a volunteer with the local YWCA. (Served on the board since September 1996)

WVE's 1997 Staff

Bryony Schwan (Director)
Bryony has a BA in Fine Arts and is currently completing a Master's degree in Environmental Studies. She has over ten years experience as an environmental and social activist. She has won awards for "Outstanding
Organizing in Defense of Wilderness" and "Environmental Activism." Her activist roots were in the anti-apartheid movement in southern Africa where she was born. As a member of a labor union in the 1980's, she participated in the country's largest strike by women and has a keen interest in labor issues. She is the former Development Coordinator for the Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute.

Gail Gutsche (Pesticide Project Director) has been an activist in the women's movement for 20 years. She's especially interested in reproductive rights and has successfully organized two Missoula-based voter identification projects which have helped elect pro-choice candidates. She became involved with WVE during the first WVE conference when she hosted a workshop on reproductive rights, population control and women's rights. Gail has a BA in English from Gustavus Aldophus College in St. Peter, Minnesota.

1997 Steering Committee

Bethany Walder received a BA in Political Science and Comparative Area Studies from Duke University and a MS in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana. She is now the director of Wildlands CPR (formerly Road Rip) a Missoula-based grassroots wilderness coalition dedicated to protecting and restoring wildland ecosystems by preventing, closing, and restoring roads within public wildlands.

Marcy Mahr is a research biologist with the Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute and coordinates their grizzly bear recovery project. She has a BA in Sociology/Anthropology from Middlebury and an MS in Botany from the University of Vermont. She was formerly the Regional Director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council and served on the board of the Merck Forest and Farmland Center.

Ellen McCullough is full time mother who is active in her neighborhood association. Ellen comes to WVE without any prior involvement in environmental issues. She has been active in anti-war efforts and is a pro-choice advocate. Ellen has a BA in English from Gonzaga University in Spokane.

Julie Ringelberg works for Opportunity Resources, an organization that provides job opportunities for physically and mentally disabled individuals. She was the former Membership Director of the Great Bear Foundation and the former Director of Environmental Education at the University of Michigan's Environmental Education Center. Julie has a BA in Theater and a MS in Environmental Education from Lesley College, Cambridge Massachusetts.
Sydney Cook is currently a graduate student in the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana. She was a recipient of the Clancy Gordon Environmental Scholarship (given to graduate students who have demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental activism. Sydney has worked with a number of community-based stakeholder collaboratives committed to addressing contentious natural resource issues.

Note: WVE staff members, Bryony Schwan and Gail Gutsche both serve on the Steering Committee.
Principles of Environmental Justice

The following declaration of principles as adopted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, which took place October 24-27, 1991, in Washington, D.C.

Preamble

We, the people of color, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice.

• Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

• Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all people, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

• Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

• Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing and the extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons that threaten the fundamental rights to clean air, land, water and food.

• Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

• Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
• Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

• Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

• Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality of health care.

• Environmental justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

• Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreement, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

• Environmental justice affirms the need for an urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

• Environmental justice calls for strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

• Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multinational corporations.

• Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, people, and cultures, and other life forms.

• Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

• Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and prioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

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