

“Reframing the Environment” Project
Report 1: Baseline Framing Review: Proponents, Opponents, Media

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Introduction

This report is an analysis of materials provided to the Rockridge Institute as part of the “Reframing the Environment” project. The goal of this project is to begin rethinking both environmental issues and, more broadly, the concepts of “the environment” and “the environmental movement,” in order to raise the general visibility of environmental issues as items on the public agenda.

This report discusses the major frames found in the following types of material:

- materials produced by the members of the Green Group;
- materials produced by opponents of environmental issues (some supplied by the Green Group, some supplied by Rockridge research);
- recent media reports using the search terms “environmentalist” or “environmental movement,” from one major media outlet (the *New York Times*), the Associated Press wire (since AP reports are carried by many smaller newspapers), and some mid-sized newspapers (e.g., the *Buffalo News*). As the project continues, attention will continue to be paid to the media; the pool for this report was limited for reasons of time.

Because of the number of groups participating, comments on individual materials will be restricted to illustrative quotations only.**

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Background on Framing

Framing is not just finding the right language. It is not merely “messaging.” Messaging comes as a result of the process; it is not the process itself. It is not enough to say the same things in new ways.

Framing is a fundamental rethinking of what one does and why one does it. Framing is not short term and tactical; it is long-term and strategic. This does not mean that one sacrifices the immediate for the distant: no one needs to lose the trees to save the forest. It does mean that one places the short-term in a wider and wiser view of the long term.

Whatever “objective” reality may exist is always perceived and conceived in particular ways. The resulting conceptual structures are called *frames*. Frames of the kind that effect social and political change usually have parts: they are mini-stories.

Everything that human beings understand about the world is understood through frames. Facts about the world, while necessary, are in and of themselves insufficient for understanding the world: all facts are framed, and facts are never understood without frames. If speakers do not suggest a frame, hearers will impose their own—which may lead to conclusions that are undesirable from the speaker’s point of view. This point is why it is so important to provide alternative frames, not just alternative facts. Also, when facts and frames are in conflict, the frames will win out. That is, if someone has a frame in his or her mind, and someone else points out facts that logically should prove that the frame is “wrong,” the facts usually will not matter. The facts will be explained away or rejected.

** Please note that the quotations for any given point are not exhaustive; most of the points could have been illustrated by references to other groups as well.

Language is an important part of framing, but framing is ultimately about much more than language: it is about thinking. Reframing is reconceptualizing. Values-based reframing is learning to think and talk about issues in terms of the moral reasons why they are important.

For all their good intentions, environmentalists have been far less effective than their opponents at enacting a values-based, effectively framed vision. For over 30 years, the Radical Right and its think tanks have deliberately worked to achieve greater and greater influence not only over policymakers, but more generally, and insidiously, over American culture. This is because the Radical Right understands about framing.

The Protection Frame: The Story Told by Environmentalists

The dominant story told by environmentalists is one of Protection. Words that indicate this frame include “protect” and “protection,” of course, as well as “preserve” and “preservation,” “stewardship”¹ (which has additional nuances not discussed here), “safeguard,” “defend” and “defenders” and “defense,” “safety” and “save” and “security,” “champion,” “destroy,” “jeopardize,” “trample,”² “attack” “assault,”³ and words that refer to the law. A review of the slogans and mission statements of the groups in this study shows how prevalent this frame is.

The words “conservation” and “conserve” evoke both a sense of protection and a sense of use:

one sense of the word “conserve” means to hold on to something precious in the face of impending change (the sense associated philosophically with the political term “conservative”),

while the other refers to a sensible and prudent allocation of the use of something so as to

¹E.g., “a great change in humanity’s stewardship of the earth” in directions of safety, sustainability, health, and diversity of life (Union of Concerned Scientists).

²E.g., “not to let big business trample our environmental laws” (Partnership Project).

³E.g., policy changes that “will cripple many of the safeguards that protect us from the very worst excesses of the oil, coal, logging, mining and chemical industries,” removing “vital protections” against the “coming attack” (Natural Resources Defense Council).

prevent it from being used up entirely (to “conserve resources,” “conserve one’s strength”). See below for a discussion of the “use”-related Resources frame.

The following is the structure of the Protection frame, which is a version of an adversarial Struggle story with heroes and villains: There is a perceived Danger or Threat; a potential Victim; either someone who is threatening the Victim with the Danger (an Attacker) or an impersonal Danger (e.g., a hurricane); and a Protector who prevents harm to the Victim from the Danger, either by stopping the actions of the Attacker, by preventing contact of the Victim with the Danger, or by eliminating the Danger. There are also a Means by which the Attacker intends to carry out the Threat, and a Means by which the Protector protects the Victim from the Threat.

When this frame is applied to current environmental issues, the following “mappings” result:

Danger/Threat = loss of habitat; loss of resources (see below for a discussion of the “Resources” frame); “pollution” (either as a Danger itself or as a means to another Danger such as damage to people’s health or to habitat); damage to animals’ health; damage to people’s health; destruction of quality of life;⁴ loss of heritage/national treasure; loss of one’s children’s/grandchildren’s inheritance (metaphorically: such as wild places to go fishing, etc.⁵); etc..

⁴E.g., “maintain our quality of life” (Environmental Working Group); “People from all walks of life deserve to live, work, and play in healthy communities” (Physicians for Social Responsibility); “when that two and a half cents is used to purchase a condom and combined with HIV counseling and education, it becomes . . . an investment in life” (Population Action International); “to make trails an essential component of the emerging smart growth and livable communities movement” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy).

⁵E.g., a photograph of a father and a toddler and the family dog on a beach: “We’re saving a place for you” (Nature Conservancy).

Victim =	“the environment”/“nature”; ecosystem(s); individual species; people; the future/future generations ⁶ ; etc.
Attacker =	“polluters,” corporations; “special interests” ⁷ ; apathetic or careless people; people in general (merely by virtue of human activity; this is an extreme and relatively uncommon position not found in the materials examined)
Means of Doing Harm =	unchecked behavior (often attributed to greed), including pollution, “development,” and overuse of “resources” (e.g., overfishing, clear cutting); rollback of regulations; corrupt influence in particular government administrations; etc.
Protector =	environmental groups; concerned citizens; the government
Means of Protection	government regulation (including penalties); lawsuits; boycotts; etc.

As widespread and useful as this frame is, however, there are also (as always) some problems. Some of the difficulties with this frame are the following:

- (1) The number of different potential mappings for each “role” can dilute the message.

However, this is balanced by the fact that many groups use the value of Protection as their primary message, resulting in a unified overall value. The very term

“environmental protection,” as in “Environmental Protection Agency,” reinforces this unified and unifying value.

⁶E.g., “for future generations” (many); “protecting our national legacy” (Audubon Society); “They [the Bush administration and its “corporate allies”] are stealing America from our children and all future generations” (Natural Resources Defense Council); “Love dolphins and the ocean? Make sure your kids can too” (Oceana); working to “make America’s future brighter and safer” (League of Conservation Voters).

⁷E.g., “Don’t Let Greedy Special Interests Destroy Wild America!” (Wilderness Society).

- (2) The Protection frame relies on a threat or crisis for its motivation, and a threat frame, which is based on fear, often is ultimately disempowering for those who do not naturally gravitate to activism. Asking people to view themselves as co-Protectors by joining or otherwise supporting an environmental advocacy organization is one way to counter this, by transforming fear, helplessness and despair into courage, empowerment and hope. This mapping seems to have worked well at the beginning of the environmental movement, but by now may be changing to resonate more with the use of the word “conservation” than with the use of the word “environmental” (an hypothesis that can be tested). Its usefulness has also been damaged by the following points (3 and 4).
- (3) The Radical Right has been able to pick out one part of the Protection frame—the Means of Protection—and reframe that—specifically regulation and to a somewhat lesser extent lawsuits--as a Threat. As a result, the Protectors become the Attackers in their Reversed Protection frame. This point will be discussed separately below.
- (4) At the same time, a negatively-evaluated “messenger framing” has also damaged the term “environmentalist” and seems to be extending (again, an hypothesis that can be tested) to “environmental”. This point will also be discussed separately below.

The Reversed Protection Frame, the Rights Frame, and the Freedom Frame: The Story Told by Opponents

The Radical Right and its supporters had to counter the post-1970s success of the environmental movement’s Protection frame. They have done this in a clever way. People and groups who oppose environmental advocacy groups now use a set of three linked frames, all of which are generally evoked either explicitly or implicitly to counter the environmental movement: a

reversed version of the Protection frame in which the government and environmentalists are the Attackers; a Rights frame; and a Freedom frame.

The mappings for the anti-environmentalists' Reversed Protection frame are the following:

Danger/Threat =	loss of (property) rights; loss of freedom; loss of “heritage”; loss of one’s children’s/grandchildren’s inheritance (literally: land possession) ⁸ ; etc.
Victim =	people; the future/future generations; America (including American values and America’s past/heritage); sometimes (perhaps mentioned less often than previously) the economy; etc.
Attacker =	environmental groups; concerned but misinformed citizens; the government (i.e., exactly who the environmentalists’ Protection frame views as the Protectors)
Means of Doing Harm =	unchecked behavior (for reasons for the behavior, see the discussion below of the “messenger frame”), especially “over-regulation” (or any regulation) and filing of “frivolous lawsuits”; “eco-terrorism”; etc. (i.e., exactly what the environmentalists’ Protection frame views as the Means of Protection)
Protector =	the anti-environmentalist groups; concerned citizens agreeing with these groups

⁸“What will my kids have left, if I do this?” (i.e., conservation easement) (klamathbasincrisis.org); “Our land nourishes us through the years and it is the last great gift that we can give to our children.” (propertyrightsresearch.org).

Means of Protection rollbacks of regulation; reform of the legal system; fines
and other legal punishments⁹

Because the “Danger/Threat” in this anti-environmentalist version of the Protection Frame includes the loss of (property) rights, the loss of freedom, and the loss of “heritage,” it intersects with and evokes three more frames. In the Rights frame, one’s Rights are an object to be owned and the Holder of the Rights is the owner of the object—and therefore anyone who tries to Take Away one’s Rights is a bully or a thief. When mapped to property rights, it comes out as: Rights = property rights; Holders of the Rights = property owners; Takers-Away of the Rights = thieves = the government and environmentalists. Thus, the government and environmentalists are both attackers and thieves: “[The environmentalists’] Solution: don’t buy the land, just steal the rights to it” (propertyrightsresearch.org); “ ‘If Enron does something like this, people call it theft,’ . . . ‘If Oregon does it, they call it land-use planning’ ” (*New York Times*, November 26, 2004, A1). This equation is not always as explicitly expressed, but it underlies many of the radical conservatives’ attacks on environmentalism, and, stated or not, follows from their Protection frame and has slanted the assumptions of public discourse.

In this version, all rights are seen as one indivisible package.¹⁰ However, as one environmentalist said, denying that assumption: “ ‘A landowner has a whole bundle of rights, and the right to prevent subdivision or to develop is one right that they have [also]’ ” (emphasis added) (*Argus Leader*, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, February 9, 2004, 1A) Similarly, a law professor pointed out in connection with the recent 2004 Oregon Ballot Measure 37 that zoning

⁹E.g., filing criminal charges using an 1872 “sailor-mongering” law: “Prosecutors said the only issue was the violation of the law” (Jim Teeple, “Miami Judge Dismisses Charges Against Greenpeace Activists,” *Voice of America*, May 20, 2004).

¹⁰As they must be, in a whole package that must not be impaired if the “invisible hand” of Market Fundamentalism is to operate (Fred Block).

and environmental regulations help protect property values: “ ‘If you can build a little Houston anywhere, or a gravel pit or a shopping center next to your home, you don’t have maximization of property values’ ” (*New York Times*, November 26, 2004, A1).

However, in this story the loss of property rights is seen as interchangeable with the loss of freedom(s), and therefore the powerful Freedom frame is also present in these attacks on environmental regulations, tending to prevent a nuanced examination of different rights: “If we allow the loss of our property rights, then the loss of all other freedoms will follow”; “Private property is the basis of all free governments” (www.propertyrightsresearch.org/2004/articles9/buy_a_little.htm).¹¹ The Freedom frame has a structure similar to that of the Rights frame and similar mappings with respect to who is the hero and who is the villain; therefore, people imposing regulations that constrain one’s freedom to use what one owns are also thieves: “Those imposing these restrictions have robbed you, as surely as if they had used a gun and taken money from your pocket” (propertyrightsresearch.org).

Furthermore, these frames are supported by appeals to frames of American history: “At the same time, the easements are eroding that bastion of the American tradition of freedom, private property ownership” (prfamerica.org).¹²

Messenger Framing

An often overlooked element in framing is the frame associated with the carrier of a message. How this person or organization is characterized and understood will either reinforce or undermine the framing of the messages they deliver.

¹¹This is an extremely overt statement of a position that is found in varying degrees of explicitness in right-wing publications, and that underlies their opposition to environmentalism in the public discourse.

¹²

The final weapon in the anti-environmental opponents' arsenal is the framing of the environmental "messenger": namely, government and environmental advocacy groups/environmentalists. It is not necessary to describe here the Radical Right's attack on the first messenger, the government; they have not hidden their desire for a government so small that they can, as Grover Norquist has put it, drown it in a bathtub. Nor have they held back on their actions to undercut regulation.

The other messengers associated with environmental advocacy are the groups and individuals who present pro-environmental messages. It is instructive here to look at the words associated in the media with the words "environmentalist" and "environmental (advocacy) group" to see how this group of messengers is being framed in the public mind by being included in news stories that are generally framed as "neutral":

In terms of the most common kinds of pairs¹³: it is environmentalists vs. business (e.g., *Buffalo News*, June 17, 2004, B9; *Times Union* [Albany, New York], June 17, 2004, B3; *New York Times*, June 19, 2004, B1; etc.); it is "Democrats and environmentalists" (*New York Times*, August 13, 2004, E1, p. 2); it is an assumption that environmentalists need to endorse a Republican in order to " 'avoid being pigeonholed with the crazy left' " (*New York Times*, July 4, 2004, 14NJ, p. 2); and it is elitist "environmentalists" vs. populist "conservationists" (e.g., a Recreational Fishing Alliance ad or a web article from the ideological, conservative Manhattan Institute; see below). It is people with a masochistic streak: " 'This is a car you have to be an environmentalist to tolerate,' Mr. DeSalvo said, pointing to the pale aqua first-generation Prius" (*New York Times*, June 13, 2004, sect. 9, p.1).

¹³Sometimes the pairings are linked (e.g., farmers and environmentalists together for open space or environmentalists with housing advocates), but usually the pairs are oppositional. Similarly, sometimes there are neutral verbs associated with the actions of environmental advocates, but not as often as the negative ones.

The following is a list of words that are usually associated with “environmentalists” or “environmental groups” in mainstream news reports:

criticize, protest, boycott, outraged, skeptical, dislike, blame, dislike, offensive, battling, not satisfied, (accused by opponents of) exaggerating, warn, reluctant, block, oppose, worry, complain, “the usual environmental attack” (*New York Times*, November 14, 2004, sect. 5, p. 3); visuals are often of protestors, such as variants of an “activist chained to rail tracks” (Greenpeace photograph).

When terms like these are found in repeated association with some form of the word “environmental,” it is hard for the public not to have a view of environmentalists as strident nay-sayers, even ones who do so for a good, protective reason (“environmentalists battling to cleanse exhaust-polluted air” (*New York Times*, July 2, 2004, A4). And sometimes the reason is not so good; it is highly misguided: “Ranchers wanted the dam so they could have water for their cattle. Environmentalists opposed it because of the threat to a certain variety of fish found in the stream” (*Herald News* (Passaic County, New Jersey)).¹⁴

By these kinds of word associations, environmental activism and advocacy are seen as a negative kind of disruptive activity, not as a positive kind of protective disruption of things that should be stopped. Compare the Mission Statement of U.S. PIRG, which frames activism as protection and does not use any of the negative words on the above list: “U.S. PIRG is an advocate for the public interest. When consumers are cheated, or our natural environment is threatened, or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, U.S.

¹⁴Rarely, a distinction is made by the Right between “environmentalists” and “radical environmentalists”: “I define radical environmentalism as a mechanism for permitting the collectivist mentality to feed its impulse to control society. In other words, there are very valid environmental concerns we all care about; I’ve never run into anybody who isn’t an environmentalist. No one wants dirty air and water or wants to pass on that condition to his or her grandchildren,” Donald P. Hodel, in an interview with the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, www.acton.org/publicat/randl/print_interview.php?id=224).

PIRG speaks up and takes action. U.S. PIRG’s mission is to deliver persistent, result-oriented public interest activism that protects our environment, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.”

The assertion that “environmentalists” put animals before people is entirely in the open in many right-wing publications: “whereas the environmentalist mission is exclusionary [i.e., a “priesthood”], the conservation mission is populist and inclusionary, welcoming humankind as an integral and legitimate part of nature’s landscape. Conservationism does not see man as a tapeworm in the bowel of nature. Symbiosis is possible. And when a choice has to be made, as it sometimes must, people come first” (www.manhattan-institute.org/html/_commentary-saving_the_environ.htm).¹⁵ It is “kids’ beach vs. seal haven” (*Christian Science Monitor*, October 18, 2004, p. 3); or, in an extreme Radical-Right web article: “These groups seek not to save the land or the animals, but to diminish the value of human beings and destroy our ability for self-government” (propertyrightsresearch.org). The boycott on Chilean sea bass “does nothing to conserve the species, but simply punishes those fishermen, importers and distributors who are working hard to act within the law” (letter from the president of the National Fisheries Institute, *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 2, 2002). Never mind that essentially all of the groups whose materials were reviewed for this report do include the needs of people, and usually quite explicitly¹⁶—that is not the message that the public is hearing in the media.

¹⁵ When pro-environmental actions have an “impact on our livelihood . . . [w]e need to find a balanced approach to satisfy the needs of both human water users and endangered species. While we all believe that endangered species recovery is important, we cannot do so at the expense of the Constitution [i.e., private property rights] or the good people of New Mexico” (Republican U.S. Representative; www.news-bulletin.com/news/34672-08-30-03.html).

¹⁶For example (and this list is by no means complete), “The Tongass is not a nature preserve; it is a working forest where people and wilderness coexist” (National Environmental Trust); “forging an appropriate balance between environmental protection, human development, social equity and economic growth” (Center for International Environmental Law); “The Nature Conservancy embraces the notion that people are part of the landscape, and is working to develop ways for more people around the world to live sustainably with, and in, the natural landscape” while “seek[ing] to integrate biodiversity conservation with compatible, sustainable agriculture”; “human populations engaged in a variety and varying intensities of land uses—activities that are complementary and in

When they are not being nefarious, elitist, “vindictive,” “punitive,” or over-eager advocates of a controlling, “collectivist,” and “intrusive” “Left”-ist bureaucracy (www.manhattan-institute.org/html/_commentary-saving_the_environ.htm), environmentalists are disproportionate (“willing to spend several billions of dollars to save one statistical life,” www.cato.org/dailys/11-15-02.html; ignoring the “many benefits that have resulted from taming the once wild Missouri,” such as flood control, etc. [guest column in the *Omaha World Herald*, May 3, 2001]), alarmist (“ ‘I think the environmentalists kind of jumped the gun’ ” on Chilean sea bass (*Miami Herald*, June 20, 2002 1E), inconsistent (“Why do we think one way about environmental risks but another about public risks in other contexts?” www.cato.org/dailys/11-15-02.html), manipulative (“the decision framework employed by environmentalists would look absurd in any other policy context if it were stripped of its emotional baggage,” www.cato.org/dailys/11-15-02.html), and illogical (“To focus only on the benefits of action rather than on both the costs and benefits of action, as well as inaction, is logically indefensible”) (www.cato.org/dailys/11-15-02.html). They are outdated (“ ‘It’s the environmentalists’ repackaging the same old arguments’ ” (power industry spokesperson; *New York Times*, June 10, 2004, A16), politically motivated (“ ‘There’s a lot more political science in this report than environmental science’ ”; same opponent, *Washington Post* [and other clips, e.g., *Orlando Sentinel*], June 10, 2004, A3), and practitioners of bad science (the report is “ ‘full of crude methodological assumptions’ ”; same opponent, same sources).

harmony with natural processes and undertaken compatibly with parks and protected areas” (Nature Conservancy); “building a future in which human needs are met in harmony with nature” (World Wildlife Fund).

The old hippie label (“tree-hugger”) only rarely appears directly,¹⁷ although environmentalists are often implicitly accused of being naïve or impractical as well as extreme; one example was an advertisement by the Recreational Fishing Alliance: “The do-gooders are gathering to do YOU harm! Join RFA to safeguard your Freedom to Fish! Extreme environmental organizations are pushing to create vast networks of ‘No Fishing’ areas off your coast. . . . Recreational Fishermen were among the first conservationists. . . .”, accompanied by a drawing of a goofy housewife, a nerdy teen, a Castro look-alike holding a potted tree, a guitar-playing folkie, and a woman kissing her poodle, among others. Note the Reversed Protection and Freedom frames, as well as the opposition of “environmentalist” to “conservationist”.

“Environmentalist” is, in short, a label that people often want to deny: “Dianne Hemme, another buyer in Terramor [a “ ‘green oriented’ planned community”], said that while she wouldn’t label herself an environmentalist, . . . [f]or her the community seems like a responsible way to deal with development“ (*New York Times*, August 1, 2004, sect. 11, p. 13).

The Other Stories That Environmentalists Tell

Other than the now-turned Protection frame, what stories are environmentalists telling?

Generally, the Rights and Freedom frames are not found. There are some suggestions, such as “”defend[ing] the right of all people to a healthy environment” (Earthjustice), or “promot[ing] human rights” (Center for International Environmental Law).

However, the most common is the Resources frame, signaled explicitly by such words and phrases as the following:

¹⁷ “Tree-hugger” in the *New York Times*, a bit tongue-in-cheek: “Once, they [hybrid cars] were curiosities popular mainly with tree-huggers, but today they are the must-have, can’t-get automotive fashion statement all over the country, June 13, 2004, sect. 9, p. 1); a Republican hunter “says he can’t stand the ‘Birkenstock-wearing, eco-weenies’ at most environmental conferences and [who] tend to vote Democratic” (Associated Press: date not included in materials).

natural resources, use, utilize, tourism (and other livelihood words, e.g., farming, ranching), managing, sustainable, recreation (and specialized words, e.g., fishing, hunting, swimming, hiking, etc.).

The word “conservation” can trigger this frame as well as the Protection frame; in fact, it is probably more likely to trigger the Resources frame (another testable hypothesis), given the existence outside of an environmental context of the common phrase ‘conserving resources’ and the Radical Right’s preference for both the word “conservation” and the Resource-Use frame.

A “resource” is something to be drawn upon for enrichment of some kind—resources have a “use” rather than existing for their own sake. In the Resource(s) frame there are the following elements:

the **Resource**

the **User** of the Resource

the **Purpose** of the use of the Resource

When this Resource frame is applied to “nature” or “the environment,” the following mappings occur:

Resource = nature/the environment; wildlife; plants

User = people (especially families); animals

Purpose = an experience (see below); livelihood/subsistence¹⁸

¹⁸E.g., “pristine areas are understood as necessary to maintain clean, reliable water, to control flooding; to serve as sources for medicinal compounds; to shelter fish stocks; to act as ‘rebound’ areas for rejuvenation of nearby lands after catastrophic events; and, indeed, to be a source of necessary spiritual rejuvenation” (Nature Conservancy);

That is, nature/the environment¹⁹ may be a source of food or some other tangible necessity of life, or the source of an experience: of renewal (including in opposition to the stresses of civilization,²⁰ aesthetic experience (“beauty”),²¹ inspiration, health, spiritual or religious wonder or awe, family memories, recreation and enjoyment,²² or adventure²³. (There are also negatively-evaluated experiences, where nature/the environment is the source of danger, fear, or threats such as disasters, but clearly these are not relevant here.) Usually more than one of these experiences are presented together.²⁴

There are certain logical results of the Resources frame. First, it precludes any discussion of an inherent “right to exist” of anything in nature; everything has to be referred to some user. Trees do not have standing merely because they exist; they have standing because they supply something to some other being, either for the existence of a plant or another animal (i.e., ecosystems, habitats), or for the existence or advantage of human beings. In order to be drawn

¹⁹ There are numerous other frames for “nature,” many of which are not as automatically evoked when the phrase is “the environment,” such as nature as a nurturer (“Mother Nature”), nature as an opponent (“nature red in tooth and claw,” or “conquering nature”), nature as an unspoiled paradise (the Garden of Eden), and nature as part of the Moral Order (the “Great Chain of Being” in which people and the natural world are hierarchically ranked, with people above animals, etc.). The term “the environment,” being of more recent coinage, has more scientific associations. Either may be called “sacred,” i.e., dedicated to a divine being, which is literal for religious believers and metaphorical for those who derive a sense of awe from the natural world (usually the wilderness) but do not worship a deity or deities.

²⁰ E.g., “enjoy their [the rivers’] peace and beauty as a source of respite from our busy lives” (American Rivers).

²¹ E.g., “have enough power to save this amazingly beautiful place of nature” (Greenpeace); using “America the Beautiful” as a motif (Scenic America); the aesthetics of open land: “open land does . . . indeed have a value in and of itself” (Scenic America).

²² E.g., “Trust for Public Land conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come”; “for the enjoyment of future generations” (The Ocean Conservancy); “quality recreational facilities such as rail-trails” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy).

²³ E.g., photographs of hikers, kayakers, etc.

²⁴ E.g., (and not an exhaustive list of examples), “The Colorado River through the Grand Canyon has matchless scenery and a grand geological display . . . unique historical and cultural resources, opportunity for natural quiet, unique white water recreation, and a chance for high quality reflective recreation and solitude” (Sierra Club); “a wide variety of human benefits: a park or playground . . . , clean water in a drinking fountain because a watershed was protected, an outdoor classroom in which to learn nature’s lessons, a favorite landscape preserved for our children’s children to enjoy, a farm that grows food rather than houses, a historic site that reveals where we came from so we can better chart where we are going, a wilderness in which to walk away civilization’s cares” (Trust for Public Land); “breathtaking beauty, backcountry recreation, clean air [= health], and irreplaceable wildlife habitat” (Defenders of Wildlife); “wildlife habitat, safe drinking water, recreational opportunities, and spiritual renewal while supporting sustainable local communities around the country” (American Rivers).

upon most effectively, resources need to be managed well; this opens the door to discussions that center on what constitutes good management rather than on moral questions of values other than, say, Responsibility or Prudence. In essence, the Resources frame downplays moral arguments, other than arguments related to the morality of what is allowable use and what is not; once it is introduced, it leads directly and inevitably to “wise use” arguments and to discussions of balancing competing claims on resources. Such competing claims can certainly be legitimate, and such discussions can certainly be quite in line with responsible environmental protection,²⁵ but in other hands they can lead to contentious conflicts²⁶ and block consideration of arguments based on other foundations. Taken to its extreme, the Resources frame mandates the extraction of resources, since they are only there to be used. At the very least, it legitimizes that conclusion.

In this way, the Resources frame also mandates the idea that nature and the environment are separate from human beings, who are the Users of the natural Resources. In this frame, how “we” engage with this externality is a matter of decision and choice; our participation in it is not interdependent. If asked, people would surely accept the idea that human beings affect and are affected by some aspects of nature/the environment that they cannot control, but the point is that when the Resources frame has been invoked, the internal logic of the frame puts the User in control of the Resource and makes the Resource thus inherently subordinate to the User’s demands.

Many of the groups reviewed use the word “resources” in their names and/or their literature. This observation is not a recommendation to change names! But it is important to

²⁵See, for example, the declaration that the “goal” is “to protect and use sustainably America’s rich resources to ensure a high quality of life for all people, now and in the future” (Izaak Walton League).

²⁶“Conflicts among individuals and groups vying for the same resources will increase unless an understanding of the common need for abundant and healthy natural resources is forged” and a strong foundation of responsible “outdoor ethics” is laid (Izaak Walton League).

point out that by using this word, environmentalists are harboring a conceptual contradiction that cognitively undermines many of their positions. *The point about framing is to use frames with a clear awareness of what kinds of thinking and reasoning they bring with them and what kinds they preclude.*

Some groups explicitly hold positions that challenge this aspect of the Resources frame by making claims of inherent interdependency, even while using the word “resources.” For these groups, human beings may make use of aspects of the natural world, but while always recognizing that we are not truly separate from it. For religiously based groups, human beings have a special position in but otherwise are no different from the rest of God’s creation: “The human family stands in unity before God with other creatures and the natural world . . . Humans are creatures, and as such are intimately connected with the whole creation” (National Religious Partnership for the Environment). Other groups emphasize that community and tribal cultures see life as an integrated whole, of which the natural world is one part and the human world is another part, both being important and interconnected: “We associate good citizenship with our human community and nation, but seldom link it to the natural world [but] . . . we are all ‘citizens’ of the natural world, and as such should have ‘respect’ for the natural community as a whole” (Defenders of Wildlife); “respects [both the environment and] local communities” (Center for International Environmental Law); “an understanding of the environment based on traditional tribal cultural and spiritual values” (National Tribal Environmental Council).

Other “minor” frames are frames of “caring,” “cherishing,” and “concern” (“every American who cherishes wildlife” and has a deep caring and concern for America’s treasure-

trove of wildlife and natural resources” [American Rivers]; “caring—the catalyst for conservation action” [Audubon Society]), and the “treasure” and “(American) heritage” frames.²⁷

Related to the Heritage frame is the frame of Restoration, which is also used frequently. This is a frame that is related to the value of protection, and also has links to the Legacy frame as well as to the value of Responsibility. For these reasons it may bear more attention in succeeding phases of this research, and for lack of space detailed consideration will be deferred.

Linked Issue Areas

There is only time here to mention some of the issue areas that have been linked with traditionally “environmental” issues in the materials reviewed. Health is the most common, both human health and the health of the environment (or parts of it). Other associated areas are human rights, national security, and values such as “fairness” and “justice.” This area will be revisited and expanded in succeeding phases of this project, since it will be important in reframing.

Conclusion

The environmental movement was very successful with its use of the value and frame of Protection. Recently, however, the anti-environmentalists have discovered a way to turn that frame on its head, so that it works against environmentalists. At the same time, the mainstream media as well as Radical-Right ideological media has emphasized the confrontational aspects of

²⁷“These places are national treasures” (National Parks Conservation Association); “a network of some of the most spectacular of our natural treasures,” including “national conservation areas, national monuments, wild and scenic rivers, national scenic and historic trails, wilderness areas and wilderness study areas” (Friends of the Earth); “protecting our great natural heritage” (Audubon Society); “a national treasure belonging to all of us,” with us as “stewards of this public trust” (The Ocean Conservancy). “Finding new ways to protect our oceans will further define America’s greatness” (Environmental Defense).

environmentalism's protective actions. Environmentalists are positively framed in the media only if one first accepts their actions as positive, and given the Radical Right's attack on both regulation and the courts, this is becoming increasingly problematic.

For both of these reasons, the Protection frame has become less effective. The Resources frame, also common, has some built-in difficulties, since it guides people to think of a purpose for the Resources, especially human purposes. Some of the minor frames found in the groups' materials, such as Restoration and Interdependence, deserve more consideration; they will be more thoroughly analyzed in the second and third phases of this project.

This analysis is not intended to understate the gravity of the current situation, nor to suggest that groups engaged in the adversarial struggle to protect the environment should stop doing so. Far from it. However, the dominant Protection frame needs to be supported and supplemented with new framing strategies, as the Radical Right continues to work to undermine its efficacy in public discourse.