Living Through the End of Nature The Future of American Environmentalism

Paul Wapner

The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England © 2010 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher.

For information about special quantity discounts, please send email to <special_sales@mitpress.mit.edu>.

This book was set in Sabon by the MIT Press. Printed on recycled paper and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wapner, Paul Kevin.
Living through the end of nature : the future of American environmentalism / Paul Wapner.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-262-01415-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Environmentalism—United States. 2. Conservation of natural resources—United States. I. Title.
GE197.W37 2010
333.720973—dc22

2009036083

Acknowledgments

One of the main points of *Living Through the End of Nature* is that life is interdependent. The earth is a swirling mixture of plant, animal, and mineral with no entity able to exist without others. In writing this book, I have been fortunate to experience this in a concrete way. Not only has the sun shone down on me every day and the earth provided abundant sustenance; I have also lived and worked among concerned colleagues, inspiring students, dear friends, and a loving family. Acknowledging these connections is one of the deepest joys in completing the manuscript.

First, I would like to thank my colleagues in the School of International Service at American University. Dean Louis Goodman has long provided support and enthusiasm for my work, and through many conversations, helped clarify the arguments of the book. Simon Nicholson and Judy Shapiro each assisted me at critical junctures, and supplied sustained intellectual engagement. Leah Baker, Eve Bratman, Ritodhi Chakraborty, Benjamin Goldstein, Brendan Havenar-Daughton, Rongkun Liu, Antone Neugass, Marysia Szymkowiak, Rachna Toshniwal, Bonnie Washick, and Deidre Zoll offered valuable research assistance, for which I am particularly grateful. I am especially appreciative of my students. American University tends to attract people committed to making the world a better place. Whatever insights this book may have, many of them emerged through conversation and engagement with American University students.

Outside of American University, I have flourished in the company of scholars and others who have been caring about the earth in the most meaningful ways. Much of the book's argument crystallized while backpacking with Leslie Thiele and his many suggestions have improved the manuscript. Les has always provided intellectual companionship, wise counsel and lots of laughs. The book has also benefited from long country walks and conversations with Terry Post, conference discussions with Michael Maniates and Thomas Princen, and late night chats with Dirksen Bauman about the nature of nature. I presented aspects of the argument in seminars at Bowdoin College, University of Maryland, Rutgers University, the Lama Foundation, and the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. I learned a lot from and am thankful for these opportunities. I am particularly grateful to Peter Dauvergne. Peter holds the record for reading the manuscript multiple times, encouraging me in moments of doubt, and generously offering incisive suggestions for improving the book's overall quality. Clay Morgan, at the MIT Press, read through the entire text with a keen editor's eye and expressed enthusiasm for the project in ways that have meant a lot to me.

From a different corner of my life, dear friends provided meaningful support as we lived together through the years in which this book was written. I would especially like to thank Dirksen Bauman, Joanna Bottaro, Sheila and Peter Blake, Kristin Dahl, Hilal Elver, Richard Falk, Sue Katz-Miller, Paul Miller, Robert Nelson, Mitchell Ratner, and Nicole Salimbene for the many conversations about nature as well as their friendship.

As always, my parents, Elinor and Morton, and siblings, Howard and Susan, have given me unwavering support and endless love. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

This book is dedicated to my family. Eliza, Zeke, and Diane are the stars that shine daily for me and make life more than worth living. I suppose it is inappropriate to thank them for being who they are, but I sure appreciate them constituting my life.