

(Editor's Note: 1191 words)

## **They're After Our Kids!**

**By Del Albright**

During a recent boat trip tour in Alaska, sight-seeing the famous Kenai Fjords (glaciers and such), I was once again stabbed in the back by the vicious green circle. I've written about the "circle" before, but this time I was taken by surprise. I saw first hand what appears to be the "taking" of our kids and turning them into protectionist exclusionists at very young ages.

If you have kids in school, then you probably have seen this first hand yourself, or at least heard about it. Programs are rampant in our schools that teach kids to hug a tree, save a critter from hunting, or protect the plants and animals. But you seldom hear about programs that teach responsible use or multiple-use. They are after our kids!

The basic goal of most protectionist (radical) preservationist anti-access groups is to have more Wilderness and less human impact on resources. That's what it boils down to. To do that they have banded together - no matter what their particular interest - and developed a series of strategies to eventually accomplish their primary goal of excluding people from public lands. It starts with our kids.

Just to list a few, those strategies include things like:

- The invention/promotion of Wilderness Study Areas (that are treated like Wilderness and usually end up in Wilderness designation).
- New terms (land use designations) to restrict public land use, such as Near Natural Area, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Semi-primitive areas, etc.
- Formulation of The Wildlands Project (400 more Wilderness areas proposed in California alone).
- Support of such activities as Planned Parenthood (again, to reduce the impact of humans by reducing the number of humans).
- Acquisition of huge grants from radical green supporters, many of who already have their "place" in the Wildlands (especially Hollywood types).
- Joining forces with a multitude of other green organizations to spread out their battle lines much like an Army does in a war. Many of these groups have Boards of Directors and other leaders who are members of multiple groups (the same names show up over and over).
- Lobbying for and endorsing congressional candidates that support "environmental issues."
- Spending fortunes in advertising, especially if it depicts motorized recreationists in a bad light yet portrays the sanctity of Wilderness, solitude and exclusion.
- Aggressively seeking ways to appeal to the voting public (mostly in big cities) where money flows a little easier and lack of a complete understanding of the rural areas exists.
- Supporting and helping to develop school programs (and teachers) who are blatantly anti-access and even radical protectionists.

The list goes on and on, but the point is, these strategies combine together to make a vicious green circle that keeps coming back on itself. And now I saw it on a tour boat in Alaska – and this time it was directed at our kids!

The tour boat I was on had a National Park Service Ranger as part of the tour. This Ranger was on government paycheck to be a tour guide on the boat (privately operated boat, by the way). Now I will admit, it was nice having someone on the boat who knew about the wildlife and such, and I could not help but be impressed with such a tough assignment for a bureaucrat.

There were dozens of families on the boat, and the Park Ranger brought along the Junior Ranger program to help the kids learn more about the Fjords. You can read all about this program here: <http://www.nps.gov/learn/juniorranger.htm>. The program is based on teaching kids about the environment and enlisting their help in protecting the Park. Even a quiz is included, as well as a Junior Ranger badge.

While the idea of educating our kids about resources, parks, and the need to take care of what we have is a good one, this Junior Ranger thing scared me silly. What knocked me out of my boat shoes was the graduation ceremony at the end of the tour as we motored back into the harbor. The Ranger gathered all the kids and their parents, and held a swearing in ceremony before handing out the badges and certificates. The ceremony started with, “raise your right hand” and repeat after me.... “Do you swear to protect and defend the earth and all the plants and animals?”

I tuned out after that....the words protect and defend stuck with me. I started trying to sort out what we were protecting and defending against? And where was responsible use or consumptive use or multiple-use?

So then I did some more research and found where kids could become Web Rangers and never leave their computer. If your kid wants to be a Web Ranger, you have to begin with a pledge: The Web Ranger Pledge: As a National Park Service Web Ranger, I promise to learn about and help to protect our national parks and care for my surroundings.

So ok, I admit that learning about parks and our resources is a wonderful thing, but here again we’re asking kids to protect. What are we protecting against? And where is responsible use?

It seems obvious to me that this is just another component in the vicious green circle. They are after our kids. They are teaching protectionist strategies, rather than responsible use, or multiple-use or sustained use, or another other kind of use. It’s all about non-use. It’s about exclusion of people from our resource base – from our Parks, Wildlands, and forests. That is why I tell folks that you cannot compromise with exclusionary elitists. If you compromise, you’ll most likely keep losing. You are not welcome to use your public lands – only protect them. They are now teaching our kids this message in hundreds of National Parks.

Our defense is to make sure you know what your kids are learning not only in schools, but in programs such as this. Once you see things out of whack, it’s up to us to add to our kids learning by showing them the real world, and bringing some balance into what they are learning. Get them involved in your state organization if it has kids programs such as the Off-Highway Voyagers program of the California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs. Read about it here: <http://www.cal4wheel.com>.

Our solution to breaking the vicious green circle is two fold: 1) be involved in the management of your public lands at whatever level you can (and yes, this means joining and supporting organized recreation groups/clubs); and 2) be informed and inform others. Find out for yourself what the truth is and what you believe. Educate your kids at home. Teach them our side of the story. Let your elected officials know your opinion (and demands). Never lose sight of the fact that public lands are YOURS.

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