

Constant challenge to property rights in the United States

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by [Randy Bright](#)

Sometimes we forget about things that have happened in the past and assume that they will never happen again. One of those events took place in 1993 when environmentalists nearly succeeded in convincing Congress to pass a law that would have embraced the far-reaching regulations of the Wildlands Project.

This initiative centered on the concept that mankind and wildlife were incompatible and therefore must be totally separated. It was designed to gradually drive rural populations into urban centers using ever-increasing regulations that would eventually make small towns and rural residents unviable. The goal was to perform a kind of rural cleansing, to the point that small towns would be depopulated and bulldozed, essentially returning that land back over to nature.

The Wildlands Project map revealed that eventually there would be three types of land areas. The first would be urban areas, the second would be wildlife areas, and the third would be corridors that would allow transportation between urban areas. The wildlife areas were slated to become off-limits to any kind of human activity other than highly regulated agricultural areas.

Preposterous? Truthfully, it was such an outrageous idea that it wasn't believable, but the reality was that there were those pushing for it that had no regard for property rights, especially those whose homes and land would be taken from them. They were dead serious, and the bill that would have instituted it was pulled literally hours before its passage.

In 2009, I wrote an article that dealt with property rights, and specifically addressed the outside forces that threatened the American concept of those rights. I wrote:

“The U.N. began to formulate their land development policies as early as 1976. At the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, more commonly known as Habitat I, the concept that personal property was something that must be eliminated was introduced in its preamble, which read as follows:

“Land...cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principle instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore contributes to social injustice; if unchecked, it may become a major obstacle in the planning and implementation of development schemes. The provision of decent dwellings and healthy conditions for people can only be achieved if land is used in the interests of society as a whole.

“Public control of land use is therefore indispensable...”

The statement implies that private land ownership is evil because it allows citizens to build wealth for their family and their heirs, leading to “social injustice”. What does that mean? That if one works hard, takes risks, builds wealth and creates jobs, it must mean that he has stolen something from those who have not done the same?

And if land ownership is a major obstacle to planning and implementation of development schemes, then land ownership, or at least the control of land that is owned by individuals, is not far away.”

The adverse effect of land use regulations do not just apply to housing, but to virtually all aspects of society, including free trade.

An article from the Heritage Foundation expresses this well: “Free trade is imperative to a free society, as it fosters economic growth and improves human well-being.” Free trade, at least between individuals or private companies depends on their ability to maintain private ownership and control of the land they use. Without those property rights, free trade and innovation become highly regulated, as we see in other countries, such as China.

Government, without property rights or free trade, becomes the sole provider of goods and services needed to maintain life. Joe Biden, commenting on President Trump’s executive order that cut subsidy funding to insurance companies, lamented how millions of Americans had felt such “peace of mind” under Obamacare knowing that their health care would be provided, but said nothing about the millions of Americans (myself included) that had been priced out of the health insurance market.

Likewise, a country that depends on government instead of individual responsibility and freedom, will extrapolate that same misery in all walks of life if we relinquish our freedoms to the same “logical” thinking that gave birth to schemes like the Wildlands Project.

Those who would like to see our freedoms taken from us never give up. The Wildlands Project never died; it just took on another form. More on that next week.



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