

THE 'GREEN' CIRCLE that EATS ITS OWN

*What do oil companies & environmentalists have in common?
Sometimes their money comes from the same 'donor.'*

Jim Stiles

A few years ago, *High Country News* and *Writers on the Range* published an essay by Gary Wochner called, "Can Billionaire Philanthropy Save The Earth?" The tongue-in-cheek story noted that, "the future is in capital, connections to it, and then wielding that power eco-accordingly." Wochner says it, "point-blank: 'Billionaire philanthropy is the only thing that can save the earth.'"

I loved some of Wochner's proposals: "I picture myself camping on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon," he wrote, "at the pristine, free, and spacious Wal-Mart campground. A noiseless helicopter flies past, giving free rides through the Canyon, its side emblazoned with the Rockefeller Foundation logo. And then a clean-fuels shuttle bus passes through the parking lot, its side covered with the Patagonia insignia."

Much of what Gary proposed in 2005 is already coming true. Corporations have become park sponsors. Patagonia, the alleged greenest corporation in America and the company that every enviro group worth its non-profit status wants a donation from is teaming with Wal-Mart to do new, good things for the planet and Wal-Mart is loving the image enhancement, all the way to the bank. Wochner concluded his essay with a challenge: "C'mon you rich boys, are you man enough? Who's gonna save the planet first?" (1)

But can it really work this way? Can the wealthiest among us, who are surely the most consumptive and extravagant as well, lead the planet to sustainability, a reduction of our fossil fuel use and a simpler and less polluted world? Can the rich save the planet for us? Or are there contradictions in this kind of marketing strategy? Some would call this hypocrisy, but can hypocrisy work to the earth's advantage in the 21st Century? Recently I stumbled upon a series of seemingly unrelated facts that led me in a very slippery green circle. Look where I started and look where I ended up...



I begin with...who else..my favorite leveraged buyout king, environmentalist David Bonderman. Mr. Bonderman sits on the boards of directors of the Grand Canyon Trust, the Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund and is a "major financier" of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and other green groups. He is also one of the most successful venture capitalists in America. He is a founding partner of TPG Capital and its Asian affiliate, Newbridge Capital. TPG "is a leading global private investment firm with \$51.5 billion of capital under management."

Within its vast portfolio, TPG has invested heavily in the energy sector. Previous commitments by the firm in the energy sector include Alinta Energy, Amyris, Beta Renewables, Belden & Blake Corporation, China Renewable Energy, Copano Energy, Delta Dunia, Denbury Resources, Elevance Renewable Sciences, Energy Future Holdings (formerly TXU Corp.), Greenko, Maverick American Natural Gas, MI Energy, Northern Tier Energy, Texas Genco and Valerus Compression Services. (2)



In addition, in October 2010, TPG Capital announced that, "it has formed a new venture, Petro Harvester Oil & Gas, LLC, to invest in oil and gas producing properties in North America. TPG expects the company will acquire substantial exploration and production ("E&P") assets over the next several years."

A year later Petro Harvester announced that it had, "acquired a package of producing properties in the Williston Basin of North Dakota. The assets include production and acreage in over 20 fields with most of the current value in four concentrated areas where we have high working interests and operational controls. The acquisition includes interest in 145 wells that produce from depths of 3,000 feet to 6,000 feet...Additional upside potential includes deeper tests, enhanced fracturing techniques, and field extension through 3-D seismic." (3)



In March 2011, Petro Harvester gained membership in the Western Energy Alliance. The WEA was "founded in 1974 as the Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States, (and) is a non-profit trade association representing more than 400 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West." (4) WEA has its own facebook page and among its "likes" are the Coalbed Natural Gas Alliance, the Western Slope Colorado Oil & Gas Association, the Petroleum Association of Wyoming and the Congressional Western Caucus. (4)



In September 2011, Spencer Kimball, Western Energy Alliance's Manager of Government Affairs appeared before the Environmental protection Agency to discuss proposed New Source Performance Standards and National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollution rules for the oil and natural gas sector. Clearly WEA opposes new rules and restrictions on the energy extraction industry by the

government regulatory agencies.

Mr. Kimball complained that, "These new rules are one of many EPA actions that focus limited government resources on regulation, often with limited environmental value, at a time of high unemployment and slow economic growth." He added, "These rules will further divert investment from energy development into regulatory compliance, thereby resulting in less domestic energy production, particularly of clean-burning natural gas that offers real solutions on a full life-cycle basis to reducing air emissions and greenhouse gases." (5)

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And in October, WEA addressed the Society of Environmental Journalists. Here WEA expressed its opposition to new taxes on the industry. Kathleen Sgamma, Director of Government & Public Affairs, explained that, "Policies that increase taxes on the domestic natural gas and oil industry are especially counterproductive at a time of high unemployment and slow economic growth," said Sgamma. "Many of the proposed tax increases coming out of Washington would disproportionately impact the small, independent companies who provide 82% of America's natural gas and 68% of its oil production. These proposals would result in less domestic energy, higher energy costs, domestic job losses, and increased dependence on foreign energy sources." (6)



And in June 2011, this press release was issued by WEA:

“Western Energy Alliance Applauds Secretary Salazar’s Local Wilderness Initiatives”

WEA had long fought efforts by environmentalists to establish vast wilderness areas on public lands in the West, insisting that such designations would seriously impact their industry and reduce efforts to increase production of oil and gas.

The press release stated: “Many proposals for wilderness designation have failed in Congress because far-away politicians and special interest groups propose them without regard to local communities that would be directly impacted,” said Kathleen Sgamma, Director of Government & Public Affairs. “For example in Utah, the Red Rocks Wilderness Act has failed over two decades because politicians outside the West propose huge areas without consideration of conditions on the ground, such as whether the lands even meet wilderness criteria, or the impacts on jobs, economic activity, and local recreation. On the other hand, Utah also provides us with a positive example of local communities and stakeholders coming together to protect over 130,000 acres in Washington County after several years of building support within the communities directly impacted.” (7)

BUT...

The Red Rock Wilderness bill is the 25 year old creation of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, handsomely funded by Mr. Bonderman, and strongly supported by the Grand Canyon Trust and the Wilderness Society, who not only received significant donations from Bonderman but also provide him a seat on their board of directors.

WEA hailed the Washington County wilderness bill, but SUWA had a differ-



ent opinion. In a December 2009 email to SUWA members, Executive Director Scott Groene made it clear that the Washington County wilderness bill had nothing to do with “stakeholders coming together.” He wrote, “The Washington County wilderness legislation enacted earlier this year was not the result of consensus as some now claim, but rather a multi-year political fight in Washington, D.C. Two different versions of the bill were blocked over the course of four years. In the end, because of changes forced by the political fight, the legislation was transformed so that it became a step forward for wilderness that we could support. Importantly, because it was not a consensus bill, there was no agreement to remove lands from America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act that were not protected by the Washington County bill.”

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