

Terry Weiner (continued)

used as “feel good” actions that are generally not effective at sustaining populations. Moreover, the practice has the potential to do more harm than good to populations of rare species by increasing mortality rates and decreasing reproductive rates and genetic diversity.’[2

What a shame to destroy or imperil many species, 10% of which have not even been discovered yet. There is so much more I would like to say. I’d like to include a link to the article on Ocotillo and the Ocotillo Wind Project that I wrote for the September issue of the Sierra Club CA/Nevada Desert Committee ‘Desert Report’.

<http://www.desertreport.org>.

It looks to me like you and a handful of small grassroots groups are the ONLY opposition.

We grassroots activists have been alternately puzzled and infuriated by the willingness of the national environmental organizations to go along with the program as laid out by the powers-that-be instead of throwing their weight behind the principles of 1- conservation of energy; 2- retro-fitting our homes and businesses to be much more energy efficient and 3- rooftop solar and distributed generation and local solar development on abandoned industrial lands next to cities.

A bit more history: Three years ago when it was clear that the Obama Administration



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and the DOI were planning to move ahead with fast-tracking energy development on public lands, I participated in a focus group involving Defenders, TWS, the Sierra Club and NRDC, the purpose of which was to organize a response to this juggernaut. I was the only one on the conference calls who wanted to come out in straight opposition to the administration’s plan to direct the public lands managers to come up with a plan to accommodate large-scale solar and wind development.

The Defenders’ representative declared that since this juggernaut was happening and could not be stopped, the most effective action environmental groups could take was to become involved in the process in order to work with the BLM and solar developers to steer solar development to the least sensitive lands. And of course, there the slippery slope begins: who is qualified to play god and say which lands are worthy of being saved and which can be trashed?

Although I had trouble convincing my DPC Board that it was in the best interest of the DPC to NOT become “players” and get a “seat at the table” with the large national groups; eventually they relented and agreed that validating the process of scraping our

deserts for remote solar and wind projects was not in the best interest of the desert.

DPC had also around that time helped fund a report by local engineer Bill Powers that documented how San Diego, for example, by employing principles of conservation, efficiency, rooftop and local generation, could become energy self-sufficient by 2020!

In March of 2010, Janine Blaeloch, Founder and Director of Western Lands Project contacted me about this broad plan to privatize our public lands and said she wanted to help fight this. She said this looked like the biggest public land grab for private profit she had ever seen. I know some activists who were already researching rooftop solar and already aware of this new potentially worst threat ever to our deserts and I talked to them about forming a coalition to fight this public lands grab for corporate energy development and Janine and I and five others of us created Solar Done Right.

Most of the founders of the large environmental organizations, certainly John Muir, would be appalled at the way their organizations have lost the courage to fight for protection of our public lands heritage and have chosen to cooperate in the fragmentation and destruction of our desert ecosystems while trying to make themselves believe that this is the best outcome they can hope for. It would have been so powerful if all of the national organizations joined with communities and grassroots groups to oppose this process and lobby hard for federal and state policies to make rooftop solar affordable and required on all new construction. Some of the big enviro groups got money from climate change organizations and foundations which required them to sit at the table with the solar developers and the government. One of the benefits of being small with little overhead is that for example, DPC and Basin and Range Watch are beholden to no one.

Where do you see this going? Is there any hope that the national environmental groups will see the light and join you in opposing these kinds of industrial ‘green’ projects? And do you think the public will catch on to this? I think somebody called it the greatest land grab in history.

The challenge for those of us who love and know the desert, along with our desert botanists, desert ecologists and desert soil scientists, is to figure out how to launch an educational campaign about the critical importance of our desert ecosystems

We need to bring our policy makers and representatives of the D.C. environmental organizations out to our deserts and show them the beauty and diversity of plant and animal life and explain how scraping the deserts’ fragile and ancient crypto-biotic http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cryptobiotic_soil_crusts releases carbon from the soil, thereby undermining the goal to minimize greenhouse gases.

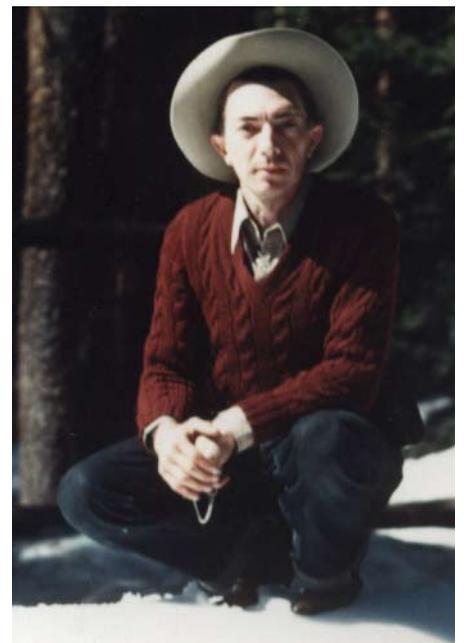
Big wind projects in particular require the building of back-up natural gas or other energy generation. We need an analysis of how much carbon and other greenhouse gases are spewed in the building of these remote projects.

Pertaining to your final sentence below, when Janine Blaeloch of Western Lands Project in Seattle called me in early 2010 to ask how her organization could help the Desert Protective Council and others to fight the oncoming juggernaut of large-scale energy projects on public lands, she reminded me of Western Lands Project’s mission to “keep public lands public” and told me that the current trend is the “biggest public lands giveaway for corporate profit” that she had ever seen.

My other thoughts on this are rather bleak Jim because until we Americans are willing to assume personal responsibility for radically reducing our energy consumption through conservation and requiring our homes and businesses to be energy efficient and until we make our cities more walkable and bike-able, and until we stop trying to foist our extravagant lifestyle on the rest of the world, I don’t see any hope of even putting on the brakes of the climate crisis. I and DPC in coalition with other organizations will do what we can to fight these projects, one by one but other than with litigation, I don’t see us slowing this down much. But given that humans are predisposed to not changing comfortable habits until forced, what I see is a continuation of our ‘too little too late’ policies toward protecting our natural and Native American cultural heritage.

DPC’s web site is: <http://dpcinc.org/>
They can also be found on facebook





HERB'S 'WOODY' OVER the YEARS...

Lately I've been posting a lot of herb's images on the Zephyr facebook page. Readers seem especially fond of Herb's 1950 Ford Woody. I've put together a collection of that wonderful car, at various locations around the West from 1950 to 1953.



South Rim, Grand Canyon. 1952

HERB RINGER came West from his home in New Jersey in 1939. Camera in hand, Herb captured the American West, from the Canadian Border to the Rio Grande and from the Big Sur coast to the High Plains.

We believe Herb's collection of Life in the West is one of the finest. His work has been published in The Zephyr for 20 years. I am pleased finally, to offer Herb's photographs in color. We are also building a new 'album' of his work, elsewhere on this site.

My dear friend died on December 11, 1998... JS

The perfect traveling kitchen...the Ford Woody somewhere on the western Plains...



DEATH VALLEY, Texas Springs Campground.

