

"OUR" OWNERLESS BACK YARD

The popular faith that "Nature" is separate from people, that the designation "wilderness" denotes that nothing humans could do would make anything better for plants and wildlife is an abomination far greater than its impact upon the land. It is an idea that leads directly to the common belief that humans are "a cancer upon the earth," "consumers" with no productive worth. This belief system renders otherwise intelligent people capable of ignoring the obvious evidence that the resulting policies are not working. Its adherents pretend no accountability for the massive consequences of inaction. It is a perspective that therefore possess no claim to scientific objectivity, wherein total alienation from the land, even succumbing to death, becomes an act of nobility, upon behalf of a deified earth "defiled" by people. On a cultural scale, it is suicidal.

I beg you, having seen the inklings of what can be done, please, refuse this wretched mental trap. The land is a place for work, best we admit that we will never know much about it unless we get to work. All we ever could do is do our best to take account of our history while we work for a future of vitality, balancing the risks of taking action with those we otherwise assume by inaction. This is not just about us as people, it is for that for which we know we are inherently accountable (the flip side of unalienable rights if you will). You and I didn't cause these problems, but we are accountable to respond, not to tie our own hands in a mutually destructive incapacity for ourselves and the land. It is our nature to be creative; it is in our nature to be responsible.

It is liberating to accept that responsibility, to labor and repair problems caused by others as the sweat dangles from the end of your nose, but be aware: Doing the independent research by which to set new standards of excellence for restoration is addictive, and it could make you an enemy of the State. I fully expect to be attacked and possibly harassed for this, having created at great expense an example: Not of perfection, but of process. Not wild and alien, but familiar and intimate. Not by being a passive actor, but a vigorous and active participant. Not with grants in a public park, but with our own money in our own back yard.

We have toiled here without reward, not just because we thought it would be pretty, but because, knowing what we did, that it was the right thing to do. Our family chose to share with you this story of our land, because we know and wish to share the possibilities within your grasp. My bet is that there is a back yard within your reach. This isn't about taking over and telling people what to do; it is learning, discovery, and sharing. It is about love and health that begins with our hands in direct contact with that which keeps us alive. There is simply an enormous amount of work to do because...

We've got trouble in "our" public back yard.



April 2008

An Oxalis pes-caprae monoculture like this produces thousands of bulblets deep in the soil. There is no known effective mechanical control method for an infestation like this. I eliminated two acres of this on a neighbor's property.



June 2002

Farther from home, this hillside on the coast is covered with poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). This plant is so toxic, the pollen is known to cause birth defects in animals. This photo is to show you the potential for this weed to colonize former grasslands. Wilder Ranch State Park is now seriously infested with it. To suggest the prognosis, the infestation progressed something like this...



These headlands probably once looked much like this... although when the Indians came in, they burned it bare every year.



June 2002



Then came the Spanish, who grazed intensively with cattle that spread the annual European grasses they were fed on the ship. Then came farmers, who used poison hemlock as fences to keep neighboring cattle out of their vegetable patches, just like they had in the land from which they came. It worked, as long as there were plows on one side and cattle on the other.

**This Seven-Mile Stretch of Coastline
Protected Forever for YOU by
The Coast Dairies Partners**



June 2002

The California State Parks and various land trusts took over local farms and the Coast Dairies property with the promise that they would keep it as a working ranch. The weeds took off on the ranch just as soon as they stopped grazing, which was hardly before the ink was dry. The lime colored landscaping for their pretty sign is poison hemlock.



June 2002



There is a lot of this poison, and it has been spreading, although the open spaces are somewhat better this year (2009) because... the Coastal Conservancy put cows on it! So, what was so bad about the dairy?



June 2002



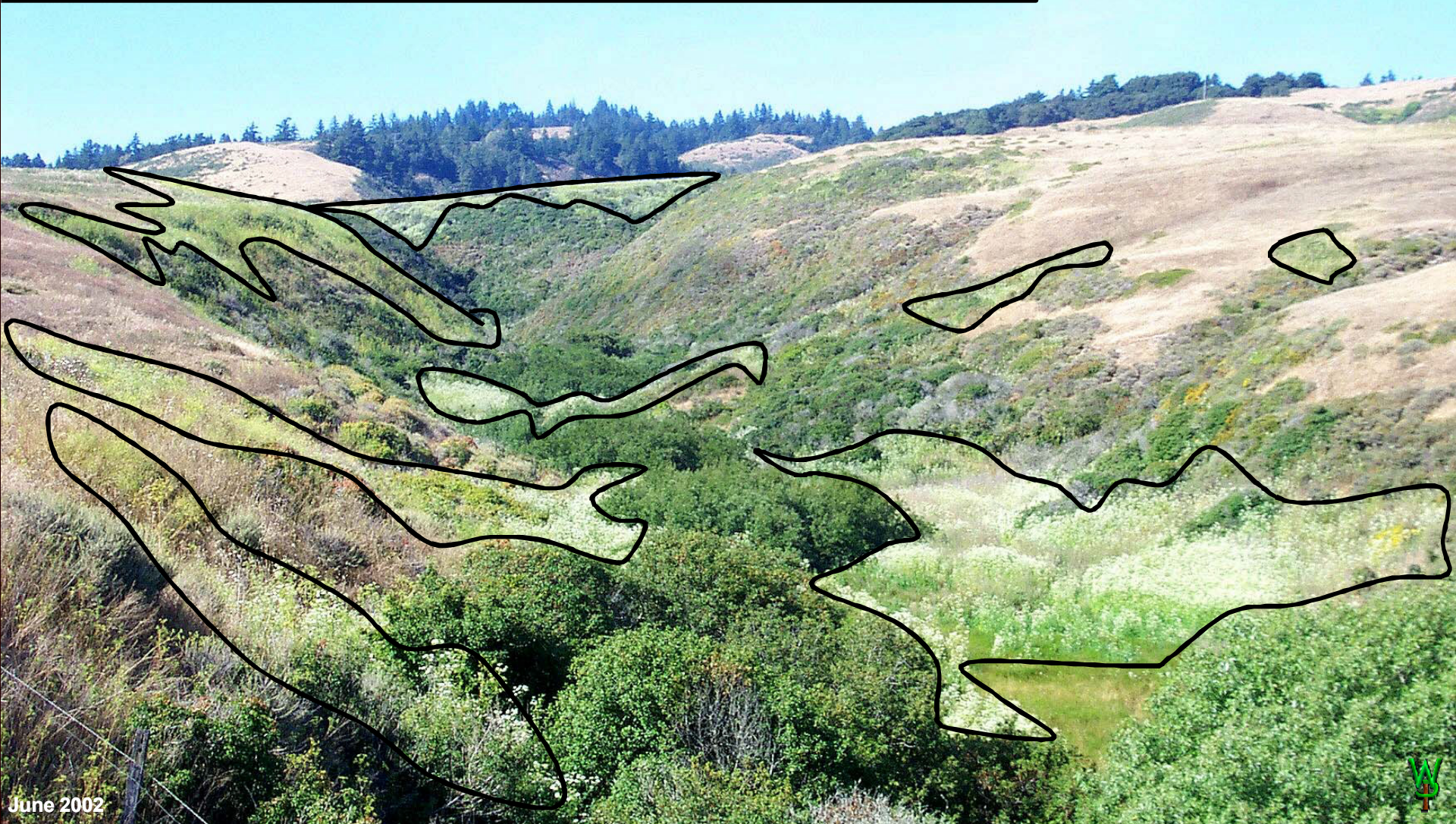
You can see where it was still grazed when I took this picture eleven years ago. I am told the hemlock is now reaching the farthest hilltop. Frankly, it's hard to make myself go back to look. I get terribly angry, having controlled it in our neighborhood. It wasn't hard to do early on, simply picking off the flower heads and putting them in a bag. Then the mowers came and I got to do it again.



Well, this abandoned field isn't all hemlock... it has thistles too! (the dark red in the foreground)
Who is going to weed all that poisonous trash when it goes over the cliff? It's all yours, protected for you!



Quail spread the seed. They live in brush, so wherever there is light in the brush, there will be hemlock, for example, growing in poison oak. Who will go get it then? Quail don't die from the poison, but the bobcats that eat them can.



June 2002

Maybe it is being protected *from* you, but by whom and to what end? I can't blame activists for wanting to save these headlands, but when they took control of this land using an ideology that holds human activity as inherently destructive, they were bound to manage it by the same rationale. The result is to abet the spread of a massive and self-replicating source of poison. Should they reverse course now, what was the justification for their having "saved" it in the first place? It was greed to acquire it from people who had loved it for generations with the belief that it would be better being kept "Natural." To what end? Follow the money.



June 2002

“Preserving Nature” without people, while socializing the business of caring for the natural world, replaces local food with factory food. It replaces local resources and jobs with foreign resources and jobs (often destroying foreign habitat). It degrades biodiversity. It ruins soil productivity. It places our lives and our freedom at peril. It blinds science with ideology. It breeds hatred, arrogance, ignorance, bureaucracy, and poverty. It leaves our children deep in debt. It alienates people from the land. It is time for this to stop.

This story was about my “back yard,” so it is subjective. Still, I have no doubt things here bear a certain similarity to yours because... this is a moral problem.

If we cannot afford to tolerate these results on “public lands,” why are we collectivizing ever more of them?

The wealthy socialists who fund the environmental movement want control of land use, markets, and people as a way to make money and secure power. They clearly do not care what happens as a consequence; all the pompous wailing we see in the mass-media they own notwithstanding. The results will be “Natural,” no matter what the outcome.

Unless people, by their actions, demonstrably take the moral high ground out from under the clueless agents of these self-righteous crooks, the damage they are doing may become irreversible, because too many plants and animals will be gone forever and your freedom with them. They are there for us to care for, to make fruitful and to multiply, to fill the earth with life, not to let them kill each other off or let their seed rot in the ground unseen. At least now you know better, and hopefully, after reading this book, you know what that means:

You are The Responsible Party, charged to care for life in the land that provides us life itself, working with your own hands if you are able, to make it ever more productive and beautiful.

Welcome to a worthy struggle, one that will take all our might to accomplish! People must take care of the land to save it and each other from arrogance, ignorance, apathy, greed, and fear. We have a responsibility to learn how to turn the knobs and we’d better get started.

Cain, meet Abel. Seek out your brothers and sisters in your back yard. We need each other now more than we know.



HOW TO SUBMIT CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Much of what I have written here is controversial, perhaps to the point of seeming deliberately inflammatory. Yet I would have had no need to document this work if I had not perceived critical deficiencies in the conventional wisdom and the motives of those who fund its development and promotion. Still, I must confront the fact that the work done here will never produce the benefit I intended unless I engage those of contrary opinion. Hence this publication and this page.

Sorry to be so blunt, but I occasionally receive a “criticism” that displays such appalling ignorance of what I do that to reply at all would be seen as disparaging. I remember once submitting an article about the (then) 22 years’ work we’d done and having one of the reviewers ask, “What tool did you use?” as if one would only use one tool in all that time without learning anything and then try something different. Nobody with any intelligence attempts the unprecedented with a “project plan” that remains static for that length of time. I had another genius ask me why I wanted to ‘poison my land’ without any consideration of the “natural” toxins weeds produce by comparison, much less the personal risks I had obviously chosen to take attendant to my own cumulative exposure. I did not crawl on my hands and knees amid herbicide residues for 20 years just so that I could suffer the autonomically strident.

Nobody would do all the work I have done for absolutely no compensation unless he or she cared deeply about the need for that work. I really do appreciate knowledgeable and considered opinions that prompt me to think, nor am I shy to admit that I might be in error. Engineers are used to being wrong; it is endemic to developmental research. It should be obvious that I care far more about results than the dominance of my opinions.

So, take your time, construct your argument, support it thoroughly, and your reply will be respected with one of my own. You can send me your comments [here](#) and, if your disagreement is rational, polite, and well supported, I will gladly post a reply [here](#). I do read every comment I receive, at least for now.

However, if in your tenor you are not respectful of my commitment, one which likely exceeds anything you have ever done of the kind, you will get no reply. Meanwhile, know that I will keep every comment, and just may, if the situation warrants, create a page upon which to repost them all with which to document the incontinent thinking of their authors.

MEVP