

WEEDS: A TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS



May 2002

This is typical of what visitors to the Santa Cruz Mountains come to see, a product for which few of the providers see a dime. Do you see a problem here? Well, in fact, this scene exhibits is a social problem that is the principal cause of the environmental problems we will now discuss. When these consequences manifest in our neighborhood, we have to deal with them in order to succeed with our restoration project. Unfortunately, those same social archetypes combined to destroy much of this beautiful scene.

WILDERGARTEN 6.4

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Revision History [1.0](#) [2.0](#) [3.0](#) [3.1](#) [3.2](#) [3.3](#) [3.4](#) [3.5](#) [4.0](#) [4.1](#) [4.7](#) [5.2](#) [6.4](#)

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Other writings by Mark Edward Vande Pol:

Natural Process: That Environmental Laws May Serve the Laws of Nature, ©Wildergarten Press, 2001, 454pp, ISBN: 0-9711793-0-1, LOC Control #2001092201.

Shemitta: For the Land is Mine: ©Wildergarten Press, 2009. Contains: 217pp text, 980pp overall, 14 picture books, 2 tables, 963 photographs, 9 maps, 2 drawings, 2 charts, 145 footnotes, 358 citations, and 216 other source references, not including external Internet links. ISBN 978-0-9711793-1-8

Articles at Wildergarten Press: collected writings on Constitutional history and regulatory racketeering by tax-exempt “charitable” foundations

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February 2003

Have you ever noticed how much time, money, and energy people expend to get away from where they pay a lot to live in order to "get in touch with Nature"? Whole industries are built upon this drive: clothing, travel, equipment, retailing, photography, publishing, and communications. So, what do the users spend to help maintain the thing they came to see? The answer is obviously, "Nothing, because, it's Natural." Do you really think that caring for land is free? Worse, the customers either don't know native from exotic, or don't care because it's not their responsibility. Effectively, they wouldn't know anything about the services for which they should be paying anyway. Most see weeds as something the County should mow if they get in their way.



September 2008

“Oh, but the users didn’t have anything to do with the weeds being there in the first place.” Oh yes they did, and the landowner is paying for it. Traders have never taken responsibility for the cost of introduced pest species that entered the country with their products, nor therefore, have their customers, the vast majority of whom are urban. In fact, the very idea of performing inspections is considered a “trade barrier.” As a consequence, landowners bear the cost of managing introduced pests. The urban public also plays an important role, to this day, in accelerating the rate of introduction of unambiguously destructive pest species into the wild.



This is a more typical view along the same rural-suburban bicycle path... er... County road. Humped shoulders channel water to eroding gullies that destabilize whole slopes, per County specification. The vegetation is dominated by various weed monocultures. On the right, is French Broom. On the left are patches of foxtail barley, tall oat, Italian thistle... They all share several things in common: They were introduced from abroad, they have crowded out native plants, they sit poised to spread into the surrounding woods after a fire, and it takes money and labor to get them under control and keep them from coming back.



Which they do!!! This is **French broom** (*Genista monspessulanus*). It grows to 6-20 feet tall in as little as four years, depending upon soil and sun. As they grow they get top-heavy and lean into the roadway. The County cannot spray them because users of that scenic product (**urban environmental activists**), object almost violently to use of even the most benign herbicides. So the Department of Public Works dutifully mows every mile.

Each broom flower produces about eight seeds. These plants are yellow with flowers every spring (left). Each mature bush produces between 500 and 5,000 seeds every year. Unfortunately, the seed can remain viable in soil perhaps as long as 100 years. Thus, to introduce broom seed into a new area creates a need for annual control for as long as 100 years. **County mowing spreads that seed along the roads for miles.** It may be a terribly expensive thing to do, but it does help make for full employment for County road workers (and they have said as much to me).

Broom is a legume, so it fertilizes the soil with nitrogen. Nitrogen facilitates germination which favors other fast spreading annual weeds that are pre-positioned all along the roads (**Italian thistle** and **tall oat** in this photo), constrained only by competition and shade from existing overgrown forests.

Broom rapidly fills a forest understory with a dispersion of highly combustible fuel. Once the inevitable ignition finally happens, the combination of sun, ash, and nitrogen provides a fertile seed bed for both broom and other weeds. With no vegetation to catch popping seed, deflect starving animals, or slow winter runoff, there would be no barrier or competition to constrain the rapid spread of every other weed in the region. This turns the prospect of a ground fire into a certain catastrophe. Even with a fire frequency of but a few years, even if the frequency was annual, some of the broom would still breed.



Broom in bloom, about 12 feet tall

May 2010





This is leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), which is so chemically aggressive it suppresses even broom germination. Little else grows in it. It can regenerate from roots that can extend thirty feet and has waxy leaves, making for a very difficult kill with herbicides. It produces a somewhat toxic and caustic sap. County mowers have spread it nearly a half mile since this photo was taken.



May 2008



This is Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), an annual that also forms monocultures. Italian thistle can breed while very small (see inset with flower). It also easily adapts to shade, making it capable of sparsely colonizing a forest until it gets to the next opening. It matures early enough that it is transported by roadside flail-mowers very efficiently, so this is yet another pest our neighbors and the County would inflict upon us but for efforts I expend on other people's land, every year. I once took out two garbage bags of just the heads on our place from a patch that had blown in and colonized a bed of poison oak (see how small they are in the inset).



May 2008

Most people recognize foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum* red). We have almost eradicated this pest within our control boundary (even from our neighbors' land). There is rip-gut brome in here too (*Bromus diandrus* blue), which actually tends to be more aggressive. These grasses have very little forage value and are injurious to grazing animals.





May 2008



Exotic grasses like these, particularly rip-gut, “poverty grass” (*Vulpia* spp.), and slender oat (*Avena barbata*), dominate much of California. The native grasses are so long gone **nobody** knows how those grasslands looked or even if they were originally grasslands at all. Annual burning might well have kept those landscapes in forbs, not grasses, a distinction with real consequences.



May 2010

Not a few of the exotic grasses on our property were introduced and spread as required by law for State road projects like this one. This brings us to the other problem with bare dirt: Bureaucrats and environmentalists have a multi-BILLION dollar “clean water” business enforcing books full of specifications to “control” erosion (you saw earlier how destructive that idea gets). Today, these rules mandate very expensive native plantings on all freeway projects, such as you see here. So, isn’t this an improvement? Well, it could be, but note the exotic weeds in the foreground across the road (still on State highway land): foxtails, starthistle, sow thistle, slender oat... This expensive grass monoculture will be wrecked in three to five years because capital budgets do not fund adequate weed control. The gas tax money for maintenance has been diverted (illegally) to fund mass transit to... “protect the environment.”



April 2012

Here it is two years later (this is the slide from our discussion of Molate fescue).
Yes, they do weed it, once a year. The weeds breed faster than that, but at least you don't see them over summer.
Your tax dollars at work.



May 2010

This very spendy, artistically textured and colored retaining wall is just up the hill a few miles, completed a bit over five years prior. On this slope the State planted wonderful (and expensive) lupines and grasses that are now long gone. Of course, they did nothing about the French broom above the retaining wall showering seed down the hill. Meanwhile, the Italian thistle is busy making its way up the hill. Eventually, as the perennials establish and the madrones above grow into decadence, the fuel load will be just like this...



May 2008



If you let it all go, this is one form this system eventually takes: dying madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) and broom. As time goes on, the fir moves in. This the top of a ridge, so fire coming uphill would be horrendous, after which there would be erosion anyway... "Oh, but that's an Act of God," as if nobody could have done a thing about the fuel. Interestingly, the reason the madrone looks so bad is yet another imported exotic pathogen by the name of *Botryosphaeria dothidea*, destroying this otherwise desirable hardwood resource.



May 2008



HOWEVER, removing such disastrous fuel loads is what made our weed problem such a big deal. Thinning put enough light on the ground to germinate that dormant seed. Unfortunately, weeds nearly always appear first. So, if what you want is native habitat, it's going to take careful, tedious, consistent, and sometimes arduous labor, no matter what. Lots of it. That's just how things are.



May 2008

When the highway is blocked with an accident, our tortuous one-lane road is the only alternative. Most of the pavement is less than an inch of oil and screens on bare dirt (hold that thought). There are few places to get cars off the road to allow emergency vehicles to get by or opposing traffic to pull over. Hence, I built three turnouts along the County road at a cost of less than \$2,000. No, I did not ask their permission. No, the pavement is not up to their driveway specifications (9" of compacted base with 3" of asphalt!!!), but the Department of Public Works appreciates them anyway when they need a place to load or park heavy equipment. So, why did I pave it? Paving almost eliminated the weeds that were coming off the trucks and workers that stop here. Behind this spot is an old road cut I got the DPW to fill with ditch cleanings. The problem isn't the DPW; it's the political players who order them around.

Public roads are a form of commons, or property “owned by everybody.” Commons are typically subject to over-use and under-investment because when “everybody” owns something, nobody takes direct responsibility for its maintenance and improvement. So, the public is forced to construct ridiculously over-built driveways while paying for ridiculously expensive pothole filling, mowing and ditch cleaning along a road of completely inadequate and archaic design and construction. The County gets to repair the inevitable failures with monstrous retaining structures that do nothing to correct the flaws that caused the failures even if that would be vastly cheaper (Federal disaster funding guidelines prohibit improvements). Meanwhile, detailed vegetation management is obviously not on the list. It is left to the property owner to undo the damage done by the methods road workers MUST employ as ordained by people with little-to-no knowledge of or accountability for the outcome.



May 2010

On this ridge, the driveway on the left limits the width of the roadway, while the slope on the right slipped out behind the guard rail. Instead of grading straight across the hump which would have widened the workable area, they built an expensive retaining wall with pilings into the weak substructure with rods connected at the top under the pavement anchored into concrete blobs on the other side. The net effect holds this spine of sand in the air because FEMA will not allow changing the grade because that is improving the road. The whole ridge is only 30 feet across at the top. The reason the County made the disaster application is that it is cheaper than the \$10-15 grand it would have cost to grade and pave it into a more stable configuration, but for one thing... What do you do with the dirt from grading off the ridge? They cannot just ask the people if they want fill dirt to solve some other problem (like retiring an old road cut) because of their own bureaucratic requirements to do a fill. So, they would have had to truck 300 yards of dirt 20 miles to a landfill, per environmental regulations. You can thank the County planners and lawyers for a waste like this.



May 2010

Here is one result. On County roads like this, scads of urbanites ride their bicycles for miles, dodging the potholes between retaining structures, never realizing that the reason the weeds are there is that environmentalists stopped the County from spraying the roadside. So the road crews use flail mowers, smearing the seed along the roadside for miles. Up come the weeds. The landowners didn't want them. So, whose plants are these now? Will the protesters pay to control them? Was this because they are afraid of poison?



June 2010

Well, apparently poison isn't a problem for them, as long as it is a **Natural** poison. This is poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). These plants are deadly. Children have died chewing on the stems for the numb sensation it brings. Even the pollen is harmful. Poison hemlock is far more toxic than Roundup®, but the chemical is feared because it is man-made. So here it is, poison spreading along roadsides pursuant to the demands of the Sierra Club, and poised to spread into every watershed if the conditions allow. All would take is a catastrophic fire. **The Sierra Club says those are Natural too.** I pull the flowers off these plants over two miles from my home, simply because I do not want them spreading down the creek from which humans and wildlife drink.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS IS A SYMPTOM OF COLLECTIVE UNACCOUNTABILITY

Why this little digression about public roads? Public roads are commons, property owned by 'everyone' for which few individuals care because it is not their own. Road design, drainage, and vegetation all have a great deal to do with whether our plant restoration efforts succeed. Without roads, the effort would be impossible. Yet because of how they are managed, the spread and multiplication of weeds is abetted enormously. That's where you come in when it comes to taking action, whether influencing politicians or doing the repair and maintenance along your roadside yourself if you are a landowner.

Our County roads are in disastrous condition. Meanwhile, County specifications for private road design and construction are an outrage. I know one neighbor who had to provide a turnaround atop his driveway for a hook-and-ladder fire truck that could NEVER make it up the County road to his property much less up the rest of the driveway. One would think the politicians who approve these rules and the bureaucrats who enforce them were insane... until you realize how much money the local quarry operators and contractors make because of this "insanity" and how much those same vendors underbid jobs for the County.

The private dirt roads on our property (the ones the activists want to eliminate) could use a few improvements, but in general are no problem when it comes to weed propagation and drainage water quality, unlike the County roads. I spend considerable effort on "our" County roads against the onslaught of seed "our" road mowers brought into the area. Similarly, State revegetation specifications for erosion control on road construction projects have abetted the largest single cause of endangered plants and insects: exotic grasses and noxious weeds.

Please, make it stop. Over a quarter century of arduous work, developing the only parcel on the Central Coast fully restored to native plants, is in jeopardy because a distracted and uninvolved general public believes a bogus story about herbicides, silt, and drinking water without having checked it out carefully and objectively. Many of the weeds the mowers spread are more toxic than the pesticides. Pesticide bans have more to do with patent protection to increase corporate profits than they do with public safety anyway (if you don't believe that, do a little Googling on DDT and organophosphate). As to silt, both cases for listing anadromous coho and steelhead as endangered in this watershed are so fraudulent as to be laughable.

All of these decisions were made with the power of collective agency, a distracted public badly informed with deliberately fraudulent data, ignoring the Constitutional limits of the powers of their agents. In other words, this is how "social democracy" works (a better word is "fascism"). Once these powers are inculcated, there is no limit to their application. It also means that there is no way to hold the agents accountable if the system they run fails to deliver upon its many promises. Consider...





April 2003

Do you think things are any better in State Parks? This is right at the entrance to nearby Fall Creek State Park. This English Ivy is killing these trees, which are way too dense anyway. Who is responsible? Parks are commons too.



April 2003



This cat's ear is in the parking lot at Fall Creek State Park. It competes by poisoning other plants (allelopathy). This is the dominant plant in this immediate area. What will stop it if the brush around the lot burns in a fire?



November 2008



This is cheat grass in Yosemite....



November 2008



With outrageous fuel loads there too... While it might seem to you like I go looking for these bad photos in parks, I really don't. I tend to stay out of the parks entirely, because they sicken me. But then, I know what I'm looking at; the activists won't tell you.



November 2008



This is the most detailed “restoration” project I found in Yosemite Valley with weeds all around it. Do you think this kind of scale will fix it? If you think more money will solve the problem, remember that public school funding has tripled in the last thirty years after inflation.



August 2014 – Stanislaus National Forest near Cherry Lake

This was after the Rim Fire outside Yosemite. To be quite frank, most of the forest I saw that did not burn was in far worse shape than what you see here. But being on a tour bus with the Society of American Foresters, I couldn't get the photos. These Sierra foothills were my favorite places as a child. To see them in the condition they are today, burned or not, just breaks my heart. But the worst thing here is the star thistle right on the edge of the road, about which neither the Forest Service nor the Sierra Club, did anything.



I have had this photo for so long I do not know whom to credit. There is no excuse for this disaster.

It's not as if the government didn't know. This is Highway 140 along the Merced River near Yosemite Valley. This is what star thistle can do. Oh, it won't be this bad after this first fire, but after the third, or fourth... How many cycles will it take before we figure out that introductions of exotic species are among the most permanent damage we do? What is it going to take?



July 2010

Maybe you'd prefer Yellowstone? Yeah that looks like "recovery." It's been recovering like this for 25 years.



July 2010



Of course, there are green forests at Yellowstone too, and now that it burned in 1988, there's no fire hazard any more, right? These trees will green right up after a fire, won't they? Looks to me like they'll be incinerated. This is springtime at this elevation. These trees are showing signs of water competition.



July 2010

Then there are the weeds at Yellowstone too. You didn't know? But it's "your National Park..." The Park Service didn't tell you? The Sierra Club didn't tell you? The Nature Conservancy didn't tell you? The National Geographic didn't tell you? Then why is the public supporting these very groups in their continuing effort to put MORE land under the management of the people who let this happen?



SCVOSA photos originally published in the Los Gatos Weekly Times, February 2015

The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority published these game-cam photos in the local paper because they were proud of them, the “best” photos they got in 10 years. Do these animals look healthy to you? Why do they look so emaciated? Look at the forage around them: Native herbs and shrubs that once provided protein for this system are almost nonexistent. Note the emphasis upon predators. Most of the animals listed as “endangered” got that way because of one of two factors: lack of food and/or over-predation.



January 2013 – There had been ample rain by that time that year



Late May, 2018

Compare the obvious differences between these two young deer: Above you have a scrawny first year buck on the Open Space Authority property versus a healthy two-year-old on our place below. Look at the hips and shoulders. Look at their coats. Look at the forage! There had been ample rain in Nov-Dec 2012, so there is no excuse for the OSA. Forage quality means everything to wildlife. But does it *have* to be native? Many California native plants are toxic, smell bad, have coarse texture, or spines because they had been grazed heavily for so long that they adapted resistances to grazing pressure. The funny thing is, deer are adapted to need it that way, else their skeletons grow weak and out of proportion.

The two-year-old below was born here. His herd of some 4-5 stays here because there are gobs of tasty things to eat. Acorns are still chief, even at this time of year. I need these animals to eat them; else my meadows are quickly saturated with scads of tree seedlings I get to cut or pull. So I did what I could to recruit deer, band-tail pigeons, anything that would eat acorns. I cut trees to make more forage so that they would stay to eat the tree seeds (more on that in [the chapter on forest understory](#)).

This buck below comes by this spot every day, along with 2-4 other deer. They spend ten to twenty minutes a day here. This being almost June, the acorns are mostly gone. And yet there will be plenty to eat through September.

Clovers and lotuses (foreground below) are excellent sources of protein for ungulates such as deer. Those plants don't germinate well with exotics present. So I thin forests and weed them and they grow, and the deer grow on them. I raised this herd. If they overpopulate, can I eat one?

If they were my goats I could, but they're your deer, so the great collective owns them, not the guy who brought the land back to life that supports them. Deer are a commons. I would have to ask pay your bureaucrats a fortune for permission to eat the animals I have fed from birth.



July 2010



How about dying aspen forests in the National Forests of New Mexico? Have you had enough yet?

It doesn't look to me like enough people have, because every time I turn around there is another government land grab on "your" behalf.



July 2017- Three years after the Eiler Fire, Hat Creek, CA
Cheat Grass is what you'll get

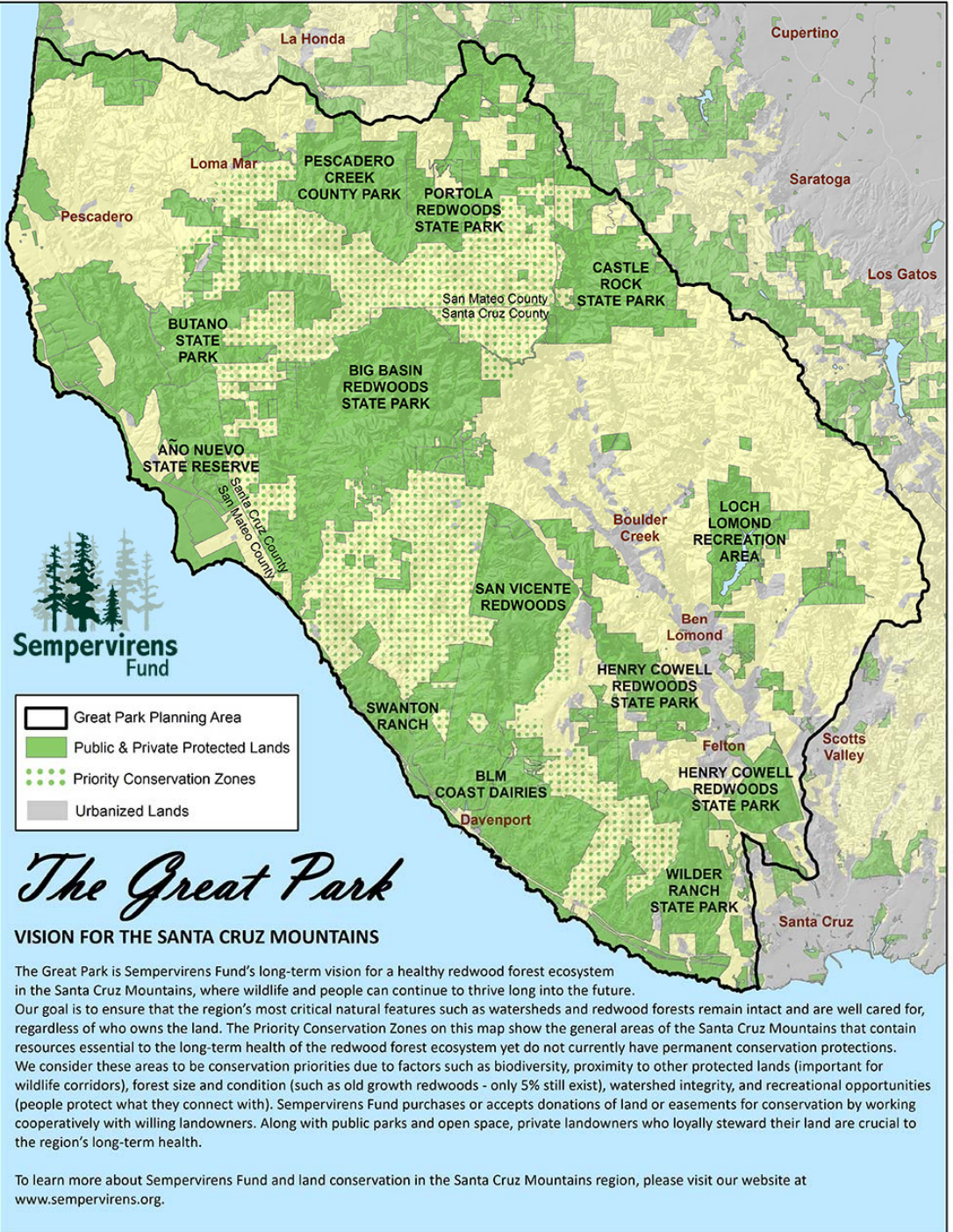
Guess whose "behalf" it really is? A lot of what the OWNERS of major resource corporations do with their money held in private, tax-exempt "charitable" foundations is to launder their money through activist groups to fund law suits to prevent oil development by their competitors so as to retain high prices for what they already have in production. You gave the power to the bureaucrats to "protect the environ-mint," powers that end up as power for sale. We are all complicit with this tax and resource racketeering scam



Summit Ridge
August 2008
Mid Peninsula
"Open" Space District



So, with all the evidence here that the system is at least damaged without intervention, but that it can be fixed only with disturbance followed by a LOT of work, WHY does the regulatory leviathan, supposedly dedicated to protecting the environment, act upon the presumption that the "precautionary principle" (which assumes that no action is preferable to taking action) has **any** scientific legitimacy? Look around you. The people pushing this urban myth about "preserving Nature" have money and power. They want more.



In 2001, I published a [long and analytical book](#) about the many dysfunctions of regulatory land use control supposedly to protect the environment. It analyzed every real estate transaction in large parcels of land in Santa Cruz County from 1970-2000 on an inflation-adjusted opportunity-cost basis compared to the 30-year bond, timber prices, and residential housing. The analysis revealed systematic and at times criminal fraud underlying land use regulations. It didn't take long to figure out how the game is played.

Prior to the mid 1990s the emphasis was to convert resource land use (farming, ranching, forestry, mining) into two primary alternatives: upscale rural residential development and poorly maintained tax-exempt land entertainment (parks, conservancies, and land trusts). I called the system "the push." That was followed in the late 1990s and beyond by "the squeeze" in which rural residents would then slowly be chased out of the hills and back into cities by the same land interests that had supplied the enticement to locate there. Interviews with some of the players in the game indicated that politicians were in general incapable of such manipulations, but that there were people who are that smart, to be named at the author's peril.

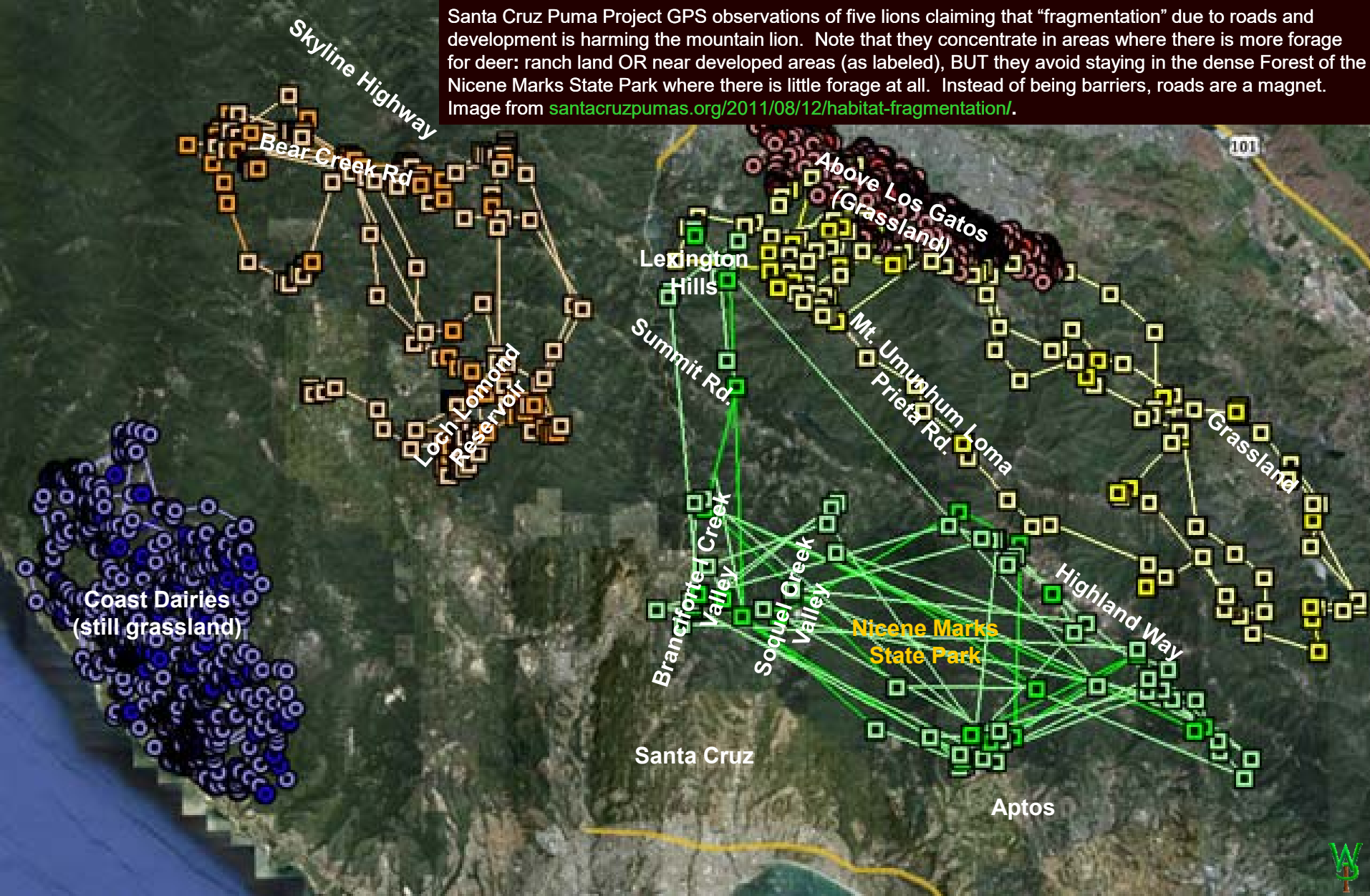
The problem isn't as much that people have overt ill intent; it is that the powers government can wield are so capable of destroying a landowner as to be too much temptation for those capable of manipulating the government. Buying politicians and bureaucrats to control land use is cheaper than buying land. At that point, all the gamesters have to do is to figure out how to make the people who bought those houses desperate to relocate back to town. Despite how attractive it is to live in these mountains, it isn't really as difficult to accomplish as one might think. The politicians need only do nothing.



January 2017 – Hutchinson Rd., Santa Cruz Mountains; this fix alone is estimated at \$1.8 million.

Lack of simple access will do. While our County spends \$84 million on a “rails to trails” boondoggle in town, they have cut rural road maintenance by two-thirds and simply wait for the inevitable. This predictable result reduces the compensation necessary for the resulting inverse condemnation rather substantially. This is Agenda 21 “sustainability” inaction.

Santa Cruz Puma Project GPS observations of five lions claiming that "fragmentation" due to roads and development is harming the mountain lion. Note that they concentrate in areas where there is more forage for deer: ranch land OR near developed areas (as labeled), BUT they avoid staying in the dense Forest of the Nicene Marks State Park where there is little forage at all. Instead of being barriers, roads are a magnet. Image from santacruzpumas.org/2011/08/12/habitat-fragmentation/.



Large predators with little to eat simply add to the pressure. Much of the mountain lion population is starving because what little forage is available for deer is around houses or in dwindling grasslands. The deer population has crashed. To this mess add wolves and soon grizzlies! I have it on very good authority that defending one's self against a substantial wolf pack is untenable even with a gun. Do you really think high tech commuters want any part of bears capable of ripping through the doors and walls of their homes?



June 2010 – Expensive homes along Hutchinson Rd., Santa Cruz Mountains

Yet “burn out” might happen sooner. This decadent oak woodland and chaparral is succeeding to “mixed conifer forest,” now typical of the County. Logging any of it is illegal. From an Indian perspective, this is too steep for prime acorn or hazelnut production, so this was probably once a grassland with lots of food for wildlife interspersed with shrubs and sparse trees confined mostly to gullies.

So, do these houses and this landscape look “fire safe” to you? If it does burn like this, what will happen ecologically?



July 2005, Photo by Steve Rich, Rangeland Restoration Academy

This was what much of Mesa Verde National Park looked like before it burned. It's mostly native.



July 2005, Photo by Steve Rich, Rangeland Restoration Academy

Thistles and cheat grass was what you got after it burned. Who is accountable? “Your” agents hired the people in charge. It’s not what they show you on National Geographic when they’re pitching for more, is it? This is the **tragedy of the commons**.



French Broom
*Genista
monspessulanus*

Italian Thistle
*Carduus
pycnocephalus*

Rattlesnake Grass
Briza maxima

Behind me in the same location as the prior slide, May 2010, across from Hutchinson Rd. The Sempervirens Fund hopes to make this mess part of their proposed "Great Park."



Every summer this roadside is lined with tinder. Weeds will be the first to come up again with no trees or brush to stop the seed from spreading. After a fire, imagine a gust of wind carrying Italian thistle seed up a slope like this. From atop this ridge thistles would carry almost a mile. The rains would carry the broom seed down to the road, combine it with the grass, head out the nearest culvert and down the hill. French broom seed can remain viable for a century. As I said earlier, repeat the disturbance and the weeds will make gains; hence, fire alone is not the answer. So, will this get better if we just avert our eyes and walk away?

Wilder Ranch, once some of the most beautiful land on earth, became a State Park about ten years before this picture was taken. When the State negotiated that acquisition, they promised the sellers to keep managing it as a working dairy ranch in perpetuity.

They lied. The bureaucrats got rid of the cows right away. The result has been an outbreak of poison hemlock, Italian thistle, and the loss of native annual forbs.

This formerly gorgeous ranch is slowly transforming into an outrage..



June 2002

We do a lot of “walking away.” One third of all extinctions in the US to date are solely because of introduced species, but if we go on with this “preserving Nature” ethic, we will likely exceed that rate of extirpation. Since the turn of the 20th Century, many areas in small private agricultural land use have been gradually regulated to death and abandoned because of competition from subsidized industrial agriculture. Today, much of that abandoned land is being forcibly “maintained” in a “preserved” state upon the presumption that ‘Nature is best able to recover when left alone.’ The problem is: those in charge are blinded by ideology and influenced by money.

Communications Hill, San Jose, CA. SummerHill Homes, Inc. built this “sustainable community” (with an ecological wasteland at its doorstep) seeking to cash in on “the squeeze” while touting their environmental standards. You can read more about this kind of urban real estate development [here](#).



December 2008

So not only is “preserving Nature” a technically delusional philosophy that is observably destructive to the land, it feeds a real estate and financial racket that is ruining an economy that could otherwise provide the jobs to fix even this mess. We do have options besides “suburban sprawl,” but only if imagination is freed from the chains of ideology, bureaucracy, and political corruption.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS IS INHERENT TO COLLECTIVE CONTROL

So why this little depression digression about public Parks? There is a reason there are no private parks: Who could compete with a rival in the land entertainment business who can get all the land they want for free with unlimited liability insurance, unlimited legal resources, and police agencies to put their competition out of business, while selling a lousy product, literally wrecking the assets with which they were entrusted? Public parks are commons, property owned by 'everyone' for which very few individuals do anything because it is not their own. Without parks where would you go? Well, that's because you allowed "progressives" to socialize what was an already developing resort industry back in the early 1900s. After all, in selling the idea of public parks they thought they knew better about "protecting Nature," believing that Nature is best kept as far from people as possible. So to fix the problems their greedy policies have induced, these elitists want to jam everyone but themselves into unlivable cities. The problem with that fantasy is that although the underlying belief is demonstrably false, its sponsors have so much money tied up in this control trip that they're trapped in it too.

Ironically, they call it "**Sustainable Development**." Collectivized ownership and control serving primarily those who have a direct and significant financial interest in directing public opinion because it is cheaper to control public opinion (and thus the government) than it is to buy the assets. Once they can control the assets, then they can control the people.

Oh but what about the poor! Yeah, they're just clamoring to get into SUVs to get into parks by the millions. If people weren't being taxed to death they could afford to offer the service as a charity as had been done for a very long time.

I did not go out of my way to get these pictures, and frankly (lucky you), I've saved the worst for last. In general, I find the condition of parks to be such that I would really rather avoid them. More importantly, I have no need for a "park" because I have made one of my own, and this is what I want for you, either as an owner or a customer.

The good news is that if we can start the process of privatizing environmental management we might just turn this economy around. There is an awful lot of work to be done that is simply not easily adapted to machinery. That means there are jobs for people to do. There are thousands of tools and equipment to be designed, tested, and improved. There is research to do and a more productive, varietal, and beautiful planet to be tended and loved. The result would be lower costs for manufactured goods, housing, and transportation and a healthier planet in return. That is a goal worthy of a generation. As a former creator and implementer of new products on multiple continents, I do know whereof I speak. So please, do not take that private option so flippantly that you fail to consider how it might work. No one knows more than I how enormous is the task ahead, but that is what new industries are for. Think of the transformation in the last two decades that an unregulated Internet has wrought. It is time to learn how to restore functional landscapes, one step at a time.

So now we will return briefly to my back yard, and then get this book wrapped up so that we can all get back to work.



OTHER BOOKS BY MARK EDWARD VANDE POL

Quick Read Picture Books

Range Management

Zion National Park

Canyonlands National Park

Deseret Ranch

Fuels Management, Succession Run Amok

The Cone Fire (the benefits of active forestry)

The Warm Fire (what happens without it)

Fire Aftermath: Mesa Verde National Park (weeds)

The Croy and Summit Fires (the wildland urban interface)

Socio-Ecological Paradigms

Environmental Consequences

Meadow Encroachment in Yosemite Valley

Why we can't accept how the original forest as it once was got that way

Living Sheepishly

Why we need a culture of animal husbandry

Sustained Development

Cities are becoming prisons

Katrina: What Did You Expect?

Environmental bureaucracy can be deadly

Natural Process: That Environmental Laws May Serve the Laws of Nature, ©Wildergarten Press, 2001, 454pp, ISBN: 0-9711793-0-1, LOC Control #2001092201. <http://www.naturalprocess.net>

Shemitta: For the Land is Mine: ©Wildergarten Press, 2009. Contains: 217pp text, 980pp overall, 14 picture books, 2 tables, 963 photographs, 9 maps, 2 drawings, 2 charts, 145 footnotes, 358 citations, and 216 other source references, not including external Internet links. ISBN 978-0-9711793-1-8. <http://www.shemitta.com>

Articles at Wildergarten Press: collected writings on Constitutional history and regulatory racketeering by tax-exempt "charitable" foundations. http://www.wildergarten.com/wp_pages/articles.html



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