

**IRON TRIANGLES OF GREEN**

# How Wendy Van Asselt and her friends made 26 million acres disappear

*Iron Triangles — The closed, mutually supportive relationships that often prevail in the United States between the government agencies, the special interest lobbying organizations, and the legislative committees or subcommittees with jurisdiction over a particular functional area of government policy.*

— A Glossary of Political Economy Terms

By Ron Arnold  
Examiner Columnist

Environmental activist Wendy Van Asselt was at the World Resources Institute in 2003 when officials from the Wilderness Society made her an offer she couldn't refuse.

They wanted her to lead a huge project to remove 26 million acres of federal land in the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) from oil and gas production, grazing, timber harvesting, mining for strategic minerals, off-road recreation, and providing rural jobs.

Van Asselt was a logical choice for the job since she had shown in her position at WRI — and previously at the Mineral Policy Center, with its shrill "No Dirty Gold" campaign — that she had a decided preference for stopping natural resource development, especially on federal lands.

The Wyss Foundation would fund the new project, thanks to a Wilderness Society board member, Hansjorg Wyss, a Swiss entrepreneur whose net worth was estimated at \$6 billion. The Hewlett Foundation would also give \$1 million to the project.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which managed the NLCS, would be cooperative, too, since stopping all those productive activities would require real authority for the system, authority that would give it a real budget, and it didn't have either of them. The BLM would need help in persuading Congress to go along.

That was because Bruce Babbitt, President Clinton's secretary of interior, had created the NLCS in 2000 by bureaucratic decree without first getting congressional approval. His "system" was really just a bureaucratic name for more than 800 existing BLM areas, each authorized separately, all created for various purposes, at various times, under various laws, with various budgets.

So, Van Asselt's new job would be to get Congress to authorize Babbitt's NCLS and give it a real budget. The graduate of Smith College (economics) and Harvard (master's in public policy) would soon prove very much up to the challenge.

By the end of 2004, Van Asselt

had organized a coalition of 50 anti-development groups to cover the NCLS' far-flung units. She had also tapped a former colleague to help wangle the National Trust for Historic Preservation into putting the entire NLCS on its popular "Most Endangered Places" report card. That in turn prompted an invitation from the National Academy of Sciences to co-author an article for its main publication.

Since 2005 was the fifth "birthday" of NLCS, Van Asselt used it for a celebratory blitz and a forum to keep up her finely tuned attack on developers who opposed stopping development on the 26 million acres Van Asselt was eyeing. She clearly understood the game and made things happen.

It was a classic Washington iron triangle: The TWS folks loved her; the funders loved her, and the BLM loved her. Soon, some key members of Congress would love Van Asselt, too.

The BLM's Elena Daly, director of the NLCS, began working closely with Van Asselt. Daly's official appointment book includes multiple entries indicating she and Van Asselt regularly shared lunch and other meetings.

By 2006, BLM, TWS, and the funders (who ultimately poured more than \$5 million into the campaign) knew Van Asselt was a political whiz kid. With Van Asselt's close ties to the BLM, she could do what BLM couldn't, which was informally tell Congress what the agency sought for NCLS. It had to be done discreetly, however, because few congressmen were likely to vote for the kind of NCLS that Van Asselt and her allies at BLM really wanted.

Multiple congressional sources point to creation of the NLCS Caucus in Congress in 2006 as the key development in Van Asselt's

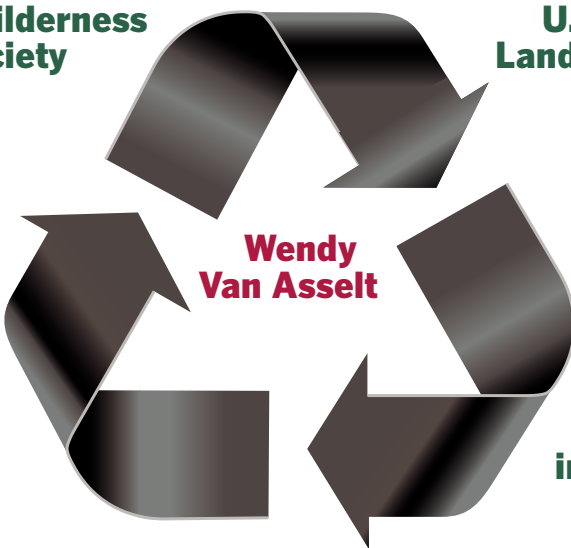
**The Wilderness Society**

**U.S. Bureau of Land Management**

**The Wyss Foundation**

**Lawmakers in Congress**

**Wendy Van Asselt**



Van Asselt

campaign, convinced that it was suggested by her to Arizona Democrat Rep. Raul Grijalva, the ultra-green chairman of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Grijalva, who was Van Asselt's most important congressional ally, convened the bipartisan caucus, selected three co-chairmen — Reps. Mary Bono Mack, R-Calif., Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., and Rep. Rick Renzi, R-Ariz. — and grew the caucus into an instrument of power.

Regardless who suggested the caucus, Van Asselt was clearly counting votes on the Hill, as shown in a June 27, 2006, e-mail from her to Daly in which she gleefully reported that Rep. Sue Kelly, R-N.Y., had just joined the newly formed caucus.

"Bring on the Rs!" Van Asselt crowed. "Keep 'em coming!"

Then, on April 4, 2007, Van Asselt left TWS to work for House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., as a member of the panel's Democratic legislative staff. It was the perfect position from which Van Asselt could guide NCLS across the finish line, because the job put her at the coordinating center of the iron triangle pushing for the project.

Shortly after Van Asselt was hired by Rahall, Grijalva introduced the first NLCS bill, which was barely a page long, with only a vague paragraph authorizing the new system, and listing Bureau of Land Management areas to be included.

Republican legislators were horrified. "This bill goes well beyond a codification of what already exists," their bill report said. "The [NLCS] is to be managed "in a manner that protects the values for which the components of the system were designated. The term 'values' is a wholly new concept to the BLM," plucked from a national parks bill "to purposefully mandate broad and vague new management practices" with "this nebulous, malleable term."

The National Park Service enforces things like "viewsapes," "soundsapes," and "smellsapes" — indefinable concepts inappropriate for productive BLM lands.

"For us to pass legislation to enforce legislatively undefined 'values' on a vast, resource rich part of the country is an unacceptable abdication of our responsibility as the policy setting branch of the government," the Republicans concluded.

Grijalva's 2007 bill went nowhere, but Van Asselt's work as a Rahall legislative staffer in keeping information flowing to the interested parties within and without government paid off two years later.

In January 2009, Grijalva's NLCS bill was lumped into the grab bag Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which passed Congress and was signed into law March 30, 2009, by President Obama.

*Ron Arnold is vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise and author of "Freezing in the Dark: Money, Power, Politics and the Vast Left-Wing Conspiracy."*

**Who you know — or oppose — is key to getting federal payola**

By Mark Tapscott  
Editorial Page Editor

When Associated Press reporters asked Defenders of Wildlife executive vice president Jamie Rappaport Clark about a no-bid \$216,625 contract the group received from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to count birds in the Gulf of Mexico, he professed amazement that anybody would see anything amiss.

"I just truly believe there are no dots to connect," said Clark, who before joining Defenders of Wildlife was Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under President Clinton.

But there are many dots that do connect, beginning with the fact that the political arm of Clark's group was a vigorous supporter of President Obama in 2008 and is one of Big Green's major sources of Democratic campaign contributions.

More dots are found in Federal Election Commission campaign records. The Examiner's analysis of contributions in the 2008 and 2010 campaign cycles found that Defender of Wildlife board members contributed more than \$381,000 to Democrats and none to Republicans, while another \$22,210 was contributed by contributors who listed the organization as their employer.

Then there is the Defenders of Wildlife PAC, which gave \$2,862,832 to Democrats and a mere \$22,622 to GOPers.

The AP also pointed to Defenders of Wildlife's aggressive criticism of former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, noting that she is a potential Obama opponent in 2012 and that both Defenders of Wildlife and its political arm, the Defenders Action Fund, blasted her for supporting use of low-flying airplanes to hunt wolves and other wildlife in winter. Defenders of Wildlife also has been urging Discovery Communications to drop plans for "Sarah Palin's Alaska," a reality TV series, and wants sponsors and viewers to boycott it.

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**IRON TRIANGLES OF GREEN**



# An Iron Triangle based in NOAA is killing the U.S. fishing industry

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**By Ron Arnold**  
Examiner Contributor

Jane Lubchenco, career environmental activist and author of a cap-and-trade plan for America's fisheries, is the most controversial director ever to run the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A marine scientist, Lubchenco co-wrote a 2009 paper titled "Oceans of Abundance," claiming, "the global oceans are being emptied of seafood. Scientists report that 90 percent of large fish — highly sought after species like tuna and swordfish — have been removed from the oceans."

Other scientists disputed that claim, but President Obama didn't nominate them to head NOAA.

She is at the center of a classic Washington Iron Triangle that includes wealthy liberal foundations, radical environmental nonprofits and multiple government officials, many of whom, like Lubchenco, came out of the foundations or activist groups.

Lubchenco has done so much to kill the New England fishing industry that 300 angry Gloucester, Mass., citizens protested outside the regional office of the federal fisheries service last October.

They didn't hang Lubchenco in effigy. Instead, they mounted an ugly mannequin representing her, looming over a gallows where she was the one hanging two fishermen in effigy. The signs pinned to their heavy weather gear read, "Betrayed by government."

In New England alone, the commercial fishing industry includes more than 35,000 fishermen and boat operators, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. New Bedford, Mass., is the most active of 88 ports listed by NOAA as part of the industry, which caught an estimated \$2.9 billion worth of fish in 2009.

In July, two Massachusetts Democratic congressmen, Barney Frank and John Tierney, called for Lubchenco to resign or be fired, not only for her treacherous hostility toward the American fishing industry, but also for harboring a culture of corrupt law enforcement agents that treated fishermen as criminals and systematically sped the culling of the fleet.

The lawmakers were furious at what Commerce Department Inspector General Todd Zinser revealed in a July 1 memo to Lubchenco — a \$96



AP FILE PHOTO

Jane Lubchenco, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has done so much to kill the New England fishing industry that 300 angry Gloucester, Mass., citizens protested outside the regional office of the federal fisheries service last October.

million "Asset Forfeiture Fund," an account NOAA officers built from enormous fishing fines far out of proportion to the violations.

The fund was being handled like a slush fund to buy 202 vehicles for 172 officers, a \$300,000 luxury "undercover" yacht (Lubchenco may not have known about this purchase), and a \$109,000 trip to Norway for 15 agents to attend the weeklong Global Fisheries Enforcement Training Workshop, among 83 pages of other irregularities.

Anger against Lubchenco isn't limited to New England. Fishing fleets operating in Virginia, along the Gulf coast, and in California and Alaska are also being bled despite her Senate confirmation hearing pledge to create "a new climate of trust" in what senators called the "seriously dysfunctional relationship" that had poisoned relations between fishing regulators and fishermen for nearly 10 years.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., introduced his fellow Oregonian (professor of marine biology, Oregon State University) as the "Bionic Woman of Good Science" with many awards — a \$500,000 MacArthur "genius grant," a \$150,000 Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation, and a year as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

She sailed through confirmation, then headed straight to New England and demanded that the local fisheries authority write a plan imposing her new untried program on their fleet.

Lubchenco first came to Washington in 1997 as a board member of the Environmental Defense Fund (2008 income: \$112 million), which has been the vanguard for a radical restructuring of the fishing industry, converting the ocean commons into commodities that EDF named "catch shares."

That's not "shares" as in splitting up the catch equitably, it's "shares" as in paper permits for a preset catch, doled out to fishermen by the government in dribbles designed, according to Lubchenco, to remove "a significant fraction" of the industry's operators.

A fisherman could sell or rent his shares to somebody seeking a bigger catch, but every geographical area and species has a government-mandated cap called a Total Allowable Catch that can't be exceeded. Each catch share is a percentage of the Total Allowable Catch.

If a fishing boat captain doesn't get enough shares to survive, he learns the hard way what a Gloucester reporter heard when Lubchenco was asked to define catch shares: "A negotiable stock that fishermen can sell as they go out of business, allowing them to exit with some cash."

During the 2009 Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles, EDF Vice President David Festa projected a 400 percent return on investment for catch shares. The institute is "junk-bond king" Michael Milken's think tank that now directs private capital into investments "that serve the public interest."

But nobody at the conference said anything about big environmental groups buying up shares or driving prices to disastrous levels. Or that catch shares inevitably meant ending a centuries-long American tradition of small-scale operations, leaving fishing communities as graveyards for rotting fishing boats. Milken thus has gone from junk bonds to junk fleets.

Rich foundations have funded the EDF/Lubchenco obsession with government control of the American fishing fleet. The Moore Foundation, based on founder Gordon Moore's Intel profits, gave EDF \$3.5 million from 2005 to 2008 to support catch

shares, while the Packard Foundation gave EDF \$2.2 million for its Oceans Program between 2002 and 2006. The Pew Charitable Trusts operates its own oceans program.

The Packard Foundation gave \$2.1 million for Lubchenco's Aldo Leopold Leadership Program, which she started in 1997. She says scientists must lead politicians and the public to create a world that is "ecologically sound, economically feasible and socially just."

Her ALLP trains selected scientists to use talking points with reporters. Following lessons on public relations techniques of role-playing and critique sessions, trainees practice speaking in crisp sound bites. Among the trainers for ALLP are journalists working for the New York Times, Washington Post and National Public Radio, along with White House and congressional staff members.

As NOAA director; however, Lubchenco tells scientists what to say and how to say it via government memos. She knows Obama has her back because he said no when Frank and Tierney demanded her removal.

Her personal staff consists largely of fellow environmentalists. Senior Adviser Monica Medina from the Pew Charitable Trusts headed the Obama NOAA transition team and recommended Lubchenco for director. Medina's husband is Ron Klain, Vice President Biden's chief of staff.

Lubchenco's chief of staff, Margaret Spring, came from the Nature Conservancy, and her communications director, Justin Kenney, from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Her confidential adviser is Amrit Mehra, who worked for Obama in the Senate.

That's entrenched power.

Ron Arnold is vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, and author of "Freezing in the Dark: Money, Power, Politics and the Vast Left-Wing Conspiracy."

## TOP 10 ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

### Green groups get gobs of greenbacks

Just because an organization is a nonprofit, that doesn't mean it's poor. Environmental organizations are thriving and have considerable financial resources at their disposal, with revenue coming from government grants and contracts, direct mail and Internet fundraising campaigns, foundation grants, and gifts from rich activists.

According to the latest tax filings, here's the net worth of some of the nation's largest and most prominent environmental organizations.

— Mark Hemingway

- 1. Nature Conservancy**  
Total assets: **\$5,636,393,924**
- 2. The Conservation Fund**  
Total assets: **\$451,178,482**
- 3. World Wildlife Fund**  
Total assets: **\$426,048,663**
- 4. Trust for Public Land**  
Total assets: **\$399,026,229**
- 5. Conservation International Foundation**  
Total assets: **\$370,034,224**
- 6. National Audubon Society**  
Total assets: **\$337,695,958**
- 7. Natural Resources Defense Council**  
Total assets: **\$232,276,696**
- 8. Environmental Defense Fund**  
Total assets: **\$145,765,426**
- 9. Sierra Club Foundation**  
Total assets: **\$107,928,024**
- 10. National Wildlife Federation**  
Total assets: **\$69,448,048**



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BIG GREEN: FOURTH OF A FIVE-DAY SERIES

# Night of the living SFRED: How environmentalists do it when Congress fails them

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When Congress won't pass a Big Green-favored proposal, environmentalists turn to their buddies in the federal bureaucracy.

That's the game plan of environmentalists campaigning to remove oil and gas drilling from huge swaths of energy-rich western federal lands — killing jobs and raising consumers' travel and heating costs in the process.

They unsuccessfully lobbied Congress for more than two years using an unincorporated front group, Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development, which they started in 2007 with a \$250,000 grant from the Hewlett Foundation.

SFRED was jointly created by three major environmental groups, the National Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

The TRCP in turn was created in 2002 by Trout Unlimited acting as a legal money funnel for \$2 million from the Pew Charitable Trusts. The Moore Foundation (Intel founder Gordon Moore's philanthropy) gave TRCP \$600,000 specifically "to change the current course of energy development on public lands," according to Moore's 2005 IRS Form 990 tax return.

The SFREDers tried to achieve their goal this year, persuading Rep. Ron Kind, D-Wis., to slip a cleverly disguised oil and gas shutdown measure into a major bill in the House of Representatives that was being revised almost by the hour as it headed toward final passage.

Kind sat on the Insular Affairs, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee chaired by Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va. Kind was previously chairman of the powerful Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus.

Kind completed a classic Wash-



PHOTOS.COM

The well-funded Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development (SFRED), has stepped up its propaganda mill to pressure the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and state governments, using their alarming report, "Hunting and Fishing Imperiled, Energy development threatens 10 of the most important fish and wildlife habitats on America's public lands" as a hammer.

ington Iron Triangle — rich donors, high-powered activists and powerful people in government.

The Wisconsin representative slipped the SFRED poison pill into the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources Act, which began its legislative life as a 95-page Obama-style reorganization of the Interior Department's energy agencies and policies.

Then BP's Deepwater Horizon oil drilling platform blew up in the Gulf of Mexico, which Democrats in Congress used to justify cramming a host of draconian new offshore drilling regulations into the CLEAR bill, bloating it from 95 to 222 pages, and 903 numbered sections.

When Rahall agreed to Kind's SFRED amendment, it became "Section 238 — Wildlife Sustainability" in the final bill sent to the House floor. It affected Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service energy-rich lands containing an estimated 20 billion barrels of oil and 186 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The words "oil" and "gas" appeared nowhere in the amendment, but it mandated a bewildering new array of wildlife regulations capable of stopping virtually all resource development on and under the affected federal lands.

Monitoring species populations became the overriding mandate, thus preventing "due consideration"

*The words "oil" and "gas" appeared nowhere in the SFRED amendment of the CLEAR Act, but it mandated a bewildering new array of wildlife regulations capable of stopping virtually all resource development on and under the affected federal lands.*



sounded so good. It didn't sound so good, though, when representatives who had carelessly voted for the bill in committee actually read Section 238. Their rebellion was so ferocious they forced House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to order Section 238 stricken from the bill the House approved. It is bogged down now in the Senate.



Pelosi

Skunked in Congress, SFREDers turned to their friends in the bureaucracy, many of whom were former colleagues in the nonprofit world.

When Obama signed his October 2009 executive order mandating Climate Change Adaptation plans, environmental bureaucrats got new regulatory authority.

The well-funded SFRED (the three parent groups took in more than \$101 million in 2008) has stepped up its propaganda mill to pressure the BLM, Forest Service, and state governments, using their alarming report, "Hunting and Fishing Imperiled, Energy development threatens 10 of the most important fish and wildlife habitats on America's public lands" as a hammer.

In Colorado, they're pushing the BLM to settle a lawsuit canceling proposed oil and gas leases on the Roan Plateau. In Montana, they're pushing the Forest Service, the BLM, and state and private landowners in a six-county area to



## Series schedule

- » **Monday:** The green gorillas
- » **Tuesday:** The cash-filled campaign powerhouse
- » **Wednesday:** Uncle Sam is Big Green's friendly banker
- » **Thursday:** How they do it
- » **Friday:** California is ground zero for Big Green

develop a vast conservation plan before any development is allowed, and hassling the BLM to stop natural gas production in the Powder River Basin.

In New Mexico, they're lobbying Gov. Bill Richardson to ban gas leasing in the Salt Basin. In Utah, they're demanding the Forest Service cancel its years-long planning process and conduct a new "forestwide oil and gas leasing environmental impact statement" before any development is allowed.



Richardson

In Wyoming, they're lobbying the Fish and Wildlife Service to declare the cutthroat trout an endangered species and urging the state to rule that "habitats that have not been developed or leased at this point should remain free from development activities and be withdrawn from future leasing."

Environmental activists know more than one way to kill energy development in America. SFRED knows them all.

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