



American Environmentalism: Philosophy, History, and Public Policy

J. Michael Martinez

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Protecting the natural environment and promoting sustainability have become important objectives, but achieving such goals presents myriad challenges for even the most committed environmentalist. **American Environmentalism: Philosophy, History, and Public Policy** examines whether competing interests can be reconciled while developing consistent, coherent, effective public policy to regulate uses and protection of the natural environment without destroying the national economy. It then reviews a range of possible solutions.

The book delves into key normative concepts that undergird American perspectives on nature by providing an overview of philosophical concepts found in the western intellectual tradition, the presuppositions inherent in neoclassical economics, and anthropocentric (human-centered) and biocentric (earth-centered) positions on sustainability. It traces the evolution of attitudes about nature from the time of the Ancient Greeks through Europeans in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the American Founders, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and up to the present. Building on this foundation, the author examines the political landscape as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry leaders, and government officials struggle to balance industrial development with environmental concerns.

Outrageous claims, silly misrepresentations, bogus arguments, absurd contentions, and overblown prophecies of impending calamities are bandied about by many parties on all sides of the debate?industry spokespeople, elected representatives, unelected regulators, concerned citizens, and environmental NGOs alike. In lieu of descending into this morass, the author circumvents the silliness to explore the crucial issues through a more focused, disciplined approach. Rather than engage in acrimonious debate over minutiae, as so often occurs in the context of "green" claims, he recasts the issue in a way that provides a cohesive look at all sides. This effort may be quixotic, but how else to cut the Gordian knot?

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Erin Marshall:

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