

# Environmental Journalism

- It's not all about climate change
- It goes back much farther than you might think
- It involves basic elements of human life
- It has involved fundamental changes in living
- It covers a huge range of issues
- It has its own terminology
- It has heroes and villains
- It has **always** been controversial

# Environmental Journalism

## Fundamental Topics:

- **Basic human needs**
  - Have to use natural resources to survive
  - Renewability – farming vs. mining, etc.
  - Conflict – harmony with nature vs. progress
- **Waste of all kinds**
  - Sewage – evolution of ways to deal with it
  - Garbage – “Throw it away” – dumping grounds
  - Farming – creates waste, uses lots of water
- **Industrialization (1860s-1900 or so)**
  - “Progress” – manufacturing, transportation, printing, communication, etc.
  - Jobs, consumer goods, travel – but impact often not considered
  - First widespread air pollution – also water and soil
  - Factories would dump waste into bodies of water
- **Technology (20th-21st centuries)**
  - Electrification, cars, telephone, labor-saving devices, food, medicine
  - Choices made in development – fossil fuels, mining, infrastructure
  - Constant push for new solutions, innovations – but some backfired (DDT, etc.)

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## Conflicts and effects:

- **Nature lovers vs. business/consumer interests**
  - Long history of depleting resources for financial, consumer benefits
  - Consumers love new products and low prices, but at what cost?
  - Companies need profits and dividends, but at what cost?
- **Rich vs. poor**
  - Mining and drilling for resources – displacing communities
  - Most development in rural areas – jobs vs. befouling land/air/water
  - Numerous examples of exploitation
- **Rational concern vs. unnecessary panic**
  - What's being sought vs. what's being preserved?
  - Costs vs. benefits, not just in financial terms
  - Where do you draw the line?
- **Effects of past unchecked use of resources**
  - Animal endangerment, loss of habitat, extinctions
  - Permanent destruction of natural features
  - Disruption of natural ecosystems

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## Core concepts and terms:

- **Ecosystem**
  - Interaction between all forms of life and nature
  - Interdependency between one another – cycles of life, death
  - Originated in 1930s – popularized in 1960s
- **Conservation and preservation**
  - Conservation – responsible use of natural resources
  - Preservation – protects environment from harmful human activities
  - At odds with many traditional practices and pursuits
- **Environmental science & ecology**
  - ES includes biology, geology, meteorology, chemistry, physics, and ecology
  - Ecology focuses on relationships between living organisms
  - Gained momentum and attention in 1960s – Earth Day in 1970
- **Climate change**
  - Global warming/greenhouse effect – cited in 1890s, got attention in 1970s
  - Depletion of ozone layer – discovered in 1980s - action taken
  - More study – showed to be accumulation of many causes

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## Important people and events:

- **Theodore Roosevelt**
  - Always an outdoorsman, though grew up in New York City
  - Created numerous national parks, forests, monuments, wildlife preserves
- **John Muir**
  - Influential scientist, writer; founder of Sierra Club
  - Writings popularized environmentalist point of view
- **National Park Service created (1916)**
  - Organized national agency to oversee, regulate park lands
  - First organization of its type in the world
- **Rachel Carson**
  - Book *Silent Spring* (1962) documented effects of pesticides
  - Bestseller focused spotlight on environmental issues
- **Earth Day (1970)**
  - Originated by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson (SJSU grad)
  - Focused attention on health and environmental impacts of industry
- **Founding of Environmental Protection Agency (1970)**
  - Nixon pursued this and similar legislation during presidency
  - Pushed pollution reduction, recycling, car emissions into focus

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## Issues in today's environmental news coverage:

- **Politics**
  - Huge partisan divisions extend to these issues
  - Competing factions even within parties
- **Transportation**
  - Move toward electric and fuel cell cars
  - Bullet trains vs. airplanes, etc.
- **Alternative energy**
  - Wind, solar, hydroelectric, geothermal, biomass, hydrogen, tidal, etc.
  - Each source has pluses and minuses, backers and detractors
- **Green technologies**
  - Reduce carbon emissions, reuse garbage & other waste
  - Sustainability at heart of most endeavors
- **Climate change**
  - At heart of everything – scientists united on this
  - Different sides have different proposed solutions