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Environmental Writing

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Before SITW I viewed and interacted with the wild environment in a very anthropogenic way. I really appreciated forests, rivers, marshes, and especially lakes. But I loved them for what they had to offer. Hiking terrain, camping areas, and most importantly fish is what came to mind when I thought of nature. The love for nature that I have was there but it has evolved so much in the past 3 months. I have a new found appreciation for nature that doesn't revolve around what I get from it.

There were moments that taught me lifelong lessons. For example, there was a grouse that taught me how to share the world with nature, a lesson that I wish all humans could learn. I was about to go fishing when I saw a dusky grouse casually standing on my gear. Used to being around people on the ranch, she had the audacity to look at me as if I was interrupting something. My first thought was how rude it was. She was standing on my rod like she owned the place. I shooed her away and she shot me a look while stepping off of my stuff and onto another man's fishing gear. The start of a thought soon to be a realization popped into my head for just a second. I shooed her away some more and she gave me that look again, a mix of annoyance and disappointment. It was in that moment that I realized how hypocritical it was of me to get upset. This is a protected wilderness, and it has been since 1980. The grouse and everything else inhabiting this land is what we wanted to protect in the first place. It was I that was standing on her property not the other way around.

When we decide to designate an area of nature as "wilderness" we act like we're heroes. We use words like "protected" as if we're its guardian angels or something. I think more realistically we are temporarily sparing its life while we pillage its counterparts. Wilderness is supposed to be permanent but with human population growing while simultaneously becoming greedier my doubtful self is skeptical.

The population trends I just mentioned (growing in numbers and greed) are making wilderness areas more valuable but at the same time more vulnerable. As suburbs spread and corporate cities grow they are taking over nature for space and the resources (wood, gravel, iron, sand, etc.) necessary for construction. But effects of rising population are leading to more people who need an escape, and they look to nature. You can see how this is contradictory.

I feel that one day we will run out of unprotected wilderness. We will expand over every acre of the country that the landscape allows. What will we do then? We will need more room. More resources. I don't think that "protected" wilderness areas will prevail over this future.

Ed Krumpe and his stories taught me that everyone wants something different from nature. Hunters want to kill in it. Adrenaline junkies want to rip it up with their dirt bikes. Evil wants to profit off of it. The unmentioned message that I got from him is that everyone wants something. This already has negative affects but as population grows and nature gets smaller and smaller this will become much more severe. Pete's class taught me that these problems will snowball because everything is part of a sensitive system, and if Adam taught me anything it's that the problem is nothing new. Writers have been talking about this for a long time. John Muir wrote about Hetch Hetchy valley in 1912. I imagine someone in the future will write a similar piece when they start to consider tapping into the protected wilderness. Pinchot was concerned about resource depletion since 1900. Leopold understood the ecological systems that I learned from Pete since the forties. We know about it, yet we do nothing.

I don't blame us for not knowing what to do. I think the wilderness act is a wonderful start despite my doubts of permanence. The real problem here is that the population is growing out of control. Paul Ehrlich said "Solving the population problem is not going to solve the problems of racism, of sexism, of religious intolerance, of war, of gross economic inequality. But if you don't solve the population problem, you're not going to solve any of those problems. Whatever problem you're interested in, you're not going to solve it unless you also solve the population problem. Whatever your cause, it's a lost cause without population control." I think this is very well put. I'm glad I found this quote because it captures

how I feel about the wilderness act. The act is a great thing but will be irrelevant if we don't solve the population problem.