

June 16, 2005

Testimony before the House Resources Subcommittee on Energy & Mineral Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

Mark E. Mathis Media, LLC
Executive Director
Citizens' Alliance for Responsible Energy

My name is Mark Mathis. I am a former television news reporter and anchor. I've been a media consultant for the past eleven years. Two and a half years ago I began consulting with the Independent Petroleum Association of New Mexico. It took only a short period of time for me to understand the great frustration endured by energy producers. They are under constant attack by anti-development groups posing as environmentalists. Much of the time the accusations and rhetoric dispensed by these groups is greatly distorted if not entirely false. Within a year's time I could see that something needed to be done. It was at that time that I began contemplating starting a non-profit organization for the purpose of educating the public about energy issues. I believe a better-informed public will result in government leaders making better decisions concerning our national energy policy. I have some experience in standing up for the public. In 2001, I formed an organization called "The 505 Coalition" to fight a new and unnecessary area code from being implemented in New Mexico. As a result of the efforts of the 505 Coalition rulings by the federal and state governments were rescinded, saving an estimated \$50 million in public and private funds. I wish to apply that same type of activism to the critical task of safeguarding our nation's energy supply.

The Wildlands Project

To date, the most comprehensive environmental coalition to appear on the scene is the Wildlands Project. This coalition is the most radical in purpose: to "re-wild" America, that is, to gradually remove people and raw material production from the rural United States with no definite stopping point. In their own words:

"The Wildlands Project calls for reserves established to protect wild habitat, biodiversity, ecological integrity, ecological services, and evolutionary processes. In other words, vast interconnected areas of true wilderness and wild lands. We reject the notion that wilderness is merely remote, scenic terrain suitable for backpacking. Rather, we see wilderness as the home for unfettered life, free from human technological and industrial intervention."

"Extensive roadless areas of native vegetation in various successional stages must be off-limits to human exploitation."

"To function properly, nature needs vast landscapes without roads, dams, motorized vehicles, power lines, over-flights, or other artifacts of civilization, where evolutionary and ecological processes can continue. Such wildlands are absolutely essential to protect biodiversity."

The Wildlands Project has proposed to set aside at least half of North America for "the preservation of biological diversity."

The resulting "wildland reserves" would contain:

- Cores, created from public lands such as national forests and parks, allowing for little, if any, human use
 - Buffers, created from private land adjoining the cores to provide additional protection;
 - Corridors, a mix of public and private lands usually following along rivers and wildlife migration routes;
- but would allow no cities, roads, homes, businesses, no aircraft over-flights, or natural resource extraction, i.e., an ever expanding area of America would be depopulated and de-developed.

A decade ago such proposals would not have been taken seriously. Even today this kind of proposal would seem highly unrealistic to a lot of people. However, such grand visions are not accomplished over night. They happen incrementally. Even though the term "Wildlands Project" is not widely known, it still presents a formidable threat to private property ownership, mineral and resource extraction, and national security. Countless anti-development organizations are pursuing the goals of Wildlands without specifically using the term.

In the late 1990s the Clinton administration adopted aspects of The Wildlands Project philosophy pushed largely by Vice President Al Gore. In Mr. Clinton's term we witnessed a moratorium on road construction in undeveloped areas. There were proposals to breach dams on the Columbia River. The expansion of the Endangered Species Act continued unabated. The Wildlands Project is technically a coalition strategy project with a single lead organization: North American Wilderness Recovery, Inc. (2000 revenue: \$1,451,459), originally based in Tucson, Arizona, but relocated in 2000 to Richmond, Vermont. The organization is an outgrowth of a 1981 Earth First! idea called the North American Wilderness Recovery Project.

North American Wilderness Recovery has been supported by foundation grants since before its exemption 1992, particularly by Doug Tompkins' Foundation for Deep Ecology, in annual amounts ranging from \$50,000 in 1992 to \$150,000 in 1996 and 1997. The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund gave \$75,000 in 1996 and the Educational Foundation of America gave \$50,000 in 1997.

A Public Deceived

We have entered the great information age. Media is all around us in television, radio, newspapers and magazines. We've

got CDs, DVDs, MP3s, and satellite TV. With our computers and the Internet massive amounts of information is just a few mouse clicks away. We can learn about the most obscure subject in great depth without ever leaving our homes. And yet, in the midst of this sea of information, many Americans are either ignorant or misinformed about some the most fundamentally important issues to their lives. This is the great irony of the 21st Century. We don't live in the information age. We live in the age of disinformation.

I believe the most critical and misunderstood issue of our time is the balance between energy development and the environment. We all know we need energy for our daily lives... electricity for lights, appliances, computers and hundreds of other devices. We know we need gasoline for our cars, jet fuel for airplanes, diesel for big trucks and ships and all kinds of other fuels such as propane and butane. We depend on this energy for absolutely everything, and yet hardly ever think about where this life-sustaining power comes from.

While Americans sit in their comfortable homes with every conceivable necessity and luxury they watch the morning news. There's another protest about "environmental destruction" caused by fossil fuels. Then they read a newspaper story about the rapid and catastrophic loss of endangered species. Then it's off to work where a radio ad informs them that some "pristine" wilderness is about to be destroyed by oil and natural gas development. While cruising along the highway they see a billboard warning them of the dangers of nuclear power. They press on the gas, take a swig of bottled water and shake their heads at those awful energy companies that are ruining their lives.

From every direction Americans are being fed a litany of lies and distortions. As preposterous as it is, people have been trained to despise the energy sources that are the foundation of unprecedented health, longevity and prosperity. Americans have been fed so much disinformation for so long that they no longer trust their own experience. They just assume the disinformation is true and those assumptions are rarely if ever challenged.

Because the public is so misinformed, a relatively small number of people who participate in vocal, well organized and very well funded activist groups are given undue influence over public policy. They demand unreasonable regulations and restrictions on energy development and they get a lot of attention from the press.

For example, The Wildlands Project and other activist groups claim we are in the "6th great extinction of species." However, a 1995 United Nations report states that there have never been so many species as there are in the modern era.

On The Wildlands Website Stanford University professor Paul Ehrlich is quoted as saying:

Although the Wildlands Project's call for restoring keystone species and connectivity was met, at first, with amusement, these goals have now been embraced broadly as the only realistic strategy for ending the extinction crisis.

It's surprising that The Wildlands Project would give Ehrlich such a prominent place on its website. Ehrlich is not so much famous as he is notorious for making doomsday predictions that do not come true. In 1981 Ehrlich predicted that we would lose 250,000 species every year. The widely discredited futurist claimed that half of all species would be gone by the year 2000 and that all species would be dead between 2010 and 2025.

True environmentalists, such as GreenPeace founder Patrick Moore, cite biological evidence that less than one percent of species may be lost in the next century.

Moore left GreenPeace many years ago because he said the environmental movement was "basically hijacked by political and social activists". Moore was interviewed for the segment "Environmental Hysteria" by Showtime's Penn & Teller program. Moore told Penn & Teller that these phony environmentalists, "came in and very cleverly learned how to use green rhetoric or green language to cloak agendas that actually had more to do with anti-corporatism, anti-globalization, anti-business and very little to do with science or ecology."

The Wildlands Project and other groups that support the same anti-development agenda are effective in spreading disinformation through their skill in using the news media. They know that they can make outrageous claims and the chance that those claims will actually be challenged is very small. They know that journalists typically don't know enough about these complex issues to even ask the right questions, let alone to challenge the sensational assumptions. Reporters are not given enough time or resources to do more than simply repeat the activists' claims. Of course, some reporters are believers in the obstructionist movement and their bias heavily influences their stories. But more than anything, the press cannot resist emotional, sensational, fear-based claims. It's their bread and butter in the 21st century.

Journalistic arrogance, of course, is another problem. Syndicated columnist Stanley Crouch recently informed readers of The New York Daily News, "The recent congressional vote for Arctic drilling would not have been necessary if we had maintained commitment to developing nuclear power as an energy source." It apparently didn't occur to Mr. Crouch that there's no such thing as a nuclear-powered car, tractor-trailer or airplane.

I have considerable knowledge in this area of media manipulation. I was a news reporter for nine years in four states and I've been a media consultant for more than 11 years. In my book, Feeding the Media Beast, I devote a chapter to "The Rule of Emotion" and another to "The Rule of Repetition". Anti-development groups are very good at using these powerful rules to their advantage.

The Renewable Deception

Supporters of the Wildlands Project philosophy are big supporters of renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and biomass. They continually urge the public and government leaders to reject fossil fuels and to embrace the energy sources

of the 21st century. These kinds of politically correct statements receive broad approval because they sound so good. However, the fact is renewable energy sources running our world is nothing more than pure fantasy for at least several more decades and probably longer.

Professional obstructionists and even some politicians have led people believe that a greater investment in wind and solar power will somehow make us less dependent on foreign oil. That's ridiculous. Wind turbines and solar panels generate electricity, which does nothing to replace the oil that fuels virtually all forms of transportation. Even the electricity generation of wind and solar power is miniscule at this point, contributing less than one half of one percent to our electricity needs. To the uninformed this distinction may seem trivial. In reality its importance couldn't be greater. We don't have an electricity problem in this country (though we could use more power plants and an upgraded grid); we have a deadly serious liquid fuels crisis that threatens our economy, our national security and indeed all that we hold dear.

There are other groups such as the Energy Future Coalition and The Governors' Ethanol Coalition made up of governors from 33 states. These organizations want Congress to increase a federally mandated use of ethanol above the 5 billion gallons required by 2012. These governors score points—and votes—by appearing to actually be doing something about our thirst for foreign oil and desire to have a cleaner environment. Farm belt governors score double points because 95% of ethanol is made from corn.

However, this is just another energy deception. It takes more fuel to produce and deliver ethanol than it provides, meaning we import more foreign oil, not less. While ethanol is advertised as burning cleaner than gasoline, on balance it actually produces more and worse pollution. Ethanol emits higher levels of NOx emissions contributing to smog, and it makes gasoline evaporate faster, reducing its value while increasing pollution. It also must be shipped separately and mixed at distribution terminals, which simultaneously drives up costs, fuel usage and emissions.

The Big Hammer: The Endangered Species Act

No single tool has been more effective in advancing the goals of The Wildlands Project than the Endangered Species Act. Say "Endangered Species Act" and most Americans believe this is a federal law that protects species in danger of becoming extinct. While that was the original intent, today the Act has very little to do with protecting species in trouble. It is a simply a tool for anti-development groups posing as environmentalists to shut down any and all uses of public land, energy development being number one on the list.

One of the fundamental flaws of the ESA is that species do not recognize state boundaries. If a species is determined to be "endangered" in one state it may become listed as such even though an abundance of the species exist in other parts of the country or in other nations. For example, the Aplomado Falcon is listed as endangered in New Mexico when the species hasn't even existed in the state for the past half century. The Bureau of Land Management has restricted energy development on 36,000 acres on Otero Mesa just in case the falcon decides to come back. Even worse, the falcon can be found in great abundance on the entire continent of South America, throughout Central America, all of Mexico, and into Texas. An additional 88,000 acres on Otero Mesa are off-limits for other conservation concerns. Dozens upon dozens of cases such as this can be found all across the country.

Another big problem is that once a species is listed it is extraordinarily difficult to get it de-listed. In the 32-year history of the ESA only 10 species have been removed from the endangered list because of "recovery". Even then, critics charge that some of those species were saved by private efforts and other activities such the banning of DDT.

In New Mexico the Gila Trout was first listed as endangered in 1967. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service proposed downgrading it to threatened in 1987 but under pressure withdrew the proposal. Another request came in 1996. It didn't happen. Today the USFW is attempting a third time but is running into stiff objections from anti-development groups.

Enforcing the ESA is very expensive to taxpayers as well as private property owners. In the west, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates it will cost about \$30 million to \$40 million every year to protect the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Unfortunately, this kind of outrageous expense for species protection is the rule rather than the exception. Remember, there are 1,262 Endangered Species and obstructionists are filing lawsuits and lobbying hard to have more added all the time.

There are many other flaws in the Endangered Species Act such as the fact that in many cases access to land is restricted based on the "Best Available Data", which often stands for "BAD" data because data are incomplete and sometimes non-existent. Another flaw is the fact that private landowners lose use of their land because of an endangered species and they receive no compensation from the government. There are more problems, however the intent of this testimony is not to make suggestions on how to fix the ESA, but simply to point out that the Act is highly flawed and yet very powerful in restricting access to land for all purposes, most importantly to energy development.

Energy is Everything

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of oil and its powerful brother, natural gas. Without them our world would be completely different, more different than any of us can possibly imagine.

Look around you and try to spot a single item that would still be there if oil were not. When people think of oil and natural gas they typically consider its obvious uses—gasoline for the car, a lubricant for the engine, and a power source for electricity generation and the heating of homes. What about rubber for tires, shoes, and seals on refrigerators, ovens, and car doors? Consider the importance of asphalt, fertilizers, pesticides, and glue. What would life be like without magic markers, lipstick, pantyhose, credit cards, dental floss, toothpaste, baby bottles, telephones, TVs, computers, soccer balls,

paint, and synthetic fibers for today's clothing?

The vast quantity of everyday items that contain some byproduct of petroleum is astonishing. Take these products away and our world would come to a sudden and catastrophic end. If somehow we could instantly remove the contribution of petroleum to our world you would find yourself standing naked and unsheltered in an open landscape among millions of other naked and unsheltered souls.

It's a little unnerving just to think about it. There's only one thing more important to our survival than oil and natural gas, and that's oxygen. Yes, water, food, clothing, and shelter are essential, but in today's world the vast majority of the population cannot get these life-sustaining necessities without petroleum.

Yet, in spite of these sobering realities, a misinformed public stands by while access to oil and natural gas are denied under the pretense of "environmental protection."

Oil & National Defense: A Sobering Reality

Oil—as well as all other energy sources—is directly tied to the success and survival of the United States of America. The same can be said of any other country. Fundamentally, no society can endure—let alone prosper—without two things: an adequate and affordable food supply and the availability of affordable energy. Because our food supply is almost completely dependent on oil, petroleum is the most important commodity we have.

While it's quite clear that our economy and standard of living are completely dependent upon oil, it may be less clear that petroleum is a key ingredient in our freedom, too. Without adequate fuel supplies for fighter jets, battleships, tanks and other armored vehicles America would be vulnerable to any nation that wished to take what we have as their own, and that includes our liberty as well.

Allied forces defeated the Axis powers in World War II for a variety of reasons—brave men and women, intelligent military leaders, and a home-front that made great sacrifices to give the military all that it needed while still running a nation. However, no level of bravery or sacrifice would have mattered if the United States hadn't had sufficient oil supplies to fuel victory.

Freedom isn't free. It takes enormous sums of bravery, skill, passion, human ingenuity and the fuel to make it all work.

A Promising Alternative: Oil Shale

One of the most promising alternatives to oil is what's called "oil shale". The potential resource is enormous. It's estimated that there is over 200 times more oil shale than there are conventional reserves. Better yet, the United States is estimated to have 62% of the world's potentially recoverable oil shale resources at 2 trillion barrels. According to The World Energy Council the largest of the deposits is found in the 42,700 km² Eocene Green River formation in north-western Colorado, northeastern Utah and southwestern Wyoming.

The name is actually a misnomer because it does not contain oil and it is not often found in shale. The organic material in oil shale is kerogen and it's contained in a hard rock called marl. When processed, kerogen can be converted into a substance similar to petroleum. During this process the organic material is liquefied and processed into an oil-type substance. The quality of the product is typically better than the lowest grade of oil produced from conventional reserves. Unfortunately, oil shale poses several significant problems. Processing of oil shale requires significant amounts of energy and water. It also produces massive amounts of waste product. In the 1970's major oil companies in the U.S. spent billions of dollars in various unsuccessful attempts to commercially extract shale oil. However, as the price of conventional oil rises the economics of shale oil will improve. When that happens we can expect groups supporting The Wildlands Project philosophy to mount a well-funded and well-organized protest. As always, disinformation will lead their plan of attack.

A Difficult Task

Getting the American public and government leaders to focus on the critical importance of responsible domestic energy production is no easy task. Re-educating the public about the nation's true environmental condition will be even more difficult. However, CARE was formed to address these issues because the stakes are extraordinarily high. The stability of our economy and the foundation of our national security are directly tied to our ability to produce domestic energy. It is bad public policy to continue to become more dependent on foreign and often unstable governments to fulfill our energy requirements, especially when environmentally responsible production is a reality today.