

FORMING AN EARTH FIRST! GROUP

El Lobo Solo



EARTH FIRST! has survived attacks by moderates, would-be leaders and the agents of the system, remaining the most diverse, passionate, committed, and uncompromised group of environmental activists. Our direct actions in defense of the last wild places only seem radical compared to an entire paradigm of denial and control, where the individual is convinced they are powerless, and the organizations set up to protect the wilderness continue to bargain it away.

EARTH FIRST! is a priority, not an organization. It is the name of our journal, and the slogan of our emerging tribe, but it is a tribe without chiefs. The only "leaders" are those temporarily working the hardest and taking the most risks. New ideas, strategies and crucial initiative come from the individual, and all decisions are made within affinity group based on preferred tactics. EF! is as much an extended family as an environmental movement, developing the integrity and skills for a new /old way of living with-in the land. Our actions are firmly based in Deep Ecology, the spiritual and visceral recognition of the intrinsic, sacred value of every living thing.

EARTH FIRST! is an international movement composed of small, bioregionally-based clans. They are taking it upon themselves to become intimately familiar with the ecology of their area, and the most immediate and serious threats to it. We apply "direct pressure" to stop the bleeding, with a combination of education, litigation, and creative civil disobedience. EF!ers invariably experience both the joy and the anguish so acutely that they felt isolated and alone before coming together as a group. Nothing is more empowering or more fulfilling than acting in defiant and creative consort with other like-hearted people. Dare to love that much!

TO START AN EF! GROUP in your area, consider the following elements:

CONTACTS:

Even though it is up to every individual EF!er to come up with campaigns and strategies to carry them out, a successful group still needs "Contacts" to

-Establish a mailing address and phone for the group to be made available for anyone wanting to get in touch.

-to maintain a mailing list, help instigate actions, initiate calls on the "phone tree" when urgent announcements must be made.

Contacts will be listed in the national EF! Journal. To avoid any confusion or loss of momentum should some key motivator leave, it is best to have TWO committed contacts, ideally male and female, on-campus and off-campus. (two names, two numbers, one shared PO Box)

A MAILING LIST & PHONE TREE is an essential way of keeping everyone in touch. Begin with friends you know share your biocentric enthusiasm. Put out sign-up sheets at any environmental concerts, speeches, etc. that you put on, as well as asking to do the same at other related events (Native American, anti-nuke, Cockburn concerts...). Put out an information table in front of student unions and natural food stores, with stand-up graphic displays on your campaigns and a sign-up sheet. Try doing a one-time only insert in related alternative publications calling for participation.

NOTE: Make sure it is clear to everyone putting their name on that it is a list for potential activists, not a mailing list for free newsletters.

THIS LIST should include their addresses for mailings, phone numbers for quick access, and notes on their skills (enjoys making costumes, good with signs and graphics, willing to work on timber appeals, computer literate, committed to civil disobedience, etc.)

MONEY: Unlike most other environmental groups, including Greenpeace, require an immense budget to do their work. In contrast, most EF! campaigns are pulled off on a shoestring, with most actions costing under a hundred bucks in materials, gas, etc., complete with trademark use of supermarket cardboard and dumpster-dived doughnuts. The major expenses for an EF! clan are printing, postage, and occasional court fines.

AN EF! BANK ACCT. with more than one contact allowed to sign for it, seems ludicrous, but allows for fair and open accounting of the scant funds going through it. As these funds are used entirely for legal (but radical!) purposes, the resulting records are no threat.

FUNDRAISING: Frogskins can be gathered in any season, and properly dried, can be stored in stacks. Good places to hunt for them include:

- Benefit concerts, slide-shows, pot-lucks
- disgusting pleas for money in the various newsletters
- annual auctions of donated goodies and services
- grants from foundations for specific projects
- school money funnelled through campus clubs for EF! presentations
- EF! work parties
- profits on the sale of EF! t-shirts (available on short term credit to credible groups)
- sale of EF! Journals

THE EF! JOURNAL is the uncensored voice for the many diverse opinions of our movement. It is the primary source for articles on the threats to wilderness and our tribe's efforts to save it. This is your journal. It is no better than you make it. All clans are encouraged to submit pieces on campaigns, philosophy, biodiversity and tactics based in deep ecology and uncompromised wilderness defense. The journal is put out by a nonhierarchical, rotating collective, and any earnest EF! activist can work a stint on its production.

ACTION ARTICLES will invariably be printed:

- make them exciting
- stress campaign background, details of the threat, reason for the choice of target, tactics, results, and ways for the reader to get involved (letters to congress, doing coordinated actions in their own town, calls for activists to come join you there...)
- include lots of good photos (preferably B&W), maps, and graphics.

FREE JOURNAL COPIES are traditionally mailed out to active EF! clans. Individual EF!ers are still expected to subscribe, since the journal depends on subs to survive. The free copies are sent to contacts to be sold at full cover cost as a fund-raiser for local groups. Consider consigning them for a small commission to newstands, campus bookstores, natural food stores, etc.

REGIONAL NEWSLETTERS augment rather than replace the national journal, focusing in greater detail on local issues, lists of local events or demonstrations, more leeway to fit poetry in, etc. These can be statewide newsletters, bioregional (portions of more than one state), or specific to your community. They can be copied and stapled, and sent out without wasteful envelopes. Production, writing, and mailing-out should be done as a group, to get the maximum number of voices represented, and keep all the work from falling on just a few.

CAMPAIGNS include everything presently impacting biodiversity on this planet. Old-growth forest protection, endangered species, species reintroduction, habitat destruction, the disastrous public lands grazing, damming of rivers, the re-wilding of the east and west coast states... To really protect a bioregion, we have to become natives, indigenous, connected through guts and soul. To really become acquainted with that which we fight for, we need to spend a lot of time intimately exploring our deserts and canyons, mapping the ancient forests, documenting the existence of endangered and threatened species, and just feeling...

EF! Nationally coordinates actions as well, such as the country-wide demonstrations against Burger King (that stopped their importation of rainforest beef), the annual "Day of Outrage" against the U.S. Forest Dis-Service, give us a chance to increase our clout, and are announced to the various regional contacts.

The annual EF! Round River Rendezvous, as well as regular regional rendezvous, offer the tribe a chance to brainstorm new campaigns while they party hearty!

MEETINGS: It's true. Meetings are the bane of civilization, the low benchmark of environmental "organizations." EF! does it differently. Call them parties with a focus! We gather for potlucks, ceremonial sweats (a must!), hikes-climbs-swims-floats. Yet we meet around one purpose only: the ACTIONS that follow!

TACTICS: EF! is open to all forms of nonviolent direct action. What we share is an undiluted passion, a belief in the sacred intrinsic value of all life, and a willingness to ACT! Although known through the sensationalist media for our arrest scenarios and advocacy of ecotage, EF! activists use all of the following tactics, and more:

- EDUCATION, informational handouts, press releases, articles in periodicals, presentations to elementary schools and universities, going to Forest Dis-Service meetings to fill them in on their own data, radio interviews...

- PUBLIC INPUT, letter-writing (so we don't lose one by default), petitions...

- LITIGATION, timber-sale appeals (write the Journal for a generic how-to form), requests for restraining orders, lawsuits based on clean-air/clean water/endangered species acts...(Also contact the Biodiversity Task Force, listed in the back of the Journal).

- DEMONSTRATIONS & CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, are what got women the vote, blacks their freedom, and the U.S. military-industrial machine out of Vietnam (next, we need to get it out of North America). The quickest and surest way to get a new EF! group goin' is to immediately do a fun, nerry action! Show how much you care!

Issues the media would never write about end up on the opinion-changing front cover as a result of creative, colorful demos. For a full discussion, see "Pulling Off Dynamic Actions" (available free through the Journal).

NOTE ON ECOTAGE: "Monkeywrenching", as coined by Cactus Ed Abbey, is a last-ditch effort to protect remnant wildlands and continuous evolution by decommissioning the machinery of the destroyers. It is a tactic that hits the multi-national corporations the only way they feel it--in the pocketbook. Property is held more sacred than life in this monoculture of greed, making ecotage a risky venture. Unlike civil-disobedience, where your deliberate arrest is part of the success of your action, monkeywrenchers are only successful if they get away. Ecotage, by definition, includes tree-spiking (mineral supplements for bothersome mill-saw blades), road de-construction, and various methods of heavy equipment maintenance (such as silicon carbide in the crankcase). Monkeywrenching is best done by those not openly associated with EF! or any other legal group, for everyone's sake. It is not the "official" tactic of EF!, but it falls within our definition of uncompromised nonviolent action, is an integral part of our tribal lore. Personal disavowal of this tactic is acceptable, but no group worthy of calling itself Earth First! would publicly denounce its practice. For further reading, see the EF! Journal, and Dave Foreman's classic book, "Ecodefense."

EARTH FIRST! is a verb. It is spirit manifested as action! We feel the joy and humor as well as the pain and anguish. We are a warrior society deeply in love with the Earth of which we are apart. We all have different skills, different tactics. We each recognize that to any less

than everything we can, is not enough. You aren't just fighting for the Earth, you ARE THE EARTH. And it's all up to you...

THE EARTH FIRST! JOURNAL, PO Box 5176, Missoula, MT, 59806

SUGGESTED READING: Talking Leaves (the magazine of deep ecology, 1430 Willamette #367, Eugene OR 97401), and the following books:

- GREEN RAGE, Christopher Manes
- GREAT COSMIC MOTHER, Mor/Sjoo
- SIMPLE IN MEANS, RICH IN ENDS, Bill Devall
- THE DREAM OF THE EARTH, Thomas Berry
- FULL CIRCLE, Lone Wolf Circles
- TRUTH OR DARE, Starhawk
- THE PRACTICE OF THE WILD, Gary