

THE ENVIRONMENTAL SHAKEDOWN OF AMERICAN TAXPAYERS

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**TAXPAYERS
PROTECTION
ALLIANCE**



Taxpayers Protection Alliance

The Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) is a non-profit non-partisan organization dedicated to educating the public through the research, analysis and dissemination of information on the government's effects on the economy. TPA, through its network of taxpayers will hold politicians accountable for the effects of their policies on the size, scope, efficiency and activity of government and offer real solutions to runaway deficits and debt. Through blogs, commentaries, and special spending alerts, TPA will publish timely exposés of government waste, fraud, and abuse. Recognizing the importance of reaching people through traditional and new media, TPA will utilize use blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to reach out to taxpayers and government officials. Ultimately recognizing that the greatest power of change rests with the millions of Americans across the country who are ready for a smaller more accountable government, TPA will be a catalyst for connecting taxpayers to their elected and non-elected officials.

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INTRODUCTION

Environmentally-focused nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are a valid and, oftentimes, valuable part of global political life. NGO's allow people with a shared interest or concern to impact policies on a multinational level. Much like nonprofit and political organizations in the United States, however, when tax dollars are used to fund NGOs, taxpayers are often forced to fund organizations that are at odds with their own beliefs and values.

Environmental NGOs are especially precarious to fund with American tax dollars for a number of reasons. As this study illustrates, environmental NGOs can be controversial in what they support. They can work in opposition to the improvement of the lives of people. They can fail to protect endangered animals and address environmental concerns. They can buy political favor. They can sell endorsements. They can misuse tax dollars. They can exaggerate and lie to make their point seem more appealing. They are unaccountable to taxpayers – and those taxpayers are on the hook for tens of millions of dollars every year.

Examples of taxpayer-funding of environmental NGOs include:

- \$138.3 million in 2010 to the World Wildlife Fund from taxpayer-funded agencies across the world;
- \$20 million in annually of American taxpayers' money to Sumatra for orangutan-related purposes through USAID;
- \$4.2 million to Wetlands International's 2011 budget;
- \$2.2 million to the Great Ape Conservation Fund in 2011; and
- \$44,977 to the Sumatran Orangutan Society in various grants and handouts.

In total, this report exposes and documents more than \$470 million in taxpayers' money used to subsidize questionable, radical, controversial environmental NGOs.

Beyond highlighting the expense of environmental NGOs to taxpayers, this report is an examination of three concerning aspects of environmental NGOs: Fraud and malfeasance plaguing the World Wildlife Fund, the orangutan lobby that is preventing much-needed development in two of the world's poorest areas and the convoluted funding structure that forces taxpayers to fund controversial NGOs.

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND SCANDALS

History

The World Wildlife Fund was founded in 1961 by 16 conservationists and powerful political figures.¹ Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, one of the founders of WWF and the organization's first president, was a former member of the German Nazi party.²

The organization tends to focus on endangered species, encouraging government involvement in environmental issues and recommending reduced consumption in order to improve the environment. WWF is active in 100 countries and claims more than 4 million members.³

WWF's Trail of Tears

A 2011 documentary by award-winning German filmmaker Wilfried Huismann unearthed several startling discoveries about WWF's disregard for native populations, inability to protect the animals they claim to serve and culpability in harming the environment. The film, "The Pact with the Panda," exposes WWF's forced

displacement of more than a million native inhabitants in India and thousands more in Indonesia in an effort to protect the local tiger population. Even though these indigenous people lived alongside tigers for centuries, WWF's Tiger Project has forced them to reestablish life elsewhere. Beyond disturbing the life, culture and society of more than a million people, this forced exile has been a failure in its quest to increase the tiger population. Fewer tigers exist now in India than before the displacement scheme began.⁴

While the aboriginal people sharing a habitat with India's tiger population were forced to leave their land, the WWF has apparently capitalized on the region as a lucrative funding opportunity. According to the documentary, what few tigers remain are chased around their reserve by eco-tourists piled in a fleet of 155 jeeps for eight hours a day. These guests pay the WWF's own travel company roughly \$10,000 each for the vacation experience. While the WWF is lining its pockets from inviting travelers into the tiger preserve, local environmentalists complain that the WWF is exploiting the local area and destroying delicate forest.⁵

Putting profit before the environment is nothing new for WWF. In 2008, while serving as a voice of alarm about the role of carbon emissions in climate change, the WWF chartered an 88-seat jet for a 24 day around-the-world wildlife viewing excursion. The journey produced 14 tons of CO₂ per person in three and a half weeks. That is more than carbon dioxide than the average person produces in three and a half years. This hypocrisy was made bearable to WWF since they were able to charge a price tag of \$64,950 per person for the trip.⁶

Protectionist Policies

Under the guise of protecting the forest of Indonesia, WWF led an effort to lobby for trade restrictions against Indonesian pulp, paper, and palm oil. These efforts to impose trade barriers against Indonesian goods are being driven by North American, European and Australian competitors who produce the same products as the Indonesian companies, but were being threatened by the lower price of the Indonesian goods.⁷ The financial support of the North American, European and Australian companies led WWF to push for laws to keep these Indonesian products from entering the marketplace.

Exaggerated Figures

The practice of illegal logging, while regrettable at any level, is apparently not nearly as common as WWF would have the public believe. The WWF estimates that illegal logging in Russia accounts for a quarter of all timber production in Russia and more than 70% of all logging in parts of Africa and Asia. More precise estimates show that illegal logging likely accounts for 5 – 10% of the world's timber production, indicating the WWF figures are bloated, possibly intentionally to gain political traction, attract media exposure and garner public concern.⁸

Harming Producers and Consumers

This year, WWF began ramping up existing efforts to impose stifling regulations on the Australian beef industry. These so-called "sustainable beef standards" would limit the ability to produce beef, resulting in higher prices for consumers, lower income for farmers and less food for the world's population.⁹

Fraud in Tanzania

The World Wildlife Fund became embroiled in a scandal in early 2012 when a series of investigations and audits discovered that the organization's employees in Tanzania were embezzling hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars.

In December 2011, after allegations of "inappropriate expense reporting" were reported in WWF's Tanzanian office, the organization commissioned Ernst & Young to conduct an independent investigation into the matter.¹⁰ In a press release, WWF estimated the amount of the alleged fraud at approximately \$200,000.¹¹ When news of WWF's financial malfeasance in Tanzania became public, Norway announced it was halting two environmental aid projects in the country managed by WWF. The Norwegian government asked the WWF to reimburse the missing funds.¹²

The Ernst & Young audit discovered that the fraud was twice as bad as WWF suspected. Over \$400,000 "misappropriated by the WWF local staff who forged hotel [and] taxi receipts," according to the Daily News, a local newspaper in Tanzania.¹³

In the wake of the investigation, eight employees were terminated, and six resigned, according to the WWF.¹⁴ Ernst & Young confirmed that all eight project employees working on two WWF projects funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted fictitious hotel receipts during 2011. According to the audit, “project employees would claim to stay in a certain hotel but would instead stay in a cheaper hotel, and then submit falsified receipts for higher amounts from the hotel where they claimed to stay.”¹⁵

United States taxpayers also lost money as a result of the WWF’s fraud in Tanzania. Ernst & Young discovered that two projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were also rife with abuse. At least “five WWF project staff were confirmed to have submitted fictitious hotel receipts during 2011,” according to the audit.¹⁶

Loss of Trust in WWF

The Tanzanian WWF scandal led *The Commentator*, an international news and watchdog website, to ask, “why do we continue to trust NGOs with opaque processes to perform work that sees so much of Western taxpayers’ money poured into inane projects?”¹⁷

Additionally, the news site pointed out that, in 2010, all the various branches of WWF received approximately \$138.3 million from taxpayer-funded agencies including U.K.’s Department for International Development, the World Bank and USAID. According to *The Commentator*, taxpayers funded 17 percent of the WWF’s total budget. “Fundraising” costs constituted 18 percent of the money WWF spent in 2010. In other words, taxpayers are paying for WWF’s entire fundraising budget. Sadly, only 55 percent of the WWF budget actually goes to programs – the things the organization ostensibly does to accomplish its mission.¹⁸

“If something like [the Tanzania fraud scandal] occurred on the watch of BP or Shell or some other ‘evil oil-grubbing capitalist entity’, the Guardian and the BBC would have front page splashes for days – sending scores of correspondents abroad to root out the corruption,” *The Commentator* correctly points out.¹⁹

Local Villagers Evicted

Before the fraud was uncovered, WWF already had a scandal on its hands in Tanzania. In November 2011, Prince Charles, who serves as president of WWF UK, visited Tanzania to present five local leaders with “Living Planet” awards for their work in WWF projects the delta of the Rufiji River, which holds the world’s largest mangrove forest.

According to an article by Christopher Booker in *The Telegraph*, “Shortly before the Prince’s arrival, it was revealed that thousands of villagers had been evicted from the forest, their huts in the paddy fields torched and their coconut palms felled. This was carried out by the Tanzanian government’s Forestry and Beekeeping Division, with which WWF has been working.”²⁰

WWF Policies Questioned

If verified fraud and strong allegations that WWF played a part in throwing native villagers out of their homes and destroying their environment weren’t already enough to make taxpayers and government officials furious at WWF, there was still another black eye for WWF in Tanzania. Apparently, their conservation efforts were harmful to the Tanzanian people.

Two American professors published a study of the Rufiji River delta in a scientific journal, titled “The REDD menace: resurgent protectionism in mangrove forests”. Booker reports that the study “was highly critical of the so-called ‘fortress conservation policy’ advocated by WWF,” and it claimed that WWF efforts were “seriously damaging the traditional life of those local communities which had been sustainably farming and fishing in the area for centuries.”²¹

PREVENTING DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD'S POOREST PLACES

Several international NGOs do more harm than good when it comes to helping native people get out of dire poverty and create a sustainable livelihood. Two of the worst culprits are Wetlands International and the Sumatran Orangutan Society. These organizations have exploited the widely agreeable goal of protecting orangutans – a species whose populations have stabilized and have significant acreage set aside for protected living in their natural habitat – in an attempt to prevent economic development and stifle the vital palm oil industry.

These organizations, despite their controversial stances and their lack of accountability to nations and their taxpayers, each receive significant levels of government funding. In a perfect world, it is difficult to justify giving tax dollars to environmental NGOs. In the current economic environment, it is almost impossible to defend.

Wetlands International

Wetlands International is an NGO based in the Netherlands with a focus on wetland preservation and water birds. In recent years, the organization created a stir by becoming involved in aspects of the environmental movement beyond its traditional scope of action, including climate change, green economy initiatives and reducing threats related to natural and man-made disasters. Wetlands International is notable for relying more heavily on government funding than most NGOs.

History & Organizational Structure

Wetlands International is known by many as a global busybody organization that gloms onto every trendy environmental concern sure to attract money from donors and grants from governments. That was not always the case. The organization began in 1937 as a small British organization focused on protecting waterfowl. By 1996, the organization, then called the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, had grown large enough to absorb two other regional wetlands organizations, Wetlands for the Americas and the Asian Wetlands Bureau, to become an international organization. The new organization of unified regional groups adopted the name “Wetlands International” and established its headquarters in central Netherlands.²²

Funding

In 2011, \$4.2 million of Wetlands International’s \$6.3 million budget – a full two-thirds of the total amount – came courtesy of taxpayers.²³ In order to stuff their coffers with \$4.2 million in public funds, Wetlands International managed to shake down taxpayers from a startling number of nations – 16 in all – including:

Australia	Malaysia
Belgium	Netherlands
Canada	Niger
France	Senegal
Gambia	Spain
Germany	Switzerland
India	United Kingdom
Japan	United States ²⁴

That list of donor countries does not include taxpayer-funded intergovernmental organizations that also gave tax dollars to Wetlands International such as the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank.²⁵

Taxpayer-Funded Projects

Recent examples of U.S. tax dollars funding Wetlands International projects includes the following U.S. Fish and Wildlife service handouts:

- \$15,000 for a neotropical waterbird monitoring program;²⁶
- \$6,000 for a coastal wetland conservation and aquaculture program;²⁷
- \$5,000 for unspecified professional services in India; and²⁸
- \$1,650 for surveying and mapping services.²⁹

Additionally, the Department of the Interior gave Wetlands International \$5,000 to perform water quality studies in 2003.³⁰

Questionable Stances

One of the NGOs funding the work of Wetlands International received widespread backlash in 2002 for its use of anti-Semitic symbolism and encouraging the boycott of Israeli products. Oxfam Novib, a Netherlands-based microfinance fund and Wetlands International donor, produced a poster featuring anti-Semitic themes called for the boycott of Israeli goods and travel to Israel.³¹

Wetlands International accepts funding from Oxfam Novib to fund a portion of its anti-shrimp farming scheme. In some of the poorest parts of Southeast Asia, local residents are earning a living and supporting their families by turning areas of mangrove swamps into small shrimp farming ponds. Wetlands International is leading a furious campaign to take away the livelihoods of these shrimp farmers because, the organization claims, the shrimp ponds harm the biodiversity of the region.³²

Long outspoken against the environmental harms of conventional petroleum-based fuels, Wetlands International came out in opposition to biofuels as well in a 2010 study.³³ By condemning both traditional fuels and biofuels, the organization alienated many supporters who are concerned about the environment and seek out the most environmentally-friendly options, but for whom alternative energy vehicles are not yet a realistic option.

Putting Humans Last

In Indonesia and Malaysia, where people are draining peat swamps to grow profitable crops, rather than compromising forests or infringing upon the habitat of endangered species, Wetlands International is working to prevent these enterprising farmers from using their land. Even though peat bogs have been drained so that peat could be used as fuel and farmland for centuries, Wetlands International has decided that the swamps are too dangerous to allow indigenous workers to use as a source of income and food. Peat, or decaying plant matter, is rich in carbon dioxide and it is believed by Wetlands International that if this CO₂ from these plants were released into the atmosphere it could cause dire consequences. As a result, Wetlands International is fighting a campaign to leave these pools of stagnant water and dead plants alone, rather than use them to support local people.³⁴

One of Wetlands International's most frustrating stances involves encouraging additional bureaucracy for administering the "Adaptation Fund." The Adaptation Fund is a pool of money intended to discourage developing nations from growing their economies by usual methods and traditional jobs, funding clean energy and green jobs instead. The scheme has stifled the growth of communities following the rules that accompany the money. Still, Wetlands International is calling for additional environmental impact assessments on the fund's recipient communities, which will only serve keep the community's residents poorer longer.³⁵

Political Activities

Wetlands International is involved in direct and indirect lobbying efforts "to influence industry standards, regulation and community practices." The group hopes to increase government involvement in the oil, gas and biofuels sectors, as well as the palm oil and soy industries.³⁶ Of course, given Wetlands International's reliance on tax money, taxpayers' hard-earned dollars are ultimately used for these controversial lobbying efforts.

Sumatran Orangutan Society

The Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS) is one of several NGOs with the stated purpose of helping to protect and expand the orangutan population native to the Indonesian island of Sumatra. While the goal may appear noble, SOS and many of their counterparts exaggerate claims about the dangers posed to Sumatran Orangutans by agricultural activities in Indonesia. As a result, the NGOs have been successful in preventing much-needed economic development in extraordinarily poor areas of rural Indonesia. In addition, SOS has managed to persuade governments across the globe to spend millions of tax dollars to support SOS and other NGOs with untenable anti-economic development stances, as well as funding various projects on the ground in Indonesia that have done little to benefit the orangutans or the people of Sumatra.

History & Organizational Structure

SOS was founded in 1997 by a former trapeze artist. The organization claims three offices: One in Bali, one in Oxford, England and one in Texas.

The Texas "office" is simply a home in DeSoto, a Dallas bedroom community, which apparently serves little purpose. Searches for the organization's Internal Revenue Service records indicated that their annual submissions were either not up to date, or SOS had raised no money in the U.S. for years. According to the IRS, SOS's American headquarters are located out of West Burlington, Iowa, not Texas, as the organization's website indicates.³⁷

The other two offices also do little to inspire confidence in the organization. The Oxford headquarters are located in a former concert venue that provides reduced price offices for environmental groups and socialist-leaning organizations.³⁸ The SOS website assures visitors to their Indonesia office that the building is near the "Taco Casa."³⁹

What the organization apparently lacks in credibility, it makes up for in extreme claims about the dangers facing orangutans. Fear mongering appears to be a valuable way to spur business for its \$3,364 "Sumatran Jungle Treks" and other sightseeing adventures that fill the organization's coffers.⁴⁰

SOS has a side organization, the Orangutan Information Centre (OIC), which was founded to serve as the front group for SOS in Indonesia.⁴¹

Funding

A collection of NGOs claiming to protect Sumatran orangutans have become a drain on taxpayers in the United States and across the globe, while preventing the native population in the area – some of the poorest people in the world – from improving their lives.

According to records submitted by the SOS to England's Charity Commission, the SOS in particular relies heavily on government support for funding. Of the SOS's £111,952 (\$177,287 USD) budget in 2011, only £46,537 (\$73,696 USD) came by way of private donations and membership fees. Taxpayers from around the world funded most of the £28,402 (\$44,977 USD) the organization received in grants. Another £25,065 (\$39,693 USD) came from what appears to be the organization's primary business, expensive, high-margin vacations to Sumatra to visit orangutans in their natural habitat.⁴²

Orangutan-focused NGOs, including the Sumatran Orangutan Society and its sister organization, the Orangutan Information Centre, as well as Orangutan Foundation International and the Orang Utan Republik Foundation receive money each year from taxpayers across the world. Taxpayers in the United States, Great Britain, Australia, European Union member countries, Taiwan, Indonesia and United Nations member countries all contribute handsomely to controversial wildlife projects related to Sumatran orangutans. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a branch of the Department of the Interior has provided regular funding to Sumatran Orangutan Society and other organizations focused on the Indonesian orangutans through the Great Ape Conservation Fund.

In 2011, taxpayers spent \$2.2 million funding the Great Ape Conservation Fund, a substantial portion of which are granted to efforts related to the Sumatran orangutan.⁴³ Federal spending on Sumatran orangutans

is nothing new. Congress distributed \$9.2 million in federal money through the Great Ape Conservation Fund during the five-year period from 2006 to 2010.⁴⁴

Taxpayer-Funded Projects

Much of the tax money shuttled through the Great Ape Conservation Fund is used on frivolous projects that did little to actually benefit orangutans, such as:

- \$51,949 to build an orangutan interpretive center in rural Indonesia;⁴⁵
- \$50,000 to fund school presentations and field trips through orangutan habitat to raise awareness of orangutans;⁴⁶
- \$48,500 to develop curricula to teach humans to stay away from orangutans;⁴⁷
- \$47,300 to teach an indigenous Sumatran community that has hunted orangutan for centuries that the practice is actually a bad thing;⁴⁸
- \$37,300 for a marketing effort aimed at winning public support for controversial conservation projects;⁴⁹
- \$35,558 to lobby local government officials in Indonesia and Malaysia regarding orangutan issues;⁵⁰
- \$24,670 to come up with a plan for dealing with orangutans in an area called the Sebangau Swamp;⁵¹
- \$23,411 to provide grant writing workshops to Indonesian environmental activists so they can submit requests for even more money;⁵²
- \$21,830 to educate 300 Indonesian children about orangutan conservation using a hands-on learning experience; and⁵³
- \$19,652 to promote orangutan conservation awareness through methods such as a festival and a mobile library unit.⁵⁴

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not the only federal agency funding projects related to the orangutan. USAID, routinely sends upwards of \$20 million in American taxpayers' money to Sumatra each year for orangutan-related purposes.

During the 2008 fiscal year, USAID spent \$19 million to subsidize Indonesian orangutan conservation.⁵⁵ In 2009, USAID shipped \$20.6 million in U.S. taxpayers' money to Indonesia to manage orangutans.⁵⁶ By 2010, that amount increased to \$23 million in support for all of Indonesia's biodiversity and forestry funding, most of which revolved around orangutan conservation projects.⁵⁷

Inaccuracies and Misleading Claims

Much of the taxpayer funding that falls into the hands of organizations such as the Sumatran Orangutan Society is aimed at restricting development through preventing development and stifling agricultural jobs. A frequent whipping boy for Indonesia and Malaysia-focused environmental and orangutan protection NGO's is the palm oil industry. Palm oil is the oil extracted from the edible fruit of the oil palm. Long used as a cooking oil in Asia and Africa, palm oil is now commonly utilized instead to produce biofuel.

Most of the world's oil palm trees are grown on a few islands in Malaysia and Indonesia.⁵⁸ Since some of these islands are shared with orangutans, NGOs such as SOS claim that the orangutan population is affected by palm oil. This assertion appears more tied to the fundraising opportunity created by a narrative claiming that industry is impacting orangutans than it is related to the truth. After all, despite what many NGOs claim, the habitat of Sumatran Orangutans is already preserved through protected areas and safeguarded by a number of laws.⁵⁹

Indonesia is one of the world's most densely populated countries. Still, 25% of the country's land mass, including the Sumatran Orangutan's habitat, is reserved for forest conservation. Malaysia is committed to maintaining more than 50% of the country's forest cover. Agricultural cultivation occurs on areas allotted for commercial production.⁶⁰ In Malaysia, only 17.5% of the country's land was under permanent crops as of 2005.⁶¹ Economist Keith Boyfield

determined that increases in palm oil cultivation has taken place at the expense of other, less valuable, crops rather than by taking over virgin forest or crowding into orangutan habitat.⁶²

The Sumatran Orangutan Society actively lobbies to end the palm oil industry, as well as other forms of agriculture and commercial development on the island of Sumatra in the name of preventing deforestation and preserving orangutan habitat. This movement to stifle development and prosperity keeps rural Sumatran residents, many of whom are among the poorest people in the world, from earning money needed to pull themselves and their families out of agonizing poverty. This lack of development is, in fact, the leading cause of deforestation in Sumatra. As much as 70% of the forest land cleared “is cleared by the poor to secure fuel wood, or produce food or make space for housing,” according to Kenyan Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai.⁶³

Putting Humans Last

It is a quite unusual when an aid organization is accused of working on behalf of U.S. Intelligence services. But then, Development Alternatives, Inc (DAI) is perhaps not an ordinary aid organization. According to the New York Times, the federal government used Development Alternatives, Inc. to channel money into Venezuela to create civil unrest. Additionally, the Cuban government has accused the organization of doing the bidding of U.S. Intelligence in that country.

DAI is not active just in Latin America, however. In fact, it is running operations in Sumatra and Indonesian Borneo under a \$10 million grant in 2007 from USAID. DAI claims its efforts are in the name of orangutan protection. This is curious, and if past is prologue, DAI may be undertaking more sinister operations at the behest of certain U.S. interests.

After all, palm oil and paper production in the area has proven highly competitive with American soybeans and pulp and paper industries, enjoying higher yields and lower production costs. The result is that millions have been raised out of poverty in Indonesia and Malaysia and consumer prices have declined for American consumers. But this trend has not been without its detractors, including American industries that have become less competitive in today’s globalized economy.

Domestic industries went so far as to file a trade complaint in 2011, accusing foreign producers of high quality paper of dumping in the U.S. market. This reflects a traditional means of engaging political allies to shield industries from competitive imports.

Is DAI working in tandem with American industry to attack Indonesian and Malaysian industries? In light of their close relationship with USAID, it is a question worth asking. The end result of DAI’s efforts – reduced development and competition – begs the question of how closely linked the two interests are.

Palm oil and paper industries are a driving force for prosperity. The average resident of rural Indonesia currently lives on less than \$2 per day. Workers in palm fruit harvesting, for example, regularly earn over \$30 per day. Yet these industries are being attacked. It is cause for serious concern when U.S. Government officials or agencies are involved in funding organizations such as DAI, which have been involved in covert operations.

With no good explanation, the Federal Government is spending American taxpayers’ money promoting campaigns which could keep thousands – perhaps millions – of Indonesians from breaking out of poverty and towards prosperity.

Rather than celebrating the accomplishments of the palm oil industry in creating jobs for poor rural Indonesians and Malaysians while protecting the natural habitat of the orangutan population, orangutan activists seem intent on extinguishing an industry responsible for bringing \$14.5 billion annually into Indonesia.⁶⁴ Malaysian exports of palm oil products contributed more than \$27 billion to Malaysia’s gross national income in 2011.⁶⁵

THE TANGLED FINANCIAL WEB OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS

World Wildlife Fund

The World Wildlife Fund is a powerful, yet controversial, environmental activism and research group. On its website, WWF claims to be the world's largest environmental organization.⁶⁶

Taxpayer Funding

Throughout its history, WWF has bullied the federal government into ponying up millions in tax dollars to underwrite its divisive efforts. As a result, American taxpayers are forced to support the WWF's work, whether they agree with the WWF's mission, politics or efforts.

This fiscal year, Congress and various federal bureaucracies are expected to funnel \$7.3 million in U.S. taxpayers' money to WWF.⁶⁷

Since 2000, the World Wildlife Fund has received \$97 million in federal grants and other handouts funded by tax dollars.⁶⁸

The United States is far from the only nation that lines WWF's coffers with taxpayer-funded government subsidies. In 2010 alone, countries around the globe redistributed \$139 million from taxpayers to WWF.⁶⁹ America constituted \$17.3 million – about 12% – of that total.

Campaign Contributions for Tax Dollars

In the five year period from 2002–2006, WWF averaged \$503,118 in taxpayer-funded handouts. Over the next five years, however, WWF's government subsidies skyrocketed to an average of \$16.9 million per year.

Despite relatively small increase in federal spending from 2006 to 2007 of 2.8%, the increase in federal dollars appropriated to the World Wildlife Fund exploded by 2,263% – or 22.6 times – the previous years' amount.⁷⁰

The surge in federal dollars pouring into WWF coffers appears to be the consequence of a perfect storm of factors, resulting in a tremendous expense to taxpayers. During the 2006 elections, Democrats retook control of the House of Representatives for the first time in a dozen years, putting the party in prime position to reward favorite interest groups with federal dollars. On top of that, the reception of *An Inconvenient Truth* and former Vice President Al Gore's resulting Nobel Peace Prize brought heightened interest and concern to environmental issues.

In truth, the sudden and massive increase in federal dollars granted to WWF appears to be correlated with federal campaign donations made by members of the WWF's board of directors. During the 2006 congressional election cycle, members of the WWF board of directors poured \$347,891 in campaign donations to the Democratic Party, Democratic candidates or PACs that supported Democratic candidates. In fact, 82.5% of all political donations made by the 32 individuals serving on the WWF board of directors in 2006 went to Democrats or liberal campaign efforts.

The campaign contributions made by individuals associated with WWF did not end with board members. Since 2000, federal campaign finance records indicate that WWF employees have given 104 separate federal campaign donations totaling \$50,461. Democratic candidates and liberal PACs, such as MoveOn.org and EMILY's List, received 103 of the 104 donations given by WWF employees.

In an apparent quid pro quo in which hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions were swapped for millions in federal handouts, once the Democrats that WWF board members and employees so heavily supported took office, the organization received levels of federal funding previously unheard of for a private environmental nonprofit group.

WWF's habit of enticing Members of Congress to support their efforts shows no signs of slowing. In August 2011, WWF funded a portion of a 10-day junket to Botswana and South Africa for four Congressmen and

three of their wives. The trip, which costs as much as \$30,000 per Congressman, included a wild game drive in which the lawmakers took part in chasing lions and elephants across a wildlife reserve.⁷¹

Employee Salaries

According to the organization's most recent publically available Form 990, in 2009 WWF gathered an impressive \$177.7 million in revenue. During the same year, WWF spent even more – an astounding \$179.5 million.

Much of the \$179.5 million the WWF burned through in 2009 went to its army of 507 employees. WWF's leadership team, it turns out, are among the most well-compensated nonprofit sector workers in the world. Carter Roberts, WWF's president, pocketed a \$425,000 salary and another \$30,147 in benefits and other compensation in 2009. Marcia Marsh, the chief operating officer of the World Wildlife Fund earns over \$300,000 in salary and benefits. In fact, in 2009, no fewer than 18 U.S.-based WWF employees raked in more than \$200,000 in salary and benefits.

Reserve Fund

Thanks largely to the massive amounts of government subsidies the organization receives each year, the WWF currently maintains a fund balance of \$238.1 million. That means that taxpayers are forced to pour millions of dollars each year into an organization with nearly a quarter of a billion dollars sitting in the bank. The organization is extraordinarily rich and certainly does not need a bailout courtesy of taxpayers to keep the lights on.

Sierra Club

History

Founded in 1892 by the great conservationist John Muir with the mission to "explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast," the organization has been overtaken by anti-industry, anti-growth extremists who cost taxpayers millions by suing government over land use and endangered species issues.⁷² In addition, the Sierra Club pushes to take land out of the hands of private owners for collectivist purposes.

Since 2011, the Sierra Club has used a portion of the funding it has received from a myriad of questionable sources to, among other extremist positions, call for the boycott of palm oil, which would devastate the indigenous people of Malaysia and Indonesia.⁷³

Funding

According to IRS records, in 2010, the Sierra Club Foundation claimed gross receipts topping \$70.2 million – money that went primarily towards subsidizing their environmental work.⁷⁴ Their lobbying and activist arm brought in considerably more, with gross receipts of \$92.9 million.⁷⁵

Between 1991-2012 the controversial Tides Foundation and the Tides center combined to donate approximately \$5 million to the Sierra Club.⁷⁶

In addition to "usual suspect" liberal foundations, the Sierra Club was caught in a compromised funding arrangement with the natural gas industry in early 2012. The Sierra Club received \$26 million from natural gas interests to fund an anti-coal initiative. Among the campaigns funded by the donation was an effort to smear new coal technology even though it generates energy as clean as that produced by natural gas.⁷⁷

Salaries

The Sierra Club pays its employees with salaries that are extraordinarily competitive for any industry and almost unheard of in the nonprofit world. The organization's highest-compensated (considering salary, plus

benefits) employees include:

- Deborah Sorondo, *Chief Operating Officer* - \$271,657
- Carl Pope, *Executive Director* - \$235,786
- Louis Barnes, *Chief Financial Officer* - \$215,821
- Bob Sipchen, *Communications Director* - \$214,484
- Jackie Brown, *Chief Advancement Officer* - \$209,608
- Bruce Hamilton, *Deputy Executive Director* - \$200,493
- David Simon, *Director of Information* - \$195,916
- Susan De La Rosa, *Director of Human Resources* - \$182,821⁷⁸

Tides Foundation

While extremist environmental nonprofits often syphon dollars directly from taxpayers, they snag tax dollars indirectly, as well often via handouts from the controversial – and taxpayer subsidized – Tides Foundation.

The Tides Foundation operates as a pass-through, allowing private charities and foundations to direct “money to a spectrum of left-wing organizations which the original donors would not or could not support on their own.”⁷⁹

As a result mainstream organizations can fund controversial or radical organizations with no backlash, since the money an organization receives through the Tides Foundation, ultimately, cannot be traced back to the original donor.

In 2010, the Tides Foundation and its sister organizations, the Tides Center and Tides Shared Spaces – all three of which generally share in, and disburse from, the same pots of money – combined for a staggering \$134 million budget.⁸⁰

A sizeable portion of the Tides Foundation’s funding has come from George Soros. The billionaire funder of dozens of socialist, anti-free market and extremist environmental organizations has donated more than \$7 million to the Tides Foundation.⁸¹

All of that money goes to some very contentious efforts.

Notably, the Tides Foundation apparently bankrolled a portion of the anti-capitalist Occupy Wall Street Movement and assisted in the publication of the “Occupy Wall Street Journal,” a free, full color newspaper.⁸² Another of the organizations funded by the Tides Foundation was ACORN, the disgraced collection of community-based organizations ultimately disbanded after videos surfaced showing a number of ACORN employees involved in criminal behavior.

In the aftermath of ACORN’s embarrassing downfall, it was discovered that Drummond Pike, the sixties radical who founded the Tides Foundation, paid approximately \$700,000 to cover money embezzled by the brother of ACORN founder Wade Rathke. Pike gave the hefty payoff in hopes of preventing a financial investigation that might reveal the name of the Tides Foundation’s secret benefactors.⁸³

To make matters worse, the shady Tides Foundation and its sister groups have racked up millions of dollars in tax money in recent years. Since 2000, the Tides Foundation and the Tides Center have combined to devour \$4.4 million in federal funding, according to the government spending database USASpending.gov.⁸⁴

As a result of these taxpayer subsidies that go to underwriting the Tides Foundation, tax dollars are used in almost every effort the organization undertakes. This includes funding a number of very controversial and dubious environmental NGOs and nonprofits.

In a five-year period between 2005 and 2009, the Tides Foundation granted \$161,000 to WWF projects in the United States and Canada.⁸⁵

Various Sierra Club organizations also pocketed a total of \$3 million in Tides Foundation funding during the same period.

Recommendations

In order to prevent tax dollars from being used to fund NGOs that are not consistent with the best interest of the United States, are offensive to taxpayers or stifle the opportunity for prosperity for people in developing nations, Congress should stop all federal funding of international environmental organizations.

When NGOs receive government support, it compromises their independence. They are no longer “nongovernmental organizations,” instead becoming de facto government agencies, ultimately manipulated by governments to act on their behalf in exchange for taxpayers’ cash.

To make matters worse, federal tax dollars are frequently either misused or unaccounted for by environmental NGOs. If these NGOs continue to receive federal funding, it should come with the stipulation that they are legally required to repay the people of the United States for any misused or missing tax dollars.

Many environmental NGOs, no matter how well-intentioned, encourage policies that restrict the opportunity for economic growth. Increasing personal wealth and improving living conditions in developing nations is the most surefire way to ensure that people have the time and resources to focus on environmental concerns, rather than basic necessities. No tax dollars should ever support policies that restrict the ability of people from earning a living or bettering their lives.

If and when federal tax dollars are used to fund environmental NGOs, it should be required that the NGOs be subject to the same audits that federal agencies face, as well as a comprehensive review of the impact of their efforts on the economic development of any relevant native populations.

Taking such a step would avoid unnecessary funding controversies while reflecting a position supportive of economic growth and prosperity. It would also encourage American citizens to donate their own money to support causes in which they believe, rather than having their tax dollars spent on controversial organizations chosen by Congress and bureaucrats.

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