

World Wildlife Fund

Organization: World Wildlife Fund

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Description Operating in over one hundred countries, employing 4,000 people globally, and boasting five million supporters on five continents, the World Wildlife Fund, or WWF, is one of the world's largest environmental organizations. WWF was founded on 11 September 1961 by, among others, Sir Julian Huxley, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, Max Nicholson, and Sir Peter Scott. Registered under Swiss law as an independent foundation, the WWF is governed by a Board of Trustees under the guidance of an international president. Past presidents have included Prince Bernard of the Netherlands (1962-1976), former head of Royal Dutch Shell, John H. Loudon (1976-1981), and the Duke of Edinburgh (1981-1996). The current president is Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria (2001 – present).

WWF is a "global conservation organization" that works to "stop and eventually reverse environmental degradation and... build a future where people live in harmony with nature" (www.panda.org). Among their guiding principles WWF has pledged to "be global, multicultural and non party political," and to "involve local communities and indigenous peoples in the planning and execution of its field programmes, respecting their cultural as well as economic needs"(www.panda.org). In order to accomplish their goals, WWF has identified six priority global issues: climate change, forests, freshwater, marine, species, and toxics. They have also created the "Global 200" initiative in which two hundred ecoregions that represent areas of globally outstanding biodiversity are given priority within the conservation agenda. In addition to these prioritized areas, WWF attempts to influence socio-economic and conservation policy issues related to agriculture, trade and investment, macroeconomics, sustainable development, and Indigenous peoples. Although the WWF usually works on the local/national level, it also works more broadly to influence regional policy, as well as the policies of global economic institutions such as the World Bank. Currently funding almost 2,000 projects, WWF works to accomplish its goals through field projects, scientific research, public education, and advising on policy.

Despite its international success there are some animal welfare organizations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, that oppose some of WWF's policies. WWF does not prohibit sport hunting or culling, nor do they oppose sealing, whaling, or the wolf hunt. In its defence, WWF states that: "We are not an animal welfare organization. We support the hunting and consumption of wild animals provided the harvesting does not threaten the long-term survival of wildlife populations" (quoted at

www.WickedWildlifeFund.com).

In addition to this issue of animal welfare, there is also a great deal of controversy surrounding WWF's relations with Indigenous and traditional peoples. Although WWF claims to maintain partnerships with Indigenous peoples who live in ecologically-sensitive areas, complaints about WWF's treatment of Indigenous peoples have emerged all over the world. One complaint is that the establishment of Protected Areas and National Parks has often led to the eviction of Indigenous and traditional peoples from their lands and has cut short the land claims being made by these peoples.

There are also concerns about the conflicts of interest that arise from the funding relationships that WWF has with governments, multilateral agencies, and private corporations. Corporations such as Shell, ExxonMobile and Monsanto are major funders of WWF, meaning that WWF is allying "with forces that are destroying the world's remaining ecosystems" (Chapin 2004). This funding has several consequences. For example, WWF cannot ally itself with Indigenous peoples who are fighting these corporation's activities without endangering their funding, and their government and corporate ties mean that they may not oppose the government corruption and inaction that is often responsible for environmental degradation. WWF excuses its lack of action in "national matters" with the suggestion that they wish to remain apolitical, but critics believe that WWF is more concerned with the science of biodiversity than social realities.

- Work Cited: **Chapin, Mac.** 2004. A challenge to conservationists. *World Watch* 17: 6.
- Suggested Reading: **Wicked Wildlife Fund website.** www.WickedWildlifeFund.com (accessed 16 August 2005).
- World Wildlife Fund website.** www.panda.org (accessed 16 August 2005).