**Reflections on Leopold**

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A grizzly bear dips his paw into a crystal clear stream and pulls out one of the numerous salmon swimming along. A pack of wolves prowls around the edge of the forest searching for prey. In the presence of all this wildlife, there is an absence of civilization, this place is wild. This place is the largest expanse of temperate rainforest left in the world and one of the last great wild places on earth. Unfortunately, this wilderness may not last very long. Developers have found oil in this area and want to begin a mass drilling project in the region.

If Aldo Leopold has taught me anything, it is that this oil drilling must never happen. In this land many people would see the oil and how lucrative that would be, but Leopold would take a different perspective. He wouldn’t see the 35000 square miles of rainforest as a commodity, but as one big organism flourishing with all of its parts in place. If drilling were to occur, that organism would no longer be a flourishing ecosystem, but instead a sickened piece of land desperately needing the medicine of conservation. Is this what we would give up for lower gas prices? The number of salmon running in the now murky creek would dwindle, the grizzlies would falter as a result, and the wolves would be nowhere to be seen, and mechanized man would have succeeded yet again in completely conquering the wild.

Aldo Leopold was a man ahead of his time in his writings about conservation, and after reading them I have a greater understanding of the importance of the land we live on. My newfound understand is largely a result of his most famous essay, *The Land Ethic.* The *Land Ethic* deals with how land should be treated by all of us. An overarching theme in this essay is that land must not be looked at as a mere commodity, but as something much greater than that. Every time man has seen an opportunity to make money on the land he makes the money and destroys the land as well leaving it as a problem for the future generations to solve. For instance the Chesapeake Bay’s oyster population; the oysters of the Chesapeake Bay were once so numerous that their reefs would be a hazard to navigating ships. Now to find an actual upright reef would be a special discovery. This is just one example of the many times mechanized man has destroyed the land, and finally someone stepped up to write a code dealing with the land, so that this generation, instead of continuing to harm the land, may actually start to heal the land and give our great grandchildren a place to live.

Although Leopold wrote many great pieces, I think his greatest piece of writing deals with the time he shot a wolf. He shot the wolf and as he was arriving at his prey he caught a glimpse of green fire in the eyes of the wolf. The green fire died as the wolf died and I think that the green fire is incredibly symbolic in this scene. The green fire represents the wildness not only of the wolf, but of the whole world we live in and as that wolf died a piece of earth’s wildness also died. If we continue to live in our lavish ways, destroying the world we live in, we will destroy all the green fire that still exists and that world sounds awfully miserable to me.