

Wilderness Watch

Rod Nash, Author of *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Speaks in Hamilton September 19

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Roderick Nash, Ph.D., author of *Wilderness and the American Mind*, will speak at the Civic Auditorium in Hamilton at 7 P.M. September 19. The title of his speech is “The Meaning of Wilderness and the Rights of Nature.”

Now in its fourth edition and 25th printing, *Wilderness and the American Mind* is Yale University Press’s all-time bestseller. MacMillian Publishing has called it the sixth most important book on the environment (Thoreau’s *Walden* is number five), and *Outside Magazine* named it one of the “Ten Books That Changed Our World.”

Nash’s book chronicles the 180-degree shift in America’s perceptions of nature, from the first settlers’ determination to “break the will” of all wildlands, to the first stirrings of appreciation of wilderness by mid-19th century landscape painters and writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, to the great charismatic conservationists such as John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Bob Marshall, whose activism culminated in the Wilderness Act. After eight years of hearings and debate and 65 rewrites, Congress passed the Wilderness Act in 1964 with one dissenting vote in the House and only 12 in the Senate.

Nash puts the book in context this way, “We always thought of growth as synonymous with progress but maybe bigger is not better if it creates a civilization that is unsustainable.”

The author of nine other books and over 150 essays, Nash is now retired after 30 years as history professor and founder of the environmental studies program at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

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He's not your stereotypical academic but an outdoorsman and adventurer of considerable accomplishment: He's a whitewater-rafter more than 40,000 river miles, including more than 50 runs through the Grand Canyon on the Colorado River and numerous "first descents" on rivers in Alaska, California, and Peru. In his boat, "Forevergreen," he's explored the Pacific Coast from Mexico's Sea of Cortez to Glacier Bay in Alaska. And he's a life-long Powder Hound, who skis the highest reaches of the Colorado Rockies from his home in Crested Butte.

Wilderness and the American Mind is a classic and is routinely required reading in college courses throughout the country. Harvard biologist and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Edward O. Wilson has said, "Americans in particular need this historical perspective to come to grips with their relation to nature and hence to the whole world." Earth First! founder Dave Forman calls the book "a must-read for anyone who wants to understand wilderness" and "a peerless work and irreplaceable for everyone who cares for nature."

Wilderness Watch, a national environmental organization located in Missoula, is celebrating the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Wilderness Act by sponsoring Nash's talk. Wilderness Watch is America's leading citizens' voice for protecting and ensuring the proper stewardship of our nation's Wilderness and Wild Rivers. Its website is www.wildernesswatch.org

The success of the wilderness idea continued earlier this year when Congress passed the Omnibus Wilderness Bill. In 1964, the U.S. National Wilderness Preservation System started out with nine million acres and now numbers nearly 110 million acres. There are wilderness areas in all but six states, 756 in all, with 3.4 million acres in 15 Montana wilderness areas.

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