

Conservation Redefined, NPR, And More Media Links Last Week



By Hank Campbell — October 23, 2017



In today's advocacy journalism, Nobel laureate Dr. Norm Borlaug would not be a conservationist.

1. Do you consider yourself a conservationist? A group of advocacy journalists and environmentalists in North Carolina don't. James Womack, on the American Council on Science and Health Board of Scientific Advisors, recently got scorn for being appointed to a state oil and gas commission. It wasn't because of his qualifications, he is arguably the most qualified person there, it was because he was filling a slot described as being for a "conservation" group - and Womack is not proactively endorsing bans on everything, which ticked off writers for anti-science groups.

If he had ever donated \$25 to Sierra Club, or any other organization that hates poor people, these activists believe he could be qualified for a conservation slot, but if he helps the pro-science community, including those of us who advocate for responsible use of land, for no compensation of any kind he cannot be a *real* conservationist.

Womack accurately defended us. "It probably is the poster-child of conservationists," [he stated to them](#) ^[1], given our history. But...but...we can't be, the advocacy journalists claimed, because we were lauded by President George W. Bush, who said of us, "By increasing our understanding of complex issues, you help Americans make sound decisions about their well-being and influence public policy."

Want to guess which Presidential compliments probably would have been cooed over by those journalists? Obama, Clinton or Carter would be safe bets, and it has nothing to do with

conservation, since Pres. Bush (43) signed the toughened Lacey Act, doing arguably more for worldwide conservation than any President in American history. It has more to do with the first letter in their political party.

I have issued a challenge to Sierra Club. If I am not more of a *real* conservationist than 99 percent of their employees, I will donate \$1,000 to their general fund, and they can use it for whatever eugenics idea they are selling this quarter. They refused to respond. Smart move.

I shared my conservation story with every journalist who wrote. If you are also a conservationist who is not out to ban all energy and agriculture, please share your story in a comment. It's important that journalists learn conservation is a lot more diverse than they spin it.

 Oct 13 (9 days ago)

Dear Ms. Sorg,

Thanks for your note. I am glad at least one advocate is asking instead of insisting you can't be a conservationist unless you want to ban things. I have been so fascinated by attempts to polarize "conservation" to meaning only bans that I started a recent editorial meeting by asking our scientists and doctors if they felt like they were conservationists even if they didn't plant trees or lobby government. Most of the responses were that they actually did plant trees or donate to groups that manage the environment but stay out of the politics.

For my part, I grew up on a subsistence farm in Pennsylvania. My house was heated by wood, we hunted for meat and canned vegetables for use all winter. I wasn't born in the 1700s, a lot of people live like that right now and if we tell them they are not conservationists - when their whole life is sustainable stewardship of nature - they are rightfully going to be insulted. I take my kids back to PA every year so they learn to appreciate nature, even though we don't need to hunt for food and use much cleaner natural gas for heat.

Mr. Wornack was nominated by Dr. Elizabeth Whelan in 2013. As her successor, I only have access to her notes, which say he was instrumental, due to his position at the time, in helping find research for a book we were doing about any possible health or environmental effects of natural gas.

How does one get on the Board of Scientific Advisors? Is this by invitation only or can one apply?

It is by invitation.

When did Mr. Wornack join? Who invited him?

2013. He was nominated by Dr. Elizabeth Whelan and the Trustees approved it in November 2013.

Is there a fee to join the board?

No one pays a fee or receives anything for any participation.

Are the board members required to disclose any conflicts of interest?

Yes. That includes both financial and ethical. IARC has been under fire because the head of a Working Group labeling carcinogens was later found to be a consultant for Environmental Working Group. He did not have to disclose it because when he had IARC rules changed for Col, he said conflicts of interest were only being paid by industry, not an activist group. People are also vetted by their work. Before any program is published by someone not on our staff they must declare that they will not benefit in any material way. So a Nature Conservancy executive would have to declare any Col just like an academic or industry scientist.

Has he reviewed any reports or participated in seminars or educational activities on behalf of the organization? Has peer reviewed any publications? And just so I make sure I'm understanding, "peer review" at ACSH means fellow scientists or experts review the publications before they are issued. That doesn't necessarily mean this research appeared in peer-reviewed journals, right?

The way you are using peer-review, as in only corporate journal publication, has only been common since the 1960s, and that was because the Reagan administration wanted to increase science funding but wanted a metric to know how money was being used. Peer-reviewed journals were the solution - it is why grant committees now look at scientists who are in prestige corporate journals more favorably. All peer-review is peer-review, having a media corporation publish it is not a hallmark of validity. Our Board has consisted of names like C. Everett Koop, the guy who eliminated Smallpox worldwide, and the founding director of WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer. Saying they were not qualified to do peer review, but a PhD with no expertise in that field who volunteers and remains anonymous is, is counter intuitive to what peer review is.

We collate experts by their fields. So heart disease is one group while toxicology is another, we don't have 300 people reviewing each document because it would be meaningless. We haven't produced any books on energy or environmental policy in the last few years that have a conservation aspect, we have been lacking salt, artificial colors, etc.

And finally, Mr. Wornack was appointed to the commission to represent a nongovernmental conservation interest. What kind of conservation work does ACSH do? I look at the list of publications and I didn't see any thing that spoke directly to conservation, but perhaps I didn't drill down deeply enough.

For its entire 39-year history, the American Council on Science and Health has promoted responsible stewardship of the environment. As I suggested above I will plainly state here: I am confident I am more of a real conservationist than 99 percent of Sierra Club employees. The suggestion that because they were created to get a ban on DDT while we said that would kill tens of millions (we were right, our EPA now writes the guidelines for how to spray it in homes in developing nations because hundreds of thousands more were dying annually from malaria after it was banned) means that we can't be conservationists is silly. We don't plant trees, we instead defend those who care about them by giving evidence-based testimony on very complex science issues to federal science panels, we write books for the public and policy makers, we write articles every month for USA Today, WSJ, etc. and we write 1,300 science and health articles each year on our own site. Only books, where we are speaking for the entire ACSH organization, go through peer review.

Mr. Wornack is an engineer and a long-time advocate for conservation and responsible energy management. Our donor list is filled with people in rural communities, with sportsmen and urban dwellers who appreciate nature and fund us precisely because we separate scaremongering from legitimate health concerns. If energy policy becomes a controversy again as it did a few years ago, I am confident he will be a valuable voice no matter what our finding is. If he does not agree with our finding, he is welcome to have his dissent printed, as we do in any document where there is no clear consensus.

Thanks again for writing and good luck with your article.

[2]

2. Not everyone usually on the anti-science side was out to criticize us. *The American Prospect*, a publication generally for progressive elites, [agrees that media coverage of science is pretty awful](#) [3]. The public knows this too, corporate media science coverage has plummeted due to disinterest among readers while the *New York Times* has lurched toward chiropractors, chemophobia and claims that agriculture is a vast, right-wing conspiracy bizarrely out to feed poor people for low cost.

Who is taking up that slack? ACSH and Science 2.0 and RealClearScience and plenty of other politically-agnostic groups. The problem is not lack of science interest, 65 million Americans are interested in science, they just got tired of corporate media filtering science through the politics of their editorial boards and their journalists. America leads the world in adult science literacy so this migration away from mainstream media politicization of science is a good thing...unless you are an unemployed former science journalist who went into the field to advance your political agenda.

3. On Indianapolis station WIBC's Hammer and Nigel Show, Dr. Chuck Dinerstein [discussed the effect of President Trump's Healthcare Executive Order](#) [4] finally allowing insurance companies to sell across state lines. There is a reason car insurance is available to everyone but health care was not, and that reason was capricious government policy.

4. The website *Cheat Sheet* discussed our article in *USA Today* trying to figure out what was really happening in the sonic attacks on American diplomats in Cuba

[5]. *Washington Post* also carried our work [6], as did [7] many [8] others [7].

5. There's some concern about designer babies but, really, outside the fringes no one is worried. The goal is to prevent awful diseases, like mitochondrial diseases, and people like Wesley Smith may think those kids should not be helped because science is "unnatural", as do "frankenbaby" activists on the other pole, but legitimate scientists don't do think that way. Nor do they behave that way. In my upcoming book on mitochondria, I discuss how with the first successor to IVF, the American FDA asked the science community not to pursue it until they could create guidelines, and the American science community did it and still does, even though those guidelines were never forthcoming. The first child of over a dozen born before we ceased pursuing that avenue is now an adult and just fine. So the philosophical concerns are invalid. And it's also a lot harder than science opponents portray [and Gears of Biz talked about our work outlining how difficult it is](#) [9].

6. On NPR, Alex Berezow took on three people who were convinced the world is overpopulated and that draconian measures might be needed. This stuff has been popular among people who hate "races" other than Anglo-Saxon (Margaret Sanger, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Maynard Keynes, et al.) since Malthus in the 1800s, but really came alive again thanks to people like Dr. Paul Ehrlich and Dr. John Holdren in the 1960s and '70s and hasn't left since. Rather than being the eugenics of 70 years ago it is now the more innocuous-sounding population control but the intent is the same: elites want to protect people like them while curbing births among people of color or who have different values than they do.

You won't be surprised to learn that even with those odds, Dr. Berezow won.

You can listen below or [download](#) [10] for later.

7. Finally, *India Food & Beverage News* carried our ridicule of an organic food product which attempted to use "Love" as an ingredient [11].

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Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/10/22/conservation-redefined-npr-11999>

Links

[1] <http://www.wral.com/oil-gas-and-fracking-ally-lined-up-for-conservation-appointment/16995042/?source=acsh.org>

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/sites/default/files/ACSH%20womack%20conservation.JPG>

[3] <http://prospect.org/blog/tapped/americans-say-mainstream-media%E2%80%99s-coverage-science-less-stellar?source=acsh.org>

[4] <http://www.wibc.com/blogs/hammer-and-nigel-show/explaining-trumps-healthcare-executive-order?source=acsh.org>

[5] <https://www.cheatsheet.com/culture/diplomats-evacuated-after-mysterious-sonic-attacks-could-cuba-attack-put-u-s-at-risk.html/?source=acsh.org>

[6] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/09/30/all-the-theories-about-whats-happening-to-the-diplomats-in-cuba/?source=acsh.org>

[7] <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/whats-making-american-diplomats-in-cuba->

sick?source=acsh.org

[8] <http://www.pnj.com/story/news/2017/10/01/mystery-behind-u-s-decision-yank-diplomats-cuba-guestview/716255001/?source=acsh.org>

[9] <http://http://gearsofbiz.com/designer-babies-wont-be-a-fad-its-too-hard-to-create-them/99810?source=acsh.org>

[10] <https://soundcloud.com/global-journalist-radio/global-journalist-the-overpopulation-debate>

[11] <http://www.fnbnews.com/Top-News/bakery-warned-for-misbranding-including-love-as-ingredient-in-granola-41214?source=acsh.org>