

Ecoterrorism

Ned Hettinger, September 2014, Draft

"Those who make peaceful change impossible make violent revolution inevitable."

John F. Kennedy (1962)

"I do not believe in violence as in any sense a solution to any problem."

Wendell Berry (2008)

Introduction

Imagine a future where climate change, mass extinction, and planetary poisoning are brought to an end by a campaign of political violence carried out by a coalition of radical environmental groups. Would such a campaign count as terrorism? Would it be morally justified?

The term "ecoterrorism" may have first been used by anti-environmentalists trying to discredit the environmental movement by applying this label to tactics (e.g., tree spiking, bulldozer siltation) practiced by some within the movement (Vanderheiden 2008). Since then, the FBI has classified groups and acts as ecoterrorist and has successfully prosecuted environmental activists and imprisoned them with "terrorism enhancements." Some in the radical environmental movement have advocated tactics that may fit this rubric and there have been concrete instances of acts that likely warrant the label.

For many, 'terrorism' is a word used to condemn more than describe. If something