

The question can't be *should* we manage—virtually every decision we make affects nature and the environment and is part of our management “plan.” Even a hands-off policy is management, which will have a number of effects, good and bad. The only question is: should we manage the environment intentionally or unintentionally? I, for one, am convinced we'll be better off if we act with good intentions. Don't get me wrong—we'll make mistakes, but not as many as we would if we didn't consider the consequences of our actions.

*Stephen Sentoff
West Chicago, Illinois*

To speak of managing something of infinite complexity that we had no hand in creating, comprehend but little, and that we have already managed to mishandle requires a vast quantity of brass. The best we can hope for is some degree of repair of the wounds we have inflicted and the humility to understand that, of all the earth's species, we are the ones without which nature could best manage.

*Anita G. Brown
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

Humans are part of nature. The greatest management should be of our own endeavors to insure our good place in the natural scheme. This means planning our population, planning our development, and planning our means of transportation, taking into account that we are not the sum of nature. If we neglect to make such an account, then nature will manage us—like a disease.

*Robert Kernodle
Greensboro, North Carolina*

“Managing” wildlife today means “harvesting” the “surplus” animals of “modified environments.” That is, animals whose habitats are fragmented and destroyed by developers, ranchers, and loggers, animals shot by “nature-loving sportsmen.” We need to manage nature through protecting wilderness from human encroachment, not through the issuance of hunting permits. God forbid any “superior” animals should ever manage human overpopulation in the same manner.

*Kelly J. Cowan
San Diego, California*

In the wild (and there should be more, much more of it), humans should not manage, manipulate, or molest nature, except by way of repairing the damage they have

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TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD HUMANS MANAGE NATURE, IF AT ALL?

done, and protecting places from further destructive human influence.

Where humans have made their living space (and there should be less, much less of it), management should take the form only of maintaining health and habitable conditions, with emphases on cooperation and integration with wild things.

*James Jett
Germantown, Maryland*

The earth continues to need rule and cultivation. The mandate of dominion given by God continues. It involves the tasks of production, labor, and stewardship.

*Robert Jones
Warren, Michigan*

“To manage nature”—what an arrogant concept.

*The Reverend Robert M. Honig
Hobe Sound, Florida*

Isn't the “need” for nature management the outcome of failed management policies? Hasn't this been done before with catastrophic results? The whitetail deer populations throughout the eastern United States are a good example of what happens when we tamper with the natural balance for human interests. We are not capable of out-managing nature. We should stop trying.

*David Jordan
Kennesaw, Georgia*

“Nature Management” is an oxymoron.

*Mark Andrew Withers
Athens, Georgia*

FOR NEXT TIME...

IF YOU RAN THE SIERRA CLUB, WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE?

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We can manage to kick the dying mule of fossil fuel for a while longer. We can manage to delude ourselves into thinking liquid nitrogen cold storage will salvage genetic diversity. We can even manage to survive in a dying environment, for a while.

Rephrase the question. Ask instead, “Can we manage to leave nature alone?”

*Michael S. Arant
Kearneysville, West Virginia*

The very idea implies a human presumption that we alone, as one single species among millions of others, have the power to set nature back in balance. Any justification of management rings of Judeo-Christian notions of stewardship and manifest destiny—the two ideals at the heart of this predicament and the premise of the management debate. Let's stop playing doctor, unconditionally take our hands off the land, and have faith in Mother Earth's powers of regeneration. I hope she has mercy on us.

*Alexander Sebastian
Mill Valley, California*

Nature doesn't need us much except to make right what we've done wrong. How to begin correcting the problems? First manage your own reproduction. Next, become a vegetarian. If saving acres of rain-forest and reducing suffering isn't enough incentive, then do it for the joy of knowing that it really aggravates right-wing fanatics. Then develop a healthy sense of humility tinged with a little guilt. I micromanage the quarter acre of the planet I “own,” knowing that I cut down forest when I bought my way into suburbia. I've applied an affirmative action to my environs—feeding the fauna, gardening organically, planting fruit trees—hoping to make up in some way for the past. Last, work on creating a new grassroots mind-set. Management means domination in our society. It should mean nurturing.

*Walter A. Holberg
Stratford, Connecticut*

Eons before humans came into the picture, nature was a self-managing system, and still is. As humans, we need to stop thinking that everything on earth is for our taking and acknowledge that every living thing has a purpose. Nature in itself is very diverse. The best way to manage it is to leave it alone!

*Michael J. Scherer
Falmouth, Massachusetts*