

The Conservation of Natural Resources

~ Your Cargo Cult College ~

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Writing Assignment: Conservation Context

I want you to think about how we adapt to environmental change, how we explain it to ourselves, to others, and finally, how and when we decide to act. When you read Aldo Leopold's *Good Oak*, you learned a lot about how he and his family tied their love of land into the history of the landscape. I asked you to undergo a similar process of self-land engagement, and describe your connections to place and history in the context of places that have meaning for you.

Now build on the focused inquiry you've started and begin a more objective engagement of the cultural and institutional framework surrounding natural resource conservation in the US today. Read Leopold's *Land Ethic* and after that, Curt Meine's "This Place in Time," and Cheng's *Natural Resource Agencies: The Necessity for Change*. You'll explore centuries of human efforts to engage their relationship to land, and identify the many state and federal agencies, businesses, educational institutions, landowners, and private non-profit organizations that make the conservation of natural resources a very complicated context!

Assigned Readings

1. Leopold's *Land Ethic*.
2. Curt Meine's "This Place in Time" in Knight and White.
3. Antony S. Cheng's *Natural Resource Agencies: The Necessity for Change* in Knight & White.

Begin with Leopold's *The Land Ethic*.

1. In the opening section of *The Land Ethic*, Leopold compares our understanding of the human community with the biological community, and considers what most people consider the scientific basis for both. What does he say about our understanding of the land community, and if this does or does not limit our grasp of our own history?
2. In the second section of the essay, *The Ecological Conscience*, what connections does Leopold make between the development of conservation education and conservation agencies?

Next, read Curt Meine's essay.

3. How does Curt's describe Leopold's essay "The Land Ethic"?
4. Think about the changes that may impact the people Meine writes about in "This Place in Time." What does Curt Meine mean when he writes about spatial and temporal *scale*?
5. What tools do we (and they) have available to cope with the scale part that were not clearly evident when Leopold wrote "Good Oak"?

Finally, read Cheng's *Natural Resource Agencies: The Necessity for Change*.

6. Cheng mentions "capacity gaps." What are these, and how does he propose to overcome them?
7. What evidence does Cheng cite that supports his argument that there is a growing willingness to accept management responsibility traditional agencies will not?

Cogent, typed responses integrated into a well crafted essay limited to three pages.

Hard copy only.