

The Broader Movement:

Nonprofit Environmental and Conservation Organizations, 1989–2005

Baird Straughan and Tom Pollak

National Center for Charitable
Statistics at the Urban Institute



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Introduction

The community of environmental and conservation organizations in the United States has a core of high-profile organizations, many of them national in scope, which have sometimes been conflated with the U.S. environmental movement as a whole.¹ For lack of information about the broader set of smaller organizations and volunteer groups, the national organizations have by default become the principal representatives of U.S. environmentalism, which has opened the door to accusations that the movement has accomplished little of late and is stuck in an elitist “inside the Beltway” mentality.² In order to get a clearer view of the breadth and health of the environmental and conservation sector, the Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics undertook this study, a first look at the full set of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data on environmental and conservation organizations.

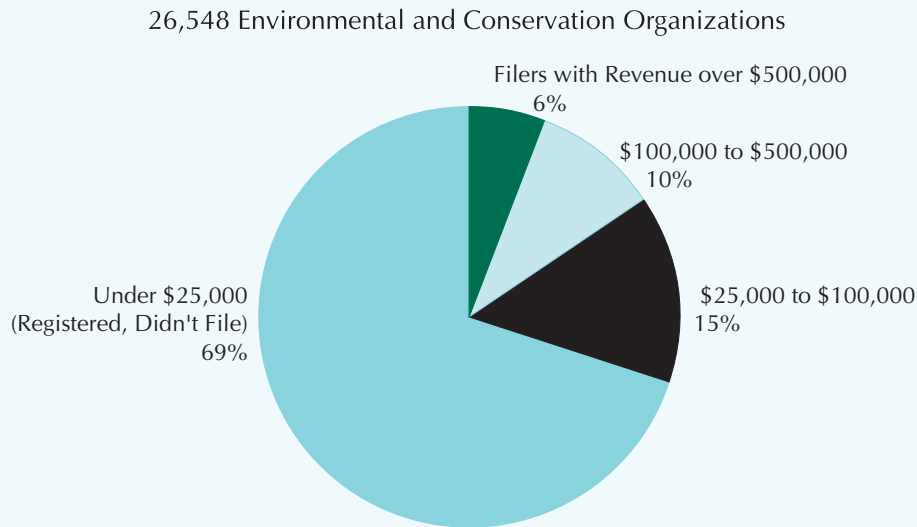
The quantitative data from the IRS from 1989 to 2005 reveals the core of national organizations and around it a much larger, faster growing ferment of lightly staffed and all-volunteer organizations formed to meet various specific challenges.³ Taken as a whole, the environmental movement appears to have grown in number of organizations, members, and in total revenues almost every year since 1960. Despite the perception that it engages mainly in advocacy, the great majority of environmental and conservation groups were focused on conservation of land, water, and wildlife through projects and public education. These groups were younger, grew faster, and had a very different mix of funding sources than nonprofits in general. Foundation and government grants were significant parts of their funding, although the role of foundation funding declined substantially since its peak in 2000. The largest organizations (by revenue) were clustered around Washington, D.C., but their portion of the total revenue pie was decreasing. The largest organizations were stable in terms of total revenue and members, but it was the youngest cohort which grew fastest.

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- 1 By “environmental movement” we mean the loosely organized but sustained campaign by many diverse people and organizations seeking to change social behavior in order to conserve nature and protect the earth’s living systems. We include both environmentalists and conservationists, who often see issues very differently. In general researchers include both camps under the term “environmental movement.” By “sector” we mean the totality of formal environmental and conservation organizations—in this case, those registered with the Internal Revenue Service.
 - 2 One expression of this view are the criticisms leveled by Ron Arnold and the Wise Use movement, which characterize environmentalists as elitists out of touch with working Americans and motivated by a desire for power. The same criticism of U.S. environmentalism is reflected in writings by dissatisfied activists themselves. See, for example, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, by Mark Dowie, or the polemic *Death of Environmentalism* by Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus.
 - 3 An early attempt to characterize the grassroots environmental movement is “Not in Our Backyards,” an article by Nicholas Freudenberg and Carol Steinsapir in Dunlap & Mertig, *American Environmentalist: the U.S. Environmental Movement, 1970–1990*. Freudenberg and Steinsapir relied on numbers in mailing lists of anti-toxics networks in the databases of the Citizen’s Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste.

The Population of Organizations in 2005

In 2005, the IRS files included over 26,000 organizations whose primary mission was conservation and protection of the natural and human environment (figure 1). Of those, 30 percent filed a Form 990 return in 2005, providing current information on their finances and activities.⁴ The remainder did not, presumably because their annual revenues were below \$25,000.

Figure 1: Number of Organizations Registered with the IRS in 2005



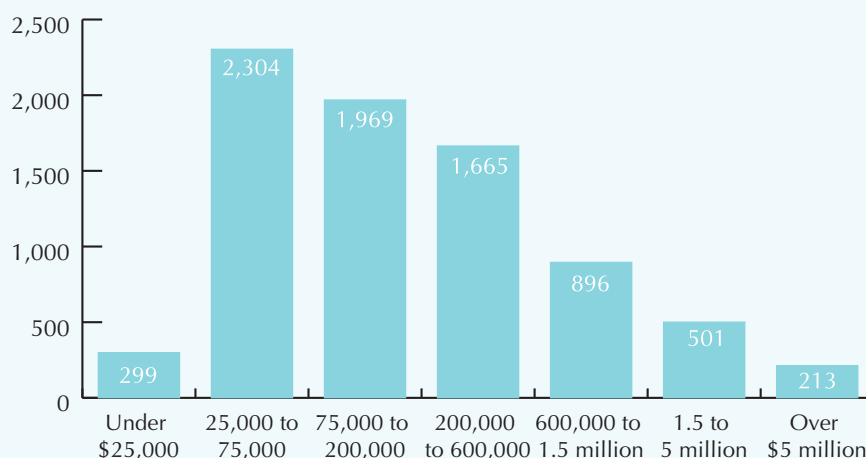
Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005 and Business Master File 2005.

Note: Where not otherwise noted, the NCCS Core File 2005 refers to the file for private charities and the file for other 501(c) organizations in its pre-August 2008 version. (coreco.core2005co_v1).

The public charities studied here range from neighborhood groups with small budgets and no assets to established institutions like The Nature Conservancy, which had almost a billion dollars in revenues in 2005. The overwhelming majority (79.5 percent) of the organizations that filed Form 990s had revenues of less than \$600,000 (figure 2).

⁴ Because of the way the IRS provides the data in their “core” files, we have analyzed the returns they *processed* in 2005, some of which are not returns for the 2005 tax year. See Appendix C for an in-depth explanation. The core files approximate the total Form 990 returns for 2005 well.

Figure 2: Number of Organizations Filing Form 990, by Amount of Revenue, 2005



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005.

If we add to this picture the more than 18,000 organizations which registered with the IRS but did *not* file in 2005, and then consider the many unregistered “kitchen table” groups active on environmental issues, we have a mix of organizations weighted heavily toward the grassroots.⁵

The great majority—93 percent—of the registered organizations were 501(c)(3) “public charities,” which may accept tax-deductible donations but only engage in limited lobbying. Although the environmental movement is often identified with its most policy-oriented organizations, only 6 percent were 501(c)(4)s, such as the Sierra Club or Greenpeace, which can do unlimited lobbying on issues (consistent with their mission).

5 How many unregistered “kitchen table” organizations are there? We do not know and to our knowledge there has been little or no research into this question. Our own look into climate change (See *The Growth of Organizations Focused on Climate Change*) found that about 40 percent of our sample of active organizations was not registered, and these were mainly local groups. In the future, one fruitful approach might be to focus on particular local environmental issues. For example, in the case of the decades-long battle over a highway in the Washington metropolitan area, five organizations were involved long-term; the two most active, which mobilized the greatest number of local citizens, never registered with the IRS. In addition, there were numerous citizens groups which sprang up briefly at different points in the battle. (See, e.g., *Washington Post*, April 27, 2008: (C) 5. “Derwood Residents Rally against Highway: Protesters Survey Denuded Woods in Their Push to Halt Intercounty Connector.”) Coauthor Straughan has worked in four countries on multiple environmental and public campaigns, and in each case it was outreach to unaffiliated citizens or kitchen-table groups which provided much of the volunteer effort. These groups may be more common today because of the ease of organizing new efforts electronically. If this is correct, it has important consequences for organizing strategies and for the support role that established organizations could play for grassroots groups.

Types of Organizations in 2005

The organizations ranged from traditional hunting and wildlife conservation clubs to public-private initiatives for sustainable energy and include just about every other kind of initiative conceivable. New types—such as development groups working for global sustainability—arose in response to newly perceived needs. The National Center for Charitable Statistics database groups them into 26 categories by the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE), the classification system used most widely in the nonprofit sector. The classifications are necessarily approximate, but they do give a new view of the movement's internal composition and the distribution of its resources.

Table 1: Types of Environmental and Conservation Organizations in 2005

NTEE code	Number Registered	Number Filing 990	Percent Filing 990	990 Filers Total Revenue	990 Filers Total Expenses	990 Filers Total Net Assets	Form 990 Filers Only	
							Median Total Revenue	Median Assets
Alliances & Advocacy	1,140	703	62%	697,808,249	615,053,658	640,358,476	155,727	69,836
Management assistance	188	119	63%	80,160,179	77,042,938	58,662,100	271,651	136,132
Professional associations	1,208	394	33%	195,737,553	186,934,894	200,626,225	104,946	95,203
Research and public policy	372	194	52%	225,683,922	190,267,899	303,992,916	271,881	138,215
Single organization support	462	219	47%	167,902,456	164,276,495	601,239,978	108,212	286,035
Fundraising and distribution	426	184	43%	79,228,088	71,534,035	175,649,714	117,093	98,790
Support - others	56	16	29%	6,388,036	4,767,496	4,651,666	309,555	129,052
Pollution abatement	695	236	34%	171,259,557	154,446,505	136,453,970	119,814	55,724
Recycling centers	443	157	35%	91,230,518	80,001,838	68,721,546	154,627	54,086
Natural resource conservation	6,565	1,504	23%	897,891,499	770,674,858	1,910,428,686	110,446	95,630
Water resources and wetlands	7,291	892	12%	578,829,702	529,399,083	612,601,786	102,857	71,656
Land resources conservation	1,522	853	56%	1,991,415,192	1,307,623,717	8,247,970,636	219,867	764,759
Energy conservation and development	338	144	43%	318,027,855	311,965,917	93,040,593	204,023	55,866
Forest resources	670	230	34%	148,591,905	143,774,559	316,853,744	126,012	104,997
Botanical and landscaping services	156	70	45%	36,834,068	33,106,097	62,335,667	112,814	123,640
Botanical gardens	565	220	39%	460,514,139	334,563,118	1,689,475,658	200,318	449,886
Native plant societies	79	24	30%	11,702,330	11,308,261	44,641,159	52,169	89,725
Environmental beautification	1,062	424	40%	169,766,499	130,966,264	341,726,011	90,880	65,988
Environmental education	1,213	696	57%	1,010,712,060	983,487,669	1,649,234,968	164,177	92,416
Environmental - other	500	79	16%	10,292,040	9,477,124	11,426,667	59,201	45,768
Wildlife preservation and protection	659	261	40%	600,498,788	533,346,748	485,167,734	93,602	98,367
Endangered species	139	64	46%	35,203,656	22,859,122	78,086,336	121,633	136,727
Bird species	225	91	40%	50,227,643	41,532,298	85,866,526	79,094	103,399
Fisheries	153	110	72%	108,304,484	106,382,259	42,720,196	122,961	72,135
Wildlife sanctuaries	412	185	45%	78,969,425	65,004,807	143,400,500	100,862	105,956
Global sustainability	9	9	100%	15,233,017	14,861,359	5,869,771	767,745	181,083
	26,548	8,078	30.4%	8,238,412,860	6,894,659,018	18,011,203,229	131,769	105,514

Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005 and Business Master File 2005.

The most populous category was Natural Resource Conservation and Protection (C30), which made up 18 percent of all those submitting Form 990 in 2005 (table 1). This category included many older organizations, such as the Izaak Walton League and the National Audubon Society. More recent entries are groups such as Conservation International, which take an ecosystem-wide approach to their work focusing on an entire habitat and the many interdependent species and systems within it.

Eleven percent of the organizations were classified under Water Resources, Wetlands Conservation and Management (C32). Since 1980, water monitoring and watershed protection organizations have multiplied greatly due in part to efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and national capacity-building organizations like River Network to catalyze new citizen groups. As governments cut their budgets for water resources management, many have turned to this growing web of citizen organizations as cost-effective partners in protecting water quality.

Eleven percent of the filers were classified under Land Resources Conservation (C34) consisting mainly of land trusts, which hold land or negotiate legal agreements to keep it from being developed. Among them was The Nature Conservancy, the wealthiest of the environmental and conservation organizations, with 11 percent of the sector's total revenue and 20 percent of its assets. As a whole, organizations in the Land Resources and Conservation category held 46 percent of the sector's assets and accounted for 24 percent of its revenues. About half of those assets were in real estate and the other half in cash—investments or other types of relatively liquid assets, a necessity for organizations which have the long-term responsibility of monitoring the land and protecting it from rising development pressures. The median organization in this category had assets valued at more than \$700,000, at least double the value of the typical organization in any other category with the exception of botanical gardens.

Nine percent of the organizations were dedicated primarily to changing or enforcing public policy—Alliances and Advocacy (C01). Among the alliances are the many newly germinated networks or coalitions, such as the Endangered Species Coalition, often formed by existing groups in order to coordinate activities on a new issue. In contrast to land trusts, alliances and advocacy organizations had few financial reserves. The median organization that filed a Form 990 reported a revenue of \$155,727, enough to hire a few staff, but had net assets of only \$69,836—and most of those were restricted (obligated to be used for purposes specified by their funders). As a result, it probably had resources for three months or less, making it more susceptible to hiccups in its funding stream.

Another 9 percent focused on environmental education initiatives, centers, and programs. This was the one subsector which had seen its total revenue stagnate, in real terms, even while the number of new organizations continued to climb. In fact, since 2001 foundation support for environmental education has dropped almost a third.⁶

6 The Foundation Center, *Foundation Giving Trends: Focus on the Environment and Animals*, web presentation on June 2, 2008, slide 16.

The environmental movement has developed its own support infrastructure. About 5 percent of the organizations tallied here existed to serve other environmental and conservation groups. Single-Organization Support groups like the Greenpeace Fund raise money for tax-deductible activities which contribute to the goals of their non-tax-exempt 501(c)(4) siblings. Fundraising and Distribution groups like Earthshare raised funds for a broad set of environmental organizations. There were also more than a hundred nonprofit Management and Technical Assistance organizations focused specifically on the unique planning and management challenges confronting environmental and conservation groups. The existence of these support organizations generally reflects the intention to grow and strengthen movement, beyond simply focusing on single organizations.

The NTEE classifications do not distinguish environmental justice groups as a separate category and many of those actually do not classify themselves primarily as “environmental” organizations at all, because they tend to work on a wide range of community concerns.⁷ Likewise, many other nonprofits with environmental and conservation activities are not listed here, such as the “Care for Creation” initiatives of Christian churches or the many cleanup programs of youth groups.

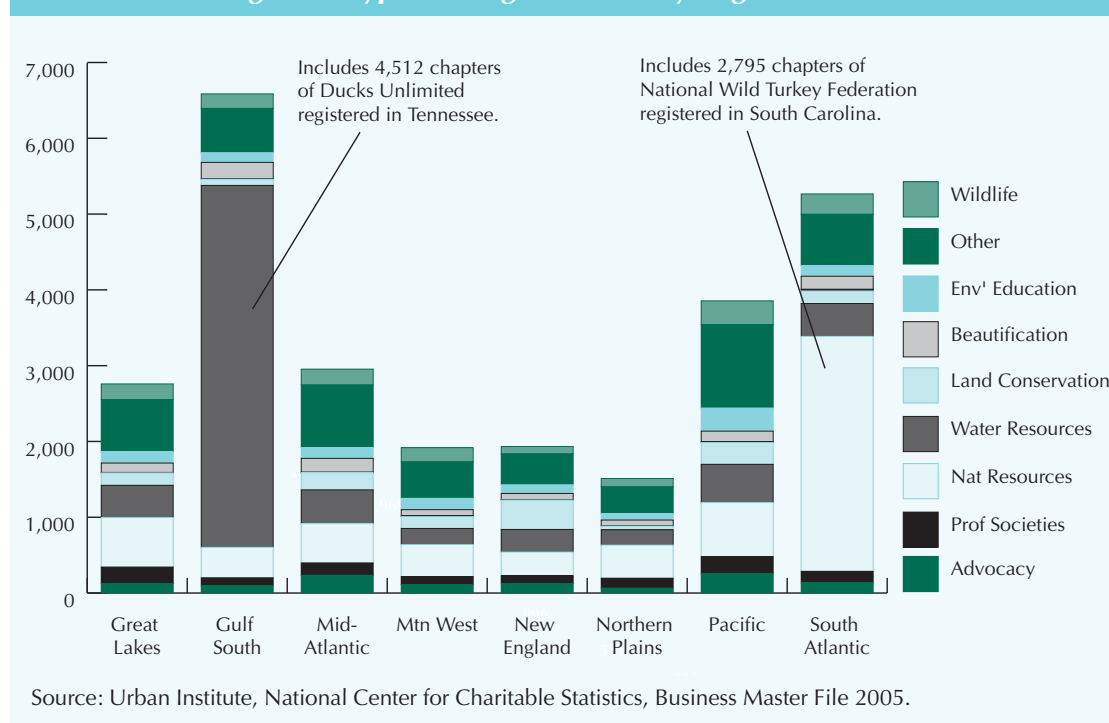
This difficulty in tracking all the activities has a larger cause. Environmental concerns are becoming “mainstream,” and many types of organizations, in addition to those that focus exclusively on the environment, do some environmental work. The organization-level NTEE codes capture only the most easily identifiable proponents of a growing and generalized public concern. Future research will use program-level analysis to help us understand the range of other organizations working on environmental and conservation issues.

7 Within the 2005 IRS Business Master File are 13 groups with the words “environmental justice” in their name, and only seven of those are classified as *environmental* organizations. The other six fall under public interest law, public health, or community development, a reflection of the fact that for many minority communities, the issues of unemployment, healthcare, pollution, and crime are inextricably linked.

Distribution of Organizations by Regions

The mix of environmental and conservation organizations varies across the regions.⁸ Those with the most registered organizations were in the South, where Ducks Unlimited and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) signed up more than 7,000 of their local chapters, reflecting the region's more traditional approach to conservation, which values resource conservation not as an end in itself but for the purpose of benefiting hunters, fishermen, and other users. Those chapters are all listed under a single address in Tennessee, in the case of Ducks Unlimited, and South Carolina, in the case of NWTF.⁹ Thus they do not reflect the chapters' true geographic dispersion. Excluding those 7,000-plus chapters, the regions with the greatest number of organizations are the Pacific and the Mid-Atlantic, where advocacy organizations are also comparatively more numerous.

Figure 3: Types of Organizations by Region in 2005



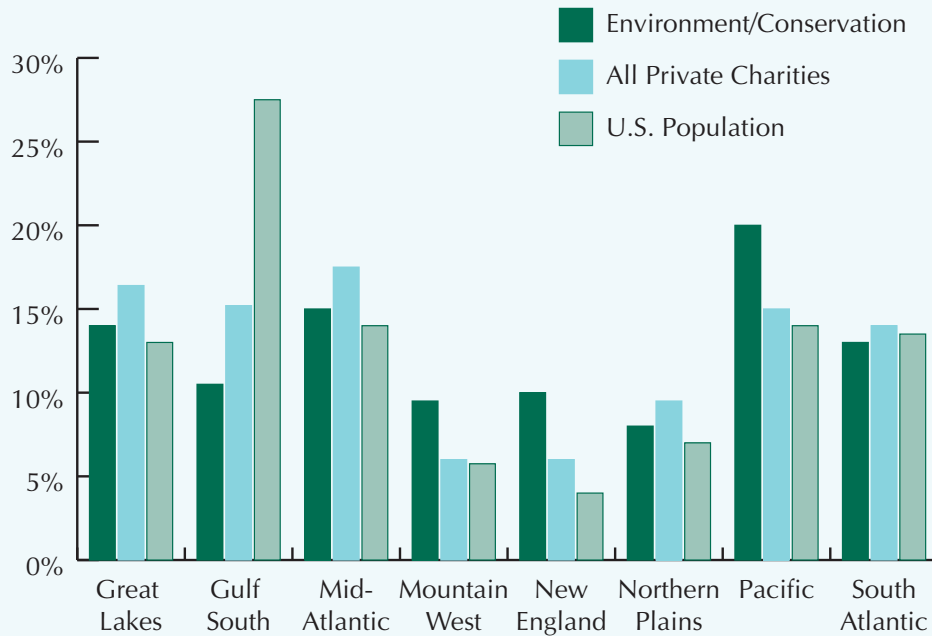
There were fewer land conservation organizations in southern states and many more in New England, which enjoys a wealth of local land trusts. Water resources organizations were more numerous in wetter regions; environmental education in the Pacific.

⁸ These are the Census Bureau's regions, with two modifications—Maryland and Delaware are shifted to the Mid-Atlantic states from the South Atlantic and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are included the South Atlantic. See U.S. Census Bureau, "Census Regions and Divisions of the United States," http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf, August 2008.

⁹ The Ducks Unlimited chapters are probably listed to one address because they file a combined Form 990. (Adam Webster, comptroller of Ducks Unlimited, personal communication.)

If we consider the distribution of organizations by population, New England, the Mountain West and the Pacific have a disproportionately large percentage of environmental and conservation organizations, compared to both the regions' population and the number of nonprofit organizations. (See figure 4: Distribution of Organizations by Region, Compared to Population.) The Gulf states have a disproportionately small percentage.

Figure 4: Distribution of Organizations by Region, Compared to Population

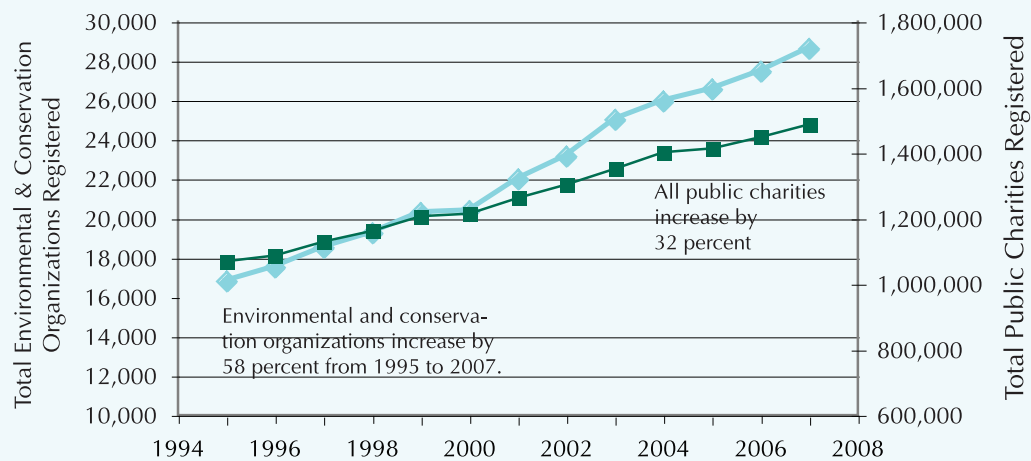


Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Business Master File 2005. Table 1: Annual Estimates of the Population for the United States, Regions, and States and for Puerto Rico: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006 (NST-EST2006-01) Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Release Date: December 22, 2006

Creation and Attrition of New Environmental and Conservation Nonprofits

Over the period from 1995 to 2007, the number of environmental and conservation organizations registered with the IRS has grown by 4.6 percent per year, at which rate it would double every 13 or so years. It increased faster than the total population of registered nonprofits, which grew at around 2.8 percent per year over the same period. The median environmental and conservation organization in 2005 was only about half as old, having registered with the IRS in 1994, versus 1984 for the nonprofit sector as a whole.

Figure 5: Number of Registered Organizations by Year



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Business Master Files 1989–2007

Organizations also became inactive and disappeared from the IRS listings. Between 1995 and 2004, in any given year around 2.5 percent of the previous year's environmental and conservation organizations failed to appear in the Business Master File. Over the ensuing decade, about 3 in 10 of those "dropouts" renewed contact with the IRS and reentered the listings.¹⁰ Overall, it seems reasonable to assume that every year around 2 percent of the organizations became permanently inactive. This is about the same rate observed in public charities overall.

In order to make up for the "dropouts" and still increase at around 5 percent annually, the environmental sector added new registrants at around 7 percent per year.¹¹ For all public charities, the equivalent "birth rate" was closer to 5 percent.

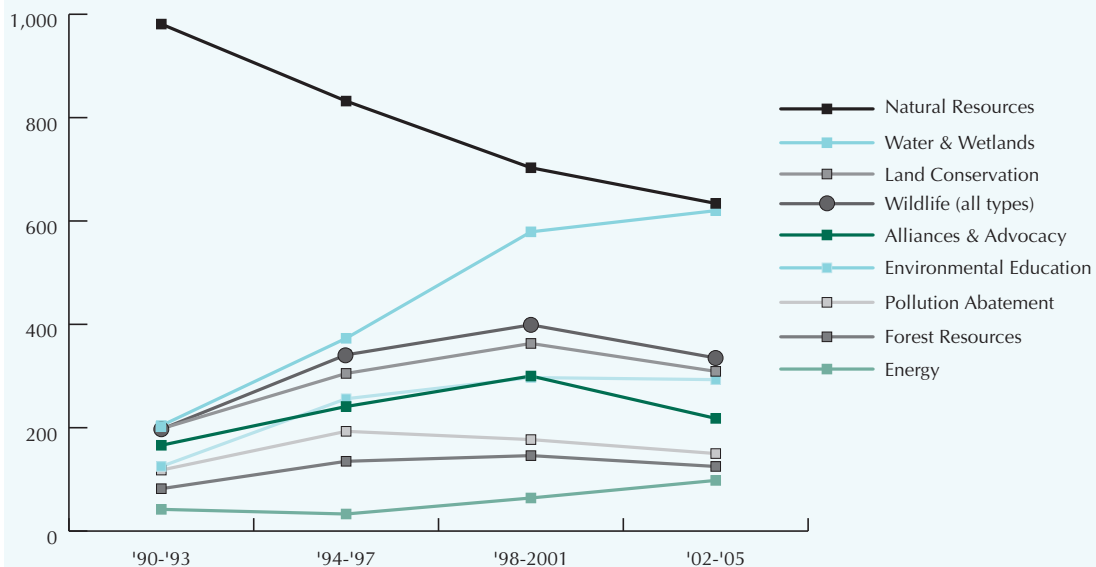
¹⁰ This figure is based upon analysis of filers in 1995, 1996, and 1997—the only cohorts available for which we have a decade of follow-up data.

¹¹ On top of this growth, many active organizations arise and never bother to request nonprofit status. We have no data to assess these spontaneous "kitchen table" organizations, but they may well be as numerous as their registered kin.

The types of new organizations have shifted over the years. The changes did not arise suddenly, in response to critical events, such as the first Earth Day in 1972. Instead, they probably reflect a steady, gradual increase in the number of people willing to make a longer-term commitment by birthing a new group. In the 1940s the most numerous were natural resource and horticultural groups. By the 1960s, the Keep America Beautiful affiliates, soil and water conservation districts, and land trusts appeared. It was not until the late 1970s that a substantial number of watershed organizations arise, and the 1980s saw the addition of many recycling centers, environmental education programs, and the first anti-toxics groups.

From 1990 to 2005, one can see trends in conservation reflected in the numbers of different types of organizations which were created. For example, in the first four years studied, from 1990 to 1993, Natural Resource Conservation groups made up 33 percent of 3,483 organizations registered for the first time. In the next four years (1994–1997), their percentage dropped to 22 percent of the total and declined further to 17 percent in the periods of 1998–2001 and 2002–2005. Over the same period, organizations classified as Wetlands and Water Resource Conservation climbed from 7 to 16 percent. The percentage of Energy Production and Conservation organizations doubled, possibly reflecting public attention to global warming and energy issues. (See section, The Growth of Organizations Focused on Climate Change.) Environmental Education and Wildlife categories also saw dramatic increases in their organizational “birth rates.”

Figure 6: Number of Organizations Registered During Four-Year Periods, by Type



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Business Master Files 1989–2005

Interestingly, the rate of creation of new land trusts holds about steady or even drops slightly as land trust revenues continued to increase. This may reflect ongoing initiatives by the Land Trust Alliance, funders, and agencies to encourage smaller land trusts to merge in order to attain the critical size needed to steward land in perpetuity. It may also be that the growth in the number of land trusts has plateaued as regions of the country are adequately served by existing groups.¹²

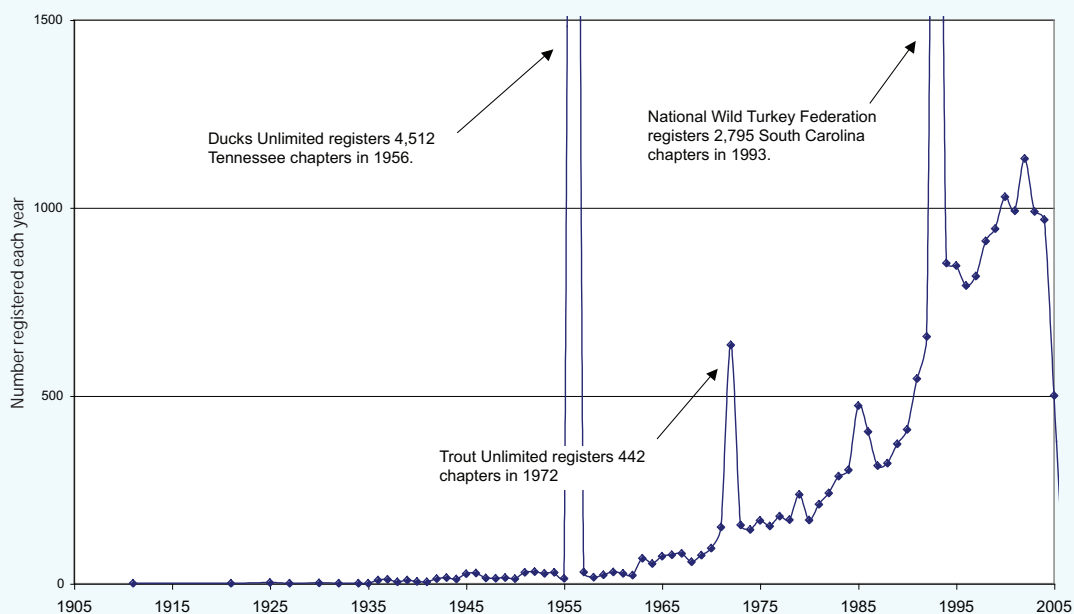
¹² Chuck Roe, Southeast Program Director of the Land Trust Alliance, personal communication, 7 Oct. 2008.

Age of Environmental and Conservation Nonprofits

The population of environmental and conservation organizations is weighted toward younger organizations. In 2005, 48 percent of environmental and conservation organizations were *10 years old or less*. (For nonprofits as a whole, 32 percent are 10 years old or less.) Furthermore, this figure does not take into account the unregistered groups, which, like smaller organizations generally, are likely to be younger. The “youth” of these organizations has important ramifications for their ability to work together, which usually develops over time and with long-term relationships between leaders. It also underlines the need for ongoing capacity-building to help these organizations develop and collaborate effectively.¹³

A more detailed look at the IRS “ruling dates”—when an organization is granted tax-exempt status by the IRS—for environmental and conservation organizations (See figure 7) shows a steady, almost geometric increase in the number of groups registered each year since 1940, although this trend may be leveling off since 2005. On top of this underlying curve are a number of spikes, caused when large associations of organizations registered hundreds or even thousands of their affiliates at one time.

Figure 7: Registration Years for Organizations in IRS 2005 Files



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Business Master File 2005.

¹³ More than 40 percent of the public charities that were created in 1994 or 1995 and that filed a Form 990 in 1995 had failed, ceased to file a Form 990 or had budget contractions of at least 20 percent 10 years later. In contrast, only 28 percent of the organizations that were at least 10 years old in 1995 failed or declined. (Unpublished analysis from NCCS 2008.)

Degree of Connection between Organizations

An essential characteristic of the environmental movement is the connectedness between organizations. The history of various environmental efforts suggests that environmental organizations work closely together on a regular basis, especially in their role as advocates.¹⁴ This connectedness is difficult to quantify, but one crude measure is the percentage of organizations that are “coalitions,” “alliances,” “networks,” “leagues,” or the like—as indicated by their names.¹⁵ In 2005, environmental and conservation nonprofits that filed Form 990 were almost twice as likely to have these words in their names as private charities in general.¹⁶ Thirteen percent of them did so in 2005, up from 10 percent in 1989. (This was not the case among all private charities—for them, the percentage remained at 7 percent.) This suggests that there may be a special benefit to collaboration in the environmental and conservation sector, or at the very least a benefit to having a name which suggested collaboration.

The relatedness of environmental organizations stemmed partly from their genesis. In many cases, leaders of existing groups chose to create and spin off new niche organizations rather than to try to extend the reach of those that already existed. For example, a group of staffers from The Nature Conservancy created Conservation International to do large-scale ecosystem protection through debt-for-nature swaps in key threatened areas. The Conservancy’s former president Pat Noonan went on to found the American Farmland Trust and the Conservation Fund, which focuses on private-public conservation deals. Other national groups gave rise to new players in similar ways.¹⁷ This pattern also occurred at the state level. In Alabama, for example, the Alabama Environmental Council helped give rise to the Cahaba River Society, which, in turn, launched the Alabama Rivers Alliance, whose executive director recently left to found Conservation Alabama.

The multiplicity of specialist organizations requires greater collaboration between the organizations if they are to achieve their goals, since few have the clout to do so alone. At the national level, the staff of nearly 30 national organizations meet regularly in the “Green Group” and occasionally launch collaborative campaigns. Similar coordinating groups are found at the regional and state levels as well. In Alabama, for example, environmental and social justice groups meet in ARC, the Coalition to Reform the Department of Environmental Management.¹⁸ Still other groups have been created to coordinate around individual issues. An example is the Citizen’s Clearinghouse for

14 Examples are the creation of the Clean Air Network, which comprised all the major organizations, to lobby for passage of the Clean Air Act, and its subsequent funding and implementation. The Clean Water Network served a similar function. Environmental and conservation organizations worked together very closely to pass the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act, which created the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. In the public arena, there are few achievements that did *not* involve collaboration between groups.

15 This is a crude measure because many “coalitions” or “networks” or “leagues” are independent organizations. (In the author’s experience most of those began as coalitions of groups and evolved into independent organizations over time. An example is the Natural Resources Council of Maine, which began with a board of representatives from other groups and today has a board of individual trustees whose allegiance is to NRCM.)

16 Thirteen percent of environmental and conservation filers in 2005 had the words “alliance,” “coalition,” “council,” “federation,” “collaborative,” “league,” “partnership,” “federation,” “roundtable,” or “working group” in their titles. Only 7 percent of private charities in general did so.

17 See Bosso’s analysis in *Environment, Inc.*

18 ARC stands for ADEM Reform Coalition.

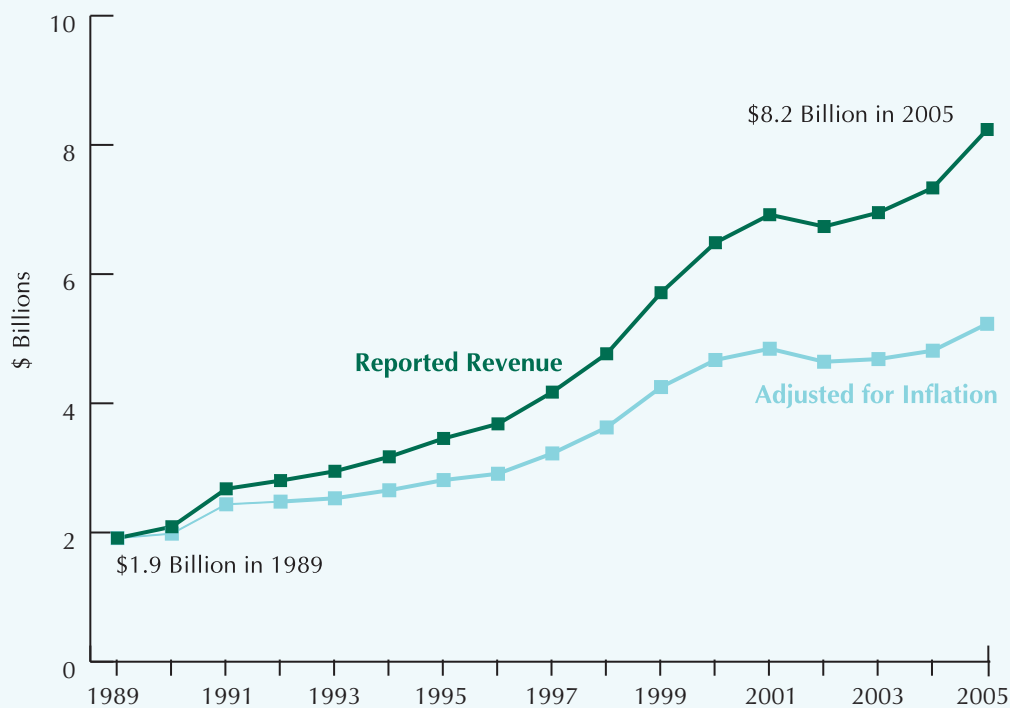
Hazardous Waste. The highly networked character of the movement is most clearly exemplified by the organizations working on global climate change, as described in the section below, The Growth of Organizations Focused on Climate Change.

Although the environmental movement has its share of prominent national organizations, over the past decades it has tended away from consolidation. Instead, it has become an increasingly decentralized web of highly specialized organizations which often work in coordination.

Revenue

Environmental and conservation organizations made up 1.9 percent of all the nonprofits that filed 990 forms in 2005. Although they tend to be highly visible, they accounted for only 0.53 percent of total nonprofit revenues. Their average income was around \$1 million, about a quarter of the average for the nonprofit sector filers. This amount was skewed by the largest organizations; the *median* income among environmental filers was only \$131,769.

Figure 8: Total Revenue for Environmental and Conservation Filers, 1989–2006



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files for Private Charities and Other 501(c) designations, 1989–2006. Value of funding in constant dollars calculated from the Consumer Price Index.

Between 1989 and 2005, environmental and conservation public charities that filed reported a 331 percent increase in their total revenues. The growth rate was over 50 percent faster than the rate for public charities in general. It was also more volatile—environmental and conservation organizations saw their revenue accelerate in the economic “euphoria” of the late 1990s, and then decline briefly during the economic downturn of 2001–2003. Over the same decade and a half, the revenues of the entire nonprofit sector grew more slowly but without setbacks.

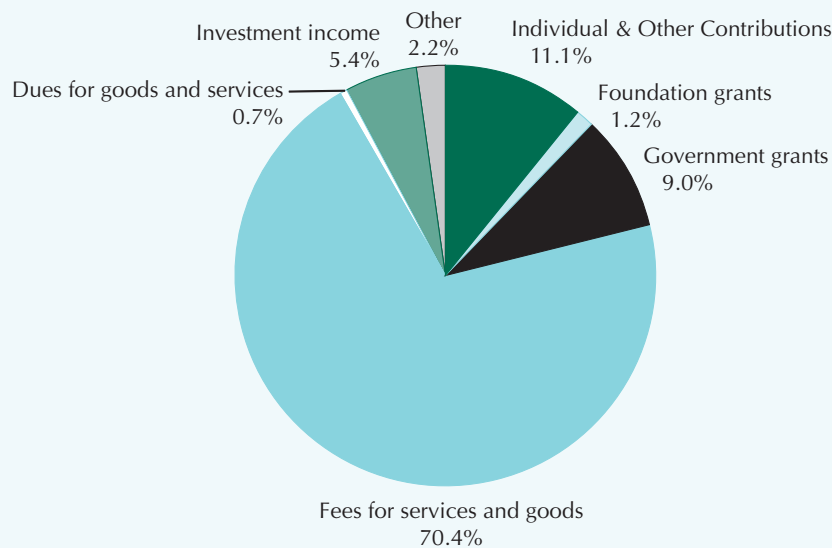
Adjusting revenue for inflation gives a less rosy picture. Up until the millennium, environmental and conservation organizations increased real revenue steadily, meaning that they could respond to

new challenges by expanding staff and services. From 2001 to 2004, the sector's real income declined slightly and then recovered before surpassing its 2001 peak in 2005. It was the first period of financial contraction in the movement's recent history. Many organizations were stretched to respond to increasing need with decreasing resources. Some merged and a few folded, although the numbers of organizations as a whole continued to grow.

Sources of Revenue

On average, environmental and conservation organizations had a very different funding mix from nonprofits as a whole. Environmental and conservation organizations relied on private grants and contributions for approximately 46 percent of their income, compared to 12 percent for all public charities. (This is consistent with a number of studies that found small to mid-size environmental and conservation nonprofits derived about half their income from foundation grants.¹⁹) The environmental and conservation filers earned only 21 percent of their total revenues from fees for goods and services—such as contracts for services, admissions to programs, or participant tuitions. Filing nonprofits as a whole earned more than 70 percent. Dues for goods and services²⁰ to members

Figure 9: Revenue Sources for All Filing 501(c)(3) Public Charities in 2005



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005, NCCS research databases 2008. The Foundation Center, *Giving USA*. Amy Blackwood, Kennard Wing, Thomas H. Pollak, "Facts and Figures from the Nonprofit Almanac 2008: Public Charities, Giving, and Volunteering," May 2008, on the NCCS web site. The Nonprofit Almanac 2008.

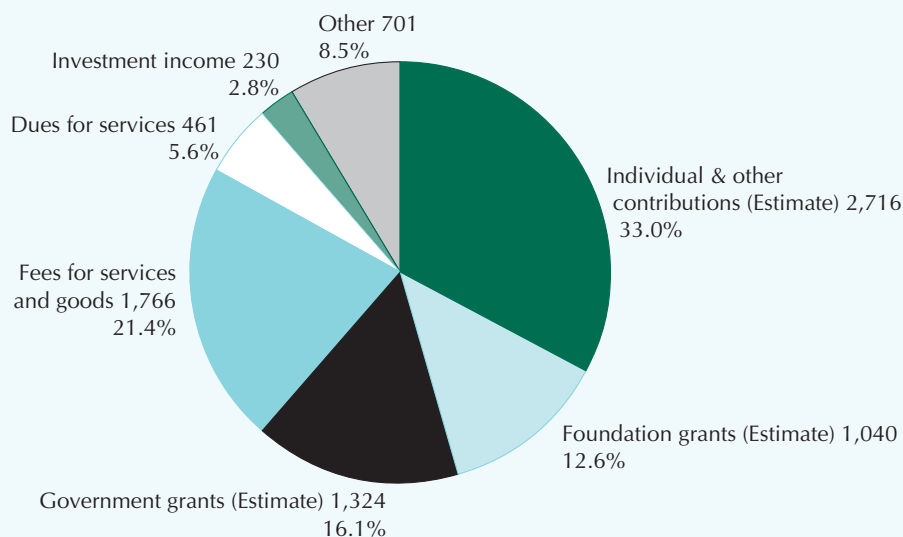
19 "Almost all organizations with paid staff (91.4 percent) received grant funding, and almost half (48.1 percent) of their total funding came from grants." *Organizational Capacity of the Environmental Sector: Findings of a Survey of Environmental Organizations in the Great Lakes and Southeastern U.S.* La Piana Associates for the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2003. <http://pubs.mott.org/lapiana/toc.asp>.

20 It's important to remember that "membership dues and assessments" on the Form 990 refers not to total dues, but only to that portion of dues paid in return for a good or service, such as a tote bag or magazine subscription.

provided 5.6 percent of the environmental and conservation filers' revenue, much greater than the 1 percent average of the nonprofit sector as a whole.

In a separate analysis of the larger organizations—those with incomes over \$250,000—13 percent of contributions (\$386 million) came in the form of in-kind gifts, of which 58 percent was given to land trusts, presumably largely as gifts of real estate. The remainder represented only 8 percent of the contributions of other environmental organizations.

Figure 10: Revenue Sources for All Environmental and Conservation Filers in 2005 (\$ millions)



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005, NCCS research databases 2008, the Foundation Center, *Giving USA*.

Sixty-two percent of the revenue for environmental and conservation organizations came from grants (private and government) and private contributions. We estimate that this broke down into 16 percent from government grants, 13 from foundation grants, and 33 from individual, corporate, and other contributions. (See the following sections, Government Grants and Foundation Support.)

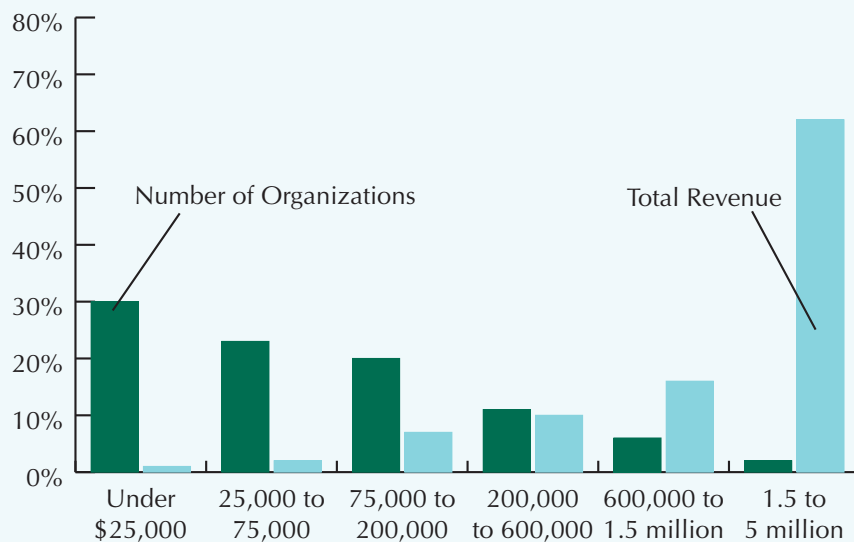
A different revenue mix appeared among organizations in the categories of pollution abatement, recycling, alternative energy, and environmental education. (See Appendix A: Sources of Revenue by Type of Organization.) Many of these groups sold their expertise and technical capacity to businesses, governments and public utilities and, not surprisingly, relied more heavily on fees for services.

Given their greater dependence on contributions and grants, environmental and conservation organizations spend more on fundraising. They dedicate approximately 5 percent of their total expenses on fundraising, whereas nonprofits as a whole spend closer to 2 percent.

Concentration of Revenue by Size and Scope of Organization

As in most nonprofit fields, the great majority of the revenue goes to the largest groups. Among those organizations which filed returns, 64 percent of the sector's revenue went to the 3 percent of the organizations with income above \$5 million. At the bottom, 1 percent of the revenue went to the 35 percent which received less than \$75,000.

Figure 11: Distribution of Income among Filing Organizations by Revenue Size in 2005



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005.

This income concentration is striking, but actually less pronounced than for public charities as a whole. Among all public charity filers, the top 3 percent (organizations with income above \$15 million) received 80 percent of the revenue.

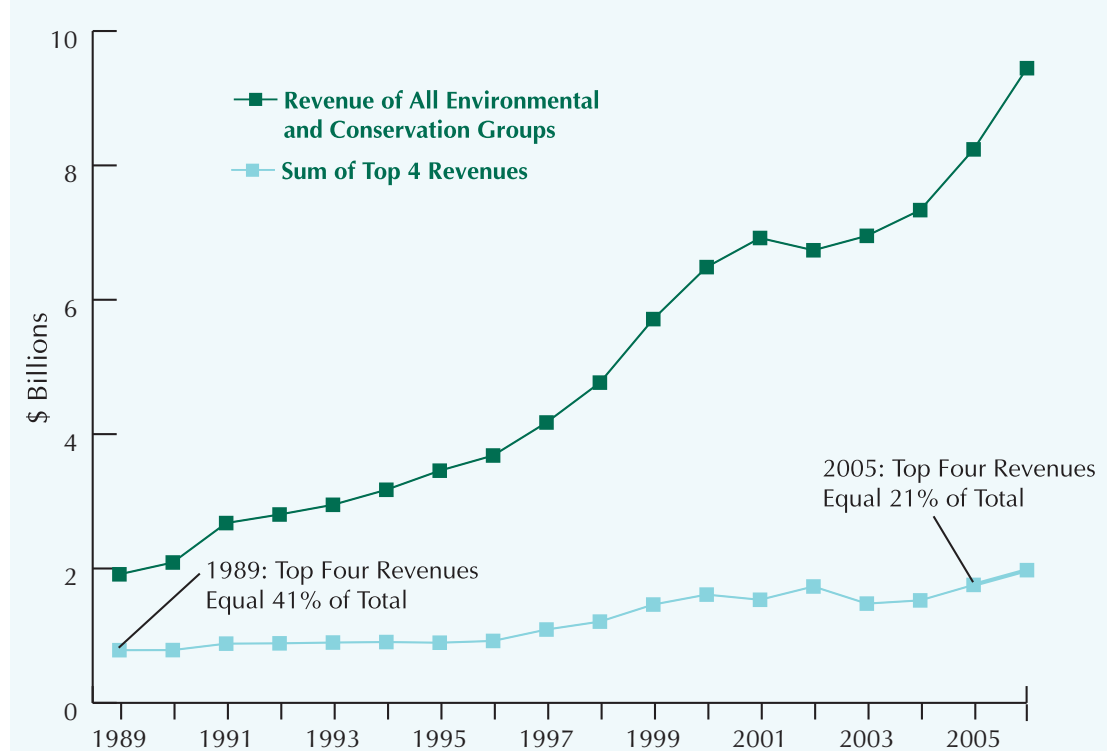
The fundraising dominance of the large institutions has aroused concern. Like many observers, Mark Dowie observed the rapid growth of the mainstream organizations and concluded that 24 large groups absorbed most of the sector's funding.

In 1965 the ten largest environmental organizations in the country ran on less than \$10 million; by 1985 that number reached \$218 million; by 1990, \$514. Today total funding is approaching three quarters of a billion dollars. Almost 70% of the total is absorbed by the 24 organizations that comprise the Washington-based mainstream sector of the movement.²¹

²¹ Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, 1995 MIT Press, p.40–41. (Dowie is comparing the budgets of the 24 national organizations to the AAFC's estimate of foundation donations.) Robert Brulle and J. Craig Jenkins also conclude that the majority of the movement's funding goes to "a small number of large environmental organizations engaged in professional advocacy." *The U.S. Environmental Movement: Crisis or Transition?* Self-published in 2005.

In fact, the IRS data indicates that the revenue was much less concentrated than Dowie estimated, and that from 1989 to 2005 it trended toward more even distribution. A standard measure of consolidation in an industry is the percentage of income going to the four largest companies.²² In 1989, the four environmental and conservation organizations with the most revenue took in 41 percent of the \$1.9 billion which went into the entire sector. By 2005, the revenue going to the top four organizations had more than doubled, in absolute terms, but made up only 21 percent of the entire sector's revenue, which had risen to \$8.3 billion. (See Figure 12: Revenue Concentration in the Top 4 Organizations, 1989–2005.)

Figure 12: Revenue Concentration in the Top Four Organizations, 1989–2005



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005, NCCS research databases 2008, the Foundation Center, *Giving USA*.

Further, if we look at 31 national organizations which were the core of the national movement in 2005, we see that their percentage of the sector's total revenue dropped slightly from 29 percent in

²² "One commonly used concentration ratio is the four-firm concentration ratio, which consists of the market share, as a percentage, of the four largest firms in the industry." *Concentration Ratio*, Wikipedia, 3 September 2008.

1989 to 25 percent in 2005.²³ It did so even though some of these organizations, such as Oceana, had only recently begun and were in periods of initial growth.

Figure 13: Revenue of 31 National Organizations Compared to Total Sector Revenue



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files for Private Charities and Other 501(c) designations, 1989-2006. Information through 2003 on the 31 national organizations from Christopher Bosso, *Environment Inc.* Information on the 31 national organizations since 2003 comes from published annual reports.

The 24 percent received by the 31 national organizations probably overestimates the amount of money expended at the national level, because many of these organizations spend much on their state and regional offices. The National Wildlife Federation and the Sierra Club are two which increased their staff effort on state and local issues. Clean Water Action greatly downsized its Washington, D.C., presence in order to bolster its local canvass and issue work. In short, even at the level of the largest organizations, the evidence indicates a trend toward decentralization. For the

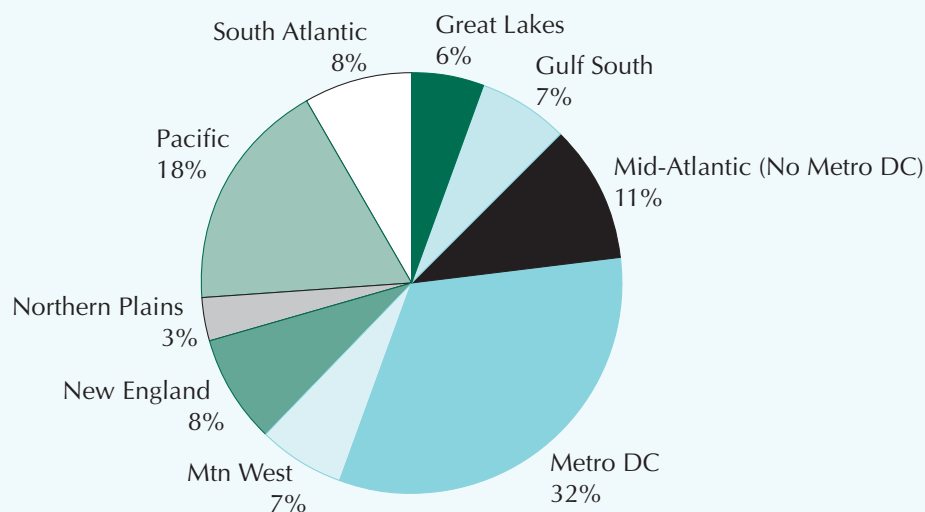
23 The 31 were selected by J. Bosso in *Environment, Inc.* pp. 54-55. They include the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, National Parks Conservation Association, Izaak Walton League, the Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund-U.S., Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Action, Natural Resources Defense Council, League of Conservation Voters, Greenpeace USA, Earthjustice, Clean Water Action, Ocean Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, American Rivers, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, Earth Island Institute, National Park Trust, Rainforest Action Network, Conservation Fund, Conservation International, Earth Share, Environmental Working Group, and the National Environmental Trust.

movement as a whole, the tendency was apparently toward more regional and local efforts, which made sense at a time when the federal political climate has been difficult. For example, in order to combat the Bush administration's plan to open the eastern slope of the Rockies to coal and gas exploration, the environmental community has put less effort into Washington policy and more into organizing affected communities.

Distribution of Revenue by Region

Revenue was fairly evenly distributed across the regions, with the significant exception that about a third of it went to organizations headquartered in the metropolitan Washington area. (A second revenue focus was San Francisco.) The Washington area is home to many of the largest organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy, National Geographic Society,²⁴ the World Wildlife Fund, the National Wildlife Federation, Conservation International, and others. All of these direct much (if not most) of their resources into regional or international programs, so the 32 percent surely overestimates the amount of revenue actually spent in the Washington area. Nevertheless, the geographic concentration reflects the federal government's importance for policy and funding, and the weight of the Washington-based organizations sometimes exacerbates tension between local grassroots and national policy organizations.²⁵

Figure 14: Revenue by Region, 2005



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files 2005.

24 The National Geographic Society is classified as an environmental education organization. According to its web site, it is dedicated to "Inspiring People to Care about the Planet."

25 The tension between activists on the ground and more measured, policy-oriented large institutions has existed since the earliest battles. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution*, p. 58ff. "The growth of large national organizations centered in Washington, D.C., and New York may have squeezed out the grassroots support, primarily at the local level, which had been the hallmark of the movement during its growth years."—Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer, *Green Backlash: The History and Politics of Environmental Opposition in the U.S.*, Lynne Rienner: Boulder, CO, 1997, p.292.

In the past 10 years, there has been a dramatic growth in the number of new organizations created outside the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area that have successfully moved from the startup phase to maturity with substantial programs and revenue. Table 2, below, shows that while organizations founded since 1996 accounted for only 4.9 percent of the revenue of Washington, D.C., organizations, they accounted for more than 25 percent of the revenue of organizations outside the metro area.

Table 2: Growth in Revenue Within and Outside the Washington Metropolitan Area

Region	Number of organizations filing Form 990s			Total revenue		
	All organizations	Organizations registered since 1996	% New	\$ All organizations	\$ Organizations registered since 1996	% New
Washington D.C. & vicinity	285	105	36.8	2,594,656,361	126,716,059	4.9
Other	7,737	3,340	43.2	5,685,994,164	1,442,091,938	25.4
Total	8,022	3,445	42.9	8,280,650,525	1,568,807,997	18.9

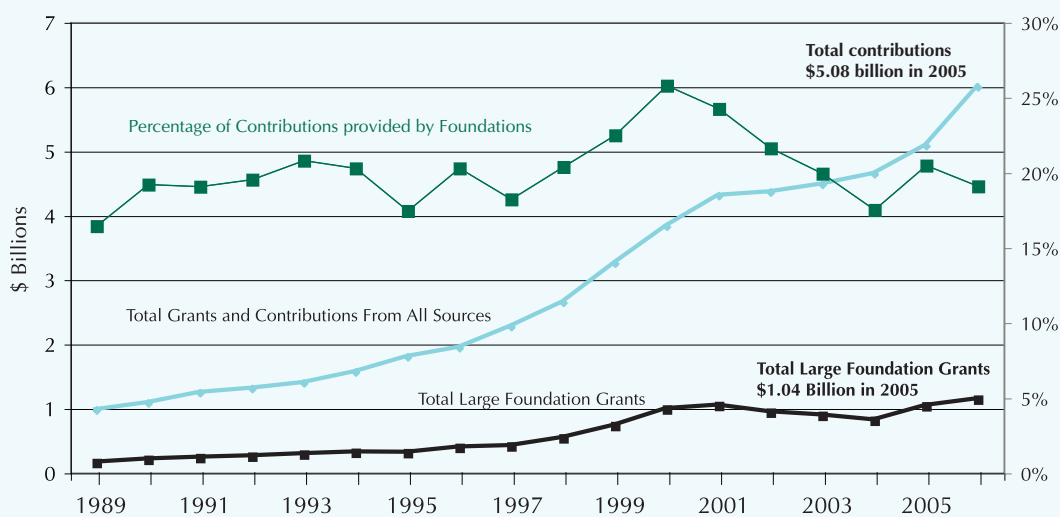
Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files and Business Master Files, 2005.

Foundation Support for Environmental and Conservation Organizations

The IRS Form 990 does not track foundation support separately, but the Foundation Center has estimated total giving for the environment and animals, based on its reporting from over 1,000 larger foundations.²⁶

²⁶ The Foundation Center, *Foundation Giving Trends, 2008*. Based on a sample of over 1,000 larger foundations. Figures for 1989 to 1997 provided courtesy of Josie Atienza and Reina Mukal, Foundation Center.

Figure 15: Grants from Large Foundations for Environment and Conservation, 1989–2006



Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files for Private Charities and Other 501(c) designations, 1989–2006. Foundation giving figures from J. Atienza and R. Mukai, *Foundation Giving Trend: Update on Funding Priorities*, New York: Foundation Center (annual). Pre 2001 figures provided by Reina Mukai at the Foundation Center, 2.4.08.

In 2005, these large foundations provided \$1.04 billion, or 20 percent of the environmental and conservation sector’s grants and contributions from all sources—which works out to about 12 percent of all revenues. As a percentage of total contributions, foundation funding for this sector is only 2 percentage points higher than for all public charities (18 percent). However, it accounts for a much higher percentage of total revenue for environmental and conservation organizations than it does for all public charities, which receive only 1 percent of their total revenues from foundations.²⁷

Over the period for which we have data, foundation support has ranged between fifteen and 20 percent of total contributions. It spiked in the late 1990s economic boom, when foundation support reached 25 percent in 2000, then dropped with the market declines of 2001 and 2002. Nevertheless, total revenue from contributions continued to rise. Why? Many groups, such as the National Wildlife Federation, the Northern Forest Alliance, and Appalachian Voices, responded to the economic slowdown by shifting appeals to individual donors, with notable success. It’s possible that this shift to individual donors was facilitated by foundation investments in capacity-building, especially in the fundraising programs supported and encouraged by foundations such as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Beldon Fund, and the C. S. Mott Foundation.

²⁷ Only public charities filing IRS Form 990s are included. This excludes religious congregations, which are public charities under the federal tax code.

Government Grant Funding

We estimate that in 2005 government grants provided about a sixth of the total revenue.²⁸ Overall, 28 percent of a random sample of the smallest organizations (annual expenses up to \$100,000) received support such as watershed planning grants from the U.S. EPA or state grants for recycling centers. Among small groups, environmental beautification and fishery organizations were especially reliant on government grants, each apparently receiving about a third of their revenues from them.

Government grants were part of the funding mix for 38 percent of the mid-sized category (annual expenses above \$100,000 and up to \$250,000). They went disproportionately to land trusts, which received more than half of the total amount of government grants given to mid-sized organizations in our sample.

Fifty percent of the largest organizations (annual expenses above \$250,000) received government funding, although on average it made up only 16 percent of their budgets. However, for several types of larger organizations in our sample government grants were more important. Energy conservation organizations received almost two-thirds (63 percent) of their income this way, while fisheries, environmental beautification, and river and watershed organizations received approximately two-fifths. For many of the groups in these categories, cutbacks in government budgets would dramatically reduce their resources.

Table 3: Government Grants by Amount of the Organization's Revenue

	Expenses of \$100,000 or less	100,000 to 250,000	250,000 or more
ALL ORGANIZATIONS			
Total Number of Organizations in Sample	312	325	2,432
Percentage of Total Revenue from Government Grants	14%	23%	16%
Percentage of Organizations Receiving Government Grants	28%	38%	50%
ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING GOVERNMENT GRANTS			
Number Receiving Government Grants	88	123	1,221
Percentage of Their Revenue from Government Grants	46%	50%	24%

Sources: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files for 501(c)(3)s. For the two smaller expense categories, we drew random samples using the Core 2005 file as a sampling frame. For the largest expense category, all organizations were included.

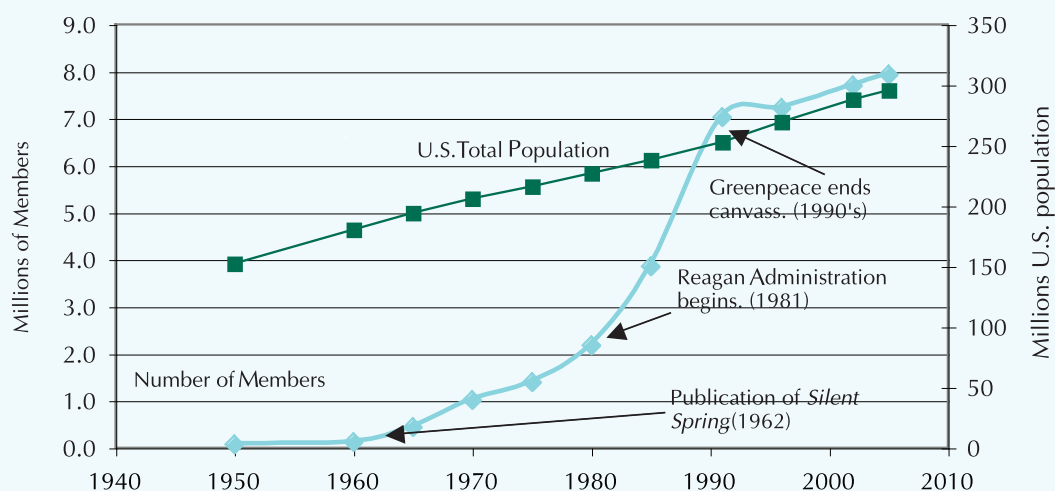
²⁸ The largest category of table 3 accounts for 91 percent of the total grant income, so it seems reasonable to assume that the sector as a whole receives close to 16 percent.

Numbers of Members and Supporters

The IRS does not collect data on membership or number of donors. Surveys of the entire U.S. population indicate that membership in environmental, conservation and animal rights organizations of all sizes continued to rise through the end of the last millennium, from 5.1 million in 1981 to 8.3 in 1990 to 15.9 in 1999.²⁹

More recently, Christopher Bosso gathered membership numbers through 2003 for *Environment, Inc.* (2005), and we have undertaken the surprisingly arduous task of updating it through 2005–2006. (See Appendix B.) Much of the historical data is approximate, because some organizations don't keep historical records, or switch databases and lose information in the process, or change the definition of "member" as they evolve their services. For purposes of this study, we limited the membership counts to individuals or donors who had paid membership dues or made a donation within the past year.³⁰ Beginning with Bosso's data, we have historical information for 25 national organizations.³¹

Figure 16: Total Reported Members of 25 National Organizations



Sources Information through 2003 on the 31 national organizations from Christopher Bosso, *Environment Inc.* Information on the 31 national organizations since 2003 comes from published annual reports and personal communications with each of the organizations. For more detailed information, see Appendix B.

29 1999–2002 World Values Study. Cited in Dalton, Russell. "The Greening of the Globe? Crossnational Levels of Environmental Group Membership," *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 441–459, August 2005.

30 Some organizations use an 18 month period instead of 12, and a couple even use two years.

31 These 25 include the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, National Parks Conservation Association, Izaak Walton League, the Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund–U.S., Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Action, Natural Resources Defense Council, League of Conservation Voters, Greenpeace USA, Earthjustice, Ocean Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, American Rivers, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, Earth Island Institute, the Conservation Fund, and Conservation International. This leaves out a number of organizations which have reported combined totals of donors and electronic activists, like Clean Water Action, or which only cultivate a relatively small number of individual and institutional donors.

The first conclusion to be drawn is that the often predicted decline of public involvement in environmental organizations has so far failed to occur.³² Pollsters have indeed measured swings in general public opinion about environmental issues and organizations. But overall reported membership in national organizations has continued to grow, even despite the unfavorable political climate in Washington, D.C., since 2001.

The membership curves generally correspond to the trends in environmentalism documented by historians and public opinion researchers. A first wave of new members joined during the late 1960s and early 1970s, in response to the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the battle over the Grand Canyon dams and public attention to other egregious problems (like the flammability of the Cuyahoga River). Later in the decade researchers measured a decline in public concern.³³ The Reagan administration's hostile attitude toward environmental protection, embodied in its first secretary of interior, James Watt, spurred a second surge.³⁴ By 1989, 76 percent of respondents to a Harris poll considered themselves "environmentalists."³⁵ Environmental and conservation organizations embraced expensive direct marketing techniques and door-to-door canvasses to boost their membership rolls.

The rapid growth of membership in the 1980s was followed by a period of stagnation in the early 1990s. Industry used anti-environmental publicity to sway public opinion, and the Clinton administration seemed a more careful steward of the earth. By 1999, the number of respondents self-identifying as "environmentalists" had dropped to 50 percent.³⁶

Among the national organizations, the 1990s saw a shift to tighter business practices and greater sustainability. The limitations of mass marketing became evident, and several national organizations narrowed their membership recruitment strategies. Greenpeace USA gave up its national canvass, which at best had broken even, and by 2005 had only a fifth of the 1.5 million donors it reported in 1991.³⁷ The National Park Trust gave up its large sweepstakes solicitation because of legal questions. Clean Water Action moved most of its staff outside Washington in order to bolster its regional activism. Conservation International stopped its direct mail membership efforts and shifted attention to cultivating high-dollar individual and institutional donors. At about the same time that market-

32 Most models of social movements posit a period of growth and then eventual decline. See *Dunlap and Mertig*, 1992, pp. 3. As early as 1972, Anthony Downs predicted that that as the public realized the true costs of environmental protection, the movement's support would wane, as would its ability to influence policy. Downs, Anthony. "Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue-Attention Cycle," in the *Public Interest*, Summer 1972. And as late as 2004 Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus predicted "the Death of Environmentalism" in their polemic of the same name. An interesting question is why the environmental movement has so far avoided the decline that other social movements have suffered.

33 For a summary of public attitudes from 1973 to 1999, see Deborah Lynn Gruber's *The Grassroots of the Green Revolution*, pp.57-61.

34 *Bosso*, p.98.

35 Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll. April 13-14, 1999. N=1,069 adults nationwide.

36 Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll. April 13-14, 1999. N=1,069 adults nationwide.

37 Carey Goldberg, "Downsizing Activism: Greenpeace is Cutting Back," *New York Times*, September 16, 1997.

ing shifted, several of the national organizations also narrowed their programmatic niches and began collaborating more closely with one another.³⁸

Since 2000, total membership numbers have been climbing again, possibly in response to the renewed public concern about the Bush administration's actions³⁹ and issues such as climate change and water shortages. However, some national organizations report that *since 2005* they have had more difficulty maintaining their numbers of dues-paying members, although their rolls of e-activists grow quickly. Today activists may be more likely to join in specific, time-limited campaigns via the Internet than to make a long-term, general commitment to an organization.⁴⁰ Kerry Zobor, vice president and managing director of Consumer Media at the World Wildlife Fund–U.S., said “I don’t have any research to support this, but my sense is that people are not as interested in signing up as annual members so much anymore but rather prefer to donate to unique projects which are their particular passions, like a tiger protection project.”⁴¹ This may be part of a shift in the nature of membership in the electronic age, and may significantly change the business models and the leadership structure of traditional membership groups.

If we break down the organizations individually, between 1996 and 2005, their total membership rose 11 percent from 7.9 to 8.7 million.⁴² Nine of the 25 grew by 20 percent or more, whereas five shrank by more than half, one of them folding. Among these national organizations, the mid-sized groups (between 50,000 and 500,000 members in 1996) were most likely to grow; most of the large organizations (over 500,000 members in 1996) held steady.

38 Michael McCloskey, “Twenty Years of Change in the Environmental Movement,” pp.84ff, in Dunlap & Mertig, *American Environmentalism: the U.S. Environmental Movement, 1970-1990*. Taylor & Francis, 1992.

39 In Gallup’s April 22nd 2005 poll, half of respondents said that the Bush administration was doing a “poor” job of protecting the environment. Ruy Teixeira, *Public Opinion Watch*, April 27, 2005. <http://www.american-progress.org/issues/2005/04/b596339.html>

40 Jilliane Smith, Martin Kearns, Allison Fine, *Power to the Edges: Trends and Opportunities in Online Civic Engagement*. “The “organization-centric” model that has traditionally dominated the civic engagement landscape has begun to show cracks. Often organizations serve as the primary intermediary through which citizen engagement occurs. The pressure that these organizations experience to build membership and revenue in order to sustain their activities competes with their ability to engage and listen to the very individuals they need in order to accomplish their mission.”

41 Kerry Zobor, Vice President and Managing Director, Consumer Media, World Wildlife Fund–U.S. Personal communication, October 23, 2008.

42 This is the total number of members and supporters reported by each group. Some individuals probably belong to more than one group, so the total number of people belonging to these groups is probably somewhat less.

**Table 4: Membership Growth from 1996 to 2005
among 25 National Organizations**

	Number of members in 1996			Totals
	Under 50,000	50 to 500,000	Over 500,000	
More than doubled			2	2
More than 20% growth	3	2	2	7
Less than 20% change	4	3	4	11
Shrank by 20% or more			0	0
Shrank by 50% or more	3	2		5
Total	10	9	6	25

Sources Information through 2003 on the 31 national organizations from Christopher Bosso, *Environment Inc.* Information on the 31 national organizations since 2003 comes from published annual reports and personal communications with each of the organizations.

It's important to note that national organizations may not reflect membership dynamics at the regional or local level. Regional groups like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, or Friends of the Columbia Gorge have exhibited very strong membership growth in the last 10 years.⁴³ It may be that as the network of local and regional organizations becomes denser, membership growth will shift to them.

⁴³ Data on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation from David A. Fahrenthold, "Green for a Day, but Then Comes Tomorrow," *Washington Post*, April 22, 2008; Page B01. Data on Friends of the Columbia Gorge in a personal communication from Kevin Gorman, Executive Director, 28 April 2008. Data on the Greater Yellowstone Coalition from Heidi Barrett, Director of Development, personal communication, 6 May 2008.

Lobbying and Political Activity

The environmental movement is often identified with its most vocal advocacy organizations. It has been criticized for what was characterized as an undue level of political activism. In 2004, Senator James Inhofe asserted “Today’s environmental groups are simply Democrat political machines with millions of dollars in contributions and expenditures each year for the purpose of raising more money to pursue their agenda.”⁴⁴

In fact, in 2005 few environmental and conservation Form 990 filers reported spending anything at all for grassroots lobbying or to directly influence specific legislation. Those that did spent only a small portion of their income on it. Overall, in 2005 only 170 of 8,078 filers (2.0 percent) reported outlays for grassroots organizing, and those amounted to only 0.4 percent of their total expenses. Only 268 (3.2 percent) reported expenses for activities to influence legislation, amounting to 0.8 percent of their total expenses.

If we focus on electoral activity, the percentage of active groups drops further. Only eight environmental and conservation Section 527 groups – “soft money” electoral fundraising organizations regulated under section 527 of the U.S. tax code—raised over \$200,000 for the 2004 federal election cycle. In total environmental 527’s contributed approximately \$15 million, 3 percent of the total of \$509 million for all 527’s.⁴⁵ Environmental and conservation groups also fielded political action committees, which make contributions to and expenditures on behalf of federal candidates and other committees.⁴⁶ Their political action committees contributed \$3 million in the 2004 election cycle, 1 percent of total PAC giving.⁴⁷ If conservation groups had sway with voters, their influence arose from something other than money.

On the other hand, the grassroots lobbying and legislative expensive numbers reported by environmental and conservation nonprofits, while low, are the highest of any type of nonprofits except civil rights groups. Moreover, issue advocacy can be broader than the IRS definition of lobbying, which is limited to direct contacts with government officials on specific legislation or “grassroots” efforts to encourage the general public to contact legislators about specific legislation.⁴⁸

As one would expect, the largest portion of outlays for grassroots organizing or for legislative lobbying came from the “Alliances and Advocacy” category, followed by organizations dedicated to protection of wildlife, public policy, those broadly dedicated to protecting natural resources, and land trusts. But even some associations of environmental and conservation professionals, and some environmental fundraising groups make use of their legal right to engage on legislation.

44 James Inhofe, U.S. Senator, “Partisan Environmental Groups,” Senate Floor Statement, October 4, 2004.

45 *Federally Focused 527s by Industry*, Center for Responsive Politics.

46 *Federal Election Commission Campaign Guide – Corporations and Labor Organizations*, January 2007, p.ii.

47 Total PAC giving in the 2004 election cycle was estimated at \$384 million. Center for Responsive Politics, “’04 Elections Expected To Cost Nearly \$4 Billion,” October 21, 2004.

48 Boris and Krehely, “Civic Participation and Advocacy,” p.303, in Salamon (ed.), *The State of Nonprofit America*. Brookings Institution Press, 2002.

Table 5: Grassroots and Direct Lobbying Expenses

	Percent reporting grassroots lobbying expenses	Percent of their budgets spent on grassroots lobbying	Percent reporting expenses to influence legislation	Percent of their budgets spent to influence legislation	Total grassroots and legislative lobbying expenses
Alliances & Advocacy	8.3%	0.6%	11.0%	1.7%	\$6,022,630
Wildlife Protection	2.6%	0.2%	3.7%	0.5%	\$2,621,080
Land Conservation	1.7%	0.2%	5.3%	0.3%	\$2,156,522
Policy	2.5%	3.2%	3.5%	1.7%	\$429,216
Natural Resources	2.3%	0.4%	3.1%	0.8%	\$1,603,374
Water Resources	1.4%	0.5%	2.3%	1.2%	\$983,901
Energy	1.4%	1.5%	5.3%	0.3%	\$239,032
Total All Organizations	2.1%	0.4%	3.2%	0.8%	\$16,658,392

Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005.

The amount spent on grassroots and legislative lobbying varied by region. The Mid-Atlantic, Mountain West, and Pacific had the highest percentages of organizations reporting expenses in these areas. New England, the Great Lakes, and the Gulf South had the lowest.

Engaging in grassroots lobbying is correlated to comparatively greater financial growth for larger organizations, but less for smaller ones. In 1989 25 organizations reported expenses for grassroots lobbying in 1989. By 2005 those with expenditures greater than \$600,000 in 1989 had grown substantially more, on average, than similar organizations which did not report grassroots lobbying. Those with expenditures less than \$600,000 grew less than similar organizations which did not report grassroots lobbying. The same effect was evident for those which reported grassroots lobbying in 1995. Interestingly, this correlation to grassroots lobbying was *not* apparent among public charities as a whole.

The Growth of Organizations Focused on Climate Change

The ferment of new activity on global climate change offers a glimpse into the way the environmental and conservation movement grows and adapts. Climate change has long been a sore spot for many national environmental groups—activists have been concerned since the 1990s and even before, but without viable opportunities to pass federal policy. The work of Vice President Al Gore, as well as growing scientific evidence and increasing alarm among climate researchers, has helped to shift public opinion.⁴⁹ Resources are increasingly available. In 2006, U.S. foundations gave approximately \$123 million (11 percent of all giving for environment and animals) to activities related to global warming.⁵⁰

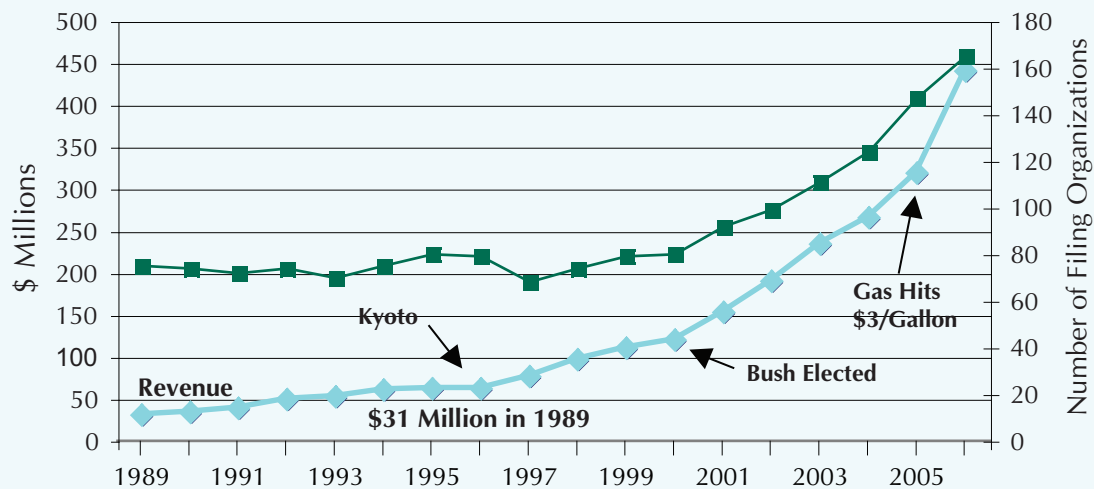
The growth of efforts related to climate change can be observed across the spectrum of environmental and conservation groups. It is visible particularly in the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation subsector (C35), which includes organizations like the Energy Trust of Oregon, which helps businesses and homeowners “save energy ... and move to energy self-reliance,” or Carbonfund.org, which accepts contributions toward carbon offsets. In this subsector, which implements policies to counteract climate change, the numbers of organizations and revenues exploded in the past decade much as they did for the movement as a whole in the 1980s. We hypothesize that some of this was motivated by climbing energy prices, and some of it by concern about global warming. Most of these organizations make an explicit connection between the two.

Between 1989 and 2006 total revenue grew over fourteen fold. (See Figure 17: Revenues of Renewable Energy and Conservation Nonprofits.) Until 1997, the number of registered and filing organizations held steady, and revenues grew at about the rate of the environmental and conservation sector as a whole. After 1997, the year of the Kyoto Protocol meeting, revenues rose sharply, followed by an uptick in the number of filing organizations some years later. Even as revenues for environmental and conservation organizations as a whole were stagnant, the subsector continued to accelerate. The growth came from 501(c)(3) public charities, and more recently also from large section (c)(4) nonprofit corporations formed to finance energy savings measures, such as Ohio’s Energy Acquisition groups, as well as organizations driving a switch to renewable sources, such as Washingtonians for Secure Energy. One explanation may be that in the absence of federal action, nonprofits became the channel for donors and state and local governments concerned about climate change and aware of the economic benefits of conservation.

49 “Americans in large bipartisan numbers say the heating of the earth’s atmosphere is having serious effects on the environment now or will soon and think that it is necessary to take immediate steps to reduce its effects, the latest *New York Times*/CBS News poll finds. Ninety percent of Democrats, 80 percent of independents and 60 percent of Republicans said immediate action was required to curb the warming of the atmosphere and deal with its effects on the global climate.” “Public Still Divided on Global Warming,” John M. Broder and Marjorie Connolly, *New York Times*, April 27, 2007.

50 J. Atienza, S. Lawrence, H. Seidler, *et al*, *International Grantmaking IV: A Report on U.S. Foundation Trends*, New York: The Foundation Center, 2008. The \$123 million figure includes giving for global warming, air pollution, energy (e.g., sustainable energy and clean energy), recycling, and deforestation.

Figure 17: Revenues of Renewable Energy and Conservation Nonprofits



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files and Business Master Files, Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy, http://www.eia.doe.gov/oil_gas/petroleum/data_publications/wrgp/mogas_history.html

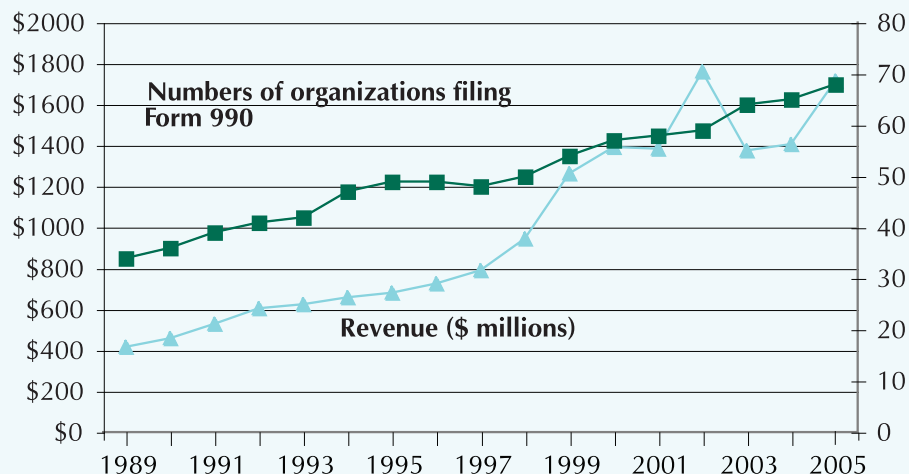
Much of this new revenue has gone to the newest of organizations. Of the \$441 million the subsector received in the year 2006, 64 percent was collected by organizations founded *after* 2000.

Among the large national organizations—Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and others—the majority launched climate change campaigns. In some cases, these are major new initiatives, born of long-simmering efforts by dedicated activists. In others, they are adaptations of ongoing programs. Even many land trusts—which typically avoid controversial issues—have begun to prepare for climate change and its impact on habitat and species, and also to plan for carbon sequestration by managing forests and grasslands differently.⁵¹

New coalitions and networks have arisen to link existing players for particular goals. Two of the most prominent are Al Gore’s “We Can Solve It” campaign, as well as the U.S. Climate Action Network. The latter is the U.S. node of the global Climate Action Network, and was founded in 1989 to coordinate advocacy at the federal, state and local levels. It exemplifies the broadening of environmental issues to nonenvironmental groups—the 71 members listed on its web site include large national organizations, statewide “interfaith power and light” networks for churches, associations of renewable energy implementers, and others. Almost a quarter of the Climate Action Network members have primary missions which fall outside the general rubric of environment. These advocacy-oriented organizations have also increased revenues, although less markedly than the energy conservation subsector.

⁵¹ Andy Pitz, “Global Warming: What’s a Land Trust to Do?” Presentation at the Land Trust Alliance Rally, Pittsburgh, PA, September 21, 2008.

Figure 18: Growth in Revenues and Numbers of the US Climate Action Network Members



Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core Files and Business Master Files, US Climate Action Network member list, <http://usclimatenetwork.org/about/members-list>, 6 Oct 2008.

New networks have been formed to involve constituencies not normally involved in environmental solutions. The US Climate Action Partnership couples large, middle-of-the-road environmental organizations and major corporations to push for greenhouse gas emissions limits. The more recent Energy Action Coalition, a project of Earth Island Institute, is comprised of organizations working with youth; Seasons' End alerts hunters and fishers to the negative impacts of climate change.⁵²

Nonprofit coalitions exist to encourage climate change work in governments, for-profits, and churches. Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) coordinates regional, county, and municipal efforts. The American Solar Energy Society promotes renewables and represents its state associations. The Interfaith Power and Light network has helped to catalyze 28 state organizations in the Interfaith Power and Light network, which promote "a religious response to global warming." The MetaFoundation's "Post Carbon Institute" has spawned dozens of groups seeking to "relocalize" the economy in preparation for a shift to sustainability.

The ease of electronic organizing facilitates a proliferation of initiatives, each with its own marketing flavor. 1Sky.org advocates for bold governmental action by 2010. ItsGettingHotInHere.org connects a global community of youth advocates. 350.org publicizes the importance of bringing carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere back under 350 parts per million. Earth Island Institute created the EcoEquity campaign as well as the Energy Action coalition, which itself gave birth to ClimateChallenge.org. StopGlobalWarming.org is a "virtual march" for freezing and reducing carbon emissions. It remains to be seen whether these multiple channels and messages eventually move more citizens

⁵² This site was created by the Bipartisan Policy Center, established in 2007, with an advisory board including four former Senate Majority Leaders, two from each party—more evidence that climate change is now a mainstream issue.

to action or, possibly, confuse them.⁵³ Deb Sachs, director of the 10% Challenge Program in Vermont, has been active in climate change issues for over a decade. “The level of volunteerism now is just remarkable,” she reports. “In Vermont, most of the 63 town-level volunteer committees formed in the last couple years alone. But that citizen interest increases the need for a clear direction on public outreach. As laudable as the many different marketing efforts are, they may muddy the waters and slow the public response to meeting the necessary 80 percent carbon reduction targets by 2050.”⁵⁴

These organizations, real and virtual, team up for events like the recent “Green Jobs” rallies, and it’s sometimes difficult to perceive the primary organizational actors. The interconnectedness of web sites and organizations may herald an increasingly “networkcentric” approach to all environmental issues.⁵⁵ It remains to be seen if this strategy involves more citizens, and how it impacts the traditional membership model, in which organizations count on members’ long-term allegiance for dues and for leadership.

Virtual organizing provides a glimpse into the grassroots of the climate change community. One window is the Wiser Earth web site, an online meeting place for international, national, regional and local initiatives for a “just and sustainable world.” As of September 2008 it contained 109,000 organizations worldwide, of which 51,000 were in the United States.⁵⁶ Of the U.S. groups, 831 categorized themselves under “Global Climate Change.”⁵⁷ The web site listed local grassroots and other nascent groups, as well as larger organizations, and so provided a look into the make-up of the movement around an emerging issue.

To get a broad-brush look at these U.S. climate change groups, we drew a small random sample of 50 organizations. More than half of those were nonprofits registered with the IRS, or (more often) were local or state chapters or subsidiaries of larger groups which were registered. (See Table 6: U.S.

53 The chorus of new voices makes it easier to slip in counter-messages—GlobalWarming.org is in fact created by the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which is “dedicated to advancing the principles of free enterprise and limited government,” and disputes much of the scientific consensus about climate change documented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, among other institutions.

54 Deb Sachs, personal communication, 2 October 2008.

55 “The network-centric advocacy focuses on supporting individual engagement by connected grid resources (that may reside with individuals or organizations). The network-centric approach relies on dense communication ties to provide the synchronizing effects, prioritization and deployment roles of the organization.” Martin Kearns, *Network-Centric Advocacy*, <http://activist.blogs.com/networkcentricadvocacypaper.pdf>.

56 The Wiser Earth site probably favors coordinated networks with staffers dedicated to doing outreach for their local affiliates, such as the Sierra Club, the Public Interest Research Groups, or the MetaFoundation. Thus it probably overstates the number registered with the IRS. Nevertheless, it’s an interesting first look into the spread of organizations on one issue.

57 <http://www.wiserearth.org/aof/browse>, 24 September 2008. The Wiser Earth web site is really a “wiki” to which users add their own information. It was initially populated with the names of groups known to the Wiser Earth team, and has subsequently invited individuals and groups to post themselves. Some of these organizations are really projects or “virtual organizations” linking to others. An example is Environmental Entrepreneurs, a “virtual organization” run by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Organizations in Wiser Earth Database Focused on Global Climate Change.)⁵⁸ Two-fifths were not registered with the IRS, which suggests the general magnitude of unregistered grassroots organizations in the United States. The remaining entries were “green business” firms dedicated to global sustainability.

Table 6: U.S. Organizations in Wiser Earth Database Focused on Global Climate Change

	Number of Organizations	Percentage
U.S. Organizations in Wiser Earth Database focused on “Global Climate Change”	831	
Sample Size	50	100%
Filed IRS Form 990	25	50%
Registered, but did not file (gross receipts under \$25,000)	2	4%
Not registered with the IRS	20	40%
For-profit	3	6%

Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File Business Master File 2008, special research sample 29 September 2008, Wiser Earth database, www.wiserearth.org

As one might expect, the largest number proportion of these groups was local, though some of them were branches of national organizations like the Sierra Club or The Nature Conservancy, or were affiliated with national and international campaigns, like those of the Post Carbon Institute. Electronic communications are central to these broader efforts to catalyze and coordinate local efforts as part of a larger network. Whether these initiatives have durability remains to be seen.

More than two-thirds of the 50 groups in the sample were located on the east and west coasts. One tenth focused solely on local sustainability though additional groups were active with programs, education, or organizing at the local level. Among these were new “relocalization” and “post-carbon” initiatives of the MetaFoundation. The organizations include 7 state groups, 4 multistate regional groups, 10 national groups, and 11 international, with the remaining 36 percent having a local focus.

Like environmental and conservation groups in general, the sample organizations were relatively young; the median age was 15 years. About a third engaged in advocacy or policy work such as activist campaigns, policy advising, and local efforts to involve students and citizens in the issues. More than a quarter focused on education—from traditional environmental education to online resource centers. Research was the focus of nearly a fifth of the sample groups in areas ranging from global warming science to human health to sustaining biodiversity.

⁵⁸ We drew a random sample of 50 entries from the 831 U.S. groups with a focus on Global Climate Change.

Taken as a whole, the sampled organizations had two broad strategic aims—one, transforming local communities and economies for sustainability, and two, creating political will for alternative energies and policy reform. To achieve these goals, the groups in the sample employed a full spectrum of strategies including research, education, local organizing, sustainable business practices and market development, large scale advocacy and organizing as part of global, policy advocacy, as well as field-work and on-the-ground preservation and restoration efforts.

In all likelihood the climate change community faces major changes in the near future, possibly not unlike those experienced by the entire environmental and conservation movement in the early 1970s, when citizen concern was at a peak and before the first federal legislation had passed. As we write this, it appears likely that the next administration will embrace renewable energy and other policy solutions for climate change.⁵⁹ As these proposals go through the legislative process, they will crystallize and orient the debate on issues, and some of the current confusion will clarify. The passage of legislation may moderate the level of public anxiety, at least temporarily, if global warming does not continue its current acceleration. We may experience a brief period of relief, similar to the late 1970s, when citizens believed that environmental problems had been addressed. However, given the magnitude of climate change impacts and the long time scales involved, it seems likely that the relief will be temporary, and that nonprofits will need to continue to advocate for solutions, even if the government and private sector take over their implementation.

⁵⁹ Both of the leading presidential candidates promise action on global warming, though, there is still substantial skepticism within the Republican party. Nearly half of all Republicans still doubt the evidence of global warming, and the percentage has recently increased. See the Pew Research Center, *A Deeper Partisan Divide Over Global Warming*, May 2008. <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/417.pdf>.

Conclusion

From 1989 to 2005, environmental and conservation nonprofits continued to grow in numbers and membership from 1989 to 2005, despite a reported lull in the American public's support for environmentalists in the 1990s⁶⁰ and despite the economic downturn of 2001 to 2003. The core of national environmental and conservation organizations proved generally resilient. During those 17 years, one national organization failed while three major new ones were created.⁶¹ The core organizations usually managed to maintain and increase membership and budgets, even during economic downturns.

The other component of this growth—revealed here from the Internal Revenue Service data—was the explosion of smaller new groups expanding into new geographic areas, issues, audiences and strategies. The movement broadened. Its revenue became less concentrated in the largest organizations and less in the major national players, although a substantial portion went to organizations headquartered in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. It was outside the Washington metropolitan area that new organizations grew fastest. The web of regional, state, and local organizations became denser, and thus probably better able to address issues at a level closer to the individual citizen.

Most environmental nonprofit organizations depended on raising funds for their “cause,” rather than for providing fee-generating services. Compared with all nonprofits, they earned a lower percentage of their revenue by providing goods and services and a greater portion from contributions. Grants from foundations played an important part in their budgets, especially for small and mid-size groups. Government grants were important for certain kinds of start-ups. Since the turn of the millennium, environmental and conservation organizations have compensated for the drop in foundation grants with increased donations from individuals, making them increasingly diversified. Some few types of organizations have substantial earned income—recycling organizations, for instance—but most depend upon contributions from individuals convinced that their programs make a difference.

To achieve their programmatic impact, environmental and conservation organizations used a broad range of strategies, including habitat protection, scientific research, social marketing to change individual behavior, coordination with government, campaigns to hold corporations publicly accountable, virtual on-line “marches” and free-market mechanisms like carbon offsets for air travel. When new challenges arose, the sector created new strategies. If existing organizations did not adopt them, new organizations were created.

Most of these strategies were nonpolitical. Contrary to the concerns of some critics, the sector's reported level of legislative and grassroots lobbying activity was low, at least as measured by the nar-

60 The number of Americans identifying themselves as “environmentalists” dropped from 76 percent in 1990 to 50 percent in 1999.

61 Environmental Action shut its doors in 1996. The Environmental Working Group was formed in 1993, the National Environmental Trust in 1998, and Oceana in 2001.

row definition of lobbying expenditures. Lobbying and grassroots organizing accounted for only 1.2 percent of the budgets of the 2 percent of organizations which reported such expenses. (At this level, they were higher than the same expenses for nonprofits as a whole.) Even if we include all the expenditures of organizations focused on advocacy (as defined by the NTEE codes) those still comprise only 9 percent of the sector's spending in 2005. The majority of the sector's funding went into implementation of activities to protect habitat and natural resources, especially land and water.

To coordinate these different strategies, environmental and conservation organizations invested much effort in networks and coalitions. An example is the issue of global climate change, where the web of organizations, virtual organizations and campaigns, web sites, and formal networks and coalitions offers citizens a multiplicity of messages and avenues for involvement. The low "barriers to entry" mean that small groups or even individuals can create web sites and aspire to organize citizens electronically at a national level, as MoveOn.org has shown. The capability of coordinating messages and actions has increased—but so has the competition between different messages and ideas, which may heighten confusion.

The ease of electronic networking may lead to a more transient relationship between national organizations and their members. Today, individual citizens can easily link to various organizations, learn, donate, take remote action, and log off within minutes. Organizations report that their lists of e-activists are growing. But several membership directors of major organizations also say that since 2005 it's been harder to maintain levels of long-term members. "I have to sell them new every time," complained one, who asked not to be named. Since 1996 total membership levels have grown at about the rate of the population, but this is likely to mask substantial churning as existing members fail to renew and organizations must depend more heavily on costly recruiting of new members.⁶² It remains to be seen whether this is a temporary trend, which may be altered as climate change campaigns kick into full gear.

Any shift in the nature of membership deserves real attention, because many core organizations, such as the National Wildlife Federation and Sierra Club, rely upon citizen members for dues, expertise, and leadership. Over the years, these organizations have been essential incubators for activists who later ran for elected office, became public officials or moved into paid staff positions in environmental organizations. Whether a more professionalized, electronic approach can continue to nurture and sustain citizen activism in the same way remains to be seen, as does the impact on the movement as a whole.

Finally, the new technology probably effects national organizations differently than local and state groups, which have a greater opportunity to maintain personal contact with donors and activists. This suggests a model, long envisioned by national grassroots organizations, in which national staff provides technical expertise and coordination, and local and regional groups build long-term rela-

62 See preliminary results for the nonprofit sector as a whole from the Fundraising Effectiveness Project, a joint project of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and the Urban Institute (http://www.afpnet.org/ka/ka-3.cfm?content_item_id=24047)

tionships and implement changes at the local level. In the past, this required an integrated structure of chapters, but now many national organizations without chapters are able to network effectively with local and regional groups on specific issues as those arise. The new technology facilitates this.

In the coming years, environmental and conservation organizations will face some important questions.

- Will the growing number of environmental and conservation organizations continue to be able to find financial support, or will we see a consolidation of organizations through mergers and attrition, especially if the economy continues to weaken?
- Assuming the latter scenario, will scarce resources disproportionately hamper advocacy organizations, which have lower financial reserves than other types? If so, what will that mean for advocacy efforts on climate change legislation or for strengthening environmental laws that were weakened over the past decade?
- If their resources shrink, will environmental and conservation groups be able to reach out to the growing number of groups and individuals who participate in environmental activities through nonenvironmental organizations? Will the current environmental and conservation organizations continue to have a leadership role?

Climate change seems destined to be the dominant environmental issue of coming decades. The global nature of the problem and its enormous predicted impact make it a vastly larger environmental issue than any that preceded it. This report is intended to provide a map of the environmental sector and an assessment of its capacity; we hope that it will prove especially useful to policymakers, nonprofit leaders and funders working to develop strategies for the sector—and society as a whole—to address this historic challenge.

Appendix A: Sources of Revenue by Type of Organization

	Number	Contributions	Program Revenue	Dues for Goods or Services	Rental Income	Investment Income	Special Events	Other Income	Total Reported Income
C01 Alliances & Advocacy	703	571,691,827	50,915,217	39,634,344	754,559	9,324,597	7,633,440	11,888,640	697,808,249
C02 Management Assistance	119	42,468,631	33,951,622	1,817,571	14,402	680,261	78,314	845,920	80,160,179
C03 Professional Associations	394	81,895,718	67,691,473	26,294,459	171,311	3,233,813	2,049,990	2,927,465	195,737,553
C05 Research & Public Policy	194	126,959,387	52,871,915	7,343,337	1,517,584	6,087,648	351,089	4,171,654	225,683,922
C11 Single Organization Support	219	123,035,606	6,935,540	4,383,258	668,007	15,817,495	2,514,953	3,311,910	167,902,456
C12 Fundraising and Distribution	184	64,245,827	5,802,097	1,386,456	133,343	3,986,073	477,686	1,868,674	79,228,088
C19 Support - Others	16	4,408,413	316,500	264,708	380,973	36,709	141,091	28,562	6,388,036
C20 Pollution Abatement	236	83,321,134	65,629,215	10,613,696	275,582	1,425,329	695,428	3,135,868	171,259,557
C27 Recycling Centers	157	33,772,906	43,727,405	967,198	130,255	871,761	94,444	1,005,930	91,230,518
C30 Natural Resource Conservation	1504	630,530,708	137,155,573	36,738,749	4,921,928	23,900,658	8,142,797	10,696,093	897,891,499
C32 Water Resources & Wetlands	892	470,279,168	55,516,790	15,445,256	-129,691	9,258,920	3,922,532	15,784,312	578,829,702
C34 Land Resource Conservation	853	1,423,325,876	331,823,777	21,091,229	3,415,238	72,236,908	7,441,217	5,184,845	1,991,415,192
C35 Energy Conservation & Development	144	170,112,119	138,797,422	1,762,486	31,850	2,215,127	84,675	233,567	318,027,855
C36 Forest Resources	230	87,881,302	30,034,752	9,304,651	941,147	6,726,102	1,020,502	8,723,349	148,591,905
C40 Botanical & Landscaping Services	70	11,759,448	12,994,470	7,998,549	174,319	1,079,505	686,802	673,348	36,834,068
C41 Botanical Gardens	220	223,954,161	77,929,398	16,580,134	5,093,512	26,074,530	3,474,253	52,630,757	460,514,139
C42 Native Plant Societies	24	4,660,579	2,505,405	1,595,916	9,600	602,421	37,185	296,458	11,702,330
C50 Environmental Beautification	424	123,581,079	19,877,780	15,344,328	138,611	2,408,677	2,534,501	2,392,346	169,766,499
C60 Environmental Education	696	172,504,737	528,876,654	187,394,154	3,040,008	22,930,019	5,358,861	40,600,356	1,010,712,060
C99 Environmental - Other	79	7,758,585	1,473,313	368,720	44,965	49,787	282,248	143,020	10,292,040
D30 Wildlife Preservation & Protectoin	261	406,920,762	52,759,675	44,994,782	1,415,585	16,269,664	29,163,729	12,439,898	600,498,788
D31 Endangered Species	59	36,098,747	2,556,772	662,265	4,517	292,787	374,668	101,724	34,835,850
D32 Bird Species	94	37,776,406	8,631,136	1,087,010	-52,758	1,003,740	505,493	384,411	50,492,140
D33 Fisheries	111	63,354,049	31,801,495	5,338,205	70,085	1,468,268	2,062,103	2,779,197	108,199,443
D34 Wildlife Sanctuaries	186	63,286,993	5,468,017	2,060,470	57,920	1,594,575	1,986,836	1,791,802	79,177,775
Q38 Global Sustainability	9	14869939	149019	97391	0	87694	5991	12518	15233017
	8078	5,080,454,107	1,766,192,432	460,569,322	23,222,852	229,663,068	81,120,828	184,052,624	8,238,412,860

Source: Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, NCCS Core File 2005.

Appendix B: Membership of National Organizations

	1950-51	1960-61	1965-66	1970-71	1975-76	1980-81	1985-86	1991-92	1996-97	2002-03	2005-06
Sierra Club	7,000	16,500	31,000	124,000	165,000	246,000	378,000	615,000	569,000	736,000	778,830
National Audubon Society	17,000	32,000	40,500	115,000	321,000	400,000	500,000	600,000	550,000	550,000	500,000
National Parks Conservation Association	5,400	15,000	31,000	49,000	45,000	27,500	45,000	230,000	375,000	375,000	297,000
Izaak Walton League	40,000	51,000	52,000	54,000	50,000	47,930	45,000	51,000	42,500	45,000	37,520
The Wilderness Society	5,000	10,000	28,000	62,000	62,500	52,000	145,000	365,000	237,000	225,000	275,000
National Wildlife Federation			256,000	540,000	612,000	818,000	900,000	997,000	997,000	997,000	1,261,167
Ducks Unlimited								469,000	600,000	656,000	598,363
Defenders of Wildlife				13,000		50,000	75,000	77,000	215,000	463,000	490,000
The Nature Conservancy				22,000		80,000	365,000	545,000	865,000	972,000	972,000
World Wildlife Fund - US					40,000	47,000	450,000	970,000	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,133,547
Environmental Defense Fund				20,000	37,000	46,000	65,000	175,000	300,000	350,000	400,000
Friends of the Earth				7,000	15,000	25,000	15,000	30,000	20,000	35,000	18,000
Environmental Action				7,000	20,000	21,000	15,000	19,000	12,000	defunct	defunct
Natural Resources Defense Council				5,000	24,000	40,000	65,000	170,000	260,000	450,000	600,000
League of Conservation Voters						35,000		25,000	30,000	60,000	31,754
Greenpeace USA						250,000	800,000	1,290,000	400,000	250,000	138,804
Earthjustice								120,000	96,000	71,000	84,000
Ocean Conservancy								105,000	110,000	100,000	170,000
Trust for Public Land										16,155	31,760
American Rivers								110,000	20,000	30,000	39,000
Sea Shepherd Conservation Society								16,000	36,000	35,000	8,000
Center for Health, Environment, and Justice								20,000	20,000	28,000	31,842
Earth Island Institute								32,000	24,000	20,000	6,000
National Park Trust									250,000	33,000	30,000
Conservation Fund								679	1,330	1,664	1,800
Conservation International								55,000	4,000	3,518	2,974
Total:	74,400	124,500	438,500	1,018,000	1,391,500	2,185,430	4,263,000	7,664,179	7,859,830	8,333,819	8,696,387

Sources for Appendix B:

This represents our best effort at gathering and estimating membership numbers, having made repeated efforts to contact each organization. While not perfect, we believe it's instructive and is a reasonable representation of membership in the sector as a whole over this time period.

Where not otherwise noted, figures for 2002–2003 and before come from Bosso, *Environment, Inc.* Membership numbers for 2005–2006 come from annual reports, web sites and personal communications with membership services departments. The numbers for the League of Conservation Voters and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society includes donors who contributed over the 18 months prior to the end of 2005.

The National Wildlife Federations membership in 1996–1997 and 2002–2003 are estimates. Given the size of NWF's total membership, this estimate has an impact on the shape of the total graph. During this period, NWF was reporting several million “members and supporters,” but that figure included all purchasers from its catalogue or any children who received *Ranger Rick*. In his study, Bosso disregarded the NWF claims and estimated the number by dividing the total contributions by the minimum dues amount, which gives a much lower number than the 1991–1992 figure included here. NWF declines to substantiate any figures at all for those years, but its IRS returns over those years indicate steady growth in dues and contributions, so it seems reasonable to assume that its membership numbers at least remained more or less steady, given that reported membership is higher today than it was in 1991.

The Nature Conservancy did not respond to requests for its 2005–2006 membership numbers, so those are estimated to be the same as the 2002–2003 numbers. As of August 2008, The Nature Conservancy reported “more than a million” members on its web site.

Greenpeace's membership apparently peaked around 1991–1992. Bosso reports it at 2.2 million, and others 1.2 million.⁶³ The number is important because Greenpeace's totals are a large part of the movement's overall membership. According to Jane Kochersberger at Greenpeace,⁶⁴ the correct number is 1.29 million.

Conservation International's donor number for calendar year 2002 and 2005 comes from Catherine Yoon, senior manager of individual giving,⁶⁵ and her staff. Bosso's figure of 70,000 for 2002–2003 probably included everyone in their database.

Numbers for Rainforest Action Network and Clean Water Action were omitted because they include substantial numbers of volunteers and activists who are not donors. Clean Water Action claimed over a million members and volunteers in this year, but many of those are members of other organizations affiliated in its campaigns.

63 Carey Goldberg, “Downsizing Activism: Greenpeace is Cutting Back,” *New York Times*, September 16, 1997.

64 Personal communication of 22 May 2008.

65 Personal communication, 21 October 2008.

Appendix C: Methodology

This analysis is based primarily on the National Center for Charitable Statistics Core 2005 files, which include all the Forms 990 received and processed by the Internal Revenue Service through October or November 2006 for organizations that NCCS believes to be active. These include returns from various tax years. For example, the 2005 Core files contain:

Returns for 2003	331
Returns for 2004	1,344
Returns for 2005	5,811
Returns for 2006	592
	8,078

We based our analysis on the Core files for four reasons:

1. They approximate the tax year data closely. For 2005, the discrepancies for revenue, expenses, and assets are all less than 2 percent.

Figure 19: Tax Year 2005 Returns Compared to Tax Returns Processed in 2005



2. They allow us to do analysis in a reasonable timeframe. Many returns come in late—even two or three years late.
3. Because of gaps in the IRS data entry, it is not possible to compile a full set of the tax year returns for each year back to 1989.
4. Because fiscal years differ, it is not possible to get a calendar year comparison in any case.



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