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Review of Wilderness and the American Mind

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Reviews

Wilderness and the American Mind

By Roderick Frazier Nash

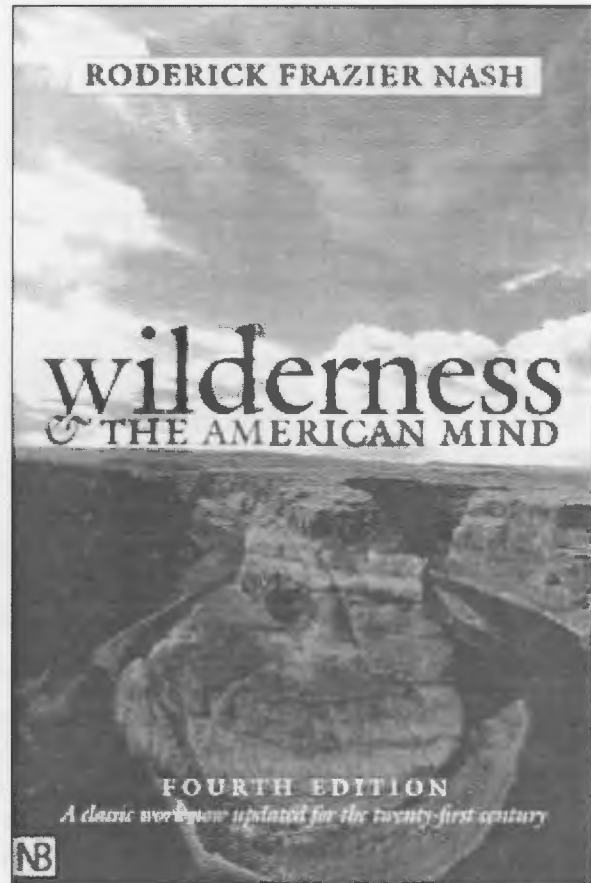
Reviewed by Charles Yaple

Yes, we know most Taproot readers have probably read Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* (WAM). In fact, many practicing environmental and outdoor education professionals "cut their teeth" on WAM and Aldo Leopold's, *A Sand County Almanac*. However, it is a good wager that many of us "older" practitioners have not read the fourth edition of *Wilderness and the American Mind*. It is important that we do so.

The fourth edition, in Nash's words, "lets the core of the earlier books stand." New in this edition is the epilogue as the author uses the past to explore the future of wilderness -- where he explores scenarios "that could maximize, minimize, or even eliminate wildness on this planet." In so doing he reflects on the "ethical and biocentric relevance of wilderness." Gone are his earlier references to "man" and instead he explores the "human" condition that weighs so heavily on the future of wilderness. Nash makes the case that wilderness is important to humans for both ecological and moral reasons and for its own sake -- that it is in a sense its own "civilization" and has a right to "share in the evolutionary endeavor of this planet." Indeed, this edition of WAM reveals the evolution of a scholar's (Nash's) thinking about the relationship of humans and the natural world.

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The Los Angeles Times has listed *Wilderness and the American Mind* "among the one hundred most influential books published in the last quarter century" and Outside Magazine includes it with a list of "books that have changed our



world." World renowned biologist E.O. Wilson believes Americans in particular need the historical perspective provided by *Wilderness and the American Mind* "to come to grips with their relation to nature and hence to the whole, real world."

We humans are forgetful creatures especially in this day and age of busy life styles and information overload. It is good, from time to time, to revisit our roots and gain a renewed perspective of what is really important to remember. Copies of *Wilderness and the American Mind* are available from Yale University Press Publications, U.S. Office (sales.press@yale.edu).