Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum
Topic: : Who owns the trout?
Re: Who owns the trout?
Author: : rab
Date: : 2013/3/5 0:28:46
URL:

Trout are part of “the commons.” Humans have both preserved and destroyed the commons throughout history based on our social relation to nature.

Some have argued that the commons should be privatized because companies will not overuse resources. The logic follows that they will preserve resources to protect future profits. I’m not anti-business, however, some businesses obviously don’t care what natural barrier stands in their way in their pursuit of profit (and I’m sure that even the most stringent classical economist in fly-fishing wouldn’t want all waters to cost money, that wouldn’t be cool). Also, history shows that privatization isn’t necessary to protect the commons.

I think what the original author of this thread is suggesting (or perhaps “thinking about”) would only make sense in a society where we depended on the trout for survival. We would, as local communities, attempt to set up boundaries for we wouldn’t over-consume the trout. We would only be able to take trout to the degree that they could reproduce annually the amount we originally took... However, we don’t survive on trout. We (and I’m talking about the aggregate of people, not us specifically) don’t have an incentive to protect them if we don’t rely on them. This is why species extinctions are accelerating. We, in advanced capitalist societies, receive virtually all of our food from grocery stores, rather than the commons. We don’t rely on other species. We have no reason to protect the trout. We have two options here: We can overthrow the capitalist economy and capital-oriented state and return to an “ideal” time. Or we can give consent to the state to regulate human behavior for we can all enjoy the commons. Personally, I desire the latter.

This option would be to use a legal institution to protect the commons, as we do with trout (sometimes). A classical social contract theorist - I can’t remember which one - posited that we give our consent to the government when we use the utilities that it provides. So, we are giving our consent to the state to regulate fishing when we use and enjoy public lands and waters that it provides to the public (because otherwise they would be private). I think that the state, as some have pointed out, does fall short of our expectations in protecting the commons, especially the trout. It’s a bureaucracy. We shouldn’t expect it to be utopia-like. I don’t think these severe problems are an inherent sociological feature of the state. Rather, it’s based on priorities and influences stemming from various positions within government. Obviously, there are corporate interests involved. Those are just some thoughts I had after reading this thread. I’m enjoying your comments.