



# Environmentalism for a New Millennium: The Challenge of Coevolution

*Leslie Paul Thiele*

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The vast majority of people in the industrialized world consider themselves environmentalists. Yet environmental problems continue to worsen. While the environmental movement is winning the battle for the hearts and minds of citizens in the United States and across the globe, it may be losing the war to preserve the health of the planet and its biological diversity. The reasons become clear in this book.

Leslie Paul Thiele provides a much needed analysis of the driving forces within the environmental movement and the key challenges that it faces. He begins with a concise history of the movement in the United States, where he identifies four successive waves of environmental thought and action. The first wave, conservation, emerged in the mid 1800s and focused on the responsible use of natural resources and the preservation of isolated tracts of wilderness. By the 1960s, the general public had become aware of the widespread impact of environmental problems on human health and welfare. A concern for the containment of industrial society's environmental degradation emerged. This second wave was followed by a period of cooptation beginning in the 1980s, as a now popular social movement made a significant impact on public policy and witnessed the dilution of its goals.

Thiele largely focuses on the fourth and current wave of coevolution. Coevolutionary thought and action is grounded in the interdependence of humans and nature in a global context. With the goal of sustainable development in mind, contemporary environmentalists argue that human livelihoods must be integrated into complex and evolving ecological systems. This affirmation of coevolutionary interdependence has brought coherence to an inherently diverse social movement.

Through extensive interviews and a critical study of environmental publications and scholarly research, the author provides an inside look at the environmental movement. His analysis illuminates the social, economic, political and cultural forces that shape the environmental movement today and set its trajectory for the 21st century. Anyone interested the future of environmentalism will find this book an invaluable guide.

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