

Discussion Questions for the *Green Fire* film from **The Aldo Leopold Foundation**

GENERAL

Near the beginning of the film, Baird Callicott says that Leopold, Muir, and Thoreau are the giants on whose shoulders we all stand. Why do you think many people know Thoreau and Muir, but fewer are familiar with Leopold? How does he compare to them?

How did Aldo Leopold's upbringing build his later ideas? How did he convey his values to his children?

How did cultural diversity contribute to or change Aldo Leopold's ideas? What was life like for him as a young forester in the Southwest and how did it change his thinking?

How have attitudes toward the natural world changed since Leopold's time? Since the first settlers arrived in America? In all human history?

THE LAND

Aldo Leopold saw tremendous change and transformation of the landscape around him during his lifetime which greatly influenced his thinking. How has the land where you live changed within your lifetime? Has it affected your thinking?

There will always be conflict in conservation. Can Aldo Leopold's ideas help us to work through some of the them? How? Which ones?

What is land health? How is that idea different from species conservation or land preservation?

Is it important to have designated wilderness? Why or why not?

Do we have a greater responsibility to the land than other members of the ecosystem do? Why?

Leopold calls land "a community." Think about your own idea of community—who does your definition include? How do you feel about your community including "soils, waters, plants, and animals?"

How does a relationship with land differ from a relationship with a person? How is it the same?

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WILDLIFE

Views on predators have changed considerably, at least among some constituencies, since Leopold's early career, mainly informed by a scientific understanding of the role predators play in an ecosystem. Can you think of other examples of how science has fueled a change of mind in society?

How would you feel about having wolves or other large predators where you live?

Leopold suggests that "only a mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf." What does he mean? Is a mountain alive? How?

Sandhill cranes have been brought back from the brink of extinction through tremendous effort. Other species, like the passenger pigeon, have been lost forever. What does it mean to lose a species permanently? Is it worth the effort to save ones that are endangered?

THE SHACK

Aldo Leopold chose his own land and Shack based on its "lack of goodness." Why? How did that affect his and his family's experience there?

What does the Shack symbolize today?

THE LAND ETHIC

What does "green fire" mean to you?

How would you "live on a piece of land without spoiling it"?

What does it mean to "think like a mountain"?

Leopold said "our tools are better than we are." What did he mean? Do you agree?

Leopold describes the power of seeing the "green fire" die in the wolf's eye, but he didn't understand until many years later why his actions felt wrong. Have you ever done something you thought was right, but regretted it later? What made you realize you were mistaken?

How would you define a land ethic?

How does a land ethic apply in urban areas?

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