

## Free Market Environmentalism for the Next Generation Report

**Brief overview:** considering a free market approach using private property to solve environmental concerns is at the core of this reading.

**Key question:** how do you place a monetary value on natural resources while preventing their depletion? – The book stated that “property rights incentivize owners to protect the value of their environmental assets,” but it is unclear that in practice property rights would maximize utility for the society as a whole. Instead, current levels of income distribution leave those who have financial and political power with an advantage to using environmental resources without facing the consequences of pollution.

### **Section: “You Be the Judge”**

The explanation of unaccounted-for costs that “result in overuse of resources” highlight one of the main problems of our economic system. In other words, the externalization of costs such as air, water, and soil pollution are pushed to predominately low-income communities, while the rest can enjoy a low price tag on the item.

Connecting gentrification with cleaning up hazardous waste was an unexpected turn on the argument.

“It is difficult to carry out the redistribution of property rights without other changes occurring. For example, government mandates to clean up hazardous wastes make property around the waste sites more desirable, thus driving up real estate prices. Given that the lower-income people living around the waste site are unlikely to own the property, they might find themselves displaced by higher rents, leading to gentrification”

The quote above demonstrates an example of *reductio ad absurdum*, which is a type of argument fallacy by concluding with an extreme event. Connecting cleaning a hazardous waste with displacement was another example of the book’s unexpected turns.

The concept of “[transfer policies] would give more people the ability to ‘purchase’ environmental quality through markets” was highly questionable. Overall, the thought of privatizing environmental quality exacerbates the current ethical problem where those who contribute the least to pollution are the first and most impacted by it.

**For the author:** What was your intention for including the example of protecting a habitat for butterflies with “the total revenues of ten of the largest environmental groups, which exceed \$2 billion?”

## **Section: Who Owns the Global Atmosphere?**

“Because energy issues are so intertwined with global warming, we stipulate at the outset that free market environmentalism has nothing to say whether climate change occurs or not and whether it is or is not caused by humans. These are questions for climate science.”

**For the author:** since these are questions for climate science, are you implying that as an economist speaking about the severity of climate change is out of your realm of expertise? And that it should be left for climate scientists to display in documents such as the IPCC report?

## **Section: Green Energy at What Cost?**

Comparing an endangered desert tortoise with the dangers of solar energy was a highlight of this section. After reading this, I was curious to know how many species are currently in danger or extinct due to the use of fossil fuels as a primary source of energy.

## **Section: Adapt, Adapt, and Become Adept**

“Such hyperbole ignores the fact that sea levels are rising very slowly, giving people time to move.”

Climate disasters happen, and when they do, they don’t give people “time to move.” Instead, they take entire houses, belongings, and even human lives downstream. Thinking that people “can adapt” with relative ease is an approach to climate change that comes from class discrimination.

## **Conclusion**

After reading Free Market Environmentalism for the Next Generation, I have a better understanding of an economist approach to environmental issues. I would recommend the author to consider himself in a position where rising temperatures could not be solved by having an AC indoors, where sea level rising could not be a matter of “adaptation,” and where having access to clean water could not be simply about purchasing purified bottled water. After all, not every environmental issue can be solved through property rights.