

According to cronon,
when and why did the
contemporary
american conception
of wil...

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Environmental Studies Environmental Studies According to Cronon, the contemporary American conception of "wilderness" first emerged in the days of the 'Wild Frontier' in the United States; which was approximately more than 250 years ago (Cronon, LoPrete and Demos, 2003). The idea of the 'wilderness' was then imbued with national as well as religious imagery and it was perceived as defining that which was slowly receding in the wake of the gains of civilization. Cronon states that the wilderness, even in that age, became the preferred landscape among elite tourists. Americans, for the most part, have always defined the wilderness as being an environment in which ordinary human beings struggled to be able to provide for themselves and their families. Moreover, this unrealistic notion disregards the fact that the American Indians lived comfortably in that supposed 'harsh wilderness' for virtual centuries; only to be unceremoniously cast out of it so that pampered tourists could continue to take pleasure in the illusion that they still had places in their nation which were preserved in their original and pristine state.

Cronon openly avows that the notion of the preservation of the wilderness is actually a myth of mainstream cultural construction (Cronon, LoPrete and Demos, 2003). The supposedly 'American Wilderness' was once the home of American Indians who farmed the land to produce food and lived on it as well. They also freely owned this land. Today, the notion of hunting societies gaining sustenance from the wilderness is in direct conflict with the statutes sustained the concept of environmentalism. Environmental dualism holds that environmentalists have a duty to safeguard "unspoiled" environments.

This means that the natural inhabitants of these lands who farm or hunt in them are viewed as being threats to the natural condition of the land.

Reference

Cronon, W., LoPrete, T., & Demos, J. (2003). *Changes in the land: Indians, colonists, and the ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang.