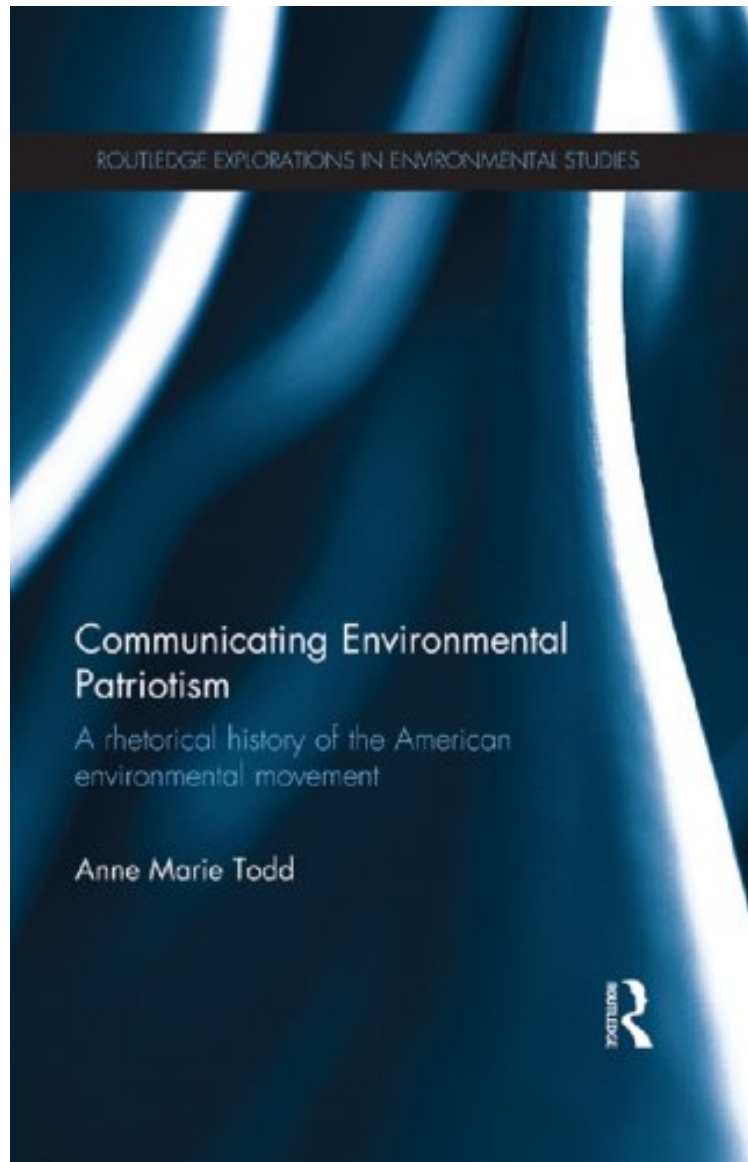


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## Communicating Environmental Patriotism: A Rhetorical History of the American Environmental Movement (Routledge Explorations in Environmental Studies)

Anne Marie Todd

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Anne Marie Todd : Communicating Environmental Patriotism: A Rhetorical History of the American Environmental Movement (Routledge Explorations in Environmental Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Communicating Environmental Patriotism: A

Rhetorical History of the American Environmental Movement (Routledge Explorations in Environmental Studies):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An impressive rhetorical history by Andrew F. Wood. Imagine that you live in a pleasant, leafy neighborhood blocks away from the downtown of a major city and you see your neighbor watering his lawn outside the period allowed by local conservation ordinances. How would you react? Maybe you'd talk to the guy, try to convince him that watering restrictions, while a hassle, are necessary to help fight drought. Perhaps you'd share your observations with friends and coworkers, hoping to discover effective strategies for persuading him to consider something beyond self-interest as a guiding principle. Anne Marie Todd pursued these options, and then she wrote a book. Professor Todd is a good friend; we teach together in the Communication Studies department at San Jose State University, and we have co-authored two essays. So I surely bring some bias to this review. Nonetheless I propose that anyone who takes environmental activism seriously, anyone looking for persuasive strategies to help heal our planet, should read *Communicating Environmental Patriotism* (Routledge). This book offers a thoughtfully procured assessment of twentieth century milestones of American environmentalism. While Todd's project is historical, her focus is rhetorical. Analyzing campaigns that tackle such seemingly disparate topics as tourism, conservation, smoke abatement, and scrap metal collection, Todd argues that environmentalists must leverage patriotic appeals to connect personal sacrifice with sustainable living. To advance this broader narrative, each chapter marshals exhaustive archival research and compelling detail. Thus we learn that the "See America First" movement was launched by men who had never visited Europe, we catch conservationists meeting Teddy Roosevelt in a room adorned with a dozen stuffed game animals, and we are inspired to wonder if Adolf Hitler really did blame his battlefield losses on American housewives who hauled kitchen grease to their neighborhood butchers. Along the way Todd explains the rise and fall of American communitarianism before offering a rhetorical strategy for its return. The book is reasoned in its claims but unsparing in its critique of the obstacles to environmental patriotism. Those claiming to be conservatives today would be surprised to learn that Teddy Roosevelt once uttered, "[t]he freedom of the individual should be limited only by the present and future rights, interests, and needs of the other individuals who make up the community." And this is precisely the point of Todd's book, comparing that conservative sensibility to the consumer-society that followed World War II. The struggles to sustain environmental patriotism, as illustrated by presidents who espoused scientism over sacrifice, suffered for ill-fated fashion choices, and responded to national disaster by pitching trips to Disneyworld, are aptly summarized by Todd's appraisal of Americans who have asked "what their country could do for them rather than what they could do for their country." Her book is a well-crafted piece of scholarship, bulging with endnotes and references to justify her claims. At the same time Todd's monograph is succinct, accessible, and surprisingly personal. She augments her prose with a fascinating set of artifacts, including a reproduction of artwork that conveys the American sublime, ghastly photographs of Pittsburgh citizens caught under a pall of smoke, and World War II posters that persuaded farmers to fight fascism with scrap metal. And there is detail piled upon detail. You may learn more about Gifford Pinchot's mother, J.P. Morgan's nose deformity, and the deadly elevators of Madison Avenue than you ever wanted to know, but you will also learn an effective strategy for confronting our globe's environmental exigencies. *Communicating Environmental Patriotism* concludes with a call for today's sustainability advocates to deploy prewar rhetorics of conservation, stewardship, and democracy to promote a new kind of American Exceptionalism, a progressive spirit in which "Americans are exceptional in their ability to heed the call for conservation." Todd's ultimate goal is to propel a grander "planetary patriotism," but she knows that quick action requires us to focus first on the national dimensions of our global problems. Toward that end she reminds us that pithy slogans such as "Think globally, act locally" are insufficient for the crisis at hand. We can no longer disconnect thinking from action. So I certainly encourage you to read Professor Todd's book, as long as you remember her advice that reading is merely the first step.

Environmental patriotism, the belief that the national environment defines a country's greatness, is a significant strand in twentieth century American environmentalism. This book is the first to explore the history of environmental patriotism in America through the intriguing stories of environmental patriots and the rhetoric of their speeches and propaganda. The See America First movement began in 1906 with the aim of protecting and promoting the landscapes of the American West. In 1908, Gifford Pinchot and President Theodore Roosevelt hosted the White House Conservation Conference to promote the wise use of natural resources for generations of Americans. In 1912, Pittsburgh's smoke investigation condemned the effects of coal smoke on the city's environment. In World War II, a massive propaganda effort mobilized millions of Americans to plant victory gardens to save resources for the war abroad. While these may not seem like crucial moments for the American environmental movement, this new history of American environmentalism shows that they are linked by patriotism. The book offers a provoking critique of environmentalists' communication strategies and suggests patriotism as a persuasive hook for new ways to make environmental issues a national priority. This original research should be of interest to scholars of environmental communication, environmental history, American history and environmental philosophy.

"In Todd's gracefully written book, environmental communicators will find a wealth of engaging material; they will be cheered by the early twentieth-century views they hear in its pages." - Environmental Communication, Michael Svoboda, The George Washington University, USA  
About the Author Anne Marie Todd is Professor of Communication Studies at San Jose State University, USA.