

*This letter was received electronically. Mr. Fischer was the Northern Rockies Director of Defenders of Wildlife for twenty years.*

February 11, 2002

Dear John,

I'm chagrined to hear that FREE is under attack by people who claim it is a tool of the radical right and big business. They clearly know nothing of your organization and certainly have never attended any of your programs.

Over the last twenty years I have attended several FREE programs, including a seminar for federal judges where I made a presentation. I've never attended a FREE function that wasn't both intellectually stimulating and fair-minded. Moreover, I have never attended a FREE program that didn't feature a full array of viewpoints. For instance, at the judge's seminar where I gave my presentation, the judges also heard from Michael Bean of Environmental Defense (one of the nation's most respected endangered species experts) and Doug Honnold of Earth Justice (one of the nation's leading environmental litigants).

Anyone who has paid even superficial attention to FREE's work over the last two decades would have to acknowledge that most of FREE's positions are pro-environment. As for being a corporate tool, FREE has attacked subsidies that benefit big business at the expense of the environment with the same zeal it has attacked the federal government that provides them. FREE's criticism of these environmentally-damaging business subsidies has been both pointed and public, appearing on the pages of our nation's leading newspapers.

I was attracted to FREE's presentations because I believe environmental organizations rely too much on governmental agencies to solve environmental problems. It's my strong belief that a better understanding of markets and incentives would make most environmental organizations much more effective. Defenders of Wildlife's Wolf Compensation Trust, which compensates ranchers at market value for all verified livestock losses caused by wolves, was born out of the belief that supporters of large predators needed to assume economic responsibility for damage caused by these animals. Once we assumed that responsibility, we removed our opponents most effective reason for saying "no" to wolf recovery.

Feel free to count me as a person who has benefited significantly from attending your programs.

Sincerely,

Hank Fischer