

# Electronic Green Journal

**Review: A Contract with the Earth**  
By Newt Gingrich and Terry L. Maple

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Newt Gingrich and Terry L. Maple. *A Contract with the Earth*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. xv, 222 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8018-8780-2 (cloth) US \$20. Printed on acid free paper that is at least 30 percent post-consumer waste.

*A Contract with the Earth* is about a new kind of environmentalism, a broad, inclusive approach to thinking about and solving environmental problems. It invokes an entrepreneurial zeal, public-private partnerships, executive leadership, and collaboration between industrial and environmental stakeholders. The book is not a step-by-step plan for implementing the contract, but a more generalized plan that presents five platforms, for example, recruit a generation of well-trained scientists and engineers to address environmental issues, and ten commitments, such as retire or rejuvenate old technologies. While the book encompasses mainstream, democratic values, examples are provided incorporating green enterprise and entrepreneurial environmentalism.

The authors, Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1995 to 1999 and former environmental studies professor, and Terry Maple, president and CEO of the Palm Beach Zoo (Florida) and professor of conservation and behavior at the Georgia Institute of Technology, call for an entrepreneurial form of environmentalism that would serve our country, economy, and earth. Gingrich was a guiding force of the Contract with America, a document credited with helping the Republicans gain a majority of seats in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. *A Contract with the Earth* is a title meant to attract attention, only this time Gingrich and Maple combine respect for the natural world with mainstream values of the American people, for example, by suggesting that conservation cannot succeed by charity alone and should be designed to appeal to self interest.

There is an overriding confidence in the creativity of the American people, open democratic societies, and market-based conservation. Ample examples are provided for each of these. The authors favor reducing carbon in the atmosphere, developing new technologies, committing to science, technology engineering and math education, and creating incentives and rewards. They also believe that conservative views are compatible with environmentalism, and readers are reminded that conservatism has often lead the way for environmental betterment, for example, the actions of Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot.

The authors are not enamored with today's political scene and recognize that change is needed. The focus is on mainstream politics; no mention is made of alternative political agendas, such as the Green Party. Mainstream political agendas focus too much on short-term goals to allow for the long-term focus of the new environmentalism. On the other hand, the authors are optimistic about "humanity's ability to restore and renew the

natural world” (p. 197). They believe it is possible to have a healthy environment and a healthy economy, to build incentives for a cleaner future, and to have biodiversity and human beings co-exist.

The authors encourage feedback via a website, <http://www.contractwiththeearth.com> but the website now links to <http://newt.org> which plugs Gingrich’s latest book, *Real Change*, and a DVD, *Rediscovering God in America*. No mention is made of *Contract with the Earth* on the homepage. The text includes “Talking Points” at the end of each chapter, useful for teachers and others, a Sources and Suggested Reading list, and an index. Recommended for all general library collections.

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