

## WHAT IS WILD LAW?

Wild Law is a phrase coined by the author Cormac Cullinan to describe a holistic approach to law and governance. This approach is based on principles of ecology, that all of life is an interconnected web of which human beings are only a part. It seeks to align law with ecology and the science of living systems. The current system of law and governance places human beings at the centre, and views us as separate from Nature. This view promotes the exploitation of Nature by seeing it as a resource base largely for the benefit of humans. This has led to the multiple environmental crises we now face.

Wild Law is based on Earth Jurisprudence, a legal philosophy that advocates a re-examination of the philosophy and value systems underpinning most of our legal and governance systems. It comes from the writing of Thomas Berry, and proposes a radical shift in these values, so that our legal and governance systems can support rather than undermine the integrity and health of the Earth. These values would shift from being anthropocentric, ie. placing human beings above other forms of life, to ecocentric, that is valuing all of Nature equally. This would mean that Nature is recognised for its own inherent value, and not only for its many benefits to humans. The two terms Wild Law and Earth Jurisprudence are often used interchangeably, though Wild Law focuses more on the laws and legal systems that would flow from this approach.

A fundamental principle of Earth Jurisprudence - and Wild Law - is that all components of Nature, including plants, animals, rivers, and even entire species or ecosystems, should be granted legal personality in the same way as human beings. They would have tangible rights to exist, thrive and renew their natural cycles. These would be enforceable in court by people. These rights would be relative and limited to the role each plant, animal etc. plays in the interdependent web of life. Granting legal subjecthood acknowledges that other species are not merely objects. It would help to change social attitudes and therefore our relationship with Nature.

Community Ecological Governance (CEG) is another aspect of Wild Law. It is concerned with more local and participatory forms of governance that encourage communities to interact with local biodiversity in a sustainable way. CEG, like Wild Law more generally, draws from traditional norms and practices that have evolved over thousands of years but are neglected in modern society. Wild Law attempts to place these concepts into basic principles of law that could one day be accepted by the courts or embodied in statute.

Wild Law puts the Earth's wellbeing at the heart of all decision-making processes. We are dependent on a healthy planet for our own survival, and therefore it is in our own long term interest to do so. The Wild Law view is that without this paradigm shift, which would bring about radical changes in law and policy, environmental law as it is simply manages our various environmental problems without fundamentally resolving them.