***1908 Conservation Conference***

On May 13-15, 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt convened a thousand people, including all of the nation's governors, at a White House Conference on Conservation. Among the conservationists of the era (broadly defined) were Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, W J McGee, Francis G. Newlands, John Muir, Robert Underwood Johnson, John Burroughs, Gene Stratton-Porter, Alice Hamilton, Mira Lloyd Dock, Ellen Swallow, and Daniel Burnham

Many such Americans had begun to understand the impact of cities and civilization on the natural landscape, as well as the importance of nature to people, and they had started to organize the first concerted conservation movement in American history. In his essay on "Efficiency, Equity, Esthetics: Shifting Themes in American Conservation," Clayton Koppes details some of the assumptions and accomplishments of this conservation movement in the 20th century.

October 31 and November 2, we will re-enact that 1908 conference. Each group will represent one of these people at the conference, planning an 8-minute speech to the conference, and then taking part in a discussion session. The speeches should include a little biographical information, and a sense of how this person got involved with the conservation/preservation of nature. They should also illuminate the speaker's position in the situation/strategy of the conservation movement. What do you see as the essential problem of the conservation movement? Why? What ideas and assumptions underlay your focus? Where (historically) did your ideas and assumptions come from? How do you understand progress in this area? What solutions will you propose to the conference? Why? What have you accomplished so far? What kinds of successes have you had? How do you see the other participants at the conference? Who are you aligned with? Who are you opposed to? Why?

At our conference, we will build an interpretation of the conservation movement out of these biographical interpretations. Groups should plan an 8-minute presentation for the class, including actual quotations from your historical figure. Don't be afraid to be dramatic or innovative: you may dress in character, and you probably will want to use Powerpoint for photos and charts and illustrations if that’s useful.

On November 9, groups should submit a written version of their speech. These position papers may just be a transcript of the class presentation. But they might be revised to answer arguments heard in the conservation conference. In any case, they should include:

1) a picture of the person, and some other visuals (cartoons, photos, maps, books, etc.) that illustrate the person's place (or the places they were interested in) in American environmental history.

2) your speech, with the speaker's actual words set in bold.

3) a bibliography of works consulted, and of useful links.