

[Magazine article is missing in action; here is the original copy.]

ADAM WERBACH

This 26-year-old from San Francisco has become a leading force in America's environmental movement. When he was just 8, Werbach took a Sierra Club petition to school and gathered 200 crayon-scrawled signatures. At age 23, he was the youngest president ever of the Sierra Club. Now Werbach is host of "The Thin Green Line," a new show on the Outdoor Life Network devoted to environmental issues. He is also a diehard skier whose love for the sport is tempered by his concerns about ski area development.

Born: January 15, 1973 (age 26)

First time: "I grew up in Southern California and I went to Mt. Palomar with my family when I was 9. I had never seen snow before and I was fascinated by it. I loved skiing. There's something so otherworldly about it--floating on top of the snow."

Balancing act: "Ski areas do expose more people to the glory of our national forests. People come back to the city a little more human after they've been to a high alpine area. But is it worth it? I think it can be worth it if the development of ski areas is done right. That's the quandary."

Developing problems: "Ski areas are more environmentally responsible than they used to be, but they're still not doing enough. To my embarrassment as a skier, I can list the crushing effects of ski area development, including clear-cutting, expanding onto endangered species habitat and over-stressing a high alpine environment."

Three commandments: "There are places where ski areas should not be, period. Even if there's a demand for it. Second, ski areas have to stop acting like they're Disneyland. They have to remember that they're in a national forest and treat the land with more respect. Third, it's a privilege to use that land and the Forest Service should be compensated better."

Fueling the fire: "When I first heard the news about the fires [set on Vail Mountain last fall by eco-terrorists, protesting expansion], I wasn't surprised. I had just given a speech in Boulder, Colo., to 600 people, and I could feel the anger. It was a powder keg waiting to explode."

No easy answers: "Vail handled the expansion badly by ram-rodging it through and not having community support. But eco-terrorism isn't the answer. Destroying property isn't the answer. On the other hand, I know more of this will happen. You have people who are really, really passionate. And you also have companies who aren't beginning a dialogue with those people."

Lift your voices: "In general, skiers are not taking enough responsibility for the mountains they love. To me it's a basic principle that people who use something have a higher responsibility to protect it. Skiers need to make their voices heard."

--Reade Bailey