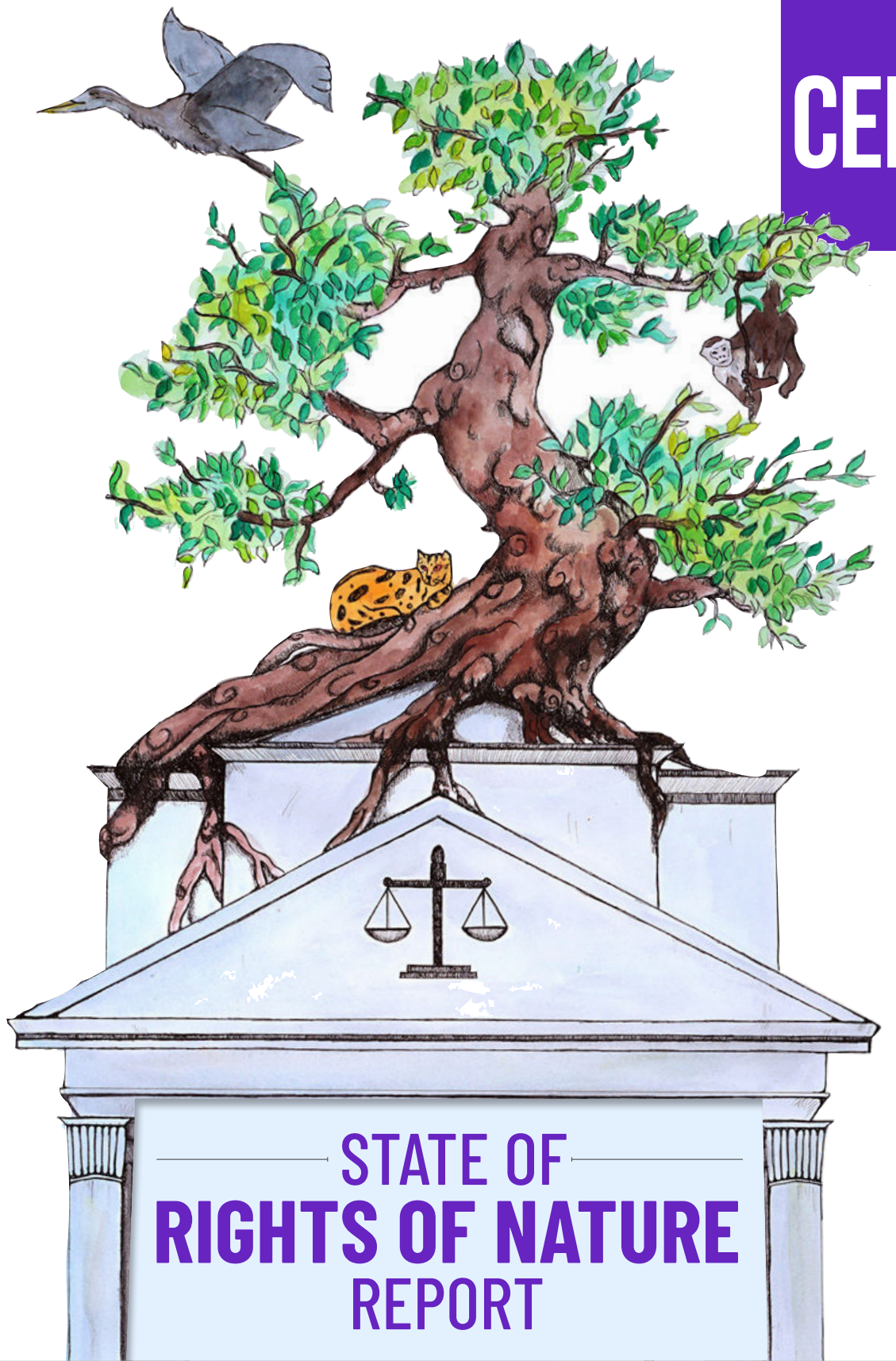


CELDF



**STATE OF
RIGHTS OF NATURE
REPORT**

2006-2025

INAUGURAL EDITION



Introduction

The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) offers this State of Rights of Nature Report in an effort to keep the revolutionary potential of Rights of Nature (RoN) intact. CELDF has been at the forefront of the RoN movement helping communities and governments establish RoN in Western law since 2006. For life on Earth to survive, and for humans to persist as one of millions of species, humans must stop the physical processes destroying the planet, in the short term, and drastically alter humanity's relationship with the natural world, in the long term. Adopting and enforcing RoN laws would help us do this.

Enforcing RoN laws would threaten the most powerful people and institutions in the world, those principally behind the destruction of the planet. The most powerful people and institutions in the world currently derive their power from exploiting the natural world and violating RoN. They will oppose any threat to their power. Those in power will not sit back and let RoN advocates use governmental and legal structures – structures they have largely designed and control – to threaten their power.

Despite rapid growth in the 20 years since the global RoN movement got off the ground, unfortunately RoN laws have largely failed to slow the rate of Earth's destruction – much less stop it. This failure is attributable more to the death grip the current power dynamic has on the systems that RoN is designed to fundamentally alter than it is to RoN's legal viability. As attacks on RoN intensify and the full actualization of RoN has yet to be reached, RoN still has tremendous potency. However, it is time for protectors of RoN's integrity to step up. Though still quite young in the scope of transformational ideas, RoN is no longer a novelty, but a viable vehicle to confront planetary violence. With RoN's rapid rise in popularity, it has also become highly vulnerable to corruption by well-meaning media platforms and environmental organizations who portray any adoption of ordinances or laws labeled "RoN," and every aspirational RoN resolution, as victories for the movement. This is dangerous and makes coopting RoN easier for those in power.

CELDF has already seen cases of cooptation of RoN that, if unchallenged, will work to dilute, neutralize, and defeat this movement. To combat the cooptation of RoN and to ensure RoN's revolutionary potential stays on track, beginning with this inaugural edition, CELDF will generate an annual "State of Rights of Nature" report that describes and evaluates important global RoN developments.

In this first “State of Rights of Nature” report, to help those who aren’t as familiar with RoN, we provide an overview of the history of RoN, and connect it to CELDF’s integral involvement in the RoN Movement. In later sections of the report, we lay out RoN Principles to help RoN advocates distinguish between helpful and unhelpful efforts. We then map out major events related to RoN from 2006 to 2025. And, finally we provide a detailed discussion of some of the most important RoN happenings in recent years.

Overview/History of RoN

For the vast majority of human history, traditional indigenous cultures have lived more or less in balance with the natural world. This balance is achieved when human communities live within self-imposed boundaries that govern human relationships with the natural world. Traditional cultures teach that the natural world is sacred and that the countless creatures humans share the natural world with are our kin. Cultures who view the natural world as sacred and other-than-humans as kin do not exploit or destroy the natural world like cultures who view the natural world as property, full of objects for humans to use however humans see fit. Today, most of the world’s governments are rooted in, or mirror, Western legal systems. These legal systems define nature as property, as things for, and to be controlled by, humans. This orientation to the world objectifies the rest of nature and leads to humans exploiting and destroying their property. By changing the legal definition of the natural world from property to rights-bearing subject with the power to legally enforce these rights, CELDF sees RoN as a viable vehicle for returning human communities to right relationship with the natural world, for helping human communities treat the natural world as sacred and full of our kin.

The modern RoN movement actually began over 50 years ago with a landmark law review article written by University of Southern California law professor Christopher D. Stone in 1972 titled “[Should Trees Have Standing?: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects.](#)” Stone wrote: “Until the rightless thing receives its rights, we cannot see it as anything but a thing for the use of ‘us’ – those who are holding rights at the time. Throughout legal history, each successive extension of rights to some new entity has been, therefore, a bit unthinkable.” That same year, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas adopted Professor Stone’s argument in his dissenting opinion in the case [Sierra Club v. Morton](#). Justice Douglas wrote: “Contemporary public concern for protecting nature’s ecological equilibrium, should lead to the conferral of standing upon environmental objects to sue for their own preservation.”

Jump ahead over 30 years later and the first community in the world to take RoN from academic legal theory to real-world application was Tamaqua Borough, a small town in southeast Pennsylvania. In 2006, with assistance from CELDF including the drafting of the law, [Tamaqua Borough](#) passed a municipal ordinance recognizing legal rights for nature and

banned the dumping of toxic sewage sludge as a violation of these rights. Since then, hundreds of communities around the world – including whole nations like Ecuador – have enacted laws recognizing RoN.

Though RoN has gained momentum around the world, it is important to remember that ecological collapse is intensifying around the world. CELDF engages in RoN work because we want to protect what's left of life on Earth. Despite RoN gains, Life on Earth is in more peril than it ever has been in human history and possibly ever. Climate change is getting worse. More and more species are forever lost as the current mass extinction event gets worse. And, air, water, and soil are polluted at ever-increasing rates. Meanwhile, those in power are fighting back against RoN. For example, the state governments of Florida, Idaho, Ohio, and Utah have all banned RoN in their jurisdictions.

is the basis of the wealth generated by real-estate developers, mining companies, fossil fuel industries, construction firms, consumer products factories, and so on. Any movement that threatens those in power will be met with pushback. Regardless, CELDF urges readers to consider that we all have a responsibility to fight to stop ecological collapse and protecting RoN requires much more than just passing symbolic laws.



CELDf's Connection to RoN

More than [30 years ago](#), CELDF began as a traditional public interest law firm working to protect the environment. We fought against industrial projects like waste incinerators, toxic sludge dumps, animal factory farms, and mining operations using permit appeals, the central strategy used by environmental law groups today. However, we soon encountered barriers in the legal system put in place by both government and corporations. Government and corporations developed a structure of law which – rather than focusing on protecting communities and the environment – was instead focused on protecting endless growth, extraction, and development. This structure – a combination of regulatory law, legal doctrines, and constitutional constructs – is inherently unsustainable, and has, in fact, made sustainability illegal.

At the heart of the problematic structure of US law is the notion that nature is only property. And, anyone with title to property has the legal right to consume and destroy their property. CELDF's RoN work elevates the ecosystems that all life depends on from property to rights-bearing entities. CELDF's first-in-country, first-in-world RoN campaigns and lawmaking efforts turn the idea of RoN into enforceable laws, empower communities to protect themselves, inspire others around the world to do the same, and create shockwaves within the system of so-called corporate "rights."

CELDF was the first organization to help communities put RoN into practice and remains a primary mover and protector of rights of nature across the globe. In 2006, CELDF assisted Tamaqua Borough, PA, to become the first community in the world to recognize RoN. Their municipal ordinance recognized RoN and helped Tamaqua Borough ban the dumping of toxic sewage sludge as a violation of the RoN described in the ordinance. In 2008, CELDF was invited to meet with [the Ecuador Constituent Assembly](#) as they drafted a new constitution. CELDF assisted the Assembly in drafting RoN constitutional provisions. Ecuadorians adopted their new constitution by an overwhelming majority, making Ecuador the first and only country in the world to recognize RoN in its constitution.

Bolivia hosted the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in 2010. At the conference, CELDF assisted in drafting the proposed Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, modeled on the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The [Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth](#) has been presented to the U.N. General Assembly for its consideration.

In 2010, with assistance from CELDF, [Pittsburgh](#) became the first major US city to adopt a RoN law, which banned fracking. In 2014, [Grant Township, PA](#), enacted a CELDF-drafted Community Bill of Rights, recognizing RoN. An oil and gas corporation sued the community to overturn the law (a lawsuit that is still active today, over 12 years later). In 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) revoked a permit for a frack waste injection well, citing the township's Community Bill of Rights as the reason. [In 2023, the injection well was plugged because of evidence that it was likely to leak.](#)

CELDF assisted [the Green Party of England and Wales](#) to develop a RoN policy for their national party platform. The policy was adopted in February 2016.

In 2018, CELDF assisted the White Earth Band of the Chippewa Nation in drafting a "[Rights of Manoomin](#)" law that secured the legal rights of Manoomin (or wild rice), a traditional staple crop of the Anishinaabe people. This was the first law to secure legal rights of a particular plant species.

Toledo, OH adopted [the Lake Erie Bill of Rights \(LEBoR\)](#) – the first RoN law democratically enacted for a major ecosystem – in the U.S. in 2019. CELDF assisted in the drafting, adoption, and legal defense of LEBoR. Inspired by the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, [the Great Lakes Bill of Rights](#) was introduced in the New York state legislature in 2022. The bill was reintroduced in 2025 and recognizes all watersheds and waterways in the state as holders of legal rights. CELDF continues to provide guidance, advice, and leadership with the RoN movement, in the media, in academia, and through lawmaking at the local, state, national, and international levels.



Rights of Nature Principles



As RoN has become more popular and the idea has spread around the world, symbolic efforts which use the words “rights of nature” but which water down or even betray the underlying spirit of the movement have become increasingly common. We see this as a dangerous parallel to the “greenwashing” that is occurring in other parts of the environmental movement, such as within the power generation sector and sustainability programs presented by corporations or governments. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of RoN developments, it is necessary to describe a set of [RoN principles](#) for distinguishing between helpful and unhelpful efforts. Institutionalizing legally enforceable RoN requires RoN advocates to acknowledge our obligation to maintain as inviolate certain basic rights inherent within and for the exclusive benefit of the natural world, unmediated by human convenience or preference. In its recent *Los Cedros Protected Forest* decision, Ecuador’s Constitutional Court stated it well: RoN “is not a rhetorical lyricism, but rather a transcendent statement and a historical commitment that demands ‘a new form of civic coexistence, in diversity and harmony with nature.’”

RoN must remain grounded in a biocentric, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonial philosophy. First, RoN must always be biocentric. To be biocentric means that the needs of the natural world and the countless species we share the natural world with are protected over the desires of humans. Second, RoN must always be anti-capitalist. Capitalism requires infinite growth on a finite planet. Capitalism generates wealth through exploiting and extracting from nature, which means that capitalism depends on violating RoN. Third, RoN must always be anti-colonial. Colonization is the process of foreign nations or organizations (like corporations) controlling an area in order to extract natural resources and wealth. There is no surplus in nature. Stealing resources from one natural community and consuming them in another is a violation of RoN. Fourth, RoN advocates must understand that the world’s capitalist and colonial governments (virtually all of them at this point) will not be persuaded to honor RoN in any meaningful way. This means that RoN will not ultimately be achieved through courts and legislative processes alone. Achieving a world where RoN are consistently respected will require the consistent application of force against those who violate RoN.

RoN recognizes and honors Nature’s inalienable rights. Nature is not property to be owned and exploited. Nature includes all ecosystems and living beings including watersheds, rivers, seas, mountains, flora and forests, animals, ecosystems, as well as humans, all inorganic habitats in which organic beings dwell, and the natural processes which contribute to the stability and furtherance of life on Earth. These legal rights are a prudent and necessary recognition that humans are only one species on Earth and that respecting RoN may restore the balance and interconnected health of Earth as first peoples largely understood. We call upon communities, peoples, organizations, and governments to enact, implement, enforce, and harmonize with RoN policies and laws that meet these criteria.

Accordingly, to be considered legitimate, a purported RoN law must:

1. Recognize the inherent, inalienable, legal Rights of Nature and Nature's constituent ecosystems, habitats, and natural communities to exist, flourish, self-organize, evolve, and regenerate, and to restoration, recovery, and preservation when harmed. And these rights must be interpreted in the manner most favorable to the protection of Nature and constituent ecosystems.
2. Define Nature and ecosystems so as to convey "a naturally occurring structural, functional, and organization unit, consisting of a community of organisms and the biotic and abiotic environmental variables that live and interact as a symbiotic whole in a given environment."
3. Ensure that RoN are free from violation, regulation, and subordination to other laws, legal and financial liabilities, economic priorities, commodification, monetization, or classification by legal concepts such as "legal personhood" where financial liabilities or resource valuations are imposed on Nature.
4. Emancipate Nature, ecosystems, and living beings from the legal status of 'property,' which allows for the violation of Nature's rights by giving deference to vested legal privileges.
5. Recognize that Nature includes human beings, and that the very existence of humanity is inevitably tied to that of Nature, and that RoN necessarily encompass the right of humanity to its existence as a species, and the right of Indigenous people and permanent residents to dwell unmolested in their natural habitat.
6. Guarantee ecosystems have legal standing to appear as the real party of interest in administrative proceedings and legal actions affecting its rights.
7. Authorize residents of communities to represent the ecosystems in which they physically dwell, and ensure that they do so in the name of that ecosystem, for the sole purpose of advancing its rights, recognizing that they are part of that ecosystem and have legal standing, in any and all legal proceedings, to do so.
8. Apply the precautionary principle and restrictive measures, including locally promulgated prohibition, for activities that may lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems, or the permanent alteration of natural cycles.
9. Require that damages derived from administrative, legal, contractual, or other proceedings be used solely and exclusively to protect, repair, and restore Nature in the affected ecosystem to assist in bringing it to its prior natural state, as opposed to being used to fund "mitigation banks," offset schemes, to subsidize energy production, or for other indirect and often greenwashed measures.

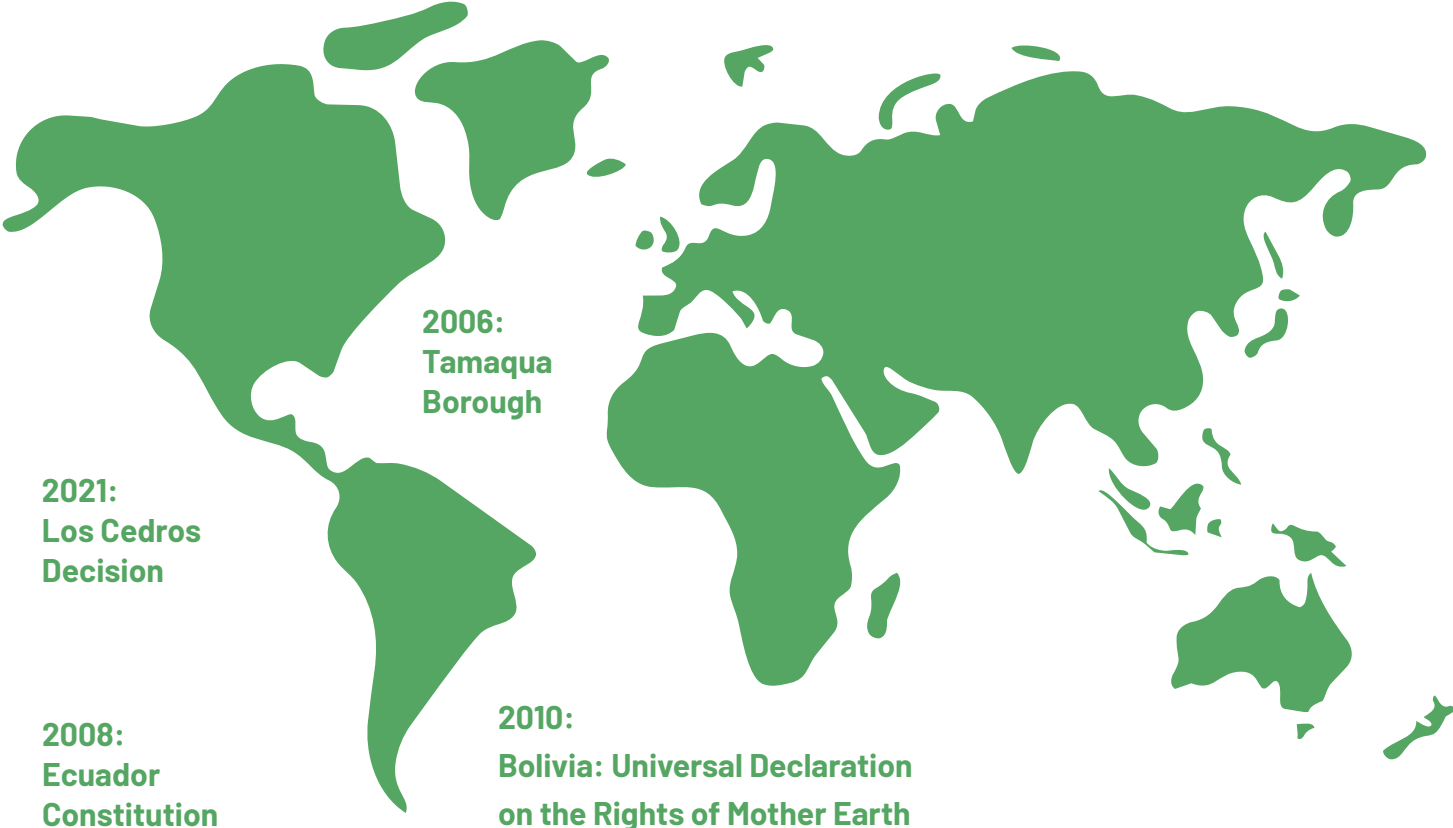
These [proposed legal principles](#) are open to further refinement. We recognize that the collective professional experience of CELDF, garnered from advocating for and assisting communities to implement legal Rights of Nature protections, does not constitute the only and last word on these crucial issues. We humbly invite allies across the globe – who have engaged in the Rights of Nature Movement with integrity – to offer their input, critique, suggestions, and assistance. Our aim in presenting these proposed principles is to embark on a journey of needed healing so that together, the whole of humanity may return to right-relationship with the rest of the living world.

RoN Around the World

2024-25:
Great Lakes Bill of Rights and other RoN state legislation

2014:
Grant Township

2019:
Lake Erie Bill of Rights



Significant RoN Advances and Setbacks in 2025

The following is not a comprehensive list of every RoN development in 2025. It's meant to be a general overview of what we at CELDF see as significant RoN developments – good or bad – that happened in 2025. We discuss some of these in more detail in the next section.

May 2025: After Chile and Columbia submitted a request for an advisory opinion to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights concerning their obligations in response to the climate emergency within the framework of international human rights law, the Court cited favorably to RoN.

June 2025: Pyramid Mountain (near Crestone, CO) became the first mountain in the United States to own itself.

July 2025: The City of Green Bay, WI officially approved its Sustainability Commission to proceed with a collaborative process for drafting a RoN resolution.

October 2025: The Province of Satipo, in central Peru, enacted the first ordinance honoring the rights of honey-making stingless bees to exist, regenerate, and maintain healthy population within their natural habitat, free from harm caused by invasive species or human activity within the Avireri Vraem Biosphere Reserve.

November 2025: The Colorado River Indian Tribes – a federally recognized Indian Tribe with an almost 300,000 acre reservation along the Colorado River on both the Arizona and California sides – passed a resolution to ‘proclaim personhood status for the Colorado River and to direct the [tribe’s] attorney general and legal and technical staff to develop proposed amendments to the [tribe’s] water code...’

November 2025: The City of Durango, CO passed a resolution recognizing that the Animas River is “a living entity possessing inherent rights.”

December 2025: Wisconsin lawmakers introduce legislation to prevent local governments from passing RoN ordinance. The law was approved by the State legislature but then vetoed by the Governor.

December 2025: The Provincial Municipality of Nauta-Loreto, Peru approved an ordinance matching the Province of Satipo’s, which honors the rights of honey-making, stingless bees to exist, regenerate, and maintain healthy populations within their natural habitat, free from harm caused by invasive species or human activity.

The Good, The Bad, The Ugly: Analyzing Noteworthy RoN Trends and Developments

We at CELDF applaud and celebrate the spread of RoN around the world. At the same time, we have serious concerns regarding the acceleration of state preemption of local RoN efforts, outright bans on RoN, the proliferation of purely symbolic RoN measures, and trends like “nature owning itself” or placing nature on corporate boards of directors which do not fundamentally challenge destructive power structures.

Good: Inter-American Court of Human Rights 2025 Advisory Opinion on Climate Emergency and Human Rights

After Chile and Colombia submitted a request for an advisory opinion concerning their obligations in response to the climate emergency within the framework of international human rights law, [the Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#) noted that “the United Nations General Assembly has adopted fifteen resolutions and twelve reports that reflect the increasing recognition of the case law on the Earth and the rights of Nature at the global level.” The Court also stated that the “reciprocal interdependence between climate stability and ecological equilibrium reinforces the need for integrated legal approach, capable of uniting the protection of human rights and the rights of Nature within a legal framework coherently aligned with the harmonious interpretation of the *pro persona* and *pro natura* principles.”

While it’s good to see the Inter-American Court of Human Rights citing favorably to RoN, it’s important to understand that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights’ advisory opinions are not immediately enforceable. The United States, the second largest carbon dioxide emitting nation and one of the worst violators of RoN, does not recognize the Inter-American Court of Human Rights’ jurisdiction. The Court has little power to force other governments to comply with its rulings. Member states are largely free to enforce the Court’s decisions as they see fit. This is especially problematic when the Court rules against a member state.

Good: Favorable Decisions from Ecuadorian Courts

In 2008, [Ecuador](#) became the first nation to include RoN in its constitution. Theoretically, constitutionally protected rights are expected to be among the best protected rights in nations with constitutions. So, many RoN advocates in other nations aspire to change their own constitutions to include RoN. Ecuador currently serves as the test case for how RoN constitutional amendments can be applied in the real world. In the 17 years since Ecuador recognized RoN in its constitution, Ecuador’s RoN constitutional amendment has been applied with mixed results.

Ecuador's version of RoN is articulated in Title II, Chapter 7, Articles 71-74 of its constitution. These articles state that Nature "has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes" and "the right to be restored." Humans "can call upon public authorities to enforce the rights of nature." And, the Ecuadorian government "shall apply preventive and restrictive measures on activities that might lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems and the permanent alteration of natural cycles."

Despite the addition of RoN to the Ecuadorian constitution in 2008, then-President Rafael Correa was committed to exploiting Ecuador's natural resources, especially minerals, for his economic agenda. Because of this, the Correa government chose not to create the secondary laws and institutions needed to implement constitutional RoN principles. Furthermore, Correa immediately launched a public campaign to enact a mining law that opened new sites for extraction and greatly expanded existing mining operations. Indigenous and RoN advocates criticized the law on the grounds that it violated both RoN and Indigenous constitutional rights. When the mining law passed in 2009, nationwide protests followed. Later in 2009, after the government proposed a water law that opponents argued would similarly violate RoN and the rights of Indigenous communities, the Ecuadorian government began arresting Indigenous leaders and charged them with terrorism for protesting mining activities. The government also shut down some of the organizations leading the protests.

Scholars Craig M. Kauffman and Pamela L. Martin interviewed key RoN advocates about this time in Ecuador and concluded:

"Given the passage of constitutional RoN provisions in 2008, Indigenous movements and environmental NGOs were initially optimistic that Ecuador was turning away from extractivist-based development. These hopes were dashed when the government passed the 2009 Mining Law and moved quickly to expand industrial mining."



The Condor-Mirador Case

In 2012, the Ecuadorian government signed a contract with the Chinese-owned mining company Ecuacorriente to construct the Mirado Mining Project – Ecuador’s first, large-scale, open-pit mine in an area of the Amazonia province Zamora-Chichipe known as Condor-Mirador. The mine plan would have clearly harmed parts of the Condor mountain range and its large forests, tropical areas, settlements of indigenous communities, biological diversity, and high rainfall – one of the most important Amazon biomes left on Earth. According to the mining corporation’s own environmental impact study, the mine would violate Ecuador’s RoN constitutional provisions including by destroying whole ecosystems, pushing species to extinction, and degrading water ecosystems. Regardless, both the trial and appellate courts ruled that the Condor-Mirado project did not violate RoN.

The Los Cedros Decision

[The Los Cedros Forest](#) is a protected lower montane rainforest, also known as a cloud forest, in Ecuador. In 2017, Ecuador’s Ministry of Mining and Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition issued permits for mining activity in the Los Cedros Forest. In 2018, local Ecuadorian governments challenged these permits as violations of the rights of nature in Ecuadorian court. The court of first instance ruled that no constitutional rights (including rights of nature) were violated by the mining permits. The local governments appealed to the Provincial Court, which overturned the trial court and found that there was a violation of the right to participation granted in Article 61, paragraph 4 of the Ecuadorian Constitution. The Provincial Court’s decision, in turn, was appealed to Ecuador’s Constitutional Court by the mining company.

In one of the best legal decisions for rights of nature, to date, the Constitutional Court in 2021 ruled that Ecuador’s Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition violated the Los Cedros Forest’s rights of nature, right to water, and affected communities’ rights to be consulted about decisions or authorizations that affect those communities. For reparation, the court ordered that mining and all types of extractive activities be stopped in the Los Cedros Forest; annulled the mining permits at issue; ordered the mining company to remove any infrastructure built in the forest; and ordered the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition to adopt necessary measures for the preservation and protection of the Los Cedros Forest’s rights. The Los Cedros decision is important because it is one of the few rights of nature decisions that have made a real difference for nature on the ground.

Bad: Nature Owning Itself

In June 2025, **Pyramid Mountain** (near Crestone, CO) became the first mountain in the United States to own itself. This was achieved when the private foundation that owned the mountain transferred title to Pyramid Mountain. According to a press release in the *Crestone Eagle* newspaper, the process entails the creation of a legal “alter ego” for the land and the water, soil, air, plants and animals who live on the land. As part of this process, a council of five human guardians was formed to represent Pyramid Mountain’s interests. 3 of the 5 guardians are Indigenous women whose ancestral lands include Pyramid Mountain. The other two guardians are local community members.

While we at CELDF understand the inclination to normalize RoN, the concept that nature is an object to be owned – whether that ownership is by humans or itself – is one of the primary concepts that RoN is aimed at undermining. The natural world will never be safe so long as the natural world we depend on is objectified and valued only for the way humans use it. Environmental philosopher John Livingston calls the objectification of nature “resourcism” and explains: “A ‘resource’ is anything that can be put to human use . . . It is the concept of ‘resource’ that allows us to perceive nature as our subsidiary.” Livingston notes that once the nonhuman “is perceived as having some utility – any utility – and is thus perceived as a ‘resource,’ its depletion is only a matter of time.” Because our legal system currently defines nature as property, “resourcism” is institutionalized in American law. Law shapes our experience of the world. Currently, law teaches that nature is property, an object, or a resource to use. This entrenches a worldview that encourages environmental destruction.

Bad: Nature on Corporate Boards of Directors

In 2022, Scottish beauty company **Faith In Nature** announced that it was the first company in the world to give nature a formal vote on corporate decisions that might affect nature. Faith in Nature’s new, revised “Objects of the Company” (similar to a mission statement) in its articles of association (similar to articles of incorporation in the US) state that “the objects of the Company are to promote the success of the Company: for the benefit of its members as a whole...minimise the prospect of any harmful impact of the business and operation on Nature and...to have a material positive impact on (a) society and (b) the environment, taken as a whole.”

Some may argue that granting Nature the rights granted to corporate directors is a positive step for RoN. CELDF disagrees. While we appreciate the impulse to normalize RoN, putting nature on a corporate board of directors (thereby granting nature the rights granted to corporate directors) is a tactic that could easily be co-opted by corporations to greenwash their brand and image. Faith In Nature’s new, revised articles of association don’t even mention RoN. While it’s great that Faith In Nature wants to use “its best endeavors to have a positive impact on Nature as a whole and to minimise the prospect of any harmful impact of the business and operation

on Nature,” this aspiration, by law, must be balanced against “the success of the Company” and “for the benefit of its members.” In simpler terms, nature’s rights as a corporate director, under Faith in Nature’s articles of association are still subservient to Faith in Nature’s profit motive. Furthermore, Faith In Nature’s revised articles of association explicitly limits causes of action based on the articles of association to the company itself. In other words, putting Nature on its Board of Directors is a mostly symbolic act for Faith In Nature.

Ugly: States Banning Rights of Nature

In 2019, after Toledo, OH residents overwhelmingly adopted the Lake Erie Bill of Rights – the first law in the U.S. passed to recognize the rights of a distinct ecosystem – the **Ohio** legislature quickly added language to a budget bill (Ohio Revised Code 2305.011) declaring that “Nature or any ecosystem does not have standing to participate in or bring an action” in Ohio courts and that “No person, on behalf of or representing nature or an ecosystem, shall bring an action” in Ohio courts. This effectively banned RoN in Ohio by closing the courts to nature or humans to enforce any law.

In 2020, after Orange County voters proposed a charter amendment aimed at protecting RoN, **Florida** passed the 2020 Clean Waterways Act that includes a provision that bans “local governments from recognizing or granting certain legal rights to the natural environment or granting such rights relating to the natural environment to a person or political subdivision.” This effectively banned RoN in Florida. In 2022, **Idaho** passed a law (HB 720) banning personhood for nature and animals. This effectively banned RoN in Idaho. In 2024, after grassroots Utah voters proposed granting rights to the Great Salt Lake, **Utah** passed a law (House Bill 249) that prohibits the state and local government from granting legal personhood to animals, plants, or major ecosystems like the Great Salt Lake.

Because laws protecting RoN would disrupt corporate exploitation of the natural world, these legislative efforts to squash the RoN movement are entirely predictable and similar to historical efforts to squash other rights-based movements like the civil rights and women’s suffrage movements. Instead of giving up in the face of setbacks like these, RoN advocates must learn how to enforce rights of nature outside of courtrooms and legislative processes along with adapting tactics and strategies for the long game of transforming the legal system.



Conclusion

As RoN gains momentum around the world, it is important that advocates guard against cooptation and the pressure that powerful opponents are already putting on our movement to render it ineffective. It's also critical that we stay on guard against impulses which often arise inside our movements when, facing setbacks and extreme challenges, some activists wish to render our measures toothless in return for greater public acceptance. "At least these measures will pass," they say. But symbolism isn't enough in these times. Material change must be our goal.

We offer this inaugural State of Rights of Nature report to celebrate RoN successes, honor the work that is being done around the world by thousands of committed people, and to help keep the revolutionary potential of the Rights of Nature movement intact. In this report, CELDF has provided a set of biocentric, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonial RoN principles to ensure that the RoN movement maintains its revolutionary nature. We've applied these principles to some significant RoN events to evaluate their efficacy. We at CELDF look forward to continuing to fight for revolutionary RoN.



RIGHTS OF NATURE RESOURCE

The Eco Jurisprudence Monitor (EJM) tracks rights of nature activities worldwide. The database includes laws adopted at the local, state, and national levels along with court decisions recognizing nature's rights. To date there are sixty-six countries who have some version of Earth-centered laws, resolutions, or declarations. CELDF is an advisor to [the Eco Jurisprudence Monitor](#).

[Eco Jurisprudence Monitor | \[ecojurisprudence.org\]\(http://ecojurisprudence.org\)](#)



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