

# THE LEOPOLD WRITING PROGRAM

2017 ALDO LEOPOLD WRITING CONTEST AWARD WINNER



## TIGERLILLY WARNER GRADES 6-7 DIVISION

In Aldo Leopold's book *A Sand County Almanac* he states, "We can only be ethical in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, and otherwise have faith in." That means that without spending a substantial amount of quality time in nature we begin to believe that land is simply dirt, the well-being of which is unnecessary for human survival. The land has always provided for us, offering the resources necessary for survival. At some point in our evolution, humanity realized that we could take advantage of this relationship. We could manipulate the land for human profit. The proposed Gila River Diversion is an example of this. The Gila is the last free flowing river in New Mexico yet there is a plan to divert it, potentially harming the delicate ecosystem for which the Gila is the heart. Those who have grown up going to the river, and those who have learned to love and have faith in it are fighting the diversion. It's hard to imagine that those who welcome the dam have ever had that relationship with the Gila, because when we truly connect with something, we are no longer apart from it. Humans traditionally think of animals, soil, and plants as something separate from themselves, detaching from these elements. Maybe that is one reason why we stand by as we destroy the environment, because we think of it as something disconnected and apart from us. If humans regularly spend time in nature, we may be able to understand how important it is to human survival. By trusting in nature it is more likely that we will gain faith in each other. With this faith we might be able to change our perspective towards nature and be able to "be ethical in relation" to it.



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