

Case 1



(This is based on the most recent data I could find; if you dispute any of these facts, however, please respond to the questions as if everything said here were true)

Wind farms in the United States kill about 10,000 birds annually. Approximately 2,000 of these are raptors, including a large number of golden eagles (pictured). Hunting birds like eagles are particularly threatened because they must focus on the ground, rather than the sky, while hunting.

Golden eagles are already an endangered species, and this additional pressure on their numbers increases the chances that they will become extinct. On the other hand, wind farms are a vital part of the United States' move to use renewable power sources and reduce greenhouse emissions, and the areas where raptors hunt tend to be the places wind farms would function most effectively.

Case 2

(This is a hypothetical case; treat the stated situation as if it were factual)

California wants to put a high speed train between Los Angeles and San Francisco, which will greatly benefit tens of thousands of travelers every year and greatly reduce pollution caused by driving and flying. Unfortunately, the only route that will work goes through the land of a small Native American tribe, with only about two dozen members remaining. The tribe refuses to move or to allow construction of the train. U.S. laws and treaties would allow the government to use military force to relocate the tribesmembers, although it is quite likely that doing so would lead to the deaths of all the tribesmembers.

Questions:

1. Should we continue to run windfarms in areas where golden eagles hunt? Should the government use military force to relocate the tribe in order to build the train?
2. Imagine that the windfarms continue to run, killing thousands of eagles, and that the use of force in case 2 ends up killing all the tribespeople. If so, would there be anything wrong with benefitting from the power generated by the windfarms, or using the train? Should people abstain from these benefits because of how they are achieved?
3. Imagine that a person could help the eagles by sabotaging some of the turbines on the windfarm, or could help the tribespeople resist being moved by passing military information on to them. This would be illegal. Should people do it anyway?
4. You can probably think of other options for green power or environmentally friendly commuting not mentioned in these cases. Imagine that no one is willing to take those options (if you follow public reactions to environmental issues, this is not hard to imagine). So the choice is between windfarming and keeping things as they currently are, or building the train and keep things as they currently are. Does this change your answers?