

WATER WETLANDS AND WILDLANDS: Managing Landscapes for Humanity and Nature¹

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Nearing the close of 1989, we find ourselves at the cusp of a new decade and at the dawn of a new age in the affairs of humanity. Increasingly we are coming to recognize that the affairs of one individual...of each community, indeed, each country cannot be singly evaluated, but must be viewed in the context of the whole. No longer is it prudent to assume that the affairs of humans are separate from the working of the biosphere, or that the planet can take care of itself. Our numbers are too great and our demands on the resources of the planet too numerous.

More than a decade ago there was an awareness on the part of many individuals that humanity needed to begin to learn how to live within the biosphere in harmony with the cycles and processes of nature. But somehow, much of that awareness dwindled in our headlong drive to exploit our resources and to turn a profit. Little did we recognize that short-term profits did not make for long-term sustainability. In the end we prolonged the inevitable and put off till tomorrow that which we must do...nourish and support that which supports us. As we proceed toward the 21st century, the time is now fast upon us to face the consequences of a lack of stewardship, and to reverse current trends in order to prepare ourselves and the next generation for a world economy that has limits and a biosphere that needs attention.

We are now confronted, more than ever, with a future of limited supplies of resources, dwindling space, and a lack of biosphere buffering capacity to absorb the wastes of an ever increasing appetite for growth. It is only a matter of time before we once again face fuel shortages and the realization that everything we do requires a constant dependable supply of rich resources. Space (that is, good productive land) is already in short supply in many regions of the globe, and in our country is in short supply for the diminishing numbers of endangered and threatened wildlife species caught between developing urban centers. The biosphere is full of our wastes; there is little room left for more smokestack emissions, garbage dumps, or super fund sites. Can we continue at this pace without some thought to how we will manage the planet?

Once again, we must begin to educate ourselves in sustainability, in doing more with less, and in living within the cycles and processes of the biosphere instead of in spite of them.

What is required of us as educators is to develop a new educational paradigm. We must resurrect our feelings of connectedness with the biosphere and educate the next generations in management, not business management, but landscape management.

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