

## Nature Bats Last

Contributed by Terry Mock  
Friday, 09 May 2008

We are Part of Nature, Too&hellip;

In previous articles published in this magazine, I have supported a more environmentally-friendly approach to land development.

&ldquo;Understanding the Sacred Bond we have with Trees&rdquo; pointed out the historical importance of wood to the rise of major civilizations and the link between deforestation and environmental collapse, and the fall of many of those same civilizations. The article &ldquo;Biodiversity is the Living Foundation for Sustainable Development&rdquo; was published to highlight the fact that underlying all efforts to achieve a triple-bottom-lined sustainable future is the fundamental requirement that certain environmental building blocks must exist, or little hope for civilization can remain. Finally,&ldquo;Building a Sustainable Community Forest&rdquo; addressed the need for a comprehensive approach to build sustainable &ldquo;designer ecosystems&rdquo; for the future.

Having taken an early environmentally defensive position on land development issues in the past, I now find myself in the position of defending our industry in the face of recent publicly reported criticism and dire predictions which have outlined a very bleak future for humanity as a consequence of the collective eco-sins of present and preceding generations. While the consequences of bad environmental practices are now evident and obvious to any rational observer, I now offer an opinion contrary to the current hysteria-media-driven fear of a coming &ldquo;Dark Age&rdquo; for civilization.

The key to my optimism is the belief that inevitably the movement of human emotion between the extremes of confidence in human dominance over nature, and the fear of nature punishing us for our exploitive tendencies, will result in a more balanced view that as part of nature, humans have the capability to be a positive evolutionary force and to learn from and influence the natural world around us, for the benefit of society today, as well as future generations of all species.

As evidence that the above described human emotional cycle does exist, I offer the following simple example - In 1992, in conjunction with the assembly of the first World Summit on Sustainable Development, a majority of the world&rsquo;s leading scientists signed and delivered an unprecedented and explicit document entitled, &ldquo;A Warning to Humanity&rdquo; with the following introduction:

&ldquo;Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about.&rdquo;

&ldquo;We must bring environmentally damaging activities under control to restore and protect the integrity of the Earth&rsquo;s systems we depend on.&rdquo;

Even though it is easy to see in hindsight that the scientists were correct in their warnings, at the time neither the New York Times nor the Washington Post even carried the story. Now, in contrast, doomsayers are given top billing in the news of the day, and end-of-the-world stories are common.

What is a responsible land developer to make of this?

Well, in 1987, five years before &ldquo;A Warning to Humanity&rdquo;, this developer was elected president of a major environmental organization, called for &ldquo;The Year of Restoration&rdquo;, and predicted that earth restoration would become a major world-wide industry. Since that time, as evidenced by the emergence of this magazine and its parent organization &ndash; Sustainable Land Development International (SLDI)- there has been an amazing burst of new technology on the scene, with much more on the way, that will enable our species to not only survive, but to thrive as the stewards of a restored planet.

The cornerstone of our new-found knowledge of sustainability is the philosophy of &ldquo;doing more with less,&rdquo; and the best sustainable models to study are the earth&rsquo;s natural systems. By emulating the efficiency of nature, we can sustain our species at a desirable standard of living and at long last, the often repeated cycle of natural resource exploitation, and the rise and fall of civilizations from the dawn of human time, will be broken. SLDT