

Sustainable Land -Development

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Tuesday, 02 December 2008

Building a Bridge to a New Global Culture

As the first year of SLDI's publication of this magazine draws to a close, I want to take a look back at where the sustainable land development movement has come from, along with offering a new prediction of where we go from here.

In the summer of 1995, as a co-founder and the first (and only) land developer past-president of the non-profit Florida Native Plant Society, I was asked to write an article for the Society's quarterly publication – The Palmetto. Following are excerpts from that article, which provides a snap shot of a time 13 years ago. You be the judge of whether there has been movement toward more informed decisions about the future, toward a plan that I called at the time, “the coming restorative economy.”

Outrunning our Headlights

While there continues to be debate over various scientific, economic, and political details of the plan, two over-riding pressures are now combining to forge a new global consensus for environmental restoration:

- At the present rate of consumption, the Earth does not have the resource capacity to continue to sustain our human population. The end of the current world for humankind is now in sight.
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- The United States, winner of the Cold war and the leading role model for the rest of the world, has a capitalistic system that is now approaching insolvency…
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- The existing world economic order is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and will not be capable of sustaining itself much longer by exploiting dwindling world supplies of natural resources and by deficit government spending.

That is the bad news.

Paradigm Shift

The good news is that out of these huge problems will come the pressure to replace our old system with new political and business structures that will help provide for a sustainable global economy. The will to act is all that is missing, for the scientific knowledge to technologically operate our planet in a sustainable manner is now available to all via satellite-relayed, instant around-the-world information.

The key component of our newfound knowledge of sustainability is the philosophy of “doing more with less”, and the best sustainable models for us to study are the earth's natural systems. Only by emulating the efficiency of nature can we sustain our species at a desirable standard of living. At long last…the restoration economy will replace the competitiveness of a scarce resource mindset with the cooperativeness of a limitless, sustainable resource paradigm…

…Restoration implies a responsibility to change existing business practices to more closely mimic the complex and efficient models of sustainable natural systems:

- New accounting standards, which consider the long-term costs of environmental degradation, must be implemented.
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- Creative financial tools, such as mitigation banking, must be allowed to evolve in order to vent development pressure and to raise revenue for large-scale restoration projects.
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- Sustainable profit centers, such as eco-tourism, must be developed for local economies as an alternative to natural resource mining.
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- Organically produced, local cash crops must be developed to replace chemically dependent monocultures in order to preserve biodiversity.

Take the High Ground

• Earth restoration will not only restore our natural systems – it will restore our faith in ourselves and our hope for the future. David Brower, the first executive director of the Sierra Club and pre-eminent wilderness preservationist, now asserts, "...the world desperately needs CPR – Conservation, Preservation, and Restoration – in order to achieve the ultimate goal in life – Celebration."

The opportunities for each of us as environmental entrepreneurs are greater than at any time in human history. We can make money, save the world, and have fun! Who says you can't have it all?!

Update

In his latest book, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, multi-Pulitzer-winning journalist Thomas Friedman now says that the greatest thing that the U.S. could do today for itself, and for the whole world, would be to announce its intention to "outgreen China" - by taking a commanding lead in the race to build the next great global industry. In this groundbreaking account of where we stand now, he shows how America's recent lack of focus and national purpose; and the global environmental crisis are linked – and how we can restore the world and revive America at the same time.

The mission of Sustainable Land Development International is the bridge to a new global culture•Promoting and enabling land development worldwide that balances the needs of people, planet & profit for today – and future generations. SLDT