

USSEE Newsletter

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Society News

Greetings from the President

On behalf your newly elected Board of Directors, I want to take this opportunity to say hello. As we begin the important intellectual adventure of bringing ecology and economics into synthesis, I hope you are as excited as I am. The formation of the US Chapter provides us with an opportunity to develop our own character and make unique contributions. Your responses to the survey in the previous newsletter make it clear that you have a number of creative suggestions to offer. At the upcoming meeting in Duluth, I hope that all of you will take the time to communicate your suggestions and discuss them with me and the Board. This initial meeting will play an important role in shaping the direction that the USSEE takes over the next few years. Hopefully, we can find directions that will truly serve the membership. (Bob O'Neill, oneill@attglobal.net)

Pathways to Sustainability: Theory and Practice

USSEE's first biennial conference will be held on July 11th-13th 2001 in Duluth, Minnesota. The event is sponsored by the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE), the Institute for a Sustainable Future (ISF) and the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance's Sustainable Communities Network (MnSCN). So far, we have received 122 abstracts and numerous requests for table displays. We will continue to accept abstract submissions and table registrations until the end of May; please direct questions to Sue Mageau (conferenceinfo@ussee.org). The complete conference program and updated conference information can be found at www.ussee.org.

The conference will begin on Wednesday evening with a locally catered welcoming reception at the Inn on Lake Superior. Here we can enjoy good food and beverages directly on the shore of Lake Superior. Hopefully the weather will cooperate!

Thursday will be devoted to theoretical topics and begin with three morning plenary addresses.

- **Overcoming the Disciplinary Dilemmas of Transdisciplinarity**, Richard Norgaard, President of the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE)
- **Frontier Issues in Economic Thought**, Neva Goodwin, Co-Director of the Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University
- **Ecological Economics and Political Economy: Why the Twain should Meet**, James Boyce, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Thursday afternoon's breakout sessions will consider the following topics: Defining Sustainability, Developing Ecological Economic Education, Understanding Consumption, Addressing Commoditization, Confronting Inequality, Valuing Natural Capital, Assessing

Globalization, Applying Technology, Protecting the Commons, and Understanding Complex Systems.

Thursday evening we will gather for dinner and entertainment as we cruise Lake Superior on the Vista Queen to celebrate the inauguration of the USSEE. There will be a small individual charge for this event to help cover the costs.

On Friday we will move from theory to application and begin with three plenary addresses.

- **Vanishing Borders: Protecting the Planet in the Age of Globalization**, Hilary French, Director, Global Governance Project, World Watch Institute.
- **Trust Us, We're Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles with Your Future**, John Stauber, Co-editor of PR Watch.
- **The Conversion of Natural to Financial Capital**. David Korten, Founder, Positive Futures Network.

Friday afternoon's breakout session will cover the following applied pathways: Innovative Policies for Sustainability, Quantifying Sustainability, Invoking Tourism, Regional Planning Strategies, Natural Capital Valuation, Eco-Industrialism, Participatory Modeling, Ecosystem (NC) Management, Preserving Biodiversity, Using the Environmental Kuznets Curve, and Case Studies in Sustainability.

This inaugural conference should set the stage for the dominant role of the USSEE in the future – linking these many pathways to sustainability! Hope to see you in Duluth this summer, and please spread the word to help us ensure the success of this event. (Mike Mageau, Institute for a Sustainable Future, mageau@isfusa.org)

USSEE Membership Survey

We thank the 38 members who responded to the survey included in the first *USSEE Newsletter*. According to respondents:

- About half of our membership has a PhD.
- We have a diversity of major fields ranging from economics — who would have guessed? — to philosophy to publishing to a bio dynamic farmer.
- Most of us are coming to the meeting in Duluth. The reasons are many but most of all to interact with other ecological economists.
- By a margin of about three to one we do not think it is time to start a new journal, but prefer, at least for the near term, to support existing journals and use the *USSEE Newsletter* and possibly a more formal bulletin for communication.
- About half of us asked to have the *USSEE Newsletter* sent via email.

Respondents had a wide range of comments on the questions concerning a new journal, the newsletter, a bulletin, a web site, and membership services. The Board of Directors are pleased to have this input. It will be discussed at the board meeting in July. The complete survey can be found at www.ussee.org. (Carl McDaniel, Rensselaer, mcdanc@rpi.edu)

Secretariat

The USSEE Board of Directors has selected the Institute for a Sustainable Future (ISF), Duluth, MN to be the secretariat for the society. ISF will administrate membership activities, establish and maintain the society's web site, assist with the newsletter, write grants and fund raise to promote society programs, and incorporate and establish USSEE as a not for profit (501 c3) organization. (ISF secretariat proposal)

Newsletter Staff

If you compare the first newsletter with the second, you will note that some sections are missing in the second letter that were in the first. The reason is that I did not get and was unable to solicit any input for these sections. The long and short of it is, I need a volunteer to take on the responsibility for getting input for each section. Currently the sections are: News and Views, Society News, Open Forum, Education, Humor, Annotated References with subsections for articles and books, Selected References, and Calendar of Events for the Coming Year. If you have an interest in a particular section and are willing to take on the responsibility of getting input for one of these sections, please let me know. Your responsibility would be to beat the bushes for contributions as well as provide your own material, and send it to me. I have requested a table at the Duluth meeting to discuss the newsletter and to seek staff. The pay is like that for most truly important things — zero — but the opportunity for influence is substantial — you will provide what your colleagues read in the newsletter. (Carl McDaniel, Rensselaer, mcdanc@rpi.edu)

Open Forum

How to Grow the USSEE?

There is a question that faces any new organization, such as USSEE: How fast should we grow? The answer to this question helps determine the initial agenda of the organization and ultimately its character.

Deciding to grow slowly and carefully permits a new organization to develop its own character. Keeping both the annual meeting and distribution of the newsletter small for a couple of years allows members to meet each other, discuss issues of concern, and perhaps develop goals that are unique to USSEE. Small size promotes closer interaction and increases the opportunity for input by individual members. Small size, however, also has distinct disadvantages. Like similar organizations, USSEE operates primarily on membership dues. So small size means that the organization doesn't have much in the way of resources and cannot accomplish very much.

Rapid growth requires that active members devote considerable energy to recruitment. This involves developing affiliations with related societies, in our case economics and ecological societies. Growth also involves attending additional meetings of other societies and spreading the word. With only limited time available, active recruitment means less energy available for developing the individual character of USSEE. But, active recruitment results in increased dues revenue and greater scope for projects and influence on our colleagues.

I believe this question of how fast to grow should be carefully considered and discussed among current members of USSEE. Using the medium of the newsletter, I hope that others will take the time to express an opinion on this issue. I also hope members will take advantage of the opportunity provided by the upcoming meeting in Duluth to discuss this issue and communicate your opinions to the Board. You won't have any trouble finding me, I'll be in the bar. (Bob O'Neill, President USSEE, boneill@attglobal.net)

The Tyranny of Motorized Backcountry Recreation

For three years, Swedish colleagues and I have explored nature tourism's potential and pitfalls as a means to sustainable development in distressed rural regions. Central themes are the incursion of recreational vehicles into wildlands and the growing tyranny of motorized over muscle-powered recreation. In Maine's 10 million acre north woods, that means 90,000 snowmobiles, 40,000 all terrain vehicles, and countless jet skis on waters made accessible by 25,000 miles of

logging roads criss-crossing once remote terrain. The 150 mile Allagash Wilderness Waterway symbolizes a seemingly inexorable trend. Its 1970 federal charter allowed for two vehicle access points; today there are thirteen.

To a conservationist, canoeist, backpacker, or ecological economist, the contradictions of these energy-intensive, noisy, polluting, and habitat-disrupting technologies seem obvious. To critics of a mass consumption society fixated on power and speed (and of mega-corporations that reinforce such wants), the alienation inherent in motor-powered recreation likewise seems obvious. Starting with just these “priors,” I wasn’t prepared for what emerged from a recent study of snowmobiling in Maine and Dalarna (Sweden). For tens of thousands of Mainers, “sledding” keeps winter’s “cabin fever” at bay. Largely a family and club activity, it has co-evolved with community institutions to dramatically improve the quality of life. Sledding in Maine generates ca. \$200 million in annual spending (though far less value added), boosting slack season employment and commerce in towns with twice the statewide unemployment rate. Finally, a state agency facilitates a landowner snowmobiler management regime covering 12,000 miles of trails and making sledding a compatible use of Maine’s vast industrial forest.

At this stage of my reflections, ecological economics, and populist instincts seem at odds. I would appreciate hearing from others who grapple with similar dilemmas. (David Vail, Bowdoin College, dvail@bowdoin.edu)

It's the ecology, stupid!

In science, as in most human endeavors that strive to understand how the world works, one needs baseline data in order to establish differences and change. In 1879 the US government established the Geological Survey (USGS) to assess our geological diversity and resources. Despite the immense importance of our biological assets, we have taken them for granted until very recently. In the early 1990s, after a decades-long concerted effort, the National Biological Service (NBS) was created to provide the biological equivalent of the USGS. The political climate, however, was not right for this endeavor and the NBS was short lived.

Fortunately, the Nature Conservancy working with state agencies had initiated the National Heritage Network in the 1970s. National heritage programs are now present in all 50 states with the last being established in Alaska in 1989. *Our Precious Heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the United States* (Bruce A. Stein, Lynn S. Kutner, and Jonathan S. Adams, eds., Oxford University Press, 2000) is an executive summary on the past, present, and possible futures of biodiversity in the US. This quarter-century product of the Natural Heritage Network has given us our first detailed, albeit quite incomplete, assessment of the status of biodiversity in the United States. It standardizes approaches and assessments, and makes comparisons to other data like the Endangered Species List.

In a very accessible format — clearly written text accompanied by numerous figures, maps, charts, and tables — *Precious Heritage* explains how the data has been collected and analyzed, indicates what it can tell us, and indicates avenues for preservation. This ever expanding data base, available through the Natural Heritage Network, will allow planners to initiate large scale, comprehensive approaches to preserving what sustains us while avoiding many of the frustrations and inefficiencies associated with current piece meal approaches that characterize development in the US and everywhere.

At the same time, *Precious Heritage* illustrates that we know too little about most aspects of biological diversity to be assured of the appropriateness of our plans: the inventory of species is incomplete, we do not know what is required for most species to thrive, we do not know the role each species plays in its ecosystem, we do not know all of the functions (pollination, water and air purification, water retention, soil fertility, symbiotic relations, etc.) or the materials (food, shelter, medicines, fiber, etc.) organisms might provide, and so on. This fundamental lack of

knowledge demands we err on the conservative side. Once a habitat is substantially changed or gone, it will not come back easily if at all. And as habitats go, species go, and life support goes.

We are in this most deplorable state because we have taken biodiversity as well as its functions and materials for granted. As a result we have been and are, by and large, still unwilling to provide the resources to do the required science. I suspect this situation will only change when "It's the economy, stupid!" is replaced by "It's the ecology, stupid!" as the slogan in a presidential candidate's campaign headquarters.

In the meantime, we should recommend this book to our colleagues in other disciplines. Economists, biologists, policy makers, planners, politicians, and citizens in general need a better understanding of our ecological resources. *Precious Heritage* should be on all of our desks as ready reference for just about any project with which we might be associated. (Carl McDaniel, Rensselaer, mcdanc@rpi.edu)

Education

New book and educational materials

Rethinking Sustainability: Power, Knowledge, and Institutions, an edited volume bringing together thoughts of economists, political scientists, anthropologists, philosophers, and agricultural policy professionals, is available from Tufts University Global Development and Environment Institute (G-DAE.) *Rethinking Sustainability* is the second volume in the series *Evolving Values for a Capitalist World* that explores the ways in which societies can shape their economic systems to fit their value systems.

In addition, G-DAE also announces the availability of a free series of new teaching materials in environmental economics. Educational Modules from the forthcoming text *The Economic System and the Environment* are being made available free as teaching modules on G-DAE web site (<http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/e chapterswelcome.htm>). The topics are: Valuing the Environment, Population and the Environment, Agriculture and the Environment, The Economics of Energy, Trade and the Environment, The Economics of Global Climate Change. (Jonathan M. Harris, Tufts G-DAE, marci.harris@tufts.edu, <http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae>)

Annotated References

Books

Does food make a nation? I remember the first hamburger-fries joint near my teenage home in Wauwatosa, WI in the 1950s. It was open six months of the year and the owner spent the other six months living the good life in Florida. Our long-evolved craving for fat attracted hordes and made millionaires of many a fast food entrepreneur. Fast food's fat has also been a major contributor to half of US adults and one quarter of US children being obese or overweight — we are the most obese industrialized nation.

Schlosser in *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001) takes the reader on a cultural and economic tour of a reality we all have experienced at some level. The story begins in the 1940s with Carl Charter's and Richard and Maurice McDonald's southern California drive-in restaurants. It ends with, "... Then place your order. Or turn and walk out the door. It's not too late. Even in this fast food nation, you can still have it your way." The intervening pages examine, in story form, the exacting details of where the food comes from, why it looks and tastes so uniform everywhere, who staffs and runs the

restaurants, the franchise business, who gets rich and who doesn't, who gets injured, and the globalization of the US fast-food diet.

Why should an ecological economist be concerned about the fast food story? It seems to me that this would be a wonderful graduate qualifying exam question for a host of areas under USSEE's umbrella. (Carl McDaniel, Rensselaer, mcdanc@rpi.edu)

How long will Malthus be wrong? Lindsey Grant has written several books dealing with population and resources including *Elephants in the Volkswagen* (1992) that considered the optimum population size for the USA. His latest book, *Too Many People: The Case for Reversing Growth* (Seven Locks Press, 2000) is a short 94 pages and to the point. It is an essay arguing that essentially every environmental challenge our world economic culture faces would be easier to address if our numbers were not growing. If one accepts that we live in a full world where we have taken more than our fair share from other life and that the mass extinction we are causing by this taking will unhinge our global civilization, then you will find this book a valuable educational tool for undergraduates and most general audiences.

Too Many People illustrates how our numbers connect to everything else — food, climate, energy, pollution, biodiversity, economic growth, and our future. Equally important, it opens a conversation on challenges associated with decreasing population size in those countries that have achieved fertility rates below replacement. Unlike the push to raise fertility rates some advocate, Grant states that reducing our numbers is exactly what is needed globally so as to attain a durable population size that has a chance of having a high-quality life style.

He also acknowledges and considers some of the difficulties associated with the transition from a growing to a decreasing population. Grant's thesis and data resonate with common sense and with population trends. Our rate of growth is slowing and many demographers consider 8 to 9 billion as a possible peak, if we provide everyone with the knowledge and access to the means of having their desired family size. Grant challenges us to look beyond the peak to a steady state economy with about 3 billion people. (Carl McDaniel, Rensselaer, mcdanc@rpi.edu)

Language shapes our worldview. Using "he" signals male despite intentions. Ecologists, economists, and just about everybody is trapped in the "human:natural" dichotomy of our culture-laden language. Jane Jacobs in *The Nature of Economies* (Vintage Books, 2000) admonishes us to accept without reservation that we humans are as natural as elephants and bacteria. Likewise, human economies are natural and subject to natural laws as is everything.

The Nature of Economies is a series of discussions among a cast of characters whose commentary leads the reader through the fundamental principles that under gird economies and that explain what historians have recorded. Economies, like ecosystems, have a beginning, differentiate, co-develop, expand, diversify, contract, flow energy, cycle materials, fall apart, and so on. And, of course, economies differ from ecosystems primarily because of long distance trade and our highly developed capacity for technology that provides new opportunities to manipulate and create environments.

I found the discussion format tedious at times, but Jacobs provides important insights for biologists, economists, and others interested in economic culture. She duly respects complex adaptive systems with their unpredictability as well as the all pervasive unintended consequences these systems deliver to human enterprises. (Carl McDaniel, Rensselaer, mcdanc@rpi.edu)

Calendar of Events for the Coming Year

Conferences (compiled by Josh Frank, Rensselaer, frankj@rpi.edu)

www.sustainability2000.org Sustainability2000 is a global online convention set-up to share vital information on sustainable development. Sustainability2000 includes contributions from Tony Blair (UK Prime Minister), Michael Meacher (UK Environment Minister), Ritt Bjerregard (EC Environment Directorate), David Runnals (International Institute for Sustainable Development), Fred Singer (US Government Policy Adviser) and many others. The convention takes place in virtual locations around the world.

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/announce.htm#Conferences> EPA conference announcements.

<http://www.aere.org/meet/> A number of meetings are co-sponsored by the Association for Environmental and Resource Economics (AERE). Listed are links to a number of other interesting meetings in 2001. The annual AERE workshop — Assessing and Managing Environmental and Public Health Risks, June 13-15, 2001, Bar Harbor, Maine — may be of interest. The EPA also has a workshop series that is linked to the AERE web page.

<http://eco-informa.ead.anl.gov/> Eco-Informa 2001: Environmental Risks & The Global Community - Strategies for meeting the challenges. Meeting will take place from 14-18 May 2001, in Argonne, Illinois.

<http://www.lau.edu.lb/news-events/conferences/confhew.html> The Economics of Health, Environment and Welfare in the Middle East and North Africa. May 17-19, 2001, Byblos, Lebanon.

http://www.demogr.mpg.de/Events/Workshops/010518_announcements.htm Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, 2nd Workshop on: Population and the Environment: Modeling and Simulating this Complex Interaction. 18 - 19 May 2001 at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Doberaner Str. 114, 18057 Rostock, Germany.

<http://www.udg.edu/fcee/iwrecsere/> 7th Conference of the International Water and Resource Economics Consortium and 4th Seminar on Environmental and Resource Economics. Girona, Spain. June, 3 - 5, 2001.

<http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2001/ecosud01/> Third International Conference on Ecosystems and Sustainable Development: ECOSUD 2001, 6 - 8 June 2001, Alicante, Spain. The aim of the conference is to encourage and facilitate the interdisciplinary communication amongst scientists, engineers, economists and professionals working in ecological systems and sustainable development. Special sessions are being planned to focus on research in ecological modeling, socioeconomic ecology, conservation, management and recovery of endangered and degraded areas, sustainable development.

Biennial Conference of the Society for Advancement of Behavioral Economics, Applied Behavioral Economics: Can It Improve Decisions and Policies?, June 11-12, Center for Economic Research, Dept. of Economics, George Washington University, Washington DC, 2001; contact: Hugh Schwartz, 5902 Mount Eagle Dr., #1004, Alexandria, VA 22303-2519 or hughschwar@aol.com.

www.eaere.org Eleventh Annual Conference of the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economics, June 28-30 2001. University of Southampton, UK. Keynote topics: Growth and the Environment; Valuation; and Incentives.

<http://www.assumption.edu/html/academic/conf/iicecall.html> 7th International Interdisciplinary Conference on the Environment San Francisco, California, July 2-4, 2001, Best Western Grosvenor Hotel (Deadline for Registration: April 15, 2001) Sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Environmental Association

<http://www.usee.org> First Biennial Meeting of the United States Society for Ecological Economics, 11-13 July 2001, Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, Duluth, MN. Contacts: USSEE Conference, C/O Institute for A Sustainable Future, 5815 Glenwood Street, Duluth, MN 55804.

http://www.globe.gov/fsl/html/templ.cgi?wa2001_index&lang=en&nav=1 The Sixth Annual GLOBE Conference, July 22-27, 2001, in Blaine, Washington State, USA.

Fourth Biennial Conference of the Canadian Society for Ecological Economics, Ecological Sustainability in a Global Market Economy, 23-25 August 2001, McGill University, McGill School of the Environment, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Contacts: Dr. Frank G. Müller (phone: 514 848 3917; FGMller@Vax2.Concordia.Ca), Dr. Tom Naylor (phone: 514 398 4828; Tnaylor@Po-Box.McGill.Ca), or Conference Secretariat: Outreach Coordinator, MSE, 534 University Street, Montreal, Que., H3A 2A7 (phone: 514 398 5331; fax: 514 398 1643; secretary@mse.mcgill.ca)

Conferences in 2002

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/anmt.htm> American Economics Association annual meeting, January 4-6, 2002, Atlanta, GA.

<http://members.home.net/earthcommunity/> Global Dialogue Organized by Earth Community Organization. August 1, 2002 to August 22, 2002, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Last date for submission of Abstracts March 24, 2002. Call for Paper Details: Scope "Earth Government for Earth Community: A grassroots process." Topics: All issues related to the management of Earth with respect to the availability of resources, the environment, social and economic development aspects.

<http://www.un.org/rio%2b10/> World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10): The UN Summit for the ten-year review of progress in implementing the outcome of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992, will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. The exact dates are yet to be determined. The Summit will aim to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development at the highest level.