

Economists vs. Ecologists

Jon Erickson, the Economics and Sustainability professor at UVM, was a guest lecturer in Environmental Studies 001. His speech was basically about an economist versus ecologist view on forestry. Erickson teaches this in his classes, and does this for a living. Within his lecture, he tied the relationship between humans and nature together.

Comment: Intro does a good job giving a basic overview of what the writer is going to be talking about; makes a clear reference to the guest speaker

Erickson talked about disturbance and succession, and how these natural or human imposed relationships can destroy the environment. Sometimes this environment is one that someone has worked hard to create. For example, if a forester is trying to grow a plot full of hemlock trees for lumber, and a natural fire kills them all, his investment is not very stable. Or, if a conservationist is taking care of a plot of land, and suddenly the government buys it for clear cutting purposes, his investment is not stable either.

[Summarizes the speech efficiently]

Erickson's ideas made me think back to what Ian Worley had to say about the value of nature. He brought up the point that nature can mean many different things to all types of people. As a community or society, nature can take on many roles.

[Makes good reference/connection to another guest lecturer]

Nature can be viewed as instrumental, or human centered. It is a resource put there just for us. The instrumental viewpoint can be broken into two parts, utilitarian and non-utilitarian. The utilitarian view is use based. Clear cutters have this viewpoint, as do large corporations wasting resources as if they are endless. Americans are known for wasting natural areas, and using much more than necessary. The non-utilitarian viewpoint is still instrumental or thought of as being put there just for humans. This view, however, is non-use based. Nature is here for our existence, for aesthetic purposes. It was put here so humans could survive, almost like a gift (Worley, 9/18/02).

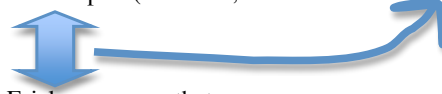
[Continuation/explanation of Worley's points to show how they connect to Erickson's; perhaps should be a part of the previous paragraph]

The intrinsic viewpoint is the exact opposite of an instrumental outlook. Here, nature is species and non-species centered. It is inherent, a value in itself. I would like to say that I partake in this worldview except that I am a hypocrite just by wearing the clothes on my back or eating the food from the local grocery store. All of these items have cost large amounts of natural resources just to get to me, and unfortunately I have no choice.

[Ties in personal experience/opinions]

When Erickson talked about an economist's point of view, many questions are at stake. When should the forest be cut? How much should be cut? How fast will it grow back? What is the value of the wood? What products will be made? What should I do with the resource money? To answer these questions, one must figure out the Net Present Value. In the equation, Net means benefits, Present means the time (usually the present), and Value means price per acre. This means you must choose the right time to get the best benefits out of the land plot (Erickson, 9/23/02).

[These two paragraphs should be combined. They do refer directly to the speech, which is important]



While Net Present Value may be helpful in gaining present value, Erickson argues that wearing both the Economist and Ecologist hats is important. This way a marginal benefit is attained as well as time for recovery of the forest. An ecological rotation is important and is highly beneficial if correctly used.

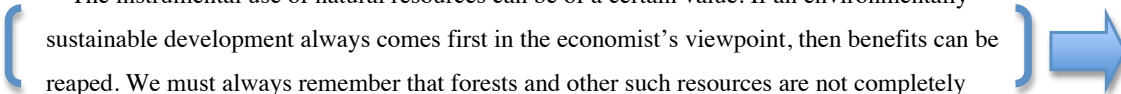
To have an environmentally sustainable economic development there are basic principles to be followed. Prevention and precaution must come first and foremost. Pollution must be thought of beforehand, with the idea of prevention and what is put in before the idea of cleanup and output come as an afterthought. *The types of resources must be renewable, and the resources must be efficient with low waste (Miller, 2002). These principles go along with Erickson's thoughts of wearing both the economist's hat and the ecologist's hat.*

[Uses another reference to tie ideas together]



The instrumental use of natural resources can be of a certain value. If an environmentally sustainable development always comes first in the economist's viewpoint, then benefits can be reaped. We must always remember that forests and other such resources are not completely renewable.

[Succinct conclusion is effective in summing up key ideas. Overall, good flow to the paper and focused paragraphs]



[References should be cited]