

Monthly Environment Education Material
EEM - 6 **June, 1998.**

The Ecological Conscience

By Aldo Leopold

The practice of conservation must spring from a conviction of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the community, and the community includes the soil, waters, fauna, and flora, as well as people.

It cannot be right, in the ecological sense, for a farmer to drain the last marsh, graze the last woods, or slash the last grove in his community, because in doing so he evicts a fauna, a flora, and a landscape whose membership in the community is older than his own, and is equally entitled to respect.

It cannot be right, in the ecological sense, for a farmer to channelize his creek or pasture his steep slopes, because in doing so he passes flood trouble to his neighbours below, just as his neighbours above have passed it to him. In cities we do not get rid of nuisance by throwing them across the fence onto the neighbour's lawn, but in water-management we still do just that.

It cannot be right, in the ecological sense, for the deer hunter to maintain his sport by browsing out the forest, or for the bird-hunter to maintain his by decimating the hawks and owls, or for the fisherman to maintain his by decimating the herons, kingfishers, terns and

otters. Such tactics seek to achieve one kind of conservation by destroying another, and thus they subvert the integrity and stability of the community.

If we grant premise that an ecological conscience is possible and needed, then its first tenet must be this: economic provocation

Aldo Leopold is the father of modern wildlife conservation. This text is from a 1947 speech reappeared in *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold's famous runination on ecology and humankind.

The first International meeting on Environment was held at Stockholm in 1972. Since then in memory of that event the World Environment Day is observed on 5 th of June.

Please hold a meeting in June of Nature Club members and read this short note to them. Please plan activities ahead.

is no longer a satisfactory excuse for unsocial land use, (or, to use somewhat stronger words, for ecological atrocities). This, however, is a negative statement. I would rather assert positively that decent land-use should be accorded social rewards proportionate to its social importance.

I have no illusion about the speed or the accuracy with which an ecological conscience can become functional. It has required 19 centuries to define decent man-to-man conduct and the process is only half done; it may take as long to evolve a code of decency for man-to-land conduct. In

such matters we should not worry too much about anything except the direction in which we travel. The direction is clear, and the first step is to throw your weight around on matters of right and wrong in land-use. Cease beings intimidated by the argument that a right action is impossible because it does not yield maximum profits, or that a wrong action is to be condoned because it pays.