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Monthly Planet

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SUMMER

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Community Recycling: Individual actions affecting public policy

by David Sale

By focusing attention on the waste of natural resources and pollution that go along with an affluent lifestyle, the environmental movement has forced the government and industry to address ecological issues.

What began as a grassroots effort by a group of students and residents of several neighborhoods, the Bellingham community recycling project has emerged as a bridge between the ideas of citizens and the policies of the city government. It has carried local interest in recycling to the City Council and the Mayor, and now recycling and resource recovery are an integral part of the city's Solid Waste Management Plan.

The idea of community recycling grew out of a program jointly offered by Whatcom Community College and the Whatcom Solar Association. The Master Conservators Program led participants to perform 30 hours of community service, resulting in workshops on weatherization, storm windows, solar collectors, and ways to increase community interest in recycling. Two options are now available for community residential recycling systems: drop-off centers where people can haul their recyclables, or curbside pickups in which recyclables are removed on a door-to-door basis.

Inconvenience is the most commonly heard complaint about recycling. A curbside pickup, however, merely requires that you sort the materials and place them in front of your house. Monthly curbside pickups scheduled in the Birchwood area, for example, have been very effective in this respect.

The effort was preceded by a drive to inform residents of the service. Several residents also acted as coordinators to arrange publicity and solicit volunteers. The trucks were provided by the A.S. Recycle Center, and in April, 1982 the first Birchwood Neighborhood pickup generated two truckloads of scrap paper, aluminum, refillable and non-refillable bottles, used motor oil and scrap metal.

In June the Sehome neighborhood organized a similar system in a slightly different manner. While canvassing, volunteers asked residents if they currently recycled or if they would if curbside service was available. The survey provided a statistical record of community interest that proved invaluable in later meetings with the City Council. Over half of these surveyed actually participated, showing that a significant number of Bellingham residents would recycle if a structure was provided.

Fairhaven and Southside areas also now enjoy monthly curbside service. The neighborhoods covered are somewhat larger and include the Fairhaven business district as well. Additional communication with the individual businesses and the Fairhaven Business Association has brought area shops and restaurants into the program, further adding to the amount of bottles and cardboard packaging kept out of the waste stream.

The response from all three neighborhoods has been encouraging. In April 1983, the three programs combined recycled 13,500 pounds of paper, 144 pounds of aluminum, 69 cases of refillable bottles, several hundred pounds of glass and scrap metal, as well as tin cans

and recycled oil. At current market prices, the above figures represent over \$300 for paper, \$40 in aluminum and \$25 in refillable bottles. Because these figures reflect quantities of materials removed from the waste stream, that much less money must be paid for collection and disposal.

While volunteers were stimulating neighborhood recycling efforts others were working on City Hall. A proposal was submitted by Dennis Smith of Western's waste management program, stipulating that source separation and recycling be included as major objectives in the City's Solid Waste Management Plan.

A revised resolution was adopted by the Council which sets out to reduce by 25 percent the existing volume of solid waste (plus growth) by 1986. It also earmarks up to \$40,000 of solid waste collection surcharge revenues to assist in neighborhood recycling projects. Additional money goes towards the city's Recycling Coordinator.

The resolution also calls for increased public education efforts to heighten awareness and bring more residents into the program.

As much as 50% of the city's solid waste can be recycled or composted, an amount which would reduce both environmental and economic costs of disposal. It currently costs \$36.72 per ton to burn the waste at the Thermal Reduction Facility. Bellingham's Recycling Coordinator, Philip Morley, recently released a proposed timetable for the Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy, which will be presented to the City Council by August. In addition, a financing plan and a detailed Implementation

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— This Issue: Policies and Prospects for Whatcom County —

- Community recycling
- Agricultural land trusts
- The reality of small farms
- Fairhaven Outback
- Whatcom County's economic future
- and more ...

Conference on Building a Planetary Village

Beyond "New Age Consciousness"

Editor's note: The following article on Building a Planetary Village is written in the form of a collage. It is not intended to describe the conference in detail, but rather contains the post-conference reflections of the author.

by Lansing Regan

It began as they all do: I walk up to the long table, I tell somebody my name, she finds it on a list and gives me a folder, I move down to the next person, fill out a form, and get my nametag. Now people will recognize me as part of it all. The five-day conference on Building a Planetary Village, sponsored by the Chinook Learning Community is underway.

I have come with some doubts, some reservations. I hope for a lot; I fear being let down. Coming here has cost me more than half a month's income and five days of schoolwork. Will it be worth it? Will we get down to the hard thinking and hard work needed to build a new society or will we merely recycle vague and empty phrases about a "New Age consciousness?" Will I hear belabored pleas for a "new paradigm," a "holistic worldview," until I feel like puking my holistic guts out?

The more I found out about the Chinook Community prior to the conference, the more it seemed their spiritual orientation might overshadow other concerns. Not that I have anything against spiritual values, but I have little patience with people who believe that a spiritual renaissance is somehow sufficient to rectify all evils in our world. Consciousness ain't enough, folks; we need new institutions, new technologies, new ways of living together. All in all you might say I am fairly circumspect.

What is a planetary village, anyway? Nobody has a precise definition, nor do people seem to want one. Perhaps it is best to leave it open. But some characteristics seem fairly clear. These are suggested by the juxtaposition of the words "planetary" and "village."

Planetary—not global. "Global" suggests a vast, undifferentiated mass. Our planet is more beautifully complex and alive than that. "Planetary" reminds us of the magnificent and mysterious unity-in-diversity of our biosphere. We are reminded that we are all part of one great human family, and that today's international trade patterns, telecommunications, and high-speed transport make us more interconnected than ever. Planetary awareness also demands awareness of the problems which are truly planetary in scope—resource depletion, pollution of the oceans and atmosphere, the relations between developed and underdeveloped nations, the threat of nuclear war—and awareness that the fates of all parts of the human family are intricately intertwined.

The notion of the village reminds us that although our problems may be planetary in scope, our capacity for action is not; we must do what we can where we are. We are reminded that while we all live on the planet Earth, each of us also lives in a particular place, and that only when we are grounded in a sense of place can we practice responsible stewardship.

The American nation of displaced persons has too little at stake in the places where we live; once we foul our nests we can always move on. Planetary villagers are concerned with sensitizing themselves to local natural flows and cycles, with creating society on a human scale, and with joining others in community. This community may be set apart in a beautiful rural setting like the Chinook land, or it may be in an urban neighborhood, but if it is to be true to the notion of "planetary village" it will not be cloistered away from the world. The planetary village must be Janus-faced; simultaneously looking inward and outward, always seeking local solutions to planetary problems. In this way, it is hoped, the planetary village can be a manageably-sized unit for building a new society.



Gary Coates and Sim Van Der Ryn each lead a session on design and community planning. They provide quite a contrast: Gary in his sport jacket, smoking his pipe, articulates his grand ideas with scholarly eloquence, while Sim, unassuming in his levis and T-shirt, speaks in short, simple sentences with a somewhat pinched and nasal tone of voice.

Gary explains that "industrial society exploits human frailty. It fosters an engineered scarcity and maximization of desire, which we attempt to satisfy with material commodities." Of course, the satisfaction of such desires by such means can never be achieved, so we keep asking for more and more. Gary argues that in order to create a healthy and sustainable society we must completely restructure the current system.

How? He warns us that there is currently "more will than there is way," but suggests energy planning as a useful first step. Since energy flow pervades everything, an energy plan is inherently an integrative model. We must determine the energy inflow and outflow of a community and develop a kind of "balance of payments" concept at the community level. Gary explains how he and his associates developed an energy plan for his home county in Kansas.

Sim doesn't lecture at all but simply asks what kinds of things we would like to know. He doles out small chunks of his many years of accumulated wisdom in eco-design as we fire our questions at him. He suggests "suburban renewal" as one of the most important projects for the eighties. He explains how his work involves not only design but also "meta-design"—design of the design process. He will come in and help a group develop a design process appropriate for whatever need they have. He believes that process tools are more important than pat models. He asserts that usually the technical requirements for eco-design are not that difficult—mostly it's just a matter of deciding what you want and doing it. "The only reason you never did it before is that you never did it before."

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Fairhaven Outback Farm ... From Planning to Practice

by Sarah Hamilton

Though it isn't all that far out back, the Fairhaven Outback farm on the south side of the Fairhaven dorms seems miles away from Western's main campus where clock-conscious students, GPA's hovering overhead flock from class to class. Most Western students know very little about Outback—even less about the philosophy behind the project. Yet it is very much a part of this campus—indeed one of the few projects that help to make Western unique.

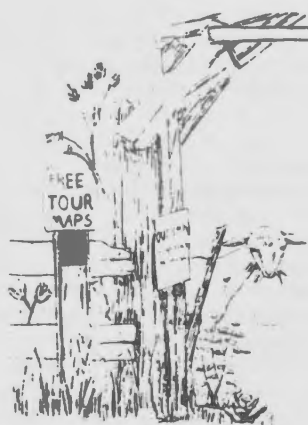
What is now Outback was once a swamp surrounded by farmland. The swamp was drained in 1971 in order to build Fairhaven dorms, and that same year a couple of students planted the seed that would ultimately grow into the Outback farm.

Since that time the future of Outback has been tenuous. Planners have come up with various unproductive ideas for other uses of the land, ranging from additional dormitories to a coal plant. But fortunately none have gone beyond the planning stage yet.

The two Outback cabins were built in 1929 by June and Ferrar Burn. At the time the Burns' had been homesteading on Sentinal Island, but as a reporter for The Bellingham Herald, June needed a place in town. Today two people live in each cabin and the larger one serves as a communal kitchen and resource library. There is also a clivus mulchum—or composting toilet which lies between them.

For those involved with Outback the emphasis is on collective living; working together as a group to get things done. Indeed without a cooperative effort and attitude many projects would never have gotten off the ground. The four people who live in the cabins form a core group actively working to keep the project alive. They are the ones who primarily care for the animals, and are often the facilitators and motivating force behind many of the projects initiated at the farm.

Since 1971 Outback has fluctuated between periods of active student and faculty involvement to times of general indifference and disillusionment. People became discouraged with it because of past failures and mistakes, without realizing (or accepting) that the intention and philosophy behind the farm is one of experimentation; it



is a place to work with others, to test new (and old) ideas about farming, alternative energy systems, and self-sufficiency. Many believe the Outback offers a very useful way to explore the connection between theory and practice. For them the value of Outback lies not so much in its successes and failures but rather in the learning process which results from participating in the design and construction of projects.

Today there is a renewed interest in Outback. More people are becoming involved and a number of projects are coming to fruition, such as a wind generator, solar greenhouse, the Outback newsletter, a series of herb seminars, and next fall a Fairhaven course on "Autumn Organic Gardening."

Among the many projects this year, the planning and construction of a wind electric-generation system has received considerable time and energy. The idea isn't actually new to the farm; it had been attempted twice before, getting blown down the first time, only to be waylaid by bureaucratic and financial problems the second time.

However when Prudy Elam, one of the Outback residents, initially thought of doing an independent project on wind technology last fall, she was unaware that there had been previous attempts to build a wind generator. That quarter she taught herself the basics of wind power and learned more about those two ill-fated attempts.

Then during winter quarter she and two other students (along with the assistance of Huxley professor Ernst Gayden and Fairhaven professor Gary Bornzin) offered a wind

power class through Fairhaven College. About a dozen people took the course and out of it developed a design based on the Jacobs wind generator model. They also re-established the Alternative Appropriate Technology Club in order to receive funding from the Associated Students.

Unlike most wind systems, Outback's will be built entirely from auto parts. It will work under the same principles as a car engine except the power of the wind will replace fossil fuel.

The spinner, an eight-foot blade made of spruce wood, will be attached to a thirty-foot telephone pole which Puget Power agreed to donate and install. The system will have the capacity to generate 500 watts of power per month, far more than the 120 watts needed to supply the Outback cabins with electricity. The remaining energy will probably be used to help light and heat the solar greenhouse this winter.

Now that bureaucratic obstacles have been overcome and funding is available, the project is moving rapidly. It is estimated that the generator will be operating by the end of the quarter.

Another large project near completion is the solar greenhouse on the south side of the Outback barn. Guy Hammel began the project in 1977 using glass as a cover, but it wasn't long before it blew out. Since then a low grade fiberglass

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Economic Futures Task Force

Where Pragmatism and Creativity Diverge

by Megan Barton

Jobs, jobs, jobs! The cry echoes across the country as a frustrated populace bewails the dismal employment situation. And though somewhat isolated, Whatcom County is by no means untouched as it struggles under a burdensome unemployment rate. For many of us, the worsening prospects are as yet only a threat to our relative security. For others, the situation is desperate. For all, the issue demands immediate and long-term solutions.

The first steps to do just that were taken by the Whatcom County Council of Governments when, in early 1982, it appointed a citizen's task force to evaluate existing and potential industries in the County and their impact on labor demand. Then, after an in-depth study and numerous interviews with area residents, business people, and government officials, the Economic Futures Task Force submitted their report in January 1983. Their work represents both a constructive effort to assess Whatcom County's economic future and to recommend policy, as well as an endeavor sorely lacking in creative initiative. For while advocating far less reliance on traditional heavy industries, the group nevertheless jumped right onto the high-tech bandwagon, thereby sacrificing prime opportunities to create visionary alternatives and truly productive options for Whatcom County's future.

In a straightforward and fairly succinct document, the Task Force reviewed "natural" and "non-natural" resource based industries, as well as what it called future "growth industries." It also discussed those sectors of the economy which the county can and can't affect through local government policy, in addition to questions concerning public investment alternatives; the role of government in economic development marketing; and economic growth and the quality of life and employment. Finally, the report concludes with "detailed public policy and action recommendations" in tabular form indicating their relative ranking.

The Task Force, composed of seventeen individuals and three ex officio members, included engineers, attorneys, educators - even a bank president and a vegetable

grower. But in a recent interview, Deborah Garret, the group's vice-chairperson, emphasized that their findings and conclusions were based upon a concerted effort to reach a consensus. The end-product, she said, represents "a real good compromise" and is "a report we could all sign."

Nevertheless, Garret, a local attorney taken to wandering nearby mountain wilderness areas, had serious misgivings about the group's business interests and thus actively sought membership on it. Yet, in contrast to her initial forebodings, the Task Force established philosophical priorities that were both "pleasing and surprising." Indeed, not only were Whatcom County's social and environmental amenities given ample consideration during the study, but they were prioritized as economic assets to be carefully safeguarded and sustained. As stated in the final report, "just as many other resources, historically considered infinite, have now been determined to be finite, so are there thresholds beyond which quality of life is sacrificed."

Thus, the Task Force gave no clear mandate for traditional heavy industries as the source of jobs and economic security. And according to Garret, they recognized the decline of the timber industry and the fact of frequently depleted fishing runs, and deliberately sought new directions for economic development. Yet, she explained further, in a county whose employment situation has ranged historically from "bad to abysmal," the evidence seemed to dictate its own conclusions.

Indeed, many of those interviewed were adamant in their call for jobs at almost any cost, and referred to environmentalists in a very deprecating way. Moreover, Garret said, they saw the promise of jobs as a means to keep their children from seeking their fortunes far beyond the county line. This last sentiment adds a fundamentally human element that transcends the politics of economic growth and greenspace. But it also compounds a land use psychology that has Garret deeply concerned. As she put it, "this county is ready to sell itself down the river for jobs" and probably will without adequate planning. But, she said,



"it's hard to sell non-traditional economic ideas to people that are desperate...and it is a desperate situation."

As such, the Task Force interpreted the data to mean job creation only through economic growth. And attaining that would require aggressive marketing of exports to Pacific Rim countries (to "overcome social and cultural factors" that prevent a demand for the county's berry crops, for example), and attracting the knowledge-based "growth industries."

Such strategies are in no way an employment panacea and should be questioned on a number of different levels. To its credit, the Task Force did recognize the need for maintaining the county's diversified economic base, and for supporting those industries which promise long-term viability. It even recommended zoning practices to accommodate cottage industries. Yet its adherence to a philosophy premised upon economic growth is ultimately self-defeating by several criteria.

In the first place, its emphasis on industries serving export

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COMMENTS

Politics and oil Do mix

To the Editor:

Washington State will soon join Oregon, Pennsylvania, and other states by instituting a program to boost recycling of used motor oil.

Used motor oil - whether it is drained on the pavement, poured into storm sewers, or thrown in the trash, - eventually finds its way to water. There, it becomes a serious pollutant. Used motor oil kills fish and other animal life, and can pollute drinking water. In Bellingham, petroleum products which periodically wash into Whatcom Creek pose an ongoing threat to the salmon and trout being reared at

Bellingham's Maritime Heritage Center.

On April 23, Governor Spellman signed into law Substitute Senate Bill No. 4201, creating a state program to educate the public on how and why to recycle used motor oil. State Senator Barney Goltz was a co-sponsor of the bill.

Under the legislation, retail stores selling oil will post the location of nearby places where do-it-yourself oil changers can recycle their used motor oil.

The state will also provide information to assist gas stations, other stores, and recyclers in es-

tablishing oil recycling depots.

Recycling used motor oil is an environmentally sound alternative to disposal. Moreover, recycling can cut our demand for new petroleum. In Pennsylvania, a similar program has tripled oil recycling in only one year.

Both Senator Goltz and Governor Spellman deserve our thanks for helping solve a pressing disposal problem.

Philip Morley
Recycling Coordinator
Bellingham Waste Reduction and
Recycling Program

*I hope we shall crush in its birth
the aristocracy of our moneyed corp-
orations which dare already to challenge
our government to a trial of strength
and bid defiance to the laws of our
country.*

- Thomas Jefferson

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markets only perpetuates the Northwest's dependence on consumer demand as well as the questionable ethos of material consumption. It fails to provide possibilities of what we can do to provide for ourselves, and ignores other options for meeting basic human needs. By envisioning only the production of commodities, we sacrifice the opportunity to engender a truly sustainable economy through more self-sufficient lifestyles.

Secondly, the Task Force stated unequivocally that "high-tech is not a fad; it is our future" - a forward-looking observation perhaps, but disappointingly narrow. For regardless of personal reservations about the computer age, that statement and the group's subsequent recommendations seem to reflect unquestioning acceptance of technological trends - a disturbing habit in our society to say the least. Breathing excuses of "inevitability" does not necessarily justify embracing an industry that is relatively non-labor intensive, especially considering the Task Force's primary concern. Moreover, a vast array of jobs could be es-



tablished that fulfill present needs without creating greater wants. This potential exists in the areas of renewable energy and food production recycling, and self-help housing to name but a few.

As it stands, the Economic Futures Task Force study was a laudable attempt to assess Whatcom County's employment prospects in view of present industrial and technological trends. From an environmental standpoint, their recommendations are well-taken. Moreover, the report was highly supportive of higher and continuing education, as well as the arts, meeting the needs of the elderly, and a more progressive approach to the working hours.

At the same time, however, the

Task Force members defeated the group's own purpose by not extending their collective imagination beyond the materialistic confines of our capitalist economy, or seeking ways to employ people in self-sufficient and/or socially productive enterprises. But at such a critical time for decisionmaking and policy formation, we must revitalize our creative energies and have the courage to pursue truly progressive alternatives. And this requirement is no less true for Whatcom County than it is for the nation and the world.■

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Agricultural Land Trusts: Protecting Small Farmers and the Land

by Denise Attwood

Agricultural land and the small farmer are two important resources for this country and yet the existence of both is threatened. Though the threats are from many sources, I have chosen to concentrate on a major one resulting from urban sprawl and the land speculation that accompanies it.

According to a 1979 report by the Council on Environmental Quality, the annual rate of loss for agricultural land is three million acres, or thirteen square miles per day. Primary land losses are to shopping malls, industrial parks, airports, residential areas and highways.

The development potential drives up the price of land far beyond its agricultural income-producing potential, making it increasingly difficult for small farms to hang on to their land. According to Wes Jackson in his book *New Roots for Agriculture*, "when land is priced above its earning power, the small farmer, or at least the farmer with little money and few assets is driven out." As small farmers are driven out and speculative land values increase, large corporations and absentee landowners often buy the land for development purposes.

E.F. Schumacher stated in his book *Small is Beautiful*, that "instead of searching for means to accelerate the drift out of agriculture we should be searching for policies to reconstruct rural culture, to open the land for gainful occupation to larger numbers of people...and to orientate all of our actions on the land towards the threefold ideal of health, beauty and permanence."

In order to do this, agricultural land must be protected from urban encroachment as well as from speculation. We must stop viewing our agricultural land as an inexhaustible resource. We must develop ways to allow small farmers to hang on to their land, to give young people the means to enter into farming, and to allow farmers to pass land on to their children. In short, agricultural land must be removed from the speculative market of development.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the American Farmland

Trust (AFT) are two national non-profit organizations trying to help small farmers secure these goals. They are doing this by helping farmers form agricultural land trusts. TPL's land trust program was established in 1974 by Jennie Gerard in order to teach community groups the techniques of proper land stewardship.

The program "offers training and technical assistance to local, rural community groups who want to develop land trusts for the purpose of protecting agricultural land in viable, family farmed communities."

According to TPL "an agricultural land trust lets a rural community govern the future of its own land, protecting it against development pressures which threaten a traditional way of life." The AFT is an organization based in Washington D.C. which is "trying to give farmers who love the land a viable economic alternative to selling out."



A land trust is generally a community-based non-profit corporation that enables a group of people to own or manage land in common. It is governed by a board of local residents accountable to the community.

There are several ways a land trust can work. According to RAIN Magazine the primary tool used is the "conservation easement." This, TPL states, "takes away the development rights to a parcel of land and usually transfers them to a governmental entity or a public charity like a land trust." For an agricultural land trust the recipient of the development rights is a board of residents who are then obligated "to see that the present and future owners of the property use the land in a manner consistent with the terms of the easement."

Giving up development rights does not prevent residents from farming, selling, or passing their land on to their heirs. The only restriction is that the land be used for agriculture in ways consistent with the policies of the trust, and that it never be developed or sold for development purposes.

Removing the development rights from farmland has several important effects besides preservation. For example, removing these rights significantly reduces the value of a piece of land, returning the price of land to a level that is more in line with its actual agricultural earning potential. This is important for two reasons.

First, with respect to passing land on to heirs, death taxes on the property are based on the current market value of the land. If the development potential is taken away then current market value is reduced. This in turn reduces the death taxes, often enabling heirs to hold on to land which they otherwise might be forced to sell in order to pay the taxes.

Secondly, it makes the land more affordable so that young people who want to farm are more able to do so. These are both important advantages for small farmers since it has become increasingly difficult for them to hold onto, pass on, or acquire agricultural land (see Hi Bronson's article this issue.)

Agricultural land trusts are geared towards small family farmers who want to keep their land in agriculture. Implicit in this idea is that a farmer who is willing to relinquish development rights would also embrace an ethic which includes caring for the land. This is an important aspect of land trusts and one that will certainly be the key to its success.

In Whatcom County we have examples of small farmers who maintain this ethical belief. They not only care for the land but are in the beginning stages of forming an agricultural land trust as well.

Earlier this year Representative Roger Van Dyken introduced Craig Lee of the Trust for Public Land to Whatcom County Councilman Bob Meunscher and the Director of the Concerned Christian Citizens, Ron Polinder. They discussed the

idea of a land trust for Whatcom County, and believing the idea was viable, set out to determine if there was enough interest to establish one. The response was favorable and the process of developing a land trust for Whatcom County is underway.

There were several reasons cited for wanting the trust. Many farmers felt that for religious reasons they should be "stewards of the land" and should work to maintain the land for future generations. Although prime farmland in Whatcom County is not threatened now, many people also felt that if zoning laws changed, or urban expansion increased, the future of these lands could be threatened. They want to set up a safeguard now should the threat arise.

In addition, many believed that a land trust would enable them to pass their land on to their children. Their land and occupation are very important to them and they want to see it continue. These people deserve the support and encouragement of all Whatcom County residents.

Agricultural land trusts should not be considered the answer to our increasing problems in agriculture, but they do represent a step towards retaining two valuable resources in this country: the small farmer and our agricultural land. Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute stated the problem eloquently: "Agricultural land can no longer be treated as an inexhaustible source of land for industry, urbanization, and the energy sector. Cropland is becoming scarce. In a world of continuously growing demand for food, it must be viewed as an irreplaceable resource...the needs are for a new land ethic, a new reverence for land, and a new understanding of human dependence on cropland."*



frane
poem

lansing

spaces

spaces and the spaces between spaces
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BOOK REVIEW

A Sand County Almanac

by Aldo Leopold



by David Waddell

You'd think at age 30 I'd still be young enough to know what a contemporary environmental publication like the "Monthly Planet" was after when the editor asked me to write a book review for the last issue of the year. Book reviews are generally "current," focusing on recent publications. Environmental issues, and books written about them, are considered by many to be a recent phenomena. Well, just for a change of pace, I plan to review a book written in 1949. (My apologies to those of you expecting something more recent).

The book is A Sand County Almanac, now available in paperback along with eight essays from the book Round River (Oxford University Press, 1966). The author is Aldo Leopold; forester, avid hunter, founder of The Wilderness Society and consummate natural historian and writer.

The book is a series of essays focusing on Leopold's life, his thoughts on wilderness, and on the relationship between humans and the natural world. Leopold describes this understanding, which he calls a "land ethic," in some detail. He explains that two things led him to develop this ethic; the first occurred in New Mexico.

"We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf."

"In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down..."

"We reached the old wolf in

time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunter's paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."

From that time hence, Leopold studied the interrelationships between humans and the land; and in particular the effects of altering natural communities.

"I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to an anemic desuetude, and then to death. In the end the starved bones of the hoped for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers."

"I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer."

The second major turning point in Leopold's life came when he returned to Wisconsin. He was asked to help write a policy on game management for the first American Game Conference. This led to his first published book, Game Management (Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1933) which is still considered a classic in the field. From here Leopold went on to become a writer and a Wildlife Ecology instructor at the University of Wisconsin.

Leopold's land ethic is the focus of A Sand County Almanac. He sought an understanding of our relationship with the land and eventually realized that we have no obligations to preserve it. We lack this obligation because we view land as a commodity. Without an understanding of the ecological and intrinsic value of natural systems, problems like soil erosion, habitat loss and reduction of species diversity will continue to occur. According to Leopold, an economic view of the "land-relation" will not give us this understanding; it requires an ethical perspective.

"That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten."

Leopold's essays are not only clearly presented ethical statements, they are also beautifully thoughts ecology. Few people know the habits of animals better than hunters, and Leopold was a serious hunter. "Golf is a delightful accomplishment, but the love of hunting is almost a physiological characteristic. Babies do not tremble when they are shown a golf ball, but I should not like to won the boy whose hair does not lift his hat when he sees his first deer."



But it was as a philosopher that Leopold was most brilliant. His statements were often short, succinct and cut to the bone. Consider, for example, these one-line excerpts: "Nonconformity is the highest evolutionary attainment of social animals." "Man always kills the things he loves and so we pioneers killed our wilderness." "Education I fear is learning to see one thing by going blind to another."

Part of the joy of reading these essays is the result of Leopold's insightful transition throughout the book. He begins with a discussion of human nature and ends by explaining why our activities would be more sensible if

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Small Farms in Whatcom County: A Growing Future

by Hi Bronson

Many people dream of owning a farm. The prospect of being one's own boss, the chance to engage in a variety of work activities instead of being forced into a specialized, often routine job, the joy of being outdoors watching things grow with the cycles of nature, and the chance to raise a family and live in a rural environment with quiet surroundings and a sensible way of life, are all reasons why both the dreamer and the painfully pragmatic want to be farmers.

Whatcom County has its share of the nation's farmers, and many have pursued this way of life for just these reasons. According to the latest U.S. census, slightly over four percent of the county's 107,000 people are living on farms.

This small percentage nevertheless contributes significantly to Whatcom County's economic vitality. In 1979, county agricultural crops had an economic value of over \$109 million. Related industries, like food processing equipment, fertilizer and feed sales adds perhaps another \$100 million annually.

Although there is no way to readily determine how many of the approximately 1,400 farms in Whatcom County fit into the category of a small farm, most probably do.

The United States Department of Agriculture defines a small farm as one that is managed by a family and, except during peak seasons, worked by the family. The farm must provide a substantial portion of the individual's or family's income and it must be below the state median level. Many of the local dairy farms, for example, would not fit into the small farm category simply because of the income they generate.

There are three prerequisites to becoming a success at farming in Whatcom County (or elsewhere). First, the farmer must possess sufficient technical knowledge and skills. The breadth of technical and management decisions in farming is great and changing conditions must be responded to quickly and flexibly.

It is also important to have sufficient capital in order to weather years when either crops or market conditions are bad. And finally, the farmer must have a viable marketing mechanism for the product. Even the most clever, skillful, and clairvoyant farmers will eventually lose their farm if they can't get an adequate price for



their product. The more outlets they have, be it a popular roadside stand, an active farmer's market, a "U-Pick" arrangement, or a number of institutional buyers, the more control you have over the final price.

As I observed while working on a student project, there are a variety of people engaged in small-scale farming throughout Whatcom County. Some are young, short of capital, and have little farming experience. Others have a farming background, solid financial support, and good technical knowledge. Some have left their jobs in the city and are having some success in their new careers in farming.

There are examples of small-scale farmers without excessive debts, who will be able to ride out the harsh economic times currently driving many farmers across the country off of their farms. There are, however, some small-scale farmers whose lack of capital make it doubtful whether they will remain farmers very long. Their future depends on their income from other sources and on the tenacity with which the many obstacles they face can be overcome. Indeed, all of the people engaged in small farm operations appear to be more interested in farm life than in money, and all have an overwhelming desire to remain on the land as long as they can make ends meet.

The deep, loamy, well-drained soils that sit above the Nooksack River flood plains and the mild maritime climate make Whatcom County well suited for berry production, one of the favorite crops for small farm operators. Raspberries, blueberries and strawberries generally provide reasonable economic returns even when raised on small plots.

Nursery stock and vegetables also offer excellent opportunities for the small farmer. Honey, grapes, and tree fruits in limited

amounts can serve as specialized crops or in coordination with mixed farm operations. For the person really interested in getting started, the Whatcom County Cooperative Office has comprehensive information on potential crops to raise. There are also other agencies and organizations that deal with small farmers and the issues affecting them.

Nooksack TILTH is a very active local organization of farmers and others who have a common commitment to biologically sound, socially equitable agriculture. The Washington Small Farm Resources Network (WSFRN) is also dedicated to small farm interests at the local and state levels and administers a limited number of loans to promote small farm operations. There is a struggling Farmer's Market organization comprised of farmers who want to sell their product directly to the customer. There are also growers and marketing associations that bargain for the price of crops harvested by their members to be paid by the processors and other large customers at harvest time.

The future for small farm operators in Whatcom County looks encouraging. One specialist in the area of small farms, Professor Brooker T. Whatley of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, has predicted a promising future for small farms in Washington State. He envisions a system of 663 twenty-five acre farms clustered around metropolitan areas supplying food to local markets. In this way a market glut

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Her name is No-guns.

*Dressed all in white,
(the scarf wrapping her head and shoulders flutters
in the wind as she walks;
her white shoes flash in the light of streetlamps
and falling dusk)
she adorns her brow with a head-band, dangling clear
glass beads.
She walks through city streets with her son - together.
(He skips and weaves beside her, while his mother's stride
is purposeful, rhythmic.)*

*She is a mimist and an activist -
she's fighting war through her art
(heart).
Her eyes flash like her shoes;
they shine through the descending night.*

*Some hate her, this white knight -
she threatens their secure blindness. . .
(White light).
Yet as I watched her pass across the street,
I breathed deep
and saw again my purposes.*

— Megan Barton



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they were tied to ethical land-use realities.

As it says on the cover, A Sand County Almanac is "the classic statement of the joy and beauty of a style of life that protects the environment." It's beautifully written, easily read, cheap, and as "current" now as it was 34 years ago. Aldo Leopold discussed a variety of topics with common sense, grounded like his beloved prairie flora, deep in the wellsprings of Earth.

The book is well worth the price just for descriptions like the one below, in which Leopold describes the odyssey of an atom from mountain rock to ocean sediment.

"Roots still nose among the rocks. Rains still pelt the fields. Deer mice still hide their souvenirs of Indian summer. Old men who helped destroy the [passenger] pigeons still recount the glory of the fluttering hosts. Black and white buffalo pass in and out of red barns, offering free rides to itinerant atoms."*



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that ordinarily creates farm-threatening low prices would be avoided by coordinating planting and harvesting times among farmers.

Agriculture, like many other institutions in our economy, is undergoing rapid changes. Highly capitalized operations are having the hardest time because the cost of borrowing money needed to own and operate equipment, as well as for fertilizers is very high. While programs are implemented to keep too many farmers from going under, food prices will rise.

There is a niche for the small farmer who doesn't own a lot of iron but who can raise food using minimum energy, while at the same time marketing products close to the farm. Whatcom County offers promise along these lines, especially if the crop can be marketed for local consumption. Diversity and quality are two important things small farms can offer. The same characteristics will be important as a new era of agriculture emerges.*

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Bill Mollison, a silver-haired stout man with intense blue eyes, came all the way from his home in Tasmania to speak at this conference. He talks with a thick Australian accent and doesn't mince words. The father of "permaculture," a technique for sustainable agriculture, he denounces "rectilinear thinking," the strategy that cuts up our land into rectangular grids, isolating elements of the system from each other. By imposing this apparent order we create real chaos. True harmony is only achieved in apparent disorder, where all the elements of a system are jumbled together. The basic principle of permaculture is actually fairly simple: every element in an agricultural system has both needs and outputs; the trick is to design the system so that the outputs of each element become inputs for others. Unfulfilled needs become work; unused output becomes pollution.

If the system is designed correctly, it creates no pollution and requires very little work. Everything must have many functions. For example, chickens can be a source of meat, eggs, fertilizer, pest control, and heat for the greenhouse. "If you can only think of one function for any given element in your design, get rid of it." Bill calls our current practices a form of brain damage and supports his contention with startling, little-known facts. American lawns, for example, use more water, labor power, pesticides, herbicides, fuel and machinery than the entire agricultural system. Clothes dryers require the equivalent of all the energy produced by nuclear power in the U.S. And so on. Such absurdities, he contends, all stem from our rectilinear design strategies. There are no straight lines in nature. "Always walk a crooked path."



Caroline Estes, a wonderfully warm, wise woman from Alpha Farm in Southern Oregon, has come to share her decades of experience working with consensus decision-making. She comes from a Quaker background and has the kind of serene spirit that makes you wonder if maybe she was around when the universe was created. She explains that in consensus decision-making the power of each individual is effectively equal to the power of the whole group. This idea is very different from the kind of group process most of us are used to where minority opinion is simply discarded as the group marches ahead. She warns us not to approach consensus casually; it requires both commitment and skill. When this is present, consensus fosters sensitivity, trust, and group harmony to an extent unmatched in any other method of decision-making.

When Caroline addresses the whole conference in the final summing-up session, she offers a suggestion; "This conference has been wonderful. I propose we follow it with a Building a Planetary Village II, Building a Planetary Village III, and Having Built a Planetary Village IV." Good idea, Caroline. Let's do it.■

The Mistake Called WPP\$\$



A Fable of Our Times

John F. Hippely, Ph.D.

Illustrated by Marje Van Wijk Meyers '80

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and plastic have been experimented with. Now the completed greenhouse will be covered with a highly efficient translucent glass. The external portion of the greenhouse has been completed, although there are interior parts like insulation, a vapor barrier, vent installation and shelves that will probably be finished by next fall.

In addition to these projects there are goats, rabbits, ducks, geese and chickens at Outback, as well as gardening space for the A.S. Organic Gardening Club or anyone else to use and enjoy. There are currently eight people using the garden, with tasks like watering and slug control done in shifts so that work is evenly divided. Outback also has a weekly newsletter which covers projects underway and upcoming events.

Clearly there is a lot going on at Outback and everyone is welcome to participate. As students and faculty we are fortunate to have a learning environment such as Outback where we can explore and experiment with our ideas. As our world becomes more high technology oriented, thus further separating humans from the natural environment, it becomes essential that we support and develop programs like the Fairhaven Outback, which serves to build an ecologically sound lifestyle based on self-sufficiency, and an integration with natural processes.■



PLANET STAFF

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The Monthly Planet is a biquarterly publication that strives to inform, entertain, and stimulate thought on environmental issues. Reader participation is invited in all aspects of its publication. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Associated Students or any of the advertisers.



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Plan must be submitted by December 1983 in order to make the plan active by 1984. In the meantime, it is clear that unless present recycling efforts continue to generate interest, the actual implementation of the plan will remain dubious.

Individual and collective efforts to promote recycling have been instrumental in making this strategy viable. These efforts, which began with individual initiative, have grown into a community structure involving citizens, businesses, city government, and the university. Indeed, this initiative eventually led to a progressive waste management policy in Bellingham. The citizen's effort to protect the environment, as well as their increasing involvement in the decision-making process, reflect the importance of effective organizing.

This structure also brings with it what may to many be a painful awareness. Centralized solutions to environmental problems not only remove the citizen from the decision-making process. They also buffer people from the problem itself. Why should individuals have to deal with waste and resource depletion if one project does it for everyone?

In fact, large-scale projects like landfills and garbage incinerators rarely deal with the causes of environmental problems; they hide the effects. Recycling makes us aware of the effects of our decisions concerning solid waste management, and brings to our doorstep the real challenge of an ecological consciousness: a recognition that we are both the cause and the solution.■

In Closing

This is the last issue of the Monthly Planet for the year. For many of us on the staff it represents the last opportunity we'll have to heighten readers' awareness of environmental issues, and possibly, to incite people to action. In this issue, as in previous ones, our goal has been to inform and entertain students, to elicit critical discussion, and to encourage activism on the part of all. At the same time we have tried to learn more about producing an environmental newsletter that could conceivably accomplish these goals.

If our efforts have led to controversy, or if one more person has been convinced to take environmental problems seriously, to clarify their own values and beliefs, and to actively work for social change, we have reason to be encouraged. It reaffirms the importance of our goals and the potential for achieving them. But whatever our accomplishment, it would not have been possible without a number of committed individuals who devoted tremendous time and energy to this publication.

I want to thank these people. I am deeply appreciative of their support, their creativity, and above all, their perseverance. Sarah Hamilton and Megan Barton in particular, have worked with me all year, and their commitment and insight have enabled the Monthly Planet to take on qualitatively new proportions, accounting for both its uniqueness and continuity. I also want to thank the many other students who have contributed their articles, poems, quotes, graphics, and tedious labor—the stuff of which the Planet is made.

Although the list is rather long these people deserve to be mentioned. Their work provided students with information and ideas which otherwise may not have been found on Western's campus. Staff



members Denise Attwood, David Sale, Marti Okazaki, John Kohl, Sally Toff, Mary Vandenbosch, John Sitkin, Susan Lamb, and Dondena Moyer were all instrumental in creating this publication.

In addition to the staff there have been a number of individuals who helped write and create the Planet, and they too have my appreciation. David Waddell, Sue Pelley, Mason Hewitt, Lance Regan, Hi Bronson, Heidi Hawkins, Ric Conner, Guy Roberts, Steve Gerkey, Alipio Terenzi, Melanie Peck, Roy Meyers, Peedy Witter, Bill Taylor, and Joe Ordenez. Each one of these individuals made my job considerably more interesting and meaningful.

In this respect I want to specifically thank Gay Roselle for her very provocative and yet visually soothing artwork. Her contribution made the first special conference issue of the Monthly Planet particularly effective. David McFadden and Valerie Smith of the Environmental Center also deserve a great deal of credit for this publication. Both of them were instrumental in getting the process underway, and both waited patiently while I composed last-minute excuses for publication delays.

A special thanks to our advisor, Ron Kendall, who gave us the flexibility and freedom to pursue paths of our own making. His direction in the MONTHLY PLANET Seminar was very helpful, and his overall support of our work is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, I want to thank the readers of the Planet who took the time to read the articles and offer their own ideas and criticisms in response. Your contribution throughout the year has not gone unnoticed, and without your encouragement this experience would certainly not have been as rewarding.

-DG

The basis for an effective community recycling system is individual households. Developing a system for sorting waste into paper, glass, aluminum and tin is simple. It only takes about five minutes of each nonrenewable day.

Reduce— the amount of non-recyclable containers you purchase.

Reuse— glass containers for storage, or scrap paper for notes. Take old clothes and refillable bottles to the nearest recycle center if no curbside pickup is available in your neighborhood.

Recycle— by sorting items. Place several paper shopping bags in your kitchen and mark them for paper, tin cans (lids removed and flattened), aluminum (flattened) and glass.

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