Prerogative

“Editorially Speaking”

AJES is dedicated to promoting sustainable development within the region broadly defined by the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Reserve. Sustainable development became an important phrase and concept following its central use in Common Future, published by Nation’s Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. More recently, and much closer to home, sustainable development in the Adirondacks was a major topic of discussion at the Adirondack Centennial Conference held at Silver Bay, Lake George, in May of 1992.

The importance of sustainable development as a concept, however, has not made it any easier to define. In just one reliable count, there are more than 70 sufficiently different definitions in the academic literature; thus it is not at all surprising that the Centennial participants at Silver Bay could not agree on a precise definition, either. However, while the precise definition remains elusive, all of us can agree that sustainable development is good. As broadly defined by the U.N. Commission, sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Thus, the impetus that launched AJES was the need to know, and in some depth, just what the natural and social sciences have discovered about our region, which important topics and policy issues are currently under discussion, and the arguments on both sides—all between the covers of one nonpartisan publication. Far too often, the important discoveries of scientists and their perspectives about our environment are buried in highly technical journals. And partisan publications preach to their already converted membership. Our well-educated, highly organized citizenry and the many controversial issues surrounding the problem of sustainable development make our bioregion a particularly useful international model for the development of a sustainable society.
With so much at stake, and with so many diverging views of what is best for the bi-region, we intend AJES to become the verbal platform, the balance point, amid what has often been acrimonious espousals, rather than true exchanges, of views. Our watchword, our guiding concept, is balance: between property-rights advocates and “preservationists,” between residents and visitors, between academics or politicians and everyday citizens, between recreation and industry, between progress and tradition. In order to preserve a sense of impartiality, we judiciously select articles that imply to the readership this sense of balance and rationality. This is not to say that views from the “right” and views from the “left” will not be published, for they will, though with one side balancing the other. In this way, we expect AJES to communicate broad perspectives and serve as a catalyst to help develop and implement solutions.

As focused by region and theme, and guided by our watchword, AJES is a transdisciplinary journal offering a readable presentation of the issues and topics of current interest in two broad areas. First, AJES will help to establish our understanding of what is — as perceived by the natural and social sciences. For example, in this first issue we examine mud from the bottoms of several lakes in the Adirondacks to see not only how sediment cores reveal ancient secrets through paleoecology but also how the region’s ecosystems may respond to global climate changes in the future, based on how they responded in the past.

Second, AJES is also a forum for discussions of what ought to be, clarifying issues, philosophies, social institutions and policy instruments to help us understand as well as to facilitate and manage the transition to a sustainable society. In this issue, for example, AJES offers an insight into the potentially important role the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Reserve may play in the region, an environmentalist’s vision of the Park, a discussion of one approach toward what is meant by sustainable development, and an in-depth essay exploring the Park as a case study for wilderness protection.

In sum, AJES is designed to create a tone somewhere between a magazine and a journal; the targeted readership is educated though not necessarily academic people who are concerned about the region; contributing authors will cover a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives, and among them will be representatives from industry, from colleges and universities, from local and state government, from the natural and social sciences, and from the environmental and property rights movements, to mention but a few. As editors of a transdisciplinary journal our purpose is to promote the transfer of useful information from those who generate it to those who can best use it. In the process we hope to foster a dialogue intended to find common ground among a multitude of viewpoints.

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