

Teach your children well

The time is now. We must respond quickly and work together before it's too late, if it's not already. Destruction of catastrophic proportions is occurring right now around the world. Sound like Armageddon? Depends on what your version of it is.

We are running out of trees, fish, countless plant and animal species, fresh water, clean air, and time.

The period for action isn't twenty years from now or ten or even five; we need to respond now and rescue our national treasures from irreversible and irreparable damage.

We can see evidence of mass degradation right here in Clatsop County in our Coast Range mountains. We have already lost the landscape and biodiversity which existed here originally and it's harvest time again.

To the multi-billion dollar corporation whose only interest is the revenue generated from high volume harvesting, the short term prospects look promising. For the small towns in Clatsop County however, the future looks grim. We can expect frequent use of herbicides which may leach into our water systems; unsightly clear-cuts damaging to our tourism industry and personal aesthetic values; and severe deterioration of watersheds which further threaten already dwindling salmon populations. A portion of Elk Creek, located behind Cannon Beach, for example, is already suffering rapid degradation.

It is time we began to address and acknowledge global ecosystems as an equal, rather than inferior, form of life. It is these complex and intricate systems which sustain human existence. Without them, we can not hope to remain inhabitants of this planet.

It can be overwhelming to consider all of the destruction and loss of life taking place around the world today. Unfortunately, with five billion people already inhabiting the planet and an estimated eleven billion predicted by 2050, we may be in for more of the same and worse.

Present conditions of forest systems exemplify the heavy strain humans put upon all biological systems. Our only chance for survival, now and in the future, is to establish a new relationship with our forests - giving back instead of always taking. The way to begin achieving this new style of giving back is by trying to learn and understand these delicate living systems.

It will be of no benefit if we learn of their richness, complexity, and significance after they're gone - and they almost are.

The timber industry, for instance, would benefit greatly from a transition to sustainable forestry rather than the current method of indiscriminate clearcutting. Through in-depth study and understanding of forests and their needs for diversity, a healthier, more efficient system would result; as well as industry longevity. Right now, timber workers are losing, or have lost, their jobs; not because of the spotted owl but because of corporate misuse and misunderstanding of the forest.

Current logging practices are extracting trees so fast that soon the timber workers won't have anything left to cut. Mass raw timber exportation and mechanization make the situation yet more tenuous. More often than not, the large corporate timber industries exploit workers for short term financial gain.

Right now, our planet is talking to us and she's telling us to slow down, use the eyes we have to see, and look. Presently, scientists, politicians, ex-timber workers, foresters, fishermen, business owners, journalists, aerial photographers and many others are advising the public to pay

attention to what's happening to our natural living systems.

It is vital that we be aware of the status of these habitats because we are the consumers of these precious resources; if we don't question what we use and how we're using it, we won't know what's being taken and how.

It doesn't have to be too late, not if we pull together and respond to this crisis collectively. As individuals there are a number of different ways in which to give it back. Here are a few: write a letter to your congressperson -- use your voice; join an environmental advocacy group; educate yourself -- the information is out there; teach your children new, less excessive and wasteful ways to consume -- it's their future after all; when shopping for food or other products, think about where the packaging came from and where it will go when you are finished with it; buy recycled paper products if you must use them; use reusable bags such as canvas to avoid use of paper; think of other ways that may suit your needs and the needs of the environment. Most importantly, go out as soon as you are able, with your children and teach yourself and them about the forest - listen, look, smell, touch - do it tomorrow.

Finally we must come out of the denial that we have infinite natural resources to sustain us through the rest of time; this kind of longevity requires foresight and planning. The task before us is an extremely difficult one with many variables. However, we need to put our individual differences aside and come together on this front. If we love our children and the planet, we must express this by putting a stop to the personal habits and exploitive uses destroying our life support system.

This is a tremendous challenge and may seem overwhelming, but think about what it will be like for our children in twenty years if we don't tackle it now. We must leave the same legacy of prosperity and health which was endowed to us.

- a concerned Clatsop citizen

(ed - Yep.)

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STEEL TEETH MORNING MISTS

Steel teeth rend the
hush of morning mists.
Sky sentinels crash down
among soft fern shoals . . . immobile.

Mighty spruce who embraced
celestial blues and who rode the gales;
Strong emerald giants, nature's majesty.
Sanctuary to intricate interminglings
and benedictions of the life force.

The steady howl of steel and fire
knows no quarter—offers no quarter.
The mind behind the trigger
insentient to the ancient lifeweb pulse
Spurred on by a culture that
staggers blindly through misty
remnants of desolate imagination.

August 20, 1993

Poetry on this page by
R. W. Schmeer, written
from Lincoln City.

I Have a View

I ponder the great
gape wound.
See the bright white
—almost gleam—
of freshly cut
butt ends and stumps.
Recall the white bone heaps
of Africa's
slaughtered.
I have a view.

I am the beat of
raven black wings
overhead.
Looking for roosts high
in the green canopy
now vanished in
a great inward
collapse.

I am the eyes of witness,
the animate body
Whose memories feel
still,
the cool radiance,
the tenderness of the soft
fungal strewn
bed of life.

I am neighbor
to this
earth
wound,
Whose home at night
rattles and shakes
with the comings and goings
of great, dark
silhouettes.

Angry and Agitated.

I am the one
Whose eyes burn
with a bright blindness.

I am the one
with a
view.

September 2, 1993



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