

Conservation Connects News

Summer / Fall 2011



We are advancing confidently in the direction of our dreams...

Dear Reader:

Looking back over the past six months it is this famous quote by Henry David Thoreau that comes to mind wherein he encourages us to advance confidently in the direction of our dreams promising a success unexpected in common hours. I have to admit that when I read Thoreau I am most inspired by the idea of retreating for a year or so to a cabin near a pond working out the economics of doing nothing...or at least very little. But, it appears it is not time for that just yet. There are too many exciting projects and upcoming opportunities. Here at Conservation Connects we are working with clients and partners on a diversity of projects such as restoration design for Great Lakes Marsh habitat, assisting with sustainable development projects, and initiation of green infrastructure planning. Central to all the work we do is the relationship between economic vitality and natural resource conservation and how critical both are to achieving the quality of life we'd all like to share. That makes sustainability – **measurable and tangible sustainability** – a critical action deserving of more attention. Before I give it the attention it deserves (see Page 2), I have a couple updates to share:

- Conservation Connects has received national certification by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC). Certification as a Women-Owned Business under the "MWBE" New York State certification program is underway as well but unfortunately the process is very slow due to staff shortages for this state program.
- We have a new office phone number: 585-344-0450. My cell phone number remains the same – 716-560-1768.

~Sheila Hess, Principal

Something to think about: Green infrastructure planning is an excellent way to harness greater synergy among all factions operating and relying on the landscape. Make a move toward sustainability and educate yourself, your staff, or your community about green infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure: Linking Landscapes and Communities by Benedict and McMahon is an excellent reference for the description, benefits and application of this planning tool.

Conservation Connects helps corporations and communities balance development plans with natural resource conservation. It is possible to achieve economic vitality while preserving a healthy environment and a high quality of life.

Sustainable Growth, Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Development

What does that mean?



When necessity and “in vogue” collide the true meaning of important words, phrases and concepts can get diluted in the ensuing chaos. For example, how many times a week are you encouraged to “Go Green!” and after hearing it so many times from everyone, including automotive repair shops and chemical industries, how confused are you as to what that actually means? And when we’ve reached a point where no one in their right mind would dream of leaving out the word “sustainable” in describing their latest development design or community growth strategy, what indicators are there to support the reality of these sustainability claims?

It’s possible - even likely - that you don’t have time budgeted to consider these questions. In fact, I’m surprised (and pleased) you had time to read the second page of this newsletter. It appears the entire world is crazy busy (a great read by the way, **Crazy Busy** by Edward Hallowell) and in high gear. At this velocity it is easy to be fooled by the placating effect of viewing the world through our green-colored glasses. But make no mistake, real and lasting benefits of sustainability practices will be realized only by those who remain green even after we remove our jade tinted shades.

So...what color will you be?

There are resources available to assist businesses, nonprofits, and communities in their quest to move beyond trendy green into a mode of tangible sustainability. Holistic frameworks can be developed to support sustainability-based decisions and these frameworks must include decision criteria and metrics. Metrics are measurable indicators that will quantify sustainability (how clean is the water, how much waste does your company/community generate, how many miles does staff travel, how well do you sleep at night, etc.). Metrics can also save money, increase efficiency, standardize reporting and accelerate development of systems that will conserve the world’s resources for tomorrow. If this is not convincing enough, here’s another consideration: The days are numbered for “greenwashers” who claim to be green or sustainable without the metrics that quantify that claim. Heed the words of Covey and don’t let the important fall behind the urgent. Develop a sustainability task force or provide greater support to the team you’ve already assembled and quantify your efforts! There are a growing number of incentives, programs and organizations that your team can explore to realize significant and lasting benefits to your organization and community. Make it measurable, make it real!

Here are just a few examples of resources, references and support:

- Book: **Assessing Sustainability** by Wayn M. Feiden and Elisabeth Hamin - <http://www.planning.org/apastore/Search/Default.aspx?p=4165>
- Local NY initiatives/case studies - http://www.nyserda.org/programs/green_buildings/local_gov.asp
- Sustainability planning in NY - <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/76483.html>
- Guide: **Local Quality of Life Counts** - <http://www.proveandimprove.org/new/documents/localqolc.pdf>
- Book: **Making Sustainability Work** by Marc J. Epstein
- Info on sustainable agriculture in NY - http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/sustain_ag/index.html
- See Newsweek’s 2010 top “green” companies and their environmental scorecards (hint: you can do better) - <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/10/18/green-rankings-us-companies.html>