

# Notes From Seminar Presentation on the "Future of Ecological Integrity in Our Protected Areas", Calgary, November 12, 2010

Submitted by Juri Peepre, borrowing liberally from on-line information sources. All photos by J. Peepre.



## INTRODICTION

In 2000, the Ecological Integrity Panel had a vision : "in 2025 protected areas complement a broader landscape managed for sustainability."

"Canada's national parks are embedded within a mosaic of protected areas: provincial, territorial and municipal parks, aboriginal lands, private lands and a myriad of other protected areas. The network of protected areas complements a broader landscape managed for sustainability.

But...after the Panel findings were released, the Fraser Institute responded to what they viewed as a threat to business interest.

## CHALLENGE: ECONOMICS

Fraser Institute, Public Policy Sources bulletin: "How radical environmentalists are shutting down Canada's national parks"



### Off Limits: How Radical Environmentalists are Shutting Down Canada's National Parks

Many would consider the Fraser Institute view that the Panel was recommending "shutting down the National Parks" at the far end of the spectrum, yet to some extent it reflected and continues to reflect the prevailing societal view that separates how we see the ecological and economic values of protected areas



**We still have a belief in perpetual economic growth!**

**Economic growth and ecological integrity are conflicting goals.**

There is plenty of evidence that economics is at root of our challenge to maintain EI in protected areas, and across the landscape; and that part of the solution lies in economic policy. We only need to acknowledge that ecological integrity "is found in places least hospitable to people and industrial development, and in places that we admire for their beauty" (Brian Czech).

According to Brian Czech:

"Increasing human population and per capita consumption have been recognized as threats to ecological integrity. One might expect economic growth to occupy center stage at ecological conferences, infuse the policy implication of ecological research and shape the public education programs of ecological organizations."

**Economic growth (quantitative) versus economic development (qualitative)**

"Economic development in the absence of economic growth is possible, and holds the key to EI and a sustainable society" (Brian Czech)

In the long term, we will not maintain or restore EI in protected area networks or the greater landscape until EI is valued across all sectors for its life support services, and hence as an essential part of our economy. Until the pursuit of economic growth is re-directed towards a steady state economy that fully incorporates the ecosystem, the maintenance of EI will be pursued on an ever-diminishing part of the planet

*We think the economy, is beyond our capacity to influence. We need to empower ourselves to talk about economics and influence*

*We need to retire the notion of sustainable development and replace it with EI as a fundamental goal of economic development*



## **CHALLENGE: SCALE**

**It's also a question of scale.** We may be good at maintaining EI in parks while the greater ecosystem collapses. Where should focus our work: global processes, regional processes or park management?

*At a global scale that is a challenge to ecological integrity.....*

The powerful global destructive force of trade agreements, for example North American security and prosperity agreements, where the maintenance of ecological integrity by government policy could be challenged by an appointed trade tribunal.

### **For example:**

According to the Council of Canadians: with respect to the **Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)**, few had heard of the secretive executive agreement aimed at integrating North American policy in more than 300 areas.

"It was shaped by a blue chip advisory panel made up of North America's largest corporations intent on perpetuating and intensifying an unsustainable trade model that sidelines serious environmental, labour, health and security concerns. The SPP was about fortifying NAFTA and defending it against alternative economic models that put people and the environment first."

### **For example:**

**Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreements (TILMA)** and other large scale trade agreements could hamper local and regional efforts to maintain EI.

The Council of Canadians suggests that: "TILMA would encourage deregulation and the lowering of standards, apply controversial and expensive trade rules on procurement to cities, school boards and hospitals, and make government policy vulnerable to corporate lawsuits that could result in fines."

*We need to pay attention to international and inter-provincial trade agreements as economic forces that influence our ability to maintain ecological integrity through protected area networks and the broader landscape.*

***On the potentially positive side of the equation...***

### **Convention on Biological Diversity**

Any exploration of the issues and values inherent in the concept of ecological integrity needs to take into consideration the ideas contained within the Convention on Biological Diversity.

**Patrick White, Globe a& Mail, October 17, 2010:**

"Consider the fate of the CBD: an international agreement signed amid great hope and fanfare in the early 1990s, the status of which has fizzled steadily ever since.

The CBD bound countries to cut mass species loss —significantly” and preserve 10 per cent of the world’s ecological regions by 2010. But this year brought the news that not one country had met those targets. After 20 years of high-level talks and treaties, mass extinction continues apace at between 1,500 and 15,000 species a year.

Now, the Montreal-based CBD Secretariat has proposed 20 new targets that include the elimination of subsidies harmful to biodiversity, reducing by half the degradation of forest ecosystems, eliminating destructive fishing methods and protecting 15 per cent of land and sea areas.

Member countries will hash out new funding models such as the phasing out of subsidies to ecosystem-damaging industries such as fishing and Payments for Environmental Services, a system that would provide subsidies to landowners who manage their land in a way that encourages plant and animal life."

*We need to hold our national, provincial and territorial governments to account for our obligations under the CBD.*



Challenge:

Parks for people... or ecological integrity for the planet ?

## **CHALLENGE: PARKS FOR PEOPLE or EI for the PLANET?**

**The debate about parks for people or to maintain ecological integrity will never subside, we will need to be ever vigilant**

In the last decade, progress has been real in Parks Canada and in other protected area agencies in Canada, but there have also been serious set-backs.

A legal analysis by Shaun Fluker suggests that our "National Park Act revisions to make EI the first priority have not, and likely will not, erode the 'parks for people' ideology that has governed Canada's national parks since their inception."

For example, how do we to assess Parks Canada and the "gap between noble sentiment and the reality"?

How vulnerable are the gains made, as we look to the future? This period has also seen unprecedented rapid global social and ecological change, which has weakened many protection efforts.

### **Ecological Integrity for the Planet?**

Several global organizations and initiatives are attempting to place ecological integrity at the centre of human rights, both within protected areas and across the land use mosaic.

## **Ecological Integrity Group**

Laura Westra and the GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY INITIATIVE: consider the extent to which human rights—such as the right to food, energy, health, clean air or water—can be reconciled with the principles of ecological integrity

Green sentiments in preambles and missions are quickly lost in the interests of economics and business as usual (Laura Westra, Global Ecological Integrity Initiative)



### **II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY**

Ecological integrity is necessary for all life, human and non-human, including future generations.....ensure we give consideration to the full evolutionary potential of life on Earth.

## **The Earth Charter**

From an Earth Charter perspective, ecological integrity is necessary for all life, human and non-human, including future generations – even species yet to exist – thereby ensuring we give consideration to the full evolutionary potential of life on Earth.

Principle 8 stresses the importance of education and the transfer of knowledge necessary to protect ecological integrity.



## **CHALLENGE: WILDERNESS AS A RESERVOIR OF ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY**

**Protect as much wilderness as possible.** Wilderness is a huge reservoir of EI in the landscape;

Dont ever lose our ability to talk passionately about wilderness, it is that dream that helps keep alive the maintenance of EI in parks and the greater landscape - wild processes sustain the ecological integrity of ecosystems

**Precautionary principle** should be at the root of all protected area and landscape management decisions