

THE LOSS OF COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES: AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning! When my wife heard I was speaking early in the morning and our longtime friend and sometime neighbor, Bill Press, was speaking later in the program, she quickly and pointedly observed, "that's great, you put them to sleep and he'll wake 'em up!" Well, I hope my comments stimulate thought and debate and, most importantly, action and that Bill stokes the fire.

I am delighted to be here among such a knowledgeable and experienced gathering of practitioners in the field of hopes and dreams that combines, in application, art and technical skills, law and politics, science and policy, philosophy and pragmatism, experience and erudition, and realism and vision.

I know that your work and mine is at once vocation and avocation. Most important however, we are all, to some significant degree, guardians of Mother Earth with an obligation to leave in our passing a sustainable environment that affords opportunities for quality of life comparable to or better than the legacy we discovered on our arrival.

Before I get into the essence of my comments, I want to say a few words about the Coastal Commission and California's landmark coastal protection program.

The California Coastal Commission marks its 25th anniversary on November 7, celebrating twenty-five years of aggressive and progressive environmental stewardship and innovative land-use planning to protect human and natural community environmental values found on one of Earth's most spectacular and precious treasures - the California coast.

And on its 25th, the Commission is especially appreciative and delighted that after 15 years of budget reductions, Governor Wilson, with strong support from Resources Secretary Doug Wheeler, last week signed Assembly Member Fred Keeley's AB 1581 that provides new funding to the Commission and will lift us out of the stone age of information technology. The Governor's action will also enable us to restore some staffing expertise previously lost, devise a public access implementation plan, and help fund the completion by our local government partners of their local coastal protection programs. We applaud Governor Wilson's continuing support for strong coastal protection.

As it turned out, 1997 has been a very good year for the California coast and for the Coastal Commission!

Forged in the fires of conflict and controversy, California's pioneering coastal management program remains today in the vortex of passionate and consequential philosophical, political, economic and legal debate. Established by voter initiative in 1972, after years of frustrating failure by the State Legislature to enact effective coastal protection laws, the Coastal Commission has compiled an outstanding record of achievement - a record of which the Commission, its staff and the public that created and sustained it can be enormously proud.

Many here today -- Sam Farr and, in spirit, his inspirational and visionary father, Fred Farr, Bill Press and many others -- were active champions in that hard-fought, exciting and remarkable campaign. We must never forget **what** we, with dedication and commitment, were able to achieve. And we should not hesitate to remind others **what** can be done by a dedicated few if the wisdom, wit and will is there to do it.

Californians have evolved an emotional, spiritual and enduring bond with the coast and coastal ocean: A bond that is at once mystical and pragmatic. It is rooted in the power of land's end to inspire renewal of body and soul and in its magical ability to give expression to a seemingly boundless array of natural and human artistry. It derives as well from the coast's earthly venue as a place to live, work and play.

The coast means many things to many people. And of these manifold meanings, most converge on this narrow and fragile edge of the continent to find their own place in the sun.

California's coastline is especially powerful in its attraction of competition and conflict among users and uses of land and water. This coast is blessed and cursed by an incredible diversity of natural and human-based wealth --- generally benign although temperamental climate, biologically rich and productive terrestrial and aquatic habitats, spectacular and shifting landforms, beaches and forests, and human communities of historic and contemporary uniqueness.

The California coast, like every singular and highly coveted piece of geography on earth, is never finally saved. It is always being saved. That is why perpetual, active and informed public engagement in coastal conservation is so essential to the long-term health and well-being of our precious natural heritage that is the coast and coastal ocean.

Notwithstanding the continuing controversy which embroils it, California's coastal protection law -- the California Coastal Act which the Coastal Commission is entrusted to carry out -- is, more than any other environmental law I know, the people's law and whenever its integrity or viability are threatened, the public, representing a broad cross section of political persuasion, rallies passionately and effectively to its defense. That happened in 1972 when the coastal protection initiative was enacted by the voters, in 1976 when the temporary coastal law was made permanent, and again in the summer of 1996 when the coastal program's integrity was threatened. Coastal protection was clearly a pivotal issue in last November's state legislative elections.

Public support was again dramatically demonstrated last December when the Commission sold over 2000 special coast and ocean protection license plates in the last **two** days to meet a New Year's eve deadline to qualify it for distribution. These attractive Whale Tail plates are, even as I speak, being mailed to nearly 10,000 inaugural buyers. Income from their sale will support the Commission's Adopt-A-Beach program, coastal and ocean environmental public education initiatives, and will expand and improve public access to the shoreline.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Like other environmental protection programs, the most significant accomplishments of California's coastal program are the things one **cannot** see:

- The public access and recreational opportunities that have not been lost
- The spectacular coastal views and seascapes that have not been spoiled by intrusive and visually degrading development
- The wetlands that have not been filled
- The agricultural lands that have not been converted

- The ocean fill projects that have not been allowed
- The unique coastal landforms that were not bulldozed
- The speculative, second-home subdivisions that have not been approved
- The sprawling and leapfrogging development that did not occur
- The fact California Highway 1 is not a four-lane road on most of the scenic, rural stretches of the coast
- The proliferation of coastal and offshore industrial development that did not occur
- The poorly conceived and tacky-tack development that was not allowed

Other significant accomplishments are more evident but equally difficult to quantify.

- The effective public partnerships between State and local governments and state and federal agencies, and the public-private partnerships that have been developed in a deliberate effort to create and maintain an integrated and coordinated program of coastal stewardship
- The success in promoting the concept and, in many places along the coast, the reality of environmentally sustainable development
- The changed and enlightened attitude among public policy decision-makers at all levels, especially among public officials in the 73 coastal cities and counties. Twenty-five years ago, the prevailing philosophy was to build and grow with little or no appreciation of adverse consequences. Locally elected officials now know and care a whole lot more about the direct and indirect, and unintended effects of development decisions. Public officials today, with some notable and disappointing exceptions, are more sensitive and responsive to constituency expectations and public calls for higher standards of environmental stewardship.
- The improved quality of coastal development. Responsible developers today are clearly more sensitive and attentive to the economic, social and environmental need for and benefits of high-quality coastal development.
- Increased public awareness and understanding of the need for continuing coastal management and of individual responsibility to pitch-in.
- California's national and global leadership in coastal management over the last 30 years. (Note: California created the first coastal management program in the world in 1966 when BCDC was established to protect San Francisco Bay.)
- Slowing the pace of change. California's pioneering coastal protection laws came about, in large part, as a public reaction to the rapidity of change during the 1950's and 60's. Since 1972, the most significant change on the California coast is that there has been so little change and the change that has occurred has been slow and more carefully planned and orderly.

Then there are the more clearly identifiable and visible achievements:

- The thousands of acres of new coastal parklands that but for the Coastal Act would not have been purchased and made available for generations to enjoy
- The numerous new coastal public accessways, trails and recreational facilities (e.g., in Pebble Beach and Monterey -- picnic areas, campgrounds, restrooms, the multi-use recreational trail along the waterfront, shuttles, beach parking, showers, boat launch areas)
- The new water oriented and priority coastal uses such as visitor-serving (hotels, resorts, motels), aquaculture (fish hatchery in Carlsbad), commercial fisheries, and coastal-dependent industrial facilities
- More efficient use of existing industrial port lands reducing the need for new ocean fill
- Concentrating new development in areas having the needed infra-structure

I could mention many more achievements if we had the time.

Now I turn to a more sobering subject: The challenges that lie ahead for those in our line of work.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

So far I have spoken of the past and the progress we have made in our understanding and application of sound and effective environmental stewardship principles and practices. That is the good news. Unfortunately, as I look to the environmental future of the country, I see reasons to be deeply troubled.

While we have accomplished remarkably much that many had thought not possible just 25 years ago, our ongoing endeavor to protect, preserve and restore the health, vitality and integrity of Earth's natural and human environs for the benefit of current and future generations is fraught with insidious and largely unrecognized hazards that threaten not merely continuing progress but the erosion of the good that has been done.

We have, as a society of diverse interests, backgrounds, and beliefs, accomplished what we have on the environmental front, as well as in other fields, largely because we subscribed to the overarching belief in the value and worth of promoting the common good -- the collective well-being of the people of this nation. There was in our not too distant past a generally shared sense of common interests that warranted sacrifice and subordination of individual wants for the sake of the greater good of the neighborhood, the state and the larger national community. Individual interests and expectations were tempered by a healthy understanding of obligations and responsibilities to society and to future generations.

That is why, to a significant extent, we were able to enact and implement, at a national, state and local level, planning programs and rules that adjusted private uses of land, air and water in a manner protective of public environmental interests and values at some not insignificant cost to individual rights and desires.

Regrettably, something extremely corrosive has been injected into our social being and the body politic that has eroded our appreciation of the importance of collective well-being. And nowhere is this erosion of support for community interests more dramatic and of significant long-term consequence, especially to those of us in the field of environmental stewardship, than in the national debate over private property rights.

In my view, the outcome of the property rights debate will determine the environmental future of the country. As responsible public sector participants and guardians of significant human and natural community environmental values, our ability to protect and advance the collective public interest in safeguarding these values has already been severely compromised by legal and legislative manifestations of the debate. Although the fallout from this national debate is of direct relevance and enormous consequence to current and future generations, and despite the fact qualitative and quantitative community environmental values already lost are of substantial proportions, **the public has no awareness of what has been lost or what is going to be lost.** And it is in this story that the seeds of an American environmental and societal tragedy have germinated and taken root. The implications for the future environmental health of our neighborhoods and the quality of life for Americans are ominous indeed.

I believe it imperative that a concerted effort be mounted to alert and inform the public, policy decision-makers, public opinion-shapers and -leaders, and politicians about the clear and present threat to the health and well-being of the public flowing from the property rights debate. I am especially concerned about the direction in which the debate is being driven by the courts. Although the 104th Congress, as part of the "Contract with America", and state legislatures around the country have attempted to expand property rights of private landowners at great public

expense, some with more success than others, most notably Florida, my focus of concern is the courts.

After all, it is the courts that interpret the U.S. Constitution and proclaim the rules all public land use planning and regulatory agencies in the country must follow. It is judges, who are after all human beings, that apply their own personal understanding of judicial restraint and make the **subjective** judgments necessary to interpret existing law and, in the process, **make new** law. So unless we amend our national constitution to give Americans a constitutional right to a high "quality" of life (as is the case in India) or to give standing and protection to the environmental commons of the country, it is the courts that will be the arbiters of the debate over property rights and the protection of environmental values. It will, in the end, be the courts that set the rules that will determine the environmental future of the country and the environmental legacy we leave future generations.

I am not a historian of private property rights movements in all their various incarnations, such as the "sagebrush rebellion" and the "wise use movement." I do know, however, that the private property rights movement and its legal arms, such as the Pacific Legal Foundation, together with its ideological prophets, such as the Cato Institute, have won the strategic high ground on this issue. Those of us in government charged by law with the protection of public health, safety and welfare, especially in the area of land use planning and regulation, have been outgunned, outflanked and intimidated by the tactics of, and the results achieved by the private property rights coalitions. This is especially apparent at the city and county level where the fear of monetary penalties imposed on impoverished local governments because of "wrong" decisions on individual property rights has resulted in countless land use actions that fail to protect important community environmental values and interests. Similarly, state and federal agencies, have shied away from making environmental decisions that clearly would have been in the best public interest.

Contrary to popular belief, the "wise use" and other property rights coalitions do **not** represent a grassroots movement of average American landowners fighting the excesses of big government. Rather, it is a well financed, cohesive and sophisticated campaign bankrolled by big landowners, rural landowners, land developers, Realtors, extractive industries, such as mining, oil and gas, and logging interests, agri-business, and others who see undeveloped land as a source of monetary profit. Looking behind the facade of the property rights movement, it becomes clear that its principle crusaders represent a distinct business sector with a major economic stake in the outcome of the debate.

In fact and a great irony in all this is that the vast majority of individual landowners in the country whose private property ownership interests are actually harmed or not advanced by the property rights agenda are **homeowners** and many owners of already built commercial property - not to mention those who do not yet own property. Every time government approves new development and fails to impose restrictions necessary to avoid an environmental harm and to protect an important community interest, others, notably neighbors and others downstream from the impacts, suffer the consequences.

Another irony in the debate is that the issue is not even about private property rights. All but fringe groups, value and respect private property rights. The real issue for the prime movers behind the debate is money. The hidden agenda is about profit and who pays whom for what. I need only point to justice Scalia's favorable reference in the Lucas case to the comment of a long-dead English legal scholar who said, "what is land, but the profits thereof."

Proponents of the property rights agenda have successfully masked the real issues by selective use of usually bogus "horror stories" - the farmer who lost his land because he voluntarily created a wetland on it. They have also been clever in the selection and use of sympathetic plaintiffs in carefully chosen lawsuits (the little old lady who only wants to maximize her profit from building on

her small, environmentally sensitive lot on Lake Tahoe; the little guy caught between two unresponsive big governments). No one can deny that there have been some abuses of power and process by government in the regulation of land use. The distortion of reality lies in the attempt by property rights advocates to create the false impression that abusive treatment by government of property owners is the rule, not the exception. And then in a stroke of public relations, political and legal ingenuity, these advocates twisted the issue of unfair treatment around the concept of "regulatory takings".

While proponents have been clever in seizing a simple slogan (defend private property rights) and a single concept (regulatory takings), **opponents** rely on more esoteric legal, philosophical, ecological, and ethical principles to make their point -- a weak persuader in the arena of public and political opinion. We argue that private land ownership entails both rights **and** responsibilities -- responsibilities to immediate neighbors, "downstream" property owners, the environment, the public at large, and future generations. We argue that certain environmental resources and values associated with human and natural communities are held in common and cannot be owned or harmed by an individual. We speak of environmental commons, such as ecosystems, that know no property boundaries but whose biological health and vitality affect many people and other life.

The public has a right to and interest in the protection of these environmental commons and resources held in common (i.e., wildlife). Importantly, the public has a legitimate expectation that these rights and interests can be protected **without** the taxpayer having to pay for that protection. Is it unreasonable to ask why the public should have to pay polluters **not** to pollute the environment? But it is this point of **who** must pay (i.e., the individual or the community) for **what** level of protection of **what** community environmental values or interests that is at the heart of the legal debate in the courts today.

In the recent U.S. Supreme Court Suitum decision, justice Scalia seems to spell out his position, and that of the property rights advocates, quite clearly. Simply put, it comes down to this: In the past, government has hidden behind a declared intent to **prevent harm** to the community its real, underlying desire and motivation to bestow **benefits** on the public. And the government has done so without having to pay for it and at the disproportionate expense of an individual property owner (i.e., if the restriction is something many people must comply with, such as side-yard setbacks, I presume he would say that is OK). He goes on to say that since the difference between **harm prevention** and **benefit bestowing** is in the eyes of the beholder, the harm must be clear and unquestionable (i.e., it cannot be based on ecological planning principles) and must rise to the level of a "nuisance" before the cost of preventing it can be imposed on the individual without government having to pay for the restriction on the use of land. It is not difficult to see where this line of reasoning will drive the country's ability to protect its human and natural community environmental values. The fact is, there is no legal formula or doctrine that compels this result. Rather, it is predicated on the subjective judgment, the value choices and the philosophical perspective of the judge or judges rendering the decision.

Until 1987, government was doing a fairly good job balancing the rights and expectations of individuals seeking to develop their land with the rights, interests and needs of the public to protect important human and natural community environmental values. Obviously, there were examples of government failure and excess -- inordinate delay in processing a building permit, overreaching relative to a particular development, and harsh treatment of an individual property owner. However, I have no doubt these examples were the exception and not the rule. Nevertheless, the issue of due process and fundamental fairness in the treatment of owners seeking to develop their land is a serious matter that must be addressed on a continuing basis. The public must see and believe that government treats property owners fairly. Environmental stewardship agencies must establish and visibly maintain and demand a culture of fair and professional treatment of land owners.

Historically, the courts handled due process and fundamental fairness concerns differently than 5th Amendment "takings" issues. The 5th Amendment "takings" provision was intended as a protection against government expropriation and occupation of privately owned land for public use without payment of just compensation. Since 1987, several Supreme Court and lower court rulings have, at the urging of property rights coalitions, blurred the distinction between these two legal doctrines with dramatic consequences that are, in my view, clearly detrimental to the health and well-being of the public. These decisions have eroded the ability of government to protect environmental values and have significantly redefined and expanded individual property rights and benefits at considerable public expense. What appears to have been lost over the last two decades is an appreciation by the courts of the vital role environmental commons (i.e., ecosystems) and natural resources held in common (i.e., wildlife) perform in maintaining the health and vitality of human and natural communities.

I view environmental commons to be those features of land and water areas, and air space, that exist independently or as an integral part of a dynamic whole (i.e., eco-system, watershed, waterbody, waterbasin, coastal bight, air basin, public park, neighborhood, village, town, city) whose functional viability and integrity must be protected in order to ensure the survival of natural or human community values deemed to be of vital importance to public health, well-being and quality of life. Examples include, wilderness areas, nature reserves, environmentally sensitive habitat and neighborhoods where people live, work and play. The environmental commons of a residential neighborhood, for example, are those places in it, whether on public or private land, the uses of which directly or indirectly impact the quality, functionality and safety of that human community (i.e., streets, sidewalks, playgrounds, schools, park and open spaces). One important way to protect environmental commons is through reasonable land use controls.

The recent rulings on "takings" issues have, directly and indirectly, stripped the public sector of important tools needed to effectively manage development of private land. They have done so by creating legal tests that are difficult to understand and apply, and, as a practical matter, very difficult to meet. They require the application of fiscal, technical and human resources that budget-starved public agencies simply cannot bring to bear. So at the very time the courts are asking government to do more work that is very expensive, the public and politicians are calling for lower taxes and cutting budgets of the very agencies expected to protect the environment consistent with the law. There is something obviously wrong with this picture.

Equally significant, as I mentioned before, has been the widespread chilling effect of these rulings on government land use planners and managers who now steer clear of the tough decisions in fear of monetary damages being imposed on the governmental entities they represent.

This is not the forum to go into the technical aspects of the leading Supreme Court cases in this area such as Nollan, First English, Lucas, and Dolan and the Healing, Surfside Colony and Ehrlich cases in California. Rather, I want to highlight several themes the consequences and long-term implications of which few people understand or appreciate.

The three key themes involve **value choices**, the **complexity** and **cumulative effect** of these rulings, and the **hidden losses** to the public flowing from them.

Value Choices: Judicial rulings on "takings" do not enunciate or bring into the light fixed rules of law. Rather, they represent value choices and judgments made by appointed judges that reflect their own economic, environmental, social, philosophical and political views of the world. This results directly from and is ingrained in this country's political system. If judges make value choices that drive this country toward an environmental future the majority of people do not want, then jurists with another perspective who will make different value choices should be appointed to the bench. And the only way that will happen is if those who make the appointments hear from their constituencies. This is a fundamental ingredient of democratic and representative government.

When the qualifications of judicial nominees are reviewed, subjects given greatest public attention seem to be the candidate's attitude and views on abortion, the death penalty, crime and anti-trust. Rarely are environmental issues involving the relative importance of public rights, interests and values and private property rights discussed. This has to change. It is incumbent on those charged with the public trust of environmental stewardship to speak out. We should call attention to and question the value choices made by judges that erode our ability to protect important environmental values.

Complexities and cumulative effects: The second theme relates to the complexity of the legal issues involved and the direct and indirect effects of "taking" decisions in combination with each other. Taken alone, recent property rights decisions are usually characterized in the press and by losing government counsel as being of limited scope and impact. In fact, just the opposite is true because each ruling does not operate in isolation or in a vacuum.

The Nollan decision, for the first time, established a bright line and direct nexus test between project impacts and permit conditions that cannot feasibly be met in most real-world situations (i.e., a permit condition that involves a possessory interest in land must now be clearly, directly and demonstrably connected to the specific kind of impact the new development will have). The fact is, most public agencies do not have the fiscal or human resources needed to make the kind of showing the Nollan court now requires. Failure to meet this new test is deemed to be a "taking" that must be compensated.

First English, also decided in 1987, operating in combination with Nollan, raises the stakes several orders of magnitude. In First English the court discarded long established law and created a **new** "right" for land owners who believe their 5th Amendment rights have been violated. For the first time, the court ruled that when a public agency makes the wrong judgment and effects a "taking", money damages must be paid to cover the interim period between the time of administrative action and a court ruling that a "taking" has occurred. Before First English, if government was deemed to have gone too far, the matter was sent back to be reconsidered consistent with the court's ruling. The far-reaching impact has been that decision-makers no longer, or, at best, very rarely make judgments that may run afoul of Nollan because they do not want to risk placing their public agency under the fiscal hammer of First English.

The Dolan case, requires, again for the first time, that when permit conditions on the use of land are imposed that involve a possessory interest in land, the conditions must be in "rough proportionality" to the impacts of the project. Later case law in California has expanded this ruling to apply to other land use permit actions. No one knows what this new test means or how it will be applied by the courts. Lucas establishes a new, and apparently exclusive nuisance exception to the prior rule permitting denial of economic use of land. The Lucas rule is also complex and not easily understood.

The cumulative effect of these new judicial statements of law has been disabling, to say the least. They are difficult to understand and nearly impossible to apply.

Here again, it is incumbent on those in the business of land use planning and management, to clearly explain how these decisions, standing alone and in combination, prevent public agencies from doing their job of protecting important public environmental rights and values.

Hidden losses: Like many of the accomplishments in our field of work, the adverse impacts of these court rulings, are most often **not** immediately visible or tangible. For example, no one can actually **see** the fact there are hundreds of new homes and other new developments fronting the California coast or other publicly owned recreation areas that were given permit approval without reserving the **opportunity** for future public access **along** the ocean's edge seaward of the project or **to** the public tidelands from the nearest public road. We know these projects generate conflicts

with the public users of **public** lands, but we cannot prove it under the Nollan test. Since Nollan, the Coastal Commission and local coastal governments no longer seek offers to dedicate public access or public trail easements in 9.9 cases out of 10 that previously would have included such provisions.

Nor does the public see what has been lost in places where environmentally sensitive habitats have been destroyed and replaced with housing or commercial development. Countless projects approved without adequate mitigation of potential adverse environmental impacts, or that have been approved without the protection of **opportunities** for future public benefit (i.e., waterfront access, non-motorized traffic circulation) that in reality also avoid or prevent public harm, have resulted in irreparable public losses of incalculable worth and value to current and future generations.

The tragedy is that while examples of losses are legion, the fact is, the public does **not** know what is actually being lost in terms of human and natural community environmental values and interests because the losses are hidden (i.e., **opportunities** to avoid harm and preserve benefits).

CONCLUSION

Hopefully my points about the environmental implications of the ongoing property rights debate in the country are clear:

- Important human and natural community environmental values essential to the health, well-being and quality of life of current and future generations are at serious risk and, in fact, are being lost as a result of the direction in which the debate is being driven by the courts and private property rights coalitions and crusaders;
- New "takings" law formulated in court rulings has deprived public-sector environmental managers of important tools needed to protect public rights, interests and values;
- "Takings" rulings involve judgments and value choices made by judges appointed in a political system. In a democracy and representative system of governance, we can and should take issue with value choices that are detrimental to the public's interest in the protection of environmental commons and resources held in common.
- We must do a better job explaining, in clear and understandable terms, the "on-the-ground" cumulative adverse impacts of these decisions.
- We must do a better job explaining what, from the public's perspective, the stakes are, what is being lost and what has already been lost.

As I stated before, the coast, like any coveted reach of geography, is never finally saved. It is always being saved. That means there will always be work for those of us dedicated to environmental stewardship.

It is not easy being in government these days. A cynical, shortsighted and self-centered segment of the public seems incapable of appreciating the good work, dedication and job commitment demonstrated by public employees every day. People demand services but do not want to pay for them. In our society, it seems anyone who makes money or achieves celebrity status is valued, respected and envied. A person who "costs" money -- as public employees are often characterized -- is not valued highly, notwithstanding the sacrifices they make and the good work they do in places and ways hidden in the shadows of public awareness. People seem to take the results of public service for granted.

These realities mean we must search among the psychic, intangible dimensions of our work for motivation and returns. We can, and I do derive strength and comfort from the knowledge our work is meaningful, honorable and enduring. Whenever I become discouraged and question the

worth of sticking with the job, I remember the children and embrace the sanctuary of Nature to find inspiration and renewal.

We have in our care an enormous public trust. I sincerely believe the public wants us to do our job and to do it with commitment, dedication, professionalism and integrity. When we do, the people will step forward in a strong show of support and solidarity -- as has happened many times on the coast. This knowledge, coupled with the nature of our work, empowers us to hold at bay the cynicism and resignation that inevitably gnaws at all of us from time to time.

Because so much of the work we do is about results, rewards, resources and values people cannot easily wrap their arms around, we must look primarily within ourselves for the appreciation, encouragement and drive to keep on with what we do. Self-driven and inspired by our vision of a healthy environmental future for the country, we must also always be about stoking and keeping alive that fire in the belly.

I believe our work -- yours and mine as environmental stewards -- is noble and ennobling. We are fortunate to have it. I, for one, am honored and grateful for the privilege.

Thank you!