

Preface

One of the basic, perhaps instinctual, desires people have is to surround themselves with a clean environment. We know the difference between sick and healthy without any formal training or scientific analysis. As we drive by areas that were once familiar to us as forest, farm or field, one has to pause and wonder if we have really made the right decision for the environment.

Free market capitalism and the "Lockean" theory of rights, implemented under the umbrella of Democracy, have guided America's socio-economic growth since its inception. The idea of mixing land, labor, investment and policy to create political, legal and financial structures where opportunities for personal gain are maximized is almost a uniquely American right. We have earned and maintained this right through exile, revolution and war.

These paragraphs summarize the "natural" simplicity and the "socio-economic" complexity we face as individuals and as part of American society when it comes to environmental decision-making. We all deeply desire to maximize our "potential" and have clean, comfortable and safe surroundings. These two ideals have long been viewed as opposing sides, winner take all. It is important to remember that this is not a zero sum game. Both sides can win. If we are going to find our "true" place, existing harmoniously in both worlds, we must ensure that both sides win. If not, the alternative leaves no clear winners and many clear losers.

Community Environmental Management or CEM is an attempt to shift the focus from planning's impact on the natural environment to the natural environment's impact on planning. This is not a subtle or semantic change, it is a fundamental change in the way we see our surroundings and ourselves. In the years to come, will we be able to look back and say, "I'm proud of the things we accomplished here."