LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

After several successful thematic issues of *Environmental Practice* devoted to brownfields, sustainability, and the 40th anniversary of the passage of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this issue is "themeless," consisting of an eclectic mixture of policy and science research articles, perspectives, and dialogue.

Having observed from afar how policies for managing natural areas in Chicagoland have been developed and effected, and making clear herein that I do not personally conduct environmental policy research, it seems to me that development and implementation of natural resource management policies are often the product of a contentious and messy interplay among scientists, land managers, and policy makers. Indeed, **Walter Baber** notes the "estrangement" that often exists between political theorists and environmental practitioners in the area of natural resources management. Such estrangement has effectively bankrupted both disciplines. Baber argues that various forms of democratic deliberation, particularly "juristic modeling," hold tremendous potential both for managing natural resources and improving the marriage between theorists and practitioners.

Many of my friends who are environmental practitioners engaged in natural areas restoration lament the ponderous federal and state permitting process that often results in lengthy delays in implementing their clients' projects. **Keith Greer** reports that these delays are often due to the negotiations concerning compensatory mitigation actions that are part and parcel of the environmental review and permitting process. Using a series of case studies as examples, he advocates the use of advance compensatory mitigation to reduce project delay, to increase the environmental benefits associated with mitigation, and to provide a more cost effective and efficient method for streamlining unavoidable impacts.

The ongoing Gulf oil spill has illuminated the interplay between federal and state disaster response efforts. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) environmental office **Jomar Maldonado** highlights the "alphabet soup" of environmental planning laws, executive orders, and regulations that the federal agencies involved in disaster response and recovery actions must comply with. While many of these contain provisions for dealing with emergencies and disaster declarations, most of these provisions are limited. Moreover, taken together, these provisions form a loose patchwork that often muddle the recovery process of major disasters. Maldonado discusses the challenges in applying the various provisions and encourages dialogue among federal agencies engaged in disaster response and recovery actions to develop strategies for improving consistency among this patchwork of provisions.

What impacts will a transition away from current command-and-control environmental policy to "next generation" policies have on environmental inspectors and regulatory enforcement? **Michelle Pautz** explores this issue and concludes (as do other scholars whom she cites) that the transition to next-generation policies will have significant impacts on inspectors but that concerns over "regulatory capture" (i.e., inspectors being influenced in their decisions by those they are regulating) are overstated.

Educating people on the value of natural capital and ecosystem services is an important component of developing ecosystem restoration and management plans. As **Sarah Darkwa and Richard Smardon** illustrate, programs designed to educate people about the importance of protecting and managing ecosystems should be culturally sensitive and relevant if they are to be successful. They employed a mixed-methods approach consisting of interviews and surveys to evaluate fishermen's knowledge about the value of mangrove to fish stock, and discuss possible management practices to help restore fish stock within the Fosu Lagoon, Ghana. The lagoon is plagued by "dead zones" caused by inputs of phosphorus and nitrogen-rich nutrients emanating from wastewater discharges from surrounding residential areas and industrial activities located proximal to the lagoon. Survey data obtained from 120 fishermen representing the different communities that fish from the lagoon indicated that they had some understanding of the importance of mangroves for maintaining fish populations. However, the fishermen lacked scientific understanding of how to manage the mangroves properly to insure sufficient fish stocks. Their research provides critical baseline information for developing programs to educate the people about the economic, ecological value and functions of mangroves, it analyzes one of the obstacles—depletion of mangroves—leading to decline in fish resources in the lagoon, and it provides recommendations for better management of the lagoon to help reverse fish decline.

Policy implementation is often hampered by various "barriers" to change. Indeed, **Sarah Wolfe** argues that such barriers can be surmounted by fully assessing a community's social capital. More specifically, he contends that such social capital assessment is required in order to develop and implement water demand management policies and programs effectively and successfully. Her research examined the influence of social capital on water policy outcomes in a small community located north of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Using a theoretical framework constructed from multiple literatures on knowledge management, organizational theory, and innovation diffusion, she found that social capital is a critical component affecting a community's receptivity to new policies related to water management.

This issue of *Environmental Practice* contains two interesting *Perspectives from the Field* articles. **Donald Hey and Christopher Vaughn** argue that our nation's natural infrastructure of forests, prairies,

doi:10.1017/S1466046610000335

wetlands, streams, rivers, estuaries, and shorelines are in need of repair. Restoration of this infrastructure will enable us to meet our social needs more cost-effectively, efficiently, and sustainably than built infrastructure. The advocate for significant federal investment in technologies that harness natural ecosystem services and that such investment will lead to job creation and economic growth. One technology they propose for removing excess nitrogen from rivers and streams is called "nutrient farming." This involves having farmers of bottomlands restoring presettlement wetlands and using these wetlands to remove or "harvest" excess nutrients from surface water and sequester carbon from the atmosphere. The nutrient farmer would then sell the resulting nutrient credits to municipal dischargers who cost-effectively cannot reduce their own nutrient loads. National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) member **Owen Schmidt** provides a follow-up to his *Perspective* article that appeared in the June 2010 issue (vol. 12, no. 2) on mistakes in CEQ's regulations. In this second installment he discusses the "gaps" in CEQ's regulations.

Managing Editor Dan Carroll and I are currently reviewing articles submitted for the December issue devoted to water. My coeditor, Kelly Tzoumis, is planning some exciting thematic issues for 2011 that are focused on energy and transportation. Kelly, Dan, and I welcome interesting, timely, and provocative articles covering a variety of issues, and as always, the editorial office welcomes your feedback and suggestions for future issues of the journal.

James Montgomery