

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Charting the Next 40 Years of Environmental Stewardship

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One of the first books I read in college was *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold, who championed environmental stewardship based on “dealing with man’s relation to land and the animals and plants which grow upon it” (Leopold, 1949). The theme of the 2016 National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) Annual Conference – Charting the Next 40 Years of Environmental Stewardship – was developed as a local initiative by the Illinois State Chapter. For four full days, some of the nation’s leading environmental professionals discussed new environmental practice methods, shared their expertise, and engaged in a dialogue with members and guests on the environmental challenges and successes of the 21st century, while also looking ahead to the next 40 years of environmental stewardship.

This was a great theme for the conference and for our members. We pride ourselves on being a multidisciplinary association that impacts all aspects of the profession, including environmental stewardship and protecting the environment through education, conservation, and sustainable practices. NAEP members are a mix of planners,

scientists, engineers, lawyers, educators, and policy makers. I can think of no other association that covers as many aspects of the environmental professional as NAEP.

The term “environmental stewardship” provides a good starting point to better understand all we are and all we do in our daily lives. During my time visiting the beautiful city of Chicago and talking with many of the local conference participants, I was reminded of the importance of all aspects of urban planning and of how maintaining green spaces is essential for maintaining residents’ quality of life. During the conference, presenters discussed the ever-important topics of ecosystem restoration, renewable energy, climate change, land and water use management, sustainable transportation, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other engaging topics. These subjects represent only some aspects of the environmental connections we need to understand and to implement scientifically while observing their policy implications and keeping in mind the political aspects of our world. Overall, the individuals who presented during the conference brought the highest level of awareness and education, and compelled us to move forward on meeting environmental challenges and protecting the environment.

For those who gathered in Chicago to participate in NAEP’s Annual Conference, I thank you for your commitment to continuing education

and excellence in the work we all do. NAEP continues to advance new strategic planning initiatives and increase its volunteer base, but parallels can be made with our passion and commitment to the environment and the decisions we make to make this planet better for future generations. If we all work together, we can make NAEP and the Earth a better place.

As you think about charting your own future within environmental stewardship, take a moment and reflect on your responsibility to preserve the environment, make it a part of your daily life, and create the same passion and commitment in your home and the communities you live in.

Reference

Leopold, A. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, New York, 240 pp.

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