

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Letter from the Editor: Would It Be Ethical?

As of this writing, the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) has wrapped up another successful annual conference in Portland, Oregon, and the June conference issue of *Environmental Practice* has arrived in subscribers' mailboxes. The editorial office of *ENP* employs a coeditor approach that alternates lead editorship annually between a natural scientist (James Montgomery) and a social scientist (Kelly Tzoumis), both of whom have practitioner experiences in environmental science and policy in the private and public sectors. The lead editor focuses on development of thematic topics, whereas the coeditor engages in strategic planning, including outreach to authors, for his/her lead year. This model is vital to maintaining the three "ships" that are vital to sustaining NAEP: *membership*, *authorship*, and *readership*. In addition, this model of shared leadership has been quite effective in bringing in new perspectives and topics on environmental issues to achieve greater interdisciplinarity, as well as maintaining the mission of NAEP by providing quality manuscripts that balance interests of both the practitioners and the scholars in the environmental profession. The daily operations of the journal are handled by our very capable managing editor, Dan Carroll. Dan has developed an efficient peer-review process and continues to reach out to potential reviewers. We have an active editorial advisory board (EAB) of 15 members who represent a mixture of scholars and practitioners from across the United States. EAB members have all reviewed or written manuscripts for the journal. We hope to expand the EAB to include more international representation.

Early on in my first stint as lead editor, a member of the NAEP board approached me with the idea of devoting an issue of *ENP* to the topic of ethics. I replied that I would contemplate this idea. Truthfully, I

was not real keen on devoting an issue to ethics, particularly given that I felt that many other hot-button topics were better suited for thematic issues. Besides, don't NAEP members already know enough about ethics? After all, NAEP has a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Environmental Professionals that its members are required to abide by, so what new insights into ethics could our readers possibly glean from an *ENP* issue devoted to this topic? Ethics is such a broad topic. What aspect(s) would we focus on? Theological? Philosophical? Environmental? Even though a survey conducted by the NAEP board of its members, in which they were asked to identify what topics they wanted to see covered in *ENP*, indicated that professional ethics was on their wish list, I still decided not to pursue an ethics issue. Alas, my decision had a short half-life.

During an engaging conversation with former NAEP President Ron Deverman, he reminded me of the time when he and the late NAEP president Jim Roberts attended one of my undergraduate general education environmental science classes at DePaul University in the late 1990s. I had met Ron through our affiliation with the Illinois Association of Environmental Professionals (IAEP). He called to ask permission for Jim Roberts to come and speak to my students on the topic of professional ethics for environmental professionals. I readily agreed, happy not to have to prepare another lecture! Many of you knew Jim Roberts better than I did, so it will come as no surprise when I say that he was one of the most captivating and inspiring speakers I have ever heard. His passion for all facets of ethics was readily apparent, and he connected with my students in a very personal way that mirrored the personalism and devotion of DePaul's patron saint, Vincent DePaul. As it turns out, Jim did not speak about ethics for the environmental professional per se, but rather he spoke about the larger, more encompassing issue of the importance of maintaining your professional and personal integrity and always

adhering to a true north bearing on your ethical and moral compass regardless of your intended profession or what chaotic circumstances might be swirling around you. My conversation with Ron convinced me to change my decision on devoting an issue of *ENP* to ethics. Thanks, Ron!

At the July 2011 NAEP board meeting in Chicago, I suggested that we devote an issue of *ENP* in the name of Jim Roberts, focusing specifically on the topic of ethics for environmental professionals. This idea was greeted with great enthusiasm. In September 2011, some members of the NAEP Publications Committee, including Ron Deverman, Paul Looney, Bob Michaels, John Perkins, and me, held a conference call to frame this issue and then hash out the call for papers. Specifically, what aspect(s) of professional ethics for environmental professionals did we want to focus on? John Perkins noted that the issue could focus on two aspects: One was the duties and obligations of the practitioner, such as are detailed in the NAEP Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Environmental Professionals. Here the ethical problems to be addressed by authors might include topics like staying true to your expertise (e.g., don't provide answers to questions you really can't answer); doing one's own work (i.e., don't steal somebody else's); and don't pad your expense account or hours worked. The second aspect was a focus on the duties and obligations of the practitioner as they are affected by events in the larger society, especially changes in policies and politics. This second focus is a bit more open-ended than the first one because it does not concentrate exclusively on just matters of personal honesty. Instead, it asks us to consider what moral and ethical individuals should do in the context of things about which they have no personal control. Perhaps sensing that we were struggling to weld together a framework, John interjected with a hypothetical ethical scenario that NAEP members have probably faced in real life. This scenario is worth sharing, for it crystallized for me the im-

portance of the constant need for professional development in ethics:

Suppose an environmental professional is doing some NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] work involving habitat issues. Suppose the client wants the professional to ignore climate change. However, the professional knows that some of the biggest likely impacts of the project link directly to climate change. (For example, the particular project in this case involves the expansion of infrastructure for motor vehicle transportation, which will increase output of greenhouse gases, and so on.) In this case, *would it be ethical* for the environmental professional to turn in an EIS [environmental impact statement] that ignores climate change or says something bland and vague?

John's hypothetical scenario hastened the completion of the framework and the call for papers, with only one small detail yet to be worked out. I wanted the call to include a dedication to Jim Roberts. Bob Michaels readily agreed to write this, and it is worth sharing:

This issue of *Environmental Practice* is dedicated to Dr. James (Jim) Roberts PhD, CEP (deceased 2007), who was a prominent long-time member of the NAEP and Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals (ABCEP) boards of directors, the ABCEP Certification Review Board, and the Editorial Advisory Board of our journal in its previous incarnation as *The Environmental Professional*. Jim was a consummate environmental professional who, as a cleric and otherwise thoughtful person, was especially interested in ethics and specific ethics issues potentially or actually facing environmental professionals. Jim wisely counseled his colleagues on ethics and ethical resolution of issues, and consistently succeeded at bringing opposite sides together with a shared commitment to ethics as a

necessary, even if sometimes insufficient, condition for resolution.

The next issue facing me with respect to bringing this thematic issue of *ENP* to fruition was to enlist a suitable guest editor. Paul Looney suggested that I contact Lloyd Irland. Paul and Lloyd crossed paths when Lloyd was writing his book, *Professional Ethics for Natural Resource and Environmental Managers: A Primer* (Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, 2007). The appendix of this book contains the NAEP's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Environmental Professionals. I contacted Lloyd, who enthusiastically signed on to serve as guest editor, a task for which he is uniquely qualified.

Lloyd Irland is lecturer and senior scientist at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) and president of the Irland Group, a Maine consulting firm. He earned his doctorate at Yale and he has taught at Yale F&ES at several different periods during his professional career. His undergraduate degree in forestry is from Michigan State University, and his master's is from the University of Arizona–Tucson. At the outset of his career, he served with the USDA Forest Service as a research economist before returning to Yale to teach for three years. He then served five years with the Maine Department of Conservation and five years as Maine's State Economist. Since 1987, he has been consulting, mostly to industry but also to governments, trade groups, and environmental groups. He served as a junior author of one section of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and participated in the US National Assessment on Climate Change. He has worked actively in the field of forest certification and is a fellow of the Society of American

Foresters. Lloyd has also worked in forestry and professional ethics and edited a major readings volume, *Ethics in Forestry* (Timber Press, 1994). He is author of *The Northeast's Changing Forests*, distributed by Harvard University Press (1999), and co-editor of a Yale Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry publication on long-term forest research.

Lloyd's *Professional Ethics for Natural Resource and Environmental Managers* is required reading for environmental practitioners in all stages of their careers. Indeed, given the relentless media coverage of the corporate shenanigans at JP Morgan Chase and the Facebook IPO (initial public offering) fiasco, it would seem that anyone would benefit from reading Lloyd's book, as well as the articles that Lloyd has compiled and edited in this issue of *ENP*! In his letter from the guest editor, Lloyd provides an additional rationale for the need for continuous education in professional ethics, and he presents an overview of each article and its author(s). I am truly indebted to Lloyd for his dedication to bringing this Jim Roberts memorial ethics issue of *ENP* to fruition.

Finally, while reviewing the various manuscripts submitted for this issue, it became apparent to me that ethics education and continuous professional development must be required for all students and working professionals, respectively. So, as you read through this issue of *ENP*, including Lloyd's letter from the guest editor, remember the phrase that I emphasized earlier in John Perkins's hypothetical ethical scenario, and with which Lloyd begins his letter: *Would it be ethical?*

James Montgomery