Seven steps to Sustainability

Abstract

In this brief but interesting article, a small but significant example of how sustainable management is having a positive effect in Northern New Mexico is described. Northern New Mexico, a poor, vastly unemployed region also has huge drought and desertification issues. The logging and forest business in the area has been mismanaged, and when this is combined with lack of rain, there are often uncontrollable forest fires.

In 1999 with an effort to reduce wild fires, New Mexico received $25 million to create small diameter clearances. However these clearances posed a further problem. The cleared wood from the clearances was being dumped in to landfill sites, where the decomposing wood emits ozone-depleting gases.

Through the ZERI foundation, Gunter Pauli came up with a solution which most importantly meets the needs of the local community. A solution that ripples into other areas of their wellbeing, including harnessing their indigenous skills, and allowing the environment and local economy to work closely.

“ZERI advocates working in harmony with the three design principles of nature”

1. “If one kingdom is forced to eat its own waste, it will degenerate.”
2. “Whatever is a toxin or virus for one kingdom is neutral or a nutrient for another.”
3. “The more locally integrated a system is, the more efficient it is.”

Northern New Mexico’s example of these three design principles can be seen in the following 7 steps:

1. What has been found is lubricating the chainsaws used to make the clearings with mushroom spores, produces a mass of mushroom rich melch.
2. With the removal of trees, tracks are made which are now covered with the mushroom melch.
3. Sheep travel along these tracts, now able to sustain themselves with the melch.
4. Wool is soled, now plentiful with the increase in sheep.
5. ZERI encourages the preservation of the Native Americans knowledge on dyes. Local plants used for dye are plentiful. These plants not only protect the environment, but also sustain the local economy.
6. Though ZERI’s approach the community is strengthening its independence, while still using traditional knowledge on sheep and dyes. Working with, rather than exploiting the ecosystem.
7. October 15, 2002 the project launched its first range of jumpers, 168 sweaters in total. ZERI estimates the whole ecosystem could produce up to 5,000 sweaters by 2006.