

Environmental Ethics



Azizan Baharuddin
Professor, Dept of Science & Technology Studies
Faculty of Science, University Malaya
azizan@um.edu.my

Introduction

- ❑ Why is the topic Important?
- ❑ Ethics and the Environment
- ❑ The “holistic” vs. the Compartmentalization Approach
- ❑ Environmental Ethics- What is it, why and how It works



<http://www.painsley.org.uk/scienceinschool/research/othersciences/environment/environment.htm>



www.tnwildside.org/stories.asp?Story=233

Unsustainability: Causes

- Crisis of unsustainability
- Chemicals put into the atmosphere
- Climate Change
- Global Warming
- Acid Rain
- Depletion of stratosphere
- Not relying on pollution prevention
- Continued poisoning of soil & water due to pesticides and toxic wastes
- Depletion of non-renewable minerals (esp. oil)
- Depletion and contamination of ground water, deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, loss of biodiversity due to degradation of earth capital



www.saskschools.ca/~turgeon/jpgs/waterpollution.jpg



www.vapor-tek.co.uk/html/products.htm

Unsustainability: Causes

- Overpopulation
- Over consumption of resources especially the affluent
- Poverty
- Resource waste
- Widespread use of environmentally damaging fossil fuels
- Loss of biodiversity due to oversimplification of Earth's Life-support system
- Failure to encourage earth sustaining forms of economic development & discourage earth-degrading forms of economic growth
- Failure to have market prices represent the overall environmental lost of an economic good service
- Our urge to dominate & control nature for our use

Economic Systems and Environment problems

What is an economy?

- ❖ a system of production, distribution and consumption of goods
- ❖ Individuals, business & societies make economic decisions about what goods and services to produce, how to produce them, how much to produce, how to distribute, what to buy and sell



www.flickr.com/photos/osk aline/153163576/



www.infonet-center.com/fresh-vegies-s.jpg

Economic Resources

- ❑ What are the kinds of capital used to produce foods and services - 3 types
- ❑ Earth capital of natural resources, renewable, non-renewable resources
- ❑ Manufactured capital made from earth capital
- ❑ Human - capital - physical & mental talents



www.wrightdairy.com/images/



www.preferredproduct.com



www.1-costaricalink.com

Economic growth and GNPs

- ❑ Virtually all seek economic growth: an increase in the capacity of the economy to provide goods and services for final use

- ❑ Growth accomplish by:
 - ❖ Maximizing flow of matter and energy
 - ❖ Population growth (consumption)
 - ❖ More consumption per person
 - ❖ Seeing nature as a superstore with infinite supply of resources



GNPs (market value of all goods & services in a year in monetary terms)



www.jenningsk12.net/

- ❑ Hide negative impact on humans and the rest of ecosphere of producing many goods and services
- ❑ Do not include depletion and degradation of natural resources or Earth capital upon which all economic ultimately depend
- ❑ They don't tell us about economic justice

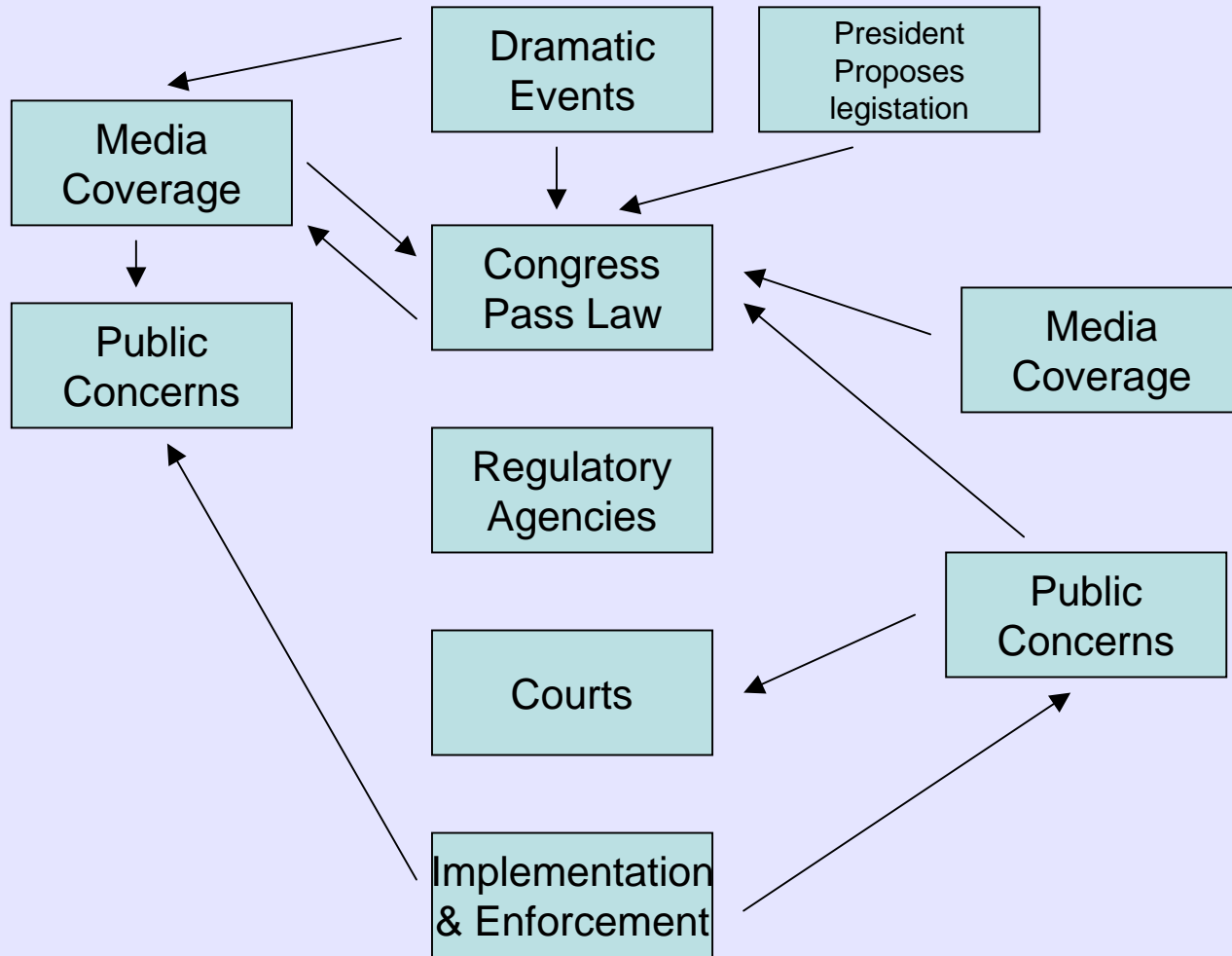
Economic Solutions

- ❑ Providing subsidies that encourage desirable behavior
- ❑ Withdrawing subsidies that encourage harmful behavior
- ❑ Enacting green-taxes
- ❑ Charging user fees
- ❑ Requiring manufacturers to pay a pollution prevention bond when they open a plant, incinerator or land fill

Politics and the Environment

- ❑ Politics is a process where individuals & groups try to influence/control policies & actions of government (local, state, national and international)
- ❑ Politics is concerned with who has power over the distribution of resources and benefits, who gets what, when and how
- ❑ Politics play a significant role in regulating the world's economic systems and persuading people towards common goals

Forces at work in the making of environmental policy



Environmental Ethics and Worldviews

- ❑ Conflicting views over how serious environmental problems are and what we do about them
- ❑ Conflicts arise out of differing worldviews
- ❑ Worldview: how we think the world works what we think our role should be, what we believe is right or wrong behaviors (ethics)
- ❑ Many flavors of worldviews, but 2 major types

Human - centered worldviews

- ❑ Prevail in most industrial societies today
- ❑ Planetary management worldview in the last 50 years
- ❑ Human-centered: man most dominant species, can and should manage planet for man's benefit
- ❑ Other species have instrumental value only whether useful to or not

Basic Beliefs of Human Centered Worldviews

- ❑ We are planet's most important species, we live apart from and we are in charge of nature
- ❑ There are always more and it's all of us
- ❑ All forms of economic growth is good
- ❑ A healthy environment depends on a healthy economy
- ❑ Our success depends on how well we can understand, control and manage the planet for our benefit



Life-centered worldviews: Working with the plants

- ❑ Nature exists for all earth's species
- ❑ There's not always more
- ❑ Some forms of economic growth are beneficial, some harmful
- ❑ A healthy economy depends on a healthy environment
- ❑ Our Success depends on learning to cooperate with one another and with the rest of nature

Earth Ethics: Respecting Life

Guidelines for working with the earth:

□ Ecosphere and Ecosystem:

- ❖ We should try to understand and cooperate with the rest of nature instead of trying to control or dominate it
- ❖ We should work with the rest of nature to sustain ecological integrity, biodiversity are the Earth life-support systems
- ❖ We have to alter nature to meet our needs, but must do so in ways that causes minimum damage
- ❖ Before altering nature we must carry out an EIA and a GIA, so that we can decide how to inflict minimal short term and long term damage

EE and Species and Cultures

- ❑ Every species has a right to live, struggle to live, because it exists (its created)
- ❑ We have the right to defend ourselves against species that do us harm but we must not cause premature extinction
- ❑ The best way to protect species is to protect their habitats and ecosystem
- ❑ No human culture should become extinct because of our actions

EE and Individual's responsibility

- We should not inflict unnecessary pain on species we hunt or raise for food or use for scientific purposes
- We should leave things in the wild unless their survival depends on human protection
- We should leave the earth in better conditions if not in the same state we found it
- We should get to know, care about and defend a piece of the earth

EE and Environmental Education

Learning how to work with and behave towards (ethics) the earth education
the goals of which may include

- ❑ Developing a respect for life
- ❑ Understanding what we know about how earth works and sustain itself
- ❑ Understanding connections
 - ▼Between people with nature
 - ▼Between people cultures/beliefs
 - ▼Between the problems we face
 - ▼Between the solutions to there

Understanding and Evaluating one's worldview

- ❑ Learning how to evaluate and resist advertising
- ❑ Learning to live sustainably in a place
- ❑ Fostering a desire to make the world a better place
- ❑ Making the leap from “I know” to “I care” to “I’ll do something”

What is needed

- ❑ Exposing teachers, media, corporate and government leaders to earth education
- ❑ Inserting examples of earth thinking into teaching materials at all levels
- ❑ Requiring students to take courses on earth education
- ❑ Developing ecological literacy
- ❑ Listening to earth:

“We can only be ethical in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love or have faith in. Experiencing the earth with our senses and heart”

Summary

- ❑ We looked at what is environment ethics and how it is linked to practical situations such as the economic
- ❑ EE requires knowledge about how the environment works or otherwise (science) and how humans affect it (the importance of economics)
- ❑ EE is connected to worldviews which are connected to beliefs and assumptions (culture and religion)
- ❑ EE which is the behavior towards the earth, is the main goal of environmental which is a must today

References

- ❑ G.Tyler Miller Jr, Sustaining the Earth: Integrated Approach, Wadsworth Publishing Co.,Belmont, 1998
- ❑ Martha Johnson, Love: Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge, Dene Culture Inst., IDRC, Ottawa 1992
- ❑ David Pepper, Modern Environment, An Intro, Routledge, London 1996
- ❑ R.P. Miara et al (eds.) Environmental Development & Education, Heritage Publishers, Sustainable Developmant Foundation, 1996, New Delhi
- ❑ Azizan Baharuddin, Environmental Values, Education and Environment Inst. Policy research, K. L. 1995