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THE FATE OF THE EARTH —THAT’S REALLY UP FOR GRABS

“We are taking apart the life-support system of Planet Earth” proclaims Dr. Ross McCluney, Principal Research Scientist at the Florida Solar Energy Center in Cocoa, Florida. He adds: “Without a major change in direction, we may be the first species to extinguish itself.” The problem is that the industrialized countries of the world have become too successful. “We’ve developed an amazingly advanced civilization, sent men to the moon, made enormous strides in science, medicine, and the arts, and are feeding more people than ever before,” says McCluney. “More people are materially prosperous now than at any time in civilization’s history. Our steady advance over the last several millennia can be thought of as a natural expression of humanity’s drive toward improved living conditions.” And we’ve succeeded beyond our wildest expectations. But we are facing a time when much of this might come to an end.

The Problem

In the early days, nature was often considered an obstacle to overcome, so we worked hard to build protections from the perceived dangers. This included advanced weaponry and strong buildings to protect us from both predators and the vagaries of weather and climate. Along the way we invented writing, and the printing press, so our new knowledge could be safeguarded in detail over the centuries. We invented new medicines to prolong life. And energy-intensive factories for manufacturing the amazing variety of products we feel are essential for life in the twenty-first century. Our enormously productive industrialized agriculture system has allowed us to feed an exponentially growing human population. These developments, coupled with the very recent discovery and use of fossil fuels, made advanced civilization possible.

“All good things come with a price, however” says McCluney. Following the recent shoot up of world population—coupled with powerful new technologies for exploiting and altering nature—Earth is now giving us signals that she’s had enough: global warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, fisheries nearing exhaustion, soil erosion and depletion, freshwater shortages worldwide, grain harvests down in China, species extinction, and the peaking and subsequent decline of world oil production. “There are real limits to growth,” McCluney writes, “and we are reaching them.”

As are many other scientists around the world, McCluney is raising the alarm, pointing to the fact that humanity is extinguishing plant and animal species at the appalling rate of over 100 each day, on average. He quotes author Daniel Quinn and scientist Alan Thornhill as saying that we are

systematically replacing nonhuman biomass with human biomass. “If the process continues,” McCluney says, “there will be nothing left for us to eat but each other!”

The Conclusion

After examining the issues for several decades, McCluney has reached the conclusion that our modern way of living has the unfortunate side-effect of irreversibly damaging important portions of the biological, physical, and chemical systems needed to support life on the planet—a conclusion resulting in the opening statement of this article. “The scientists who have studied these matters carefully have concluded that we have at most a couple of decades to turn things around, to back away from the cliff toward which we are headed, and find a truly sustainable way to live.” McCluney adds that changing our ways—living sustainably—will lead to even better lives than the ones we are now leading in the affluent nations. A truly sustainable society will be safer, less hectic, more meaningful, more rewarding, and more comfortable, with less psychological wear and tear and more inner (and outer) enjoyment of life. His new book explains these issues in a clear, easy-to-read manner, making difficult subjects accessible to the average reader.

The Result

Humanity’s Environmental Future comprehensively examines the wide variety of difficult environmental and socio-economic problems facing humanity as it struggles toward a sustainable future. The book is unique in its comprehensiveness, examining a broad variety of issues in a multidisciplinary manner, including chapters on leadership, creativity, psychology, behavior change, values and beliefs, education, science, business, energy, and growth.

The book concludes with several chapters dealing with specific reform proposals and positive suggestions for personal, group, and governmental action, concluding that achieving true sustainability will far surpass any of our previously amazing accomplishments.



The Back Cover

Powerful forces are driving us to degrade Earth’s life-support system—the biosphere. These assaults are taking their toll, resulting in a daily barrage of news reports of environmental decline and ecosystem breakdown, all of which threaten Earth’s ability to support its growing human population.

The issues involved are imbedded in the industrial world’s economic and business theories, lifestyles, development policies, and educational and political structures. They extend to the developing countries, as these follow similar growth, development, and

economic advancement patterns.

Humanity has already exceeded Earth's carrying capacity, in the absence of adequate supplemental energy inputs from the fossil fuels and other sources. As world petroleum production reaches a peak and then declines, there will be increasing pressure on energy prices to soar, possibly causing serious adverse economic consequences, and certainly stimulating major shifts in worldwide energy production and use. Major lifestyle and other changes are likely to result.

Humanity's Environmental Future addresses these issues head on, examines their causes, and provides a variety of suggestions for reform. A major conclusion is that misplaced values and beliefs both drive humanity toward environmental disaster and prevent us from taking sufficiently comprehensive actions to stop the unrelenting destruction.

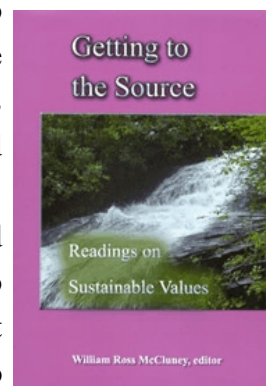
Seven chapters are devoted to the insights and skills most needed for humanity to reverse its destructive course and make the needed changes before things have advanced so far that it may become too late to stop the worst of the consequences.

Book Details

Humanity's Environmental Future: Making Sense in a Troubled World presents in Part I a comprehensive delineation of the problems facing humanity. Part II explains how humanity came to the amazing position of taking apart its life-support system and Part III addresses the changes we must make to avoid self-induced extinction. The book ends, in Part IV, with several chapters offering solution strategies, things we can do to alert the public and begin dealing with the threats facing us on a more systematic basis. 420 pages, Sun Pine Press, Cape Canaveral, FL, ISBN 09744461-0-6, \$44.95.

A second book is being published simultaneously. It a compilation of essays by prominent environmental writers, a supplement to the first one.

Getting to the Source: Readings on Sustainable Values was produced to illustrate and spotlight the writings of a number of thinkers and scholars in the reform movement. Included are excerpts from the writings of early thinkers Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson, from a 1969 exposé by Gene Marine, and essays by more recent writers Thomas Berry, Paul Hawken, and Daniel Quinn. Insightful essays are provided from scientists E. O. Wilson, Garrett Hardin, and Al Bartlett. *Getting to the Source* is an anthology of important readings to supplement *Humanity's Environmental Future*. Due to its general nature, it will be of value for many courses in the college curriculum, and is expected to enjoy a wide general readership.



317 pages, Sun Pine Press, Cape Canaveral, FL, ISBN 09744461-1-4, \$39.95

Taken together, these two books offer access to essential information and ideas which Dr. McCluney deems necessary to be truly educated—Earth-literate—in today’s world of extreme environmental distress.

About the Author

Currently Principal Research Scientist at the Florida Solar Energy Center, McCluney was a student leader in the University of Miami’s 1970 observance of the first national Earth Day environmental teach-in. He has been a member and occasional leader in several environmental organizations, including two local chapters of the National Audubon Society and a member of the Board of Directors of Florida Audubon Society. He has served on the National Advisory Board of the Environmental Ethics Institute of Miami-Dade College since 1990. His first book was *The Environmental Destruction of South Florida*, published by the University of Miami Press in 1971. McCluney has written and lectured widely on energy and environmental subjects. Since joining the Florida Solar Energy Center in 1976 his research has ranged from ocean thermal energy conversion to solar water heating and finally to assessing the energy and illumination performances of windows, skylights, and other daylighting systems. A current research interest deals with the optical performances of complex solar lighting systems: www.fsec.ucf.edu/bldg/active/fen/solarlighting.htm For more information about his two new books, visit the publisher’s web site at www.sunpinepress.com.

Ordering Information

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