

PERSPECTIVE

Making Sustainability Happen: The NAEP, from Now to Next

Don Sayre



Recognize the bold, red, stylized sphere, with a single small wave, on the cover of *Environmental Practice* and shown here in black and white? It is the logo of the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP). We are the only professional association authorized to call it ours, the only organization legally entitled to allow its display. Our logo symbolizes the tool of imagination, mankind's genius for inventive solutions. It is offered here as a reminder of who we are—the “now” NAEP—and as a lead-in for this Point of View on who we are becoming, the “next” NAEP.

Invention, Solution, Imagination—these same words are the foundation of the NAEP's upcoming conference, “Making Sustainability Happen: Goals, Practices, and Challenges.” This, our 34th annual conference, held May 3–6, 2009, questions the very course of humanity, offering a variety of optional fates for selection and for decision. It also questions the course and fate of the NAEP, offering national and international options for discussion and for decision. From this conference forward, the NAEP no longer simply represents professionals in environmental disciplines, but also the expanding number of professionals in the multi-disciplined arena of sustainability.

Ethical Practice, Technical Competence, Professional Standards—these commitments by each and every NAEP member are reflected in the content of the 2009 conference. From over 130 individual ideas submitted for consideration as papers, posters, panels, workshops, or presentations, every available session slot is now filled; in fact, for the first time, additional conference sessions are scheduled, warranted by both supply and demand. Add a collection of focused training opportunities and a careful selection of keynote speakers to the planned mix of information exchanges, and this conference achieves historic merit simply for its scope.

Honesty, Justice, Courtesy—these dynamic principles continue to shape our moral philosophies as NAEP members. They remain keystones for our conduct as individuals and as an organization. Each is accounted for in the 2009 conference agenda within the topical areas of conversation and dialogue to which the Working Groups are dedicated. Essential discussions are scheduled throughout the conference to reaffirm responsibility and ready participants to apply unique or special knowledge for the mutual benefit of earth, nature, and humanity.

Seek, Recognize, Determine, Encourage—these are important verbs within our history. They embody our origin as the only professional society created in response to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). We are the organization, called for by NEPA, of knowledgeable, skilled environmental professionals in government, industry, and academia. We are the credible, yet questioning, talent base NEPA expects for a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to the integrated use of natural and social sciences and environmental design arts when managing impacts on the environment. Our 2009 conference is rich in lessons learned over the decades by NEPA planners, doers, and regulators, adding nouns and names to the verbs of action.

The Yavapai Nation Four Diamond Radisson Fort McDowell Resort and Casino is the home and heart of the NAEP's 2009 conference. Easily accessible from Phoenix and Scottsdale, Arizona, this property rests in the quiet, isolated Fountain Hills. Its glass and stone architecture, wrapped by the Four Peaks and Red Mountains, are symbolic of the Nation's culture. Staggered windows mirror the Yavapai traditional basket-weaving pattern. A pebbled path winds through the landscape to represent the adjacent Verde and Salt rivers. Metal staves on the fences surround the pools, bent like the ribs of saguaro cactus; the pattern on the carpets reflects the surrounding Sonoran desert. Add to that the roof lines of the two We-Ko-Pa clubhouses, stretched and arched like wings of birds about to take flight.

Our logo reminds us to remain catalysts and agents of *invention, solution, and imagination*. Our standards of practice reinforce our moral purpose—*honesty, justice, and courtesy*. These elements keep us focused on our *ethical, technical, and professional commitments* as members, chapters, and university affiliates of the NAEP. Our Code of Ethics demands constant attention to our reason for being—to *seek, recognize, determine, and encourage*. It is a purposeful and proper fit to hold our conference, “Making Sustainability Happen,” at a symbolic site managed by Native Americans in a state and area where the environment takes on the larger meaning of “surroundings” and where sustainable development is the preferred, natural way of life, business, and education. Come, let's steer history.

Registration, lodging, and travel information are available online at www.naep.org.

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