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ENTERING THE WATERSHED : A NEW APPROACH TO SAVE AMERICA'S RIVER

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Bob Doppelt, Mary Scurlock, Chris Frissell, and James Karr. ENTERING THE WATERSHED : A NEW APPROACH TO SAVE AMERICA'S RIVER WATERSHEDS. Washington, D.C., Island Press, 1993. 462 pp. US\$55.00 cloth ISBN: 1-55963-247-7, US\$27.50 paper ISBN 1-55963-275-5. Recycled, acid-free paper.

Do it upstream, and save the good spots first. That, in a nutshell, is the new approach to saving America's river ecosystems. There is more of course, but anyone who has a river basin to save should take those words to heart.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions made by ENTERING THE WATERSHED is its detailed analysis and indictment of the failures of the current methods of river restoration. However, that may be one of its faults also; the authors may spend too much of their time casting indictments, and too little time explaining exactly how we might go about using this new approach.

Part I, 33 pages entitled "Forgotten Waters," is a description of the crisis in which America's waterways find themselves today, why and how they got into the shape they are in, and an overview of why our past and current attempts to fix these problems haven't worked, and won't work.

The 100-page Part II, "Recommendations," provides us with a number of broad-ranging recommendations. These include: Community and Ecosystem Based Efforts, Recommendations for New National Policies and Goals, Recommendations for Federal Lands, Recommendations for Private Lands, and finally, a section entitled "Recommendations for a Comprehensive Solution," which calls for an unlikely new federal law and program.

If I had to quibble over these recommendations (all of them based on long experience, and all of them clearly needed) it would be that, except for the community and ecosystem-based recommendations, they are based upon a vision of sudden cooperation on the part of Congress and the myriad federal (and state and local) agencies with responsibility for America's rivers. Such cooperation is unlikely in today's world.

Here in Florida, our Ecosystem Management effort at the regional, watershed, and community levels, closely resembles the community and ecosystem-based approach recommended by ENTERING THE WATERSHED. Here, the recommendations seem to be right on the mark: 1) Begin by protecting and securing the healthy areas first. 2) Find and protect other "hot spots" in the basin (areas where there still remains some biodiversity or naturalness that can be improved upon). 3) Look for potential hot spots that are near one of the other areas. These are areas that can be colonized as upstream habitats improve. 4) Identify and begin restoration of downstream river reaches that once supported important biological habitats and may support them again after extensive restoration.

The bulk of the book (beginning with page 135) is comprised of appendices which describe and critique at length "The Failure of Existing Riverine Protection and Restoration." One wonders if this amount of detail on what NOT to do is really needed.

Still, anyone who is contemplating taking on a river restoration project, whether for an agency or private group, will find something to think about in ENTERING THE WATERSHED.