

Department of Civil Engineering and Geological Sciences

Challenges and Innovation in Civil and Environmental Engineering

Natural Resources and Human Rights Toward a Declaration of Stewardship Responsibility



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Natural Resources are necessary for all human flourishing. They are scarce with complex dynamics. Access to them is fundamental to recognized Human Rights. Rights and Responsibilities are inextricably linked. Institutional development is needed to bring personal responsibility into association with rights. A Declaration of Stewardship Responsibilities is presented as a foundation.



A classification of Natural Resources is offered, emphasizing their occurrence and scarcity and their essential role in rights realization. Modes of failure in Natural Resource Management are described.



Human Rights instruments are examined for their intersection with Natural Resources. These documents recognize

- rights in housing, water, food, and health
- universal responsibilities coupled to rights
- transgenerational responsibility for sustaining resource availability
- the need for institutional development in achieving rights



Relative to Rights, Responsibilities are generally implied but remain under-developed. Recognition of a Right implies the need to provide it; yet alone, it does not create the Responsibility. A review of the Natural Law basis of Human Rights confirms

- the duality of rights and responsibilities
- an independent Basic Human Value in 'sociality', uniting rights and responsibilities



Institutions connect personal responsibility and rights. A trio of useful forms – governmental, corporate, and professional – represent independent loci of responsible action. Natural Resource occurrence is seldom congruent with any single form but requires synergy among them.

A declaration of stewardship responsibilities is presented for promulgation among professional, corporate, and governmental institutions.

For more information on this presentation, and to read Daniel R. Lynch's *A Declaration of Stewardship Responsibilities*: http://nd.edu/~jvwteach/challenges_fall_2008.html