

Guest Editorial

A National Restoration Association?

A recent revegetation meeting has generated some discussion and planning

Is the time ripe for formation of a national organization of environmental restorationists?

The success of the native plant revegetation symposium, held in San Diego in April, 1987 suggests that it may be.

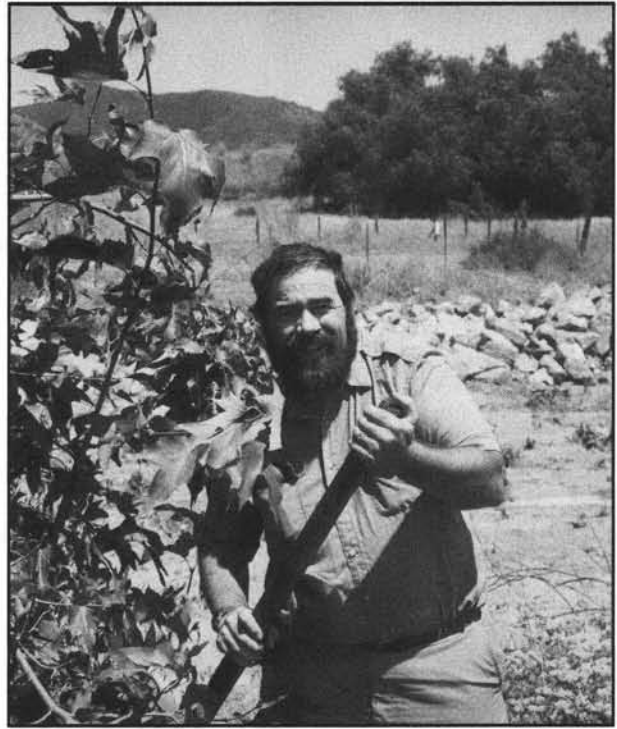
This meeting was the second one I have organized. The first, in 1984, was successful—but this one was even more so. Attendance was 278—up from 236 in 1984. There were more papers, many of very high quality. But most impressive to me was the level of interest and excitement evident throughout the meetings. All of us, I think, came away with a real feeling that something had happened during the three years since our last meeting, and that environmental restoration was beginning to emerge as a discipline in its own right.

One topic that came up repeatedly was the desirability of forming a national organization of environmental restorationists. Before the meeting was over, several of us—myself, Anne Sands, Steve Johnson, and Bill Jordan—had agreed to form a steering committee to explore the possibility of organizing such an association. This discussion is now underway, and my purpose here is to invite the readers of R&MN to participate in it.

Of course one question comes up immediately. Is a national organization concerned with restoration and habitat creation needed, or is there already a professional or scientific organization that serves this purpose? To answer the last part of this question first, there is not a national organization that serves this field of biological management. Although there are several smaller groups concerned with a specific ecological community or habitat such as prairie, riparian, or high alpine communities, these organizations are not large enough to handle a national level of activity.

But, is there a need for such an organization? This question is harder to answer. Yet, everyone I have talked with has agreed that a national organization should be formed.

What are the benefits that can be realized from a national organization? Annual meetings can provide forums for current projects. I feel that the primary reason for conducting conferences is to hear and discuss what is currently happening in the field. This is one of the reasons I initiated the 1984 and 1987 revegetation conferences here in San Diego. There is simply no substitute for one-on-one communication. Considering the recent increase in interest in restoration, and the numerous approaches that have been taken, more dialogue and record keeping needs to be conducted in this rapidly expanding field.



John Rieger

It is through a national organization that this goal can be accomplished. But more than a national meeting is needed. The relevant literature dealing with restoration projects and research is currently scattered in numerous journals, technical notes, and reports. An organized listing of current literature could be developed and kept up to date for the benefit of members. This sort of compiling of literature has been very useful for the ornithological societies with which I am familiar, and would certainly be as valuable in a field such as restoration, where sources of information are so diverse and so widely scattered.

An organization could also provide a detailed roster of members indicating area of experience and other pertinent facts, a procedure successfully used by The Wildlife Society. Depending upon the involvement of the members and the organization's objectives, it may also be possible to sponsor short-courses and workshops, develop informational literature for government agencies, and possibly influence legislation related to restoration.

In addition to the national meeting, the organization could encourage and co-sponsor local or regional meetings that would concentrate on regional community types and the problems characteristic of an area. This would be a service to regional groups, such as ours here in Califor-

nia, or organizations concerned with specific communities that already meet on a regular basis. The national organization need not be a restrictive body, but rather an organization that functions on a national scale, encouraging the development of a network that would serve the needs of smaller groups.

It is worth noting that the existence of this journal would permit the immediate establishment of communication among the members. This is a rather unusual situation—having a preexisting journal with an association to follow. Fortunately, the publisher is willing to cooperate in making R&MN the organ of the proposed organization, and ways of accomplishing this are currently being discussed.

For my own part, I can see only positives coming from the formation of a national organization, and I would very much like to know the thoughts of others across the nation. I believe the time is appropriate for the formation

of such an organization. We as practitioners of restoration biology owe it to the communities we try to duplicate to become more sophisticated, coordinated and organized. As I have noted, discussion of this subject is already underway. During the winter a number of us will be meeting to discuss possible directions and to lay plans for a national meeting, perhaps in 1989.

We are eager to hear from anyone who is interested in contributing to this discussion. If you are interested, please contact me; Anne Sands (Riparian Systems, 120 Evergreen, Mill Valley, CA 94941 (415) 381-2629); or Bill Jordan III (UW-Madison Arboretum, 1207 Seminole Highway, Madison, WI 53711 (608) 263-7889).

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Organization of Restoration Society Progresses First Annual Meeting Announced

Last-minute news as this issue of R&MN goes to press is that considerable progress has been made on the organization of the society John Rieger proposes in the preceding editorial. A steering committee has been formed and, as of mid-November, was preparing to file articles of incorporation under the name Society for Ecological Restoration and Management. The first annual meeting of the society has tentatively been scheduled to be held in the San Francisco Bay area

in January 1989, according to Rieger, who is serving as steering committee chairman.

Rieger said that planning and discussion will continue following sessions of the "Restoring the Earth" conference in Berkeley January 13-16, 1988, and that all interested persons are encouraged to participate. He said membership information will also be available at that time.