

In The Year . . .

I just returned from visiting my grandchild Anya in South Carolina. She just received her Masters of Restoration Ecology from Clemson University and contemplating her next move. I was hoping that she would go to school up north but instead Anya decided that the Southern Atlantic Coastal Plain bioregion was where she wanted to study and work. I took the HSHP (High Speed Hydrogen Powered) express train to Charlotte then transferred on to the Solbus. You know those new solar powered buses. It is amazing how far they have come with harnessing the power of the sun. Heck, I remember when I used to make this same trip with my wife and young children. We would hop into our gasoline engine car (remember those?), travel more than 400 miles over a series of highways, fight the traffic gridlock around Washington, DC, and arrive at our destination nine hours later. Now the trip takes less than four hours, traffic gridlock is a thing of the past, and I can relax and catch up on my reading or stare out the window at the diversity of landscapes that pass me by.

You see, it was only about 15 years ago that most of the major highways were dismantled and replaced with forested green corridors under the Ecological Corridors and Working Landscape Act passed by the Green Party administration in the White House. Most impressive on the U.S. east coast is that these corridors, through a network of auxiliary green corridors, link large patches of forest habitat along the Allegheny Mountains and Atlantic seaboard. In fact, my oldest daughter Caroline was in charge of one of the design teams that oversaw the ecological restoration program for these areas. She modestly declares that she really wasn't in charge; she just facilitated a community by community process of engaging people all along the planned greenway corridors in a collaborative and integrative design process. She keeps reminding me that they were the ones that developed the ecological restoration framework using the 7th edition of the SER Primer, made the strategic decisions on the restoration process, and helped set up the institutional and governance structures that gave them life.

This process also galvanized efforts by towns to establish an interwoven network of working landscapes that surrounds and weaves through the urban heart of these communities. Now these working landscapes, set aside for local organic food production, wastewater treatment, urban habitat, and

recreation, are ecologically connected to the larger corridors as part of the overall ecological restoration program.

The most rewarding part, she says, is the amount of jobs that the project created and how it helped revitalize many smaller communities suffering from the collapse of the fossil fuel industry and climate change, not to mention all of the side effects of urban sprawl. From what I hear, many people that were instrumental in the design process are now employed to manage these greenways to ensure their long-term resiliency. Hopefully their jobs will get easier now that greenhouse gas emissions have essentially been eliminated throughout the world and climate change is predicted to level off to background rates in about 50 years.

I have to remember to send Caroline the front page article in the newspaper, right next to the W/H (Wellness and Happiness) and the Biodiversity Indices, about the recent sighting of a male wolf using the Patuxent CL (Corridor Link) greenway in Maryland. This is great news! The restoration process of reintroducing wolves to the Allegheny Mountain corridor has proven wildly successful while the reintroduction process along the Atlantic Coast corridor has been adequate. But up until now there hasn't been much evidence that the two populations were commingling. Maybe this sighting will be one of many in the future. This issue of wolf reintroduction was extremely controversial in the beginning, but using the resources from SER's Global Restoration Network, the Bioregional Department of Ecology and Community came to the conclusion that in order to facilitate whole-scale ecological restoration of the landscape, all trophic levels needed to be represented. It took a lot of hard work and persistence to make this happen, but once communities began to realize the social, economic, and health benefits of an ecologically healthy, intact landscape, the decision to move forward with the reintroductions became much easier.

I need to go. I still take a daily walk out to visit the community volunteer restoration corps. They like to ask me questions about how Anya is doing and what restoration was like back in the 'Stone Ages' of 2007. Those were the years?

Where are you going to be in 2050? How will you Restore the Future? Send in your 2050 Restore the Future stories (www.info@ser.org) and we will post them on the Global Restoration Network. Let us know what you think.

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