

MAKING THE VINEYARD A SUSTAINABLE ISLAND

PARADISE LOST?
Are We Loving the
Vineyard to Death?

FORUM PROCEEDINGS



Held on Wednesday, July 20, 2005
Far Barn, Polly Hill Arboretum, West Tisbury

"Paradise Lost? Are We Loving the Vineyard to Death?" was the subject of the second forum of the summer 2005 series. It was held on Wednesday, July 20, 2005 at the Far Barn of the Polly Hill Arboretum in West Tisbury.

The 2005 series is entitled "Making the Vineyard a Sustainable Island". It marks the second year of public forums focused on areas in which the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) is actively engaged. The fourth forum in 2005 was co-sponsored by the Polly Hill Arboretum, the Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce, the Vineyard Conservation Society and the Martha's Vineyard Water Alliance. Funding for the series was provided by a generous grant from the Edey Foundation. The Organizing Committee included Judy Crawford (Moderator), Mark London (MVC Executive Director), Susan Mercier (MVC Administrative Assistant), Katherine Newman (MVC Commissioner), Linda Sibley (MVC Commissioner) and Bill Veno (MVC Staff and Producer of this forum). These proceedings were prepared by Judy Crawford and edited by Jo-Ann Taylor. Thanks to Christine Rose and MVTV for videotaping and broadcast of this production.

This forum dealt with issues involving sustainability and environmentally friendly design.

Approximately 100 interested Islanders gathered in the Far Barn of the Polly Hill Arboretum to hear a keynote speaker followed by a group of local panelists. Following their remarks, the speakers and panelists engaged in a lively discussion with the audience.

The forum was moderated by Judy Crawford and was made up of the following elements:

- Keynote Speaker, Stephen Kellert, Professor of Social Ecology, Yale School of Forestry and Environment
- Guest presenter, Ned Robinson Lynch, Steering Committee Member for Sustainability Indicators
- Panel Discussion: Linda Sibley and Art Flathers
- A question and answer period

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DVDs of all forums and written summaries of the proceedings are available in all Vineyard libraries or from the Martha's Vineyard Commission; proceedings are available on the Commission's website at www.mvcommission.org.

1. Interaction Between People and the Natural Environment – Stephen Kellert

The first speaker was Stephen Kellert, a professor of Social Ecology at Yale School of Forestry and Environment and the recipient of numerous conservation awards. He is a prolific author focusing much of his work on understanding the connection between human and natural systems. His latest book, *Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection*, is scheduled for publication by Island Press later this year. Stephen Kellert is a seasonal Vineyard resident.



Stephen Kellert began his remarks by indicating that “Restorative Environmental Design” could make an important contribution to ensuring that the quality of life on Martha’s Vineyard is sustainable.

He then proceeded to outline two main aspects of restorative environmental design:

The first is what we mean by sustainability. The term sustainability is illusive, often meaning different things to different people with different interests. In fact, a Yale graduate student recently compiled 180 pages of definitions of sustainability.

In talking about sustainability, there is often a tendency to unduly emphasize factors such as economic and material variables, which are easily quantifiable, and to underemphasize factors which don’t measure well, such as a sense of place, the feeling of history and culture, the aesthetic quality of the environment, or the emotional psychological or spiritual connections to nature. The latter can be extraordinarily important to the sustainability of any place, particularly Martha’s Vineyard.

The so-called “hard”, i.e. measurable, indicators of sustainability are important; but they will never be sufficient, if taken by themselves and to the exclusion of the “soft” indicators such as aesthetics or the spirit of a place. In fact, failure to take “soft” indicators adequately into account can create enormous distortions in assessing progress toward achieving sustainable design.

The second aspect of restorative environmental design is well expressed by the title of this forum, “Paradise Lost: Are We Loving the Vineyard to Death?”

Loving a place to death, as the title suggests, can be responsible for losing the very essence of what it is we all love about the Vineyard?

Too much of a good thing, such as love, affection or a sense of beauty, can be just as serious a threat to a place like the Vineyard as the seemingly more obvious challenges of resource exploitation.

Stephen Kellert then used the term “biophilia” to describe the innate human affinity for the natural world. The term “biophilia” is meant to capture the notion that too much or too little affection or

aesthetic attraction can be just as much of a challenge to sustainability as excessive material consumption or even the fear of nature.

Having established these two points, Mr. Kellert then proceeded “to weave together some fairly complicated strands of theory, science and practice.”

The environmental crisis is largely a crisis of the built environment, which has degraded and depleted our natural systems.

- Construction and operation of the built environment consumes:
 - 40% energy
 - 30% raw materials
 - 25% water resources

- At the same time it produces:
 - 40% air emissions
 - 20% water effluents
 - 25% solid waste

Another important effect of the built environment is the separation and alienation from nature felt by many human beings. Nowhere is the absence of sensory experience more apparent than in many modern settings, which minimize contact with natural features whether air, daylight, views of vegetation and natural materials, patterns, colors, etc. Much of the modern built environment isolates people from the natural environment, much as cages did in old style zoos.

The US Commission on Ocean Policy has reported on the rapid growth in the US coastal areas, stating that:

“During the past thirty years, coastal areas have experienced the addition of more than 37 million people, 19 million homes, and now serve as the home to over 50% of the US population on 17% of the land area. Each year, coastal development contributes to the disappearance of an estimated 20,000 acres of sensitive habitat.”

Mr. Kellert emphasized that according to recent studies, land use and development has been so extensive that fully 80% of everything built in the United States has been constructed in the last fifty years.

The prevailing paradigm of design of the human built environment entails:

- Enormous energy and resource consumption and waste generation
- Widespread environmental degradation
- Extensive pollution and contamination
- Separation and alienation from nature

This last point, the separation and alienation from nature, deserves additional explanation. It is often underestimated. There is increasing evidence that contact with the natural environment is

not an amenity, not a luxury, but a necessity for our health and well being. A connection with nature is particularly critical to healthy childhood maturation and development. We are, after all, biological creatures. We evolved in a biological world.

Evidence Linking Contact with Nature with Human Physical and Mental Well-Being

- Contact with nature enhances human health and healing (e.g. even passive viewing of nature in hospital rooms influences surgical recovery)
- People living near open spaces experience fewer health problems than people lacking such contact
- Experimental contact with nature critical in childhood emotional and cognitive development
- Office settings with natural lighting and ventilation enhance work performance and reduces stress
- Contact with nature enhances cognitive functioning on tasks requiring concentration and memory
- Recent neuro-scientific studies show human brain functioning tied to sensory features and patterns of natural environment



Recently, Steven Kellert and his colleagues completed a large scale study in the New Haven, CT area called the Greater New Haven Watershed (Mastodon) Study. The basic premise of the study was that ecological and human systems are inextricably connected, exercising reciprocal and powerful, although poorly understood, effects upon one another in all human settings, urban and non-urban.

Major findings of the Mastodon Study:

- Higher environmental quality communities value nature more positively and have higher quality of life
- Lower environmental quality communities have less environmental interest and lower quality of life
- Findings occurred in urban and non-urban communities alike
- Findings occurred independent of education and income levels
- Relationship between human and natural systems was highly influenced by highly valued landscape features

In summary, healthy communities tend to be characterized by a greater frequency of “ecosystem services” (see list below), which in turn generate environmental features to which people assign value (such as clean air, fast flowing streams, large trees), which in turn generate an array of benefits referred to as “biophilia” (see list below). When these benefits are realized, they tend to create in people an attachment to the place where they live. Finally, this attachment becomes that illusive phenomenon we call “quality of life”.

Here are the elements of each of these three variables: ecosystem services, biophilia and spirit of place.

1. Ecosystem Services:

- Decomposition of organic matter
- Remediation of pollutants
- Pest Control
- Pollination and seed dispersal
- Hydrological regulation
- Soil formation
- Plant and animal production
- Atmospheric regulation
- Wood products
- Wild food products
- Medicines
- Biotechnology



Waiting for the fireworks

2. Biophilia

- Aesthetic – physical attraction and appeal of nature
- Dominionistic – mastery and control over nature
- Humanistic – emotional bonding with nature
- Naturalistic – exploration and discovery of nature
- Moralistic – moral and spiritual relation to nature
- Negativistic – fear and aversion to nature
- Scientific – knowledge and understanding of nature
- Symbolic – nature as a source of language and imagination
- Utilitarian – nature as a source of material benefit

3. Sense or Spirit of Place

Martha's Vineyard is a great example. According to Rene Dobos, the Nobel Prize winner: "People want to experience the sensory, emotional and spiritual satisfactions that can be obtained only from an intimate interplay, indeed from an identification with the places in which they live. This interplay and identification generates *the spirit of the place*. The environment acquires the attributes of a place through the *fusion of the natural and the human order*."

Steven went on to speak about the concept of "placelessness". In quoting Mark Sagoff, he said:

"The concept of place... is an idea of surroundings that arises from harmony, partnership and intimacy. Much of what we deplore about the subversion of nature – and fear about the destruction of the [natural and human] environments – has to do with the loss of... security one has when one relies upon the characteristic aspects of place and communities one knows well. What may worry us most is the prospect of becoming strangers in our own land."



Returning to the actual design and development of the built environment, Mr. Kellert deplored its frequent lack of connection to the natural world. He described the characteristics of the prevailing approach to designing the built environment in this country:

- Enormous energy and resource consumption and waste generation
- Widespread environmental degradation
- Extensive pollution and contamination
- Placelessness and separation of people from the natural environment

David Orr describes living with this prevailing paradigm as follows:

“Most modern buildings and landscapes reflect no understanding of ecology or ecological processes. Most tell its users that knowing where they are is unimportant. Most tell its users that energy is cheap and abundant and can be squandered. Most are provisioned with materials and water and dispose of their wastes in ways that tell its occupants they are not part of the larger web of life. Most resonate with no part of our ecology, evolutionary experience or aesthetic sensibilities.”

Much talk about sustainable design focuses on how to reverse this trend. Mr. Kellert prefers the term *restorative environmental design*, rather than sustainable design because it speaks directly to the need to restore our connection with our natural surroundings by rebuilding the relationship between natural and human environments.

Restorative environmental design not only includes building and landscape designs that avoid harmful impacts on the natural environment and human health, but also those that foster a positive connection between people and nature, particularly in places that have cultural meaning and ecological integrity. It promotes designs that avoid, minimize and mitigate harmful impacts of constructed buildings and landscapes on the natural environment.

Restorative environmental design takes into account the following considerations:

- Energy efficiency and renewable energy use
- Climate neutrality
- Minimal resource use
- Water quantity and quality
- Soil erosion and sedimentation
- Biological diversity
- Air quality and avoidance of heat island effects
- Waste generation and pollution
- Low toxicity materials
- Recycled and reused products
- Site and landscape

Low environmental impact is not enough. First, a focus on avoiding the negative does little to create positive benefits that enhance people's health, productivity and well-being. Second, an exclusively low impact approach is rarely sustainable over the long-term because these more limited designs fail to promote a beneficial experience and connection to nature.

James Wines put it this way:

"People will never want to keep an aesthetically inferior building around, no matter how well stocked with cutting edge thermal glass, photovoltaic cells, recycled materials, and zero emissions carpeting... the mission [of sustainable design] is also to recover those fragile threads of connectedness with nature."

What we need in our built environment is a positive environmental impact or what Steven calls *biophilic* designs. These include buildings and landscapes that enhance human physical and mental well-being by fostering positive connections with nature in places of cultural and ecological meaning and familiarity. Most of our revered *biophilic* buildings, such as Frank Lloyd Wright's "falling Waters", are replete with these features.

Two elements of *biophilic* design:

- Organic or naturalistic design: shapes and forms in the built environment that directly, indirectly or symbolically elicit a human affinity for nature. Elements of organic-naturalistic design include:
 - Natural lighting
 - Natural ventilation
 - Natural materials
 - Vegetation
 - Water
 - Shapes and forms that mimic nature
 - Ornamentation that stimulates natural features
 - Views and vistas of exterior environment
 - Patina of age, time and evolutionary change
 - Settings characterized by ordered complexity

- Settings that foster enticement and exploration
 - Settings that encourage aesthetic and recreational values of nature, informational and intellectual values of nature, and emotional and spiritual values of nature.
- Vernacular or place-based design: buildings and landscapes that connect with the history, culture and ecology of an area, thereby fostering a sense and spirit of the place. Elements of vernacular or place-based design include:
 - Ecological, cultural and historical relationships
 - Sense and spirit of place

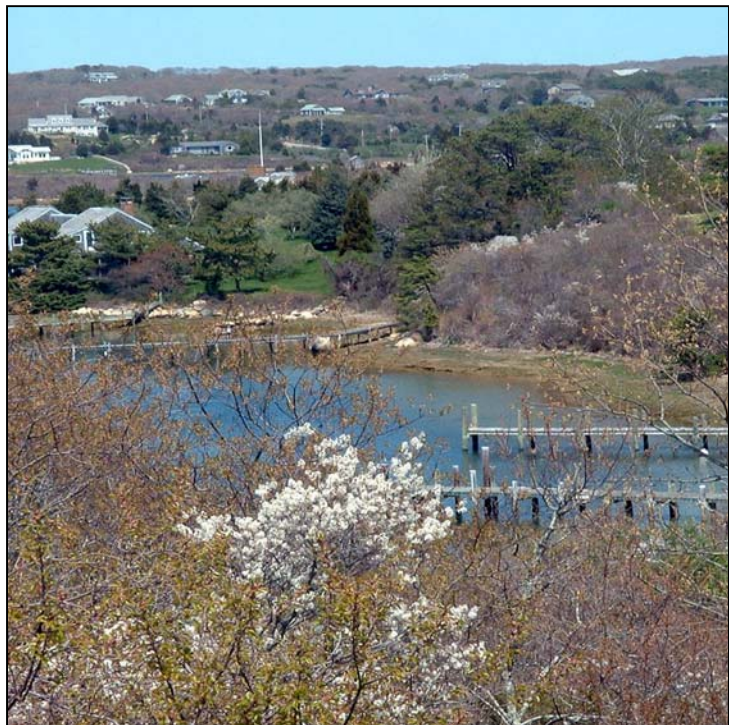
Vernacular architecture often integrates an environmental focus with specific locations. In vernacular architecture, physical forms such as climate, materials, direction, sun, wind, rainfall and more often reflect an organic rationale – not only in use of natural materials but in their integration with a range of environmental forces.

Mr. Kellert illustrated a chart explaining the connections inherent in various forms of restorative design:

<u>Human and Natural Systems</u>	Lead to	<u>Design Approaches</u>
Ecosystem Ecology	> > > >	Low Impact Design
<i>Biophilia</i>	> > > >	Organic Design
Spirit of Place	> > > >	Vernacular Design

How, then, should these considerations guide our thinking on Martha’s Vineyard if we are to ensure it’s sustainability in the face of the growth we are experiencing?

Emphasizing preference for a bottom-up approach, Mr. Kellert said that top-down regulations can create standards for *biophilic* designs, but there must be political support for their implementation. The public must understand the elements of *biophilic* design and must be convinced that it can work. Preserving the integrity of the land is in every landowner’s self-interest. Hopefully our strong sense of community will help us understand the elements of *restorative environmental design* and their importance in preserving our connection to the land and the sea.



Mr. Kellert concluded his remarks with a quote by Aldo Leopold:

“There must be some force behind conservation, more universal than profit, less awkward than government, less ephemeral than sport, something that reaches into all times and places... something that brackets everything from rivers to raindrops, from whales to hummingbirds, from land-estates to window boxes... I can see only one such force: a respect for land as an organism... out of love for and obligation to that great biota... By and large, our present problem is one of attitudes and implements. We are remodeling the Alhambra with a steam shovel, and we are proud of our yardage. We shall hardly relinquish the shovel, which after all has many good points, but we are in need of gentler and more objective criteria for its successful use.”



2. Vineyard Sustainability Indicators Project Summary – Ned Robinson-Lynch

Ned Robinson-Lynch provided an overview of the Vineyard Sustainability Indicators Project. He served on the Steering Committee for the Project from its inception and was formerly the Executive Director of Martha's Vineyard Community Services.

Ned began by acknowledging three people from the Martha's Vineyard Commission, Mark London, Bill Veno and Christine Flynn, for their work and support of the Vineyard Sustainability Indicators Project.

By way of background, a Steering Committee was formed to wrestle with two questions: How do we determine whether life, as we know it on Martha's Vineyard, is sustainable? And what are the best measures or gauges of sustainability for the Vineyard?

First, the Committee defined the term "indicators":

- Tools for positive change
- Not ends in themselves
- Most effective when linked to a specific purpose
 - Public education
 - Policy background
 - Performance evaluation

The purpose of the project was to create a broad set of measures to gauge the natural, economic, social and individual well-being of Martha's Vineyard and its inhabitants. The indicators were meant to highlight the interconnections between different issues and stimulate the community to think broadly in its approaches to decision-making about the future of the Island.

The project was initiated by Leah Smith and Paddy Moore, who proposed the watershed initiative grant opportunities to the MVC in 2000. There was a matching grant from the Edey Foundation, and additional funding from the Wampanoag Tribe and the MVC. The MVC was awarded the grant and selected consultant Alan AtKisson in the Spring of 2001 to work with the Committee. With that, the community-based process was underway.

The Martha's Vineyard Commission already had a Planning and Economic Development Committee. That group spawned a Steering Committee (22 people), a Technical Advisory Group (24 people) and a Focus Group (12 people).



*Ned Robinson-Lynch
(photo by M.C. Walla)*

The original Steering Committee consisted of the following members:

- John Abrams
- Marie Allen
- Renee Balter
- John Early
- Ned Robinson-Lynch
- Chris Murphy
- Priscilla Sylvia
- Woody Vanderhoop
- Kate Warner
- Paul Watts

Later, additional Steering Committee members were added to the group:

- Jim Athearn
- Charles Bradley, Jr.
- Tad Crawford
- Mary Etherington
- Ray LaPorte
- James Lengyel
- Normam Rankow
- B. T. Robinson
- Cassie Roessel
- Andrea Rogers
- Skye Sonneborn
- Richard Toole

Since 2002, as time allowed, the MVC staff worked to complete the indicators with continued periodic involvement by the Steering Committee and the consultant. In November of 2004, the Steering Committee categorized the indicators with the intent of releasing them for community comment and use, subject to further research. The rollout of the proposed indicators took place at this July MVC Sustainability Forum.

The steps of the process included determining the Islands assets and the issues threatening them, defining potential indicators and their measures, creating linkages among indicators and leveraging actions already underway.

The Steering Committee then determined the elements that made for a good indicator:

- Relevant
- Valid
- Credible
- Measurable
- Consistent and Reliable
- Comparable
- Understandable

- Leading
- Compelling
- Engaging for the Media
- Accessible and Affordable

Additional questions needed to be answered for an indicator to make the cut to the final list. Does the indicator apply to the whole community? Does it resonate with community vision and values? Does it connect with other important indicators? Does it focus on resources and address real needs? And finally, does it promote creativity and a call to action?

Initial indicators which had a fair amount of existing data included:

- Land Use
- Great Pond Water Quality
- Solid Waste
- Energy Use
- Affordable Housing
- Jobs
- Transit Ridership
- Civic Participation
- First Time Homeowners
- Access to Doctors
- Emergency Room Visits
- Seasonal Residents
- Cultural Continuity
- Sense of Community
- Locally Registered Cars

Relevant indicators still needing data:

- Habitat
- Groundwater Quality
- Air Quality
- Cost of Living
- Immigrant Workers
- Travel to the Mainland
- Infrastructure
- Beach Access
- Library Use
- Health Insurance
- Mental Health
- Domestic Abuse
- Public Safety
- Youth Opportunities
- Steamship Excursion Rates

Several other indicators were considered by the Steering Committee but were considered less compelling and harder to define. These include groundwater levels, water consumption, sea level change, guest houses, commuting, seasonality of businesses, education and tranquility.

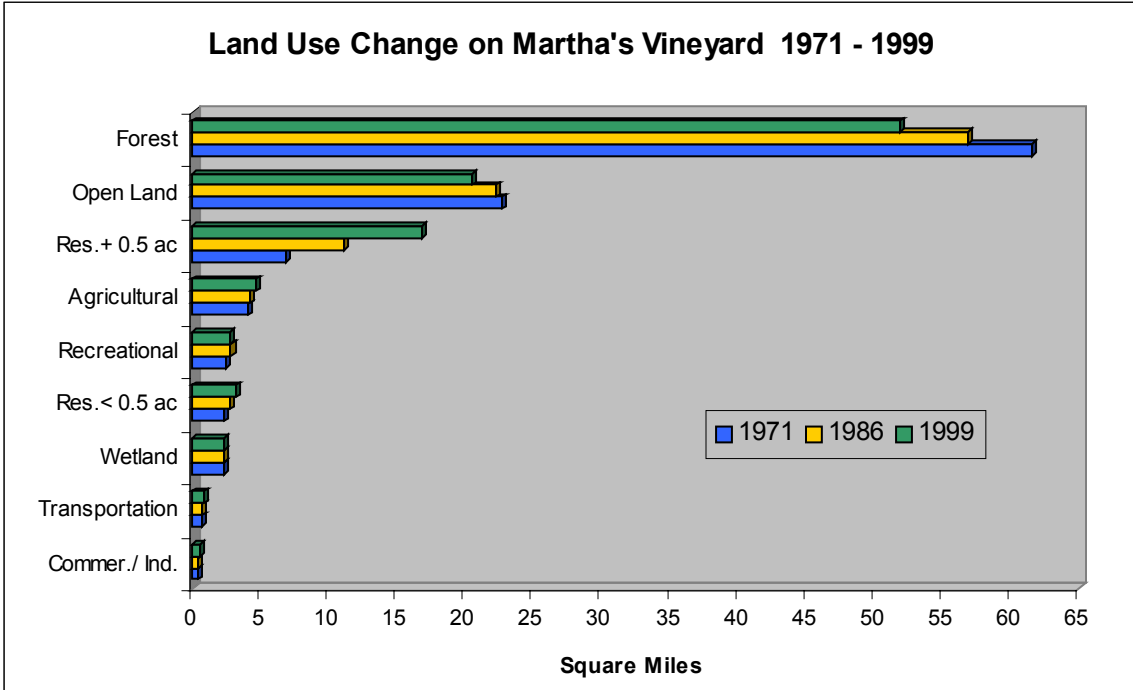
The final list of indicators to be used for the project include:

- Land use (open space to sprawl)
- Great Ponds Water Quality (shellfish health and harvest)
- Solid Waste (increase by tons of waste annually)
- Energy Consumption (annual kilowatt hours used)
- Housing Affordability (cost of owning a home)
- Jobs (distribution of types of jobs)
- Transit Ridership (annually and monthly)
- Political Engagement (how people are engaged in political action)
- First-time Homeowners (new building permits, new land purchases)
- Access to Primary Care (number of full-time doctors)
- Emergency Room Visits (annually and monthly)
- Seasonal Residents (length of shoulder seasons, holiday residence)
- Cultural Continuity (shellfish permits issued)
- Sense of Community (population living in same house for more than five years)
- Traffic Congestion (number of vehicles tracked annually and monthly)

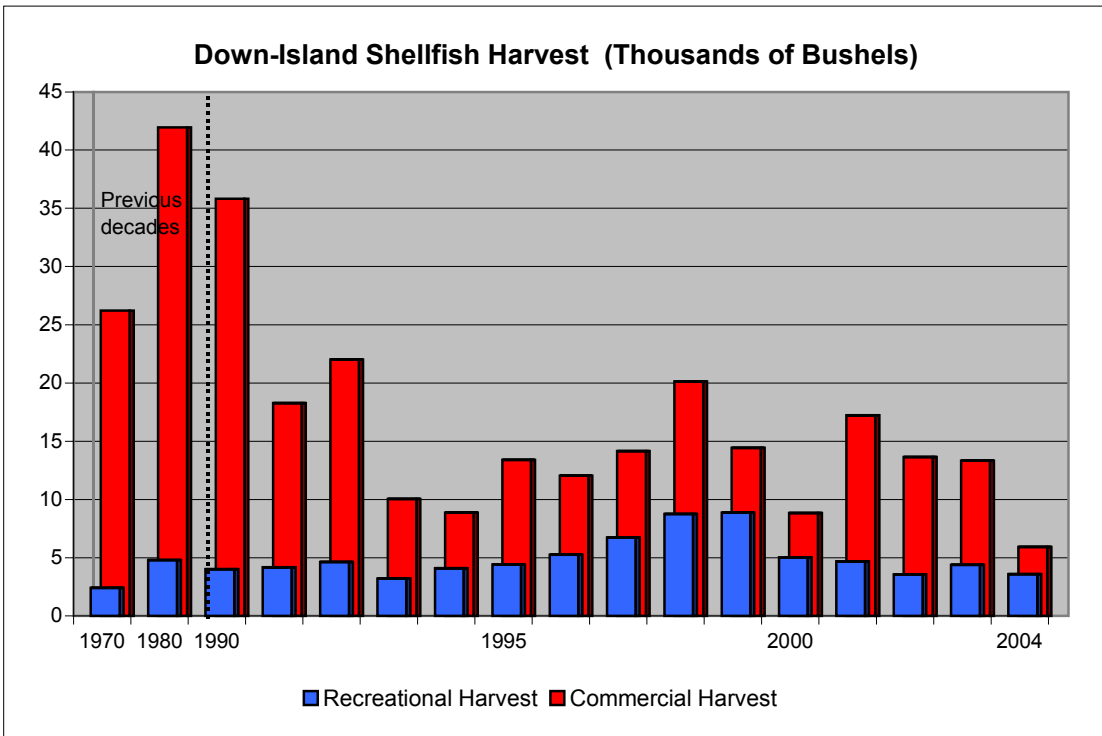
What's next? The existence of the draft indicators has already influenced some MVC efforts, such as surveys of household size, evaluation of water quality, and identifying the number of resources to fill voids in local economic data.

The Steering Committee and the MVC also plan on soliciting community feedback on the remaining relevant indicators, and promoting possible "adoption" of individual indicators by groups with a special interest in them.

Ned concluded by saying that we need community feedback on how best to utilize the sustainability indicators to improve decision-making on Martha's Vineyard. He encouraged the public to view the full Sustainability Indicators Report on the MVC website www.mvcommission.org or by calling the MVC offices at 508.693.4353.



Land Use Changes, from the Sustainability Indicators Report



Shellfish harvest trends, from the Sustainability Indicators Report

3. Panel Discussion

The panelists: Art Flathers and Linda Sibley then stepped forward and were introduced.

Linda Sibley

Panelist Linda Sibley, Chair of the Martha's Vineyard Commission, spoke first. She first coined the phrase "loving the Vineyard to death" a few months ago when she was explaining to a group of colleagues that when people come to the Vineyard to visit, they usually are revitalized by the tranquility of the Island and by their contact with nature. They often like it here so much that they want to come back, rent for a longer period of time, and eventually many of them buy or build homes here.

They are coming faster than they are leaving, said Ms. Sibley. With each new person, each new house built, each new land purchase, we incrementally erode the very thing that brought us here in the first place. Admittedly pessimistic, she does not believe this trend will end until we have degraded the natural and spiritual qualities of the Island to the point that no one would want to live here any longer. It is the quality of our everyday life experiences that keeps us here. If these degrade, as they were in places like Coney Island and the New Jersey shore, the Vineyard will have little left to attract people.

Linda asserted the need to shape the environment and control the rapid rate of growth. She acknowledged the affordable housing groups and the energy movement for their huge efforts to fundamentally change the way things are headed. However, this will all be for naught if we keep bringing more people and building more houses without limits.

Art Flathers

Panelist Art Flathers spoke next and expressed another viewpoint. He feels we can become a sustainable island, if we get to work immediately. He offered four pairs of glasses through which we can look at what we are doing to the environment: population, location, occupation and transportation.

- Population: We are an island of some 15,000 plus people, and if you include seasonal residents, many more than that, but we cannot grow indefinitely.
- Location: We live where 70-80% of the land is zoned for three acres or more for building purposes. Recent real estate values are rising at an astronomical rate.
- Occupation: As a rural community, our businesses are being hurt by Internet purchasing. If we remove the ability of businessmen to function here, we lose another key ingredient of sustainability.
- Transportation: Again, as a rural community, we need our cars to access the various parts of the island. It is becoming essential that we solve our parking and circulation issues.

"We need to be good stewards of what we have. We are not making any more land!" warned Mr. Flathers.

APPENDICIES

A1 The Martha's Vineyard Sustainability Indicators Project

This article, by Mark London, MVC Executive Director, and Bill Veno, Senior Planner, appeared in the Martha's Vineyard Times on July 14, 2005 and in the Vineyard Gazette on July 15, 2005.

If cars didn't have speedometers, people would find it much harder to know how fast they were going, and how to adjust their speed to be under the limit. It would be harder to follow through with a weight-loss program without a scale or tape measure. A useful first step in any program of behavior adjustment is having reliable, quantifiable information on where we are, as we progress towards our goal.

This is the basis for Sustainability Indicators, an international movement to help communities move towards greater sustainability by providing accurate information on how sustainable they are today, coupled with a program to update this information on a regular basis.

At the end of 2000, a group of Islanders decided to do just this for the Vineyard. The aim was to create a broad set of measures that would provide a gauge of the natural, economic, social and individual well-being of Martha's Vineyard and its inhabitants. These indicators would illustrate the interconnection of issues and stimulate the community to think more broadly in its decision-making.

The next year, a consultant was hired – thanks to grants from the Commonwealth and the Edey Foundation – and a multi-layered community input structure began, involving about a hundred people on various steering, advisory, and technical committees. Over the course of three sessions spanning seven months, the advisory group identified community assets and concerns, potential indicators and how to measure them, linkages among the indicators, and inventoried actions already underway affecting each indicator. Unfortunately, efforts faltered in the spring of 2002.

The term "sustainability" has become a catch-all that, like "truth" and "justice", means very different things to different people. Its widespread use can be traced back to the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), which emphasized the intimate interrelatedness between the natural environment and human society including the economy. The Brundtland Commission called for the development of new ways to measure and assess progress toward sustainable development.

Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It requires taking a holistic approach, looking at the social, ecological, and economic consequences of human activity – both positive and negative – in a way that reflects the costs and benefits for human and ecological systems, in monetary and non-monetary terms. It considers equity and disparity within the current population, and between present and future generations. It considers the ecological conditions on which life depends, considers economic development and other, non-market

activities that contribute to human/social well-being. It is intimately related to the carrying capacity of the land.

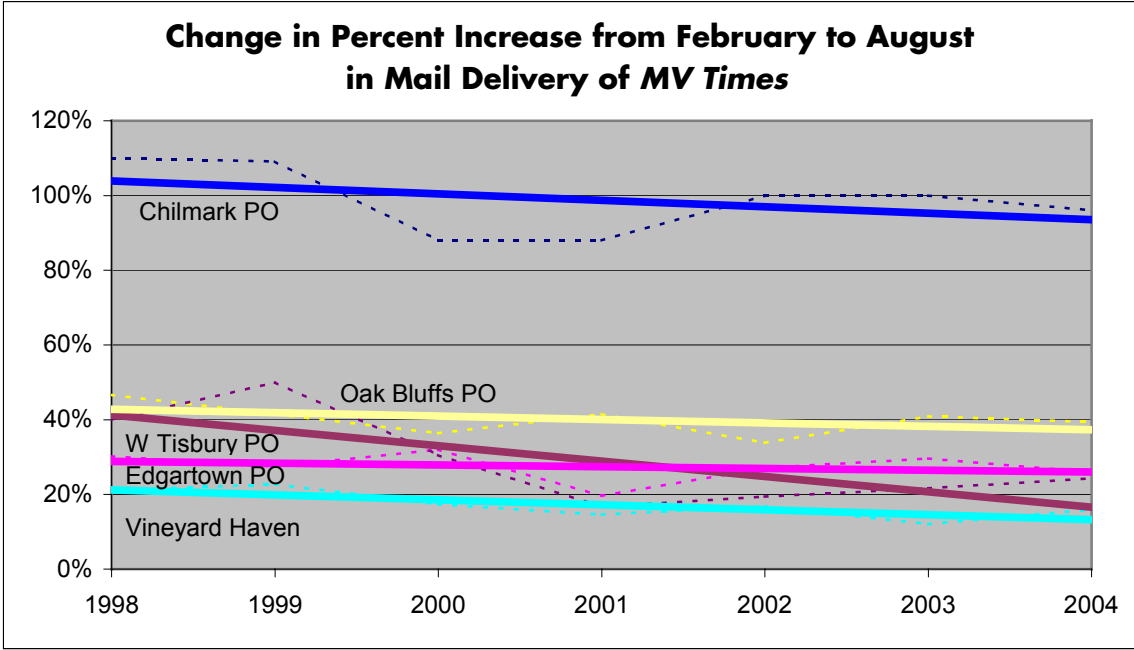
Six months ago, members of the staff of the Martha's Vineyard Commission and members of the project steering committee met several times to discuss how to revive the effort. We decided to finish off those indicators that could be finalized relatively expeditiously, and to publish them in conjunction with a forum on sustainability that the MVC was planning for this summer. So Commission staff is putting the finishing touches on a somewhat abridged version of the Martha's Vineyard Indicators Project for release at the July 20th MVC forum on sustainability entitled "Paradise Lost? – Are We Loving the Vineyard to Death?"

The Martha's Vineyard Indicators are organized into four broad categories: Economy, Nature, Society and Well Being. Of the original 37 potential indicators, 15 are included in this report. For each indicator, the committee chose a specific measure to monitor. For example, to monitor Political Engagement they chose the percent of registered voters who voted at Town Meeting and the percent that voted in the annual town election. Sometimes, there is no obvious way to measure an indicator, so a "proxy" is used to try to get at the information indirectly; for example, to measure Sense of Community, the proxy used is the percent of people living in the same place for the past five years.

For several of the indicators excluded from the current report, there is simply no reliable information available (which in itself is a type of indicator). For example, the most recent information about the cost of living on the Vineyard was a 1998 statewide study – using 1990 data – performed by the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, which calculated a so-called "Self-Sufficiency Standard", how much money working adults must earn to meet the basic needs of their families for housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and taxes. At that time, the percent of households whose income did not meet the standard was 27%, about the same as the overall average for the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the union's subsequent report using 2000 data only updated statewide figures. Recently, the Martha's Vineyard Commission has been discussing with the Martha's Vineyard Community Services starting to compile an annual Vineyard Cost of Living Index.

Each indicator includes a general summary statement, a graph of how the measure has changed over time, and a narrative that explains what was measured, what it means, its interrelatedness with other indicators, and its relevance to the Vineyard's future.

Much of the information compiled for the Sustainability Indicators project will be used in the Comprehensive Island Planning process that will begin this fall. And the planning process could help complete some of the indicators that were not done for this round. However, for the indicators project to be successful, we not only have to complete the portrait of where we are today, we also have to set up a system to update the indicators on a regular basis. More importantly, how can we use the indicators to improve decision-making and help us grapple with the fundamental question: What can we do to make the Vineyard a more sustainable Island community?



*"Part-timers seem to be a shrinking percentage of our summer population"
(from the Sustainability Indicators Report)*

A2. Useful Reference Links

The following websites may be perused for further information on Stephen Kellert, on the Martha's Vineyard Commission's planning program, and on the Sustainability Indicators Project. Much useful information resides there, including many downloadable reports, and links to related sites.

Stephen Kellert

<http://environmental.yale.edu> or <http://forestry.yale.edu>

Martha's Vineyard Commission and its Planning program:

www.mvcommission.org/planning/comprehensive

Sustainability Indicators Report

www.mvcommmission.org (type "Sustainability Indicators" in the search box)



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