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Article
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*1 FOREWORD

At the turn of the nineteenth century, John Muir, writing from the vantage point of many years exploring the Sierra Nevada, observed, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."[1]

Muir was surely referring to the wondrous web of biological connections that we describe as ecosystems. We can only surmise whether he also had a premonition of the multiple ways our human presence would come to connect with and disrupt nearly every aspect of his natural world.

Today, a century later, there can be little question as to the impact of human activity on the life systems on our planet. Human-induced climate change now pervades all aspects of nature, pushing us ever closer to the threshold of planetary disaster.

During my lifetime, the modern environmental movement has done much to further our understanding of and draw our attention to this ongoing destruction of our natural world. Consider, for example, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, just to name a few of our landmark environmental laws.

Yet, for all their positive impact, these laws fall short of comprehensive action. Each of our laws is targeted to a discrete problem, bounded by the limiting language of legal jurisdiction, and with little reach beyond our national borders. The pieces do not fit together well, and there is little synergy or unity of effect.

Moreover, our environmental laws do not speak effectively to the social and economic issues at the root of our accelerating environmental crisis. The looming shortages of water, destruction of forests, over-reliance on fossil fuels, decline of biodiversity, and threats to food security in a world of six billion headed toward nine billion, are all matters ***2** that extend across local and national borders, and are rapidly becoming issues of national security throughout the world. Addressing all these issues will require a melding of physical science, social science, policy and law.

The founders of this journal have set a laudable goal of bringing the full resources of this University together to form an expanded forum for inquiry and discussion of these sweeping issues. Their goal, as I understand it, is to create an academic ecosystem that encourages us to move freely across disciplines, to erase departmental boundaries and to encourage integrated consideration of the causes, connections, and possible solutions to these problems.

It is especially appropriate to launch such a journal here in Arizona: home to some of the world's most unique and fragile natural landscapes, in a region where population pressures impose limits on water and other resources, and where the effects of climate change call urgently for fresh thinking and research.

Footnotes

[a1] Babbitt served as Secretary of the Interior from 1993 to 2001, as Governor of Arizona from 1978 to 1987 and as Attorney General of Arizona from 1975 to 1978. As Governor, Babbitt brought environmental and resource management to the forefront in Arizona, and as Secretary of the Interior, he led the creation of the Pacific Northwest Forest Plan, restoration of the Florida Everglades, passage of the California Desert Protection Act, and legislation for the National Wildlife Refuge System. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

[1] JOHN MUIR, MY FIRST SUMMER IN THE SIERRA 211 (1911).