

SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

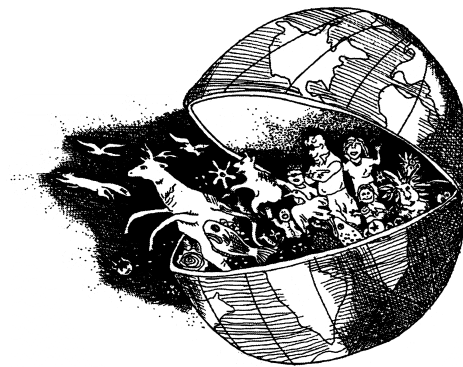
Sustainability

Getting our heads around the concept of sustainability can be difficult.

Making sustainability a reality presents even more challenges. But, we can take real action today to ensure a sustainable future. So, what do we mean by sustainability and how can we put the idea into action?

For the Izaak Walton League, sustainability comes down to the commonsense notion that long-term prosperity and ecological health not only go together, they depend on one another. We can act now to promote patterns of consumption, development and conservation that will meet the needs of both current and future generations.

However, it can be difficult to recognize what is truly sustainable. It is often easier to identify unsustainable practices than those that will prove to be truly sustainable over the long haul. Another challenge is the scale at which sustainability is practiced. It can be easier to identify local projects or practices that are sustainable – biking to work instead of driving, for example. However, when you look at the life and history of the many materials and products we use daily, it quickly becomes clear that our individual use of resources affects communities and environments all over the world (and vice versa). For example, purchasing a fuel-efficient vehicle involves manufacturing and supply chains that can literally crisscross the entire globe. If sustainable development principles are not encouraged and adopted worldwide, local efforts may ultimately be undermined.



Fostering sustainability on a global scale will be a huge job. This illustrates the need to expand our

thinking and actions to include both the local and the global. Both critics and proponents of sustainability recognize that determining what constitutes sustainability is not an exact science. Our understanding and definition of sustainability will continue to evolve over time. However, sustainability remains one of the most promising concepts to help

people live in balance with environmental limits.

Taking Action

We asked League members how they practice sustainability. Perhaps their answers will help you figure out how to incorporate sustainability into your life day-to-day. Equally important, maybe they will inspire you to share your own ideas with others. Combined, our individual actions can result in great progress on the journey to true sustainability.

> Purchase produce locally, or grow your own vegetables and preserve them yourself. I've found that freezing produce is a very easy way to preserve. I use a vacuum packer to seal the foods, and they last two to three years. Canning is another option but is much more labor intensive. It can also be very fun. This way you use locally produced foods and you can use them through the winter. No long transit distance for the foods. You know where they came from and that they are free of chemicals. Frozen vegetables are not as nice as fresh, but they are still healthy for you. I'd rather eat local frozen vegetables than get them all the way from California.

Debbie Jahnke

Izaak Walton League of America

> We practice sustainability in small ways, in daily life. We have a garden, buy locally, and support Community Supported Agriculture farms. Recycle everything. Because we're "older" we remember "rationing" from WWII and still practice it. Save on energy, i.e., lights, heat, paper, gasoline, etc.

Katherine Baird

> In my work with my business, The Wild Institute, offering wilderness trips for women, custom trips, professional speaking, and "wild" coaching, I have always strived to live and promote sustainable practices. We use recycled products, use produce from our organic gardens, and encourage carpooling for trips, and, above all, run canoe, hike, sea kayak, and dogsled trips as a way to connect with the natural world. My belief is that, one person at a time, falling in love with the natural world, we will protect that which we love.

Chris Heeter

> My main effort toward sustainability had been in developing habitat in and around the places I have lived over the years. Having a large tract of land isn't necessary. Any flowerpot or patch of yard can be developed as habitat. Microclimates are created by having lush plantings in flowerpots and perennial beds giving year-round benefits to insects, birds, and small animals. Start small and design your favorite plants to fill existing space. A geothermal heating/cooling unit for my woodshop provides a steady source of recycled water to our bioswale. There is a large grape arbor, fruit trees and vegetable garden that provide part of our food needs. Birds and rabbits are comfortable in the shelter of trees and low shrubs. We don't have a "bug" problem because of natural pest control. Extra produce is shared with neighbors and family. Many of our techniques can be used on a small scale in a variety of applications. The biggest lesson we've learned is the better habitat we develop, the greater enjoyment we can share with our many visitors.

Dwight A. Fish

Sustainability - The Local and Global

- League members from southeast Indiana have witnessed the impacts that rapid growth and development in their region have had on traffic, taxes, and pollution. They collaborated with a local university professor to collect some data about their economic, social, and environmental indicators over the last 10 years on population, incomes, natural resources, roadways, schools, etc. The data showed considerable growth in population, roads, businesses, and jobs (economic capital). But it also showed declines in open space, recreation areas, and farmland, and increases in traffic and pollution (social and environmental capital). They presented their findings to the public, city, and county officials to start conversations about the need for better land-use planning, regulations, and incentives that could support a thriving economy for the future without sacrificing natural areas and quality of life.

- Ten IWLA members traveled to rural Guatemala to see whether slowing population growth was consistent with a conservation agenda. They found a remarkable project that, in order to "save" the forest, had decided to focus on meeting community needs for jobs, health care, and education. Training farmers in traditional agricultural techniques, which were practiced by the Mayan people indigenous to the area, provided an alternative to clearing trees. Nurses offered information and voluntary reproductive health services so couples could plan their families and better provide for their children. Sustainable forestry, local handicrafts, and eco-tourism brought new revenue to communities. Through it all, women became more empowered to participate in community life and decision-making. In the long run, project staff and local officials have found that this integrated approach can both reduce immediate pressures on the forest and create ways to meet people's needs today and in the future. Part of the funding for this program came from the U.S. government through the U.S. Agency for International Development. U.S. leadership in promoting this type of sustainable development will be crucial in spreading this approach to other places around the world.