Churches—The Lost Market for Environmental Activism

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Abstract: With the rapid decline of fish and wildlife habitat and rampant population growth, we are losing the fight for fish and wildlife, and fish and wildlife are losing habitat. The nation's 350,000 churches are an uncultivated key to helping solve our habitat and environmental crisis. Conservation and stewardship responsibilities are scriptural in the western religious doctrine, and churches have had this responsibility from the beginning. No other body is as large nor has the inherent power to excite the conscience into renewed activity on behalf of wildlife and the earth as this potential source.

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The title, "Churches—the lost market for environmental activism" may stimulate different meanings and thoughts. To some, it may imply something missing, and to others, a lost opportunity. It is the latter, I think, that fish and wildlife professionals need to consider. With the rapid decline of fish and wildlife habitat, species extinction, deteriorating world environmental conditions, and rampant population growth, we are losing the fight for fish and wildlife, and fish and wildlife are losing habitat.

The Future?

Let us look into our crystal ball to see what the future might hold. The year is 2020 and the population is still growing. A recent census recorded a national population in excess of 300 million and the realtors and the Chambers of Commerce are all smiles.

The average two-bedroom tarpaper shack sells for a half million dollars. The increased concrete and cinder block retains enough heat to alter historic weather patterns. With this, and global warming, meteorologists are forecasting warm days of 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Water shortages have been a problem for years now. News teams converged today to record the filling of the last swimming pool. All other pools have long since become cactus gardens.

The State Game and Fish Department conducted its once a decade hunting lottery. Lottery tickets sold for a thousand dollars each. The five winners were given 10 shots. The July 4th season lasted for 30 minutes and was held at the local co-op feed lot. Surveys indicated huntable numbers of starlings, and house sparrows. The planned one-hour season was cut short when poachers took 75 percent of these intensely managed populations. A special session of the legislature gave the Department the bad news that it had to cut personnel by 33%, leaving only two employees.

The public lands are different now. They were designated as dune buggy and dirt bike playgrounds. Forest trees were cut for electric generators and for firewood when the oil reserves were depleted. These lands now provide a new form of recreation called mud sliding. With the vegetation gone, millions of people turn out with their inner tubes to ride the mud slides on the rare occasions when it rains.

The vegetation is gone, and even the cactus disappeared when the University cloned a cow that could consume rocks and all forms of cactus. A few seeds were saved and placed in a time vault for future scientific research.

Rumors are that a coyote was seen a few years ago in the wilderness, but this sighting was never confirmed. Most believe that the aged ex-hunter reporting it had been affected by the heat.

Congress was successful in getting the last dam built, but the final purpose was not for flood control, but to trap silt. Other lakes filled with silt years ago and are being leased for dry farming. As mitigation, Congress provided special funds to kill, mount, and display the last Bald eagle.

The wildlife federation still meets. Its program consists of aging hunters that tell stories of how in their younger days, they were able to see some form of wildlife while traveling less than 1,000 miles. A few are still able to demonstrate the ancient art of varmint calling. Although there has not been a coyote to call for years, they teach this dying art to the younger generation.

Die-hard Audubon members still have birding trips, but they are different now. This year's trip will consist of 100 bird flash cards instead of the usual 200. The Christmas bird count again tallied two species, but data indicate that the house sparrow is on the decline.

Will this be the wildlife and natural resource situation a few years from now? I hope not, but this can provide us with something to think about.

The song, "The Gambler" by Kenny Rogers, has a lot to say that applies to the future of wildlife. The familiar lines, "You've got to know when to hold them, know when to fold them, know when to walk away, know when to run," may sum up our approach to wildlife management. With a shortage of funds and personnel we have to decide which projects to make an effort and which ones we will have to fold and walk away from.

I think that for the most part, we have been sitting in a poker game, playing for wildlife and wildlife habitat. We are trying to bluff our way through with a pair of

deuces. As a result, habitat is being lost and we are doing a lot of folding and running.

Living the Illusion

Many of us work in the illusion that all is right with the world and that we are doing a fantastic job for wildlife. In reality, we are doing some great things, but we are unable to do enough.

Today, the world population is 5.5 billion people. If these people were to stand on each other's shoulders it would make 19 columns of people from the earth to the moon. We are putting more pressures on the earth than it can stand. With our machines and technology, we are not only predators on other species, with estimates that we are losing one species to extinction every ten minutes, but we have become predators on ecosystems and the biosphere.

Today, we are losing 51 million acres of tropical forest each year. This is a loss of 1.6 acres per second (Tangley 1992). In addition, in this nation, we are losing over five million acres of habitat per year, to highways, roads, and parking lots. In a mere decade, this is 78,000 square miles, or as much habitat as within the states of Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, and Rhode Island (Davis 1982).

We are all aware of the environmental forecast.

Yes, we are making some gains for fish and wildlife. We prescribe burn, plant food and cover, reintroduce extirpated species, try to protect and recover species, and change our seasons and bag limits to do the best we can with what is left. Fish, wildlife, and habitat are being lost, and people are becoming content with plastic wildlife decals and paper-mache wildlife replicas made in Taiwan.

To compound the problem, many of our fish and wildlife professionals are facing burnout. Some professionals, because of their love for the resource, keep trying even against discouraging odds.

We are trying to do more with less, but we know realistically that the 16 million hunting and 32 million fishing licenses sold (U.S. Bur. Census 1991), are not enough to solve the problem. We know that we cannot have enough banquets and raffles to negate the demands to produce more fish and wildlife with less, and on less habitat acres. We feel frustration as habitat declines, and the demands for fish, wildlife, and recreation, exceed the supply.

Professionals know that part of the overwhelming problem is that we live in a world of biological and ecological illiterates. We live in a society where most are out of touch with what is happening in the environmental world. A society where the largest percentage of the public embrace Bambi and a "Disneyfied" anthropomorphic concept of wildlife. When they want to say something to show they are environmentally aware, all they can think to say is that they are against clearcutting. Some think that this is all they need to know or do to be considered an environmentalist, or show that they have an environmental conscience.

The words of Aldo Leopold over 50 years ago, seem to be even more applicable today. Leopold (1966) said, "we are in trouble when people think that heat comes

from the stove and milk comes from the milkman." That is exactly where we are today and we are in trouble.

Dr. Douglas Gilbert (1964), in his book Public Relations in Natural Resources Management, stated that America has gone through four eras in natural resource management. These are: the era of abundance—discovery to 1850, era of exploitation—1850–1900, era of preservation and production—1900–1935, era of harvest and habitat—1935–1965, and the era of human management—1965–.

We are now in the era of human management. We know too well the impacts of increasing human demands. We can no longer grab our binoculars and lose ourselves in the wilds. Even if we give up these activities, our efforts will not be enough.

The reality is that fish and wildlife professionals cannot do the task alone and we need to consider getting others involved if we are going to slow the loss.

The Time is Right

I believe that our 350,000 churches and their 145 million members (U.S. Bur. Census 1991), are an uncultivated key to helping solve our habitat and environmental crisis. We must not be alone in this thinking because there is much happening. Listen to some of these examples:

In Alabama, Leigh Eason, initiated environmental activism when the creek she learned to swim in was deemed unsafe for recreation. Leigh formed "Vision," an international organization that consults with churches and communities seeking ways to reduce waste (Sneed 1992).

Cathy Crites, with "Vision" (pers. commun. 1992), said that in the Montevallo, Alabama, area, churches have been involved in saving wetlands, proper hazardous waste disposal, recycling, and solid waste issues. Thirteen Churches including Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Catholic, and 17 schools have worked to establish 50 recycling collection stations. These stations collect 68 tons of materials per week. In step with these efforts, churches have also eliminated their use of styrofoam cups, with the awareness that styrofoam never deteriorates and takes up valuable landfull space.

The United Methodist Church has addressed ecological concerns primarily through its Department of Environmental Justice. Methodist Bishops issued a strong statement "In Defense of Creation" which is being adapted by MacGregor Smith, director of the Institute for Environmental Ethics in Miami, Florida. This adaptation will be used for teaching and for action on environmental questions (Sherwood and Franklin 1987).

Sherwood and Franklin also reported that Presbyterian and Episcopal lay people are urging their administrators to make environmental concerns a greater priority. In the Catholic Church, the American Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy mentioned the need to care for the environment and The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is contributing funds to many conservation efforts around the country.

In December 1989, Pope John Paul II called for a global commitment to save the earth from ecological devastation and said that a safe environment should be part of a new Charter of Human Rights. The issue "lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis." Its only lasting solution was to abandon "instant gratification." The increasing devastation of the world of nature is apparent to all. It results from . . . a callous disregard for the hidden perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern nature itself," he said (The Washington Post 1989).

In April 1988 and again in January 1990, nearly 100 nations attended the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders. Here, several speakers quoted the Native American saying, "We have not inherited the Earth from our ancestors, but have borrowed it from our children" (Sagan 1992). Sagan also said that religious leaders in many nations, including the United States, have moved into action to prepare for this June's "Earth Summit." Major steps have been taken by the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, Evangelical Christians, and leaders of the Jewish community.

The Joint Appeal in Religion and Science met in Washington, D.C. This new undertaking for religious communities will generate a new sense of activism on behalf of the natural environment. Leaders from Christian and Jewish religious communities met with science and national leaders in an unprecedented partnership. Theirs is an initiative to strengthen and to present to Congress the American religious communities newly energized commitment to a sustainable environment. For your information, an updated Guide to Environmental Activities in the American Religious Community will be produced from this meeting.

In January 1987, I was asked by the Reverend Joe T. Stevens, to speak to the Bosque-McLennan Counties Baptist Association Conference in China Springs, Texas. The topic assigned was conservation and the Christian ethic and how this relates to world problems.

I had thought about the subject, but had never pursued it in depth. Knowing the audience would consist of over 100 ministers and church leaders, I thought it important to emphasize the biblical base of conservation and the Christian ethic, if I was to maintain interest and credibility.

In July 1987, I presented "Tend My Garden" using biblical references, biological and ecological principles, and environmental statistics. I was not only able to point out that churches and Christians have a stewardship responsibility, but that they of all people should have a conservation ethic, be avid ecologists, and environmentalists.

"Tend My Garden" was well received and those that heard suggested that I present it to every church and person that would listen. Since then, I have spoken to a variety of churches and groups in Texas and Arkansas, including church services and Earth Day workshops. I am continuing to convey the points that churches have a stewardship responsibility and should have a conservation ethic.

Such efforts, though little known a few years ago, are now gaining momentum worldwide. Many churches are responding to a growing environmental concern, and

are beginning to explore their roles in protecting the environment. However, an individual effort such as my experience in Texas should be recognized as an individual effort and not the only way to get the conservation message into the churches. Efforts by individuals to deliver an environmental message to clergy at conferences, through Sunday morning messages/sermons, or at a covered dish supper are to be applauded, but more is needed to really affect change in behavior adequate enough to solve the problems of wildlife and the environment. Let's look at the challenge that this presents.

The Challenge

Some may be asking, just how does this apply to fish and wildlife management? I feel that we must remember that the problem of managing fish and wildlife goes beyond the sale of hunting and fishing license and beyond providing another fish to catch, or wildlife to view or harvest. National and global environmental management problems are people management problems and are an integral part of our fish, wildlife, and habitat management problems.

The effort of getting churches completely involved will be a challenge. It could be said that the western form of Judaeo-Christian-Muslim tradition is the most anthropocentric religion that the world has seen. And with their destruction of animism, it accelerated the natural process and made it possible to exploit nature with indifference. Indifference, even to the point of becoming contemptuous of wildlife and other natural resources, and a willingness to use and abuse these resources at our slightest whim.

Many churches have operated under the misguided axiom that nature has no reason for existence except to serve humans. This demonstration of arrogance toward nature is a major factor preventing many churches from incorporating an environmental message into their teaching.

Much of this behavior was developed and is being sustained in ignorance, and under leadership with little to no enlightenment as to how biological or ecological principles tie into human well being. Historically, seminaries have not offered courses in environmental education and natural resources as part of their required courses in ethics. As a general rule, ministers have not had formal courses in the biological sciences. Many lay ministers have not had any formal education at all. Even though many stewardship and ecological principles are found in the Bible, they are not recognized as such, nor do leaders have the insight to interpret and use them.

In addition to scriptures, today's churches have songs in their hymnals that convey messages of nature, creation, and stewardship responsibilities. In denominational hymnals that I surveyed, the number of songs on these subjects varied from 40 to 84. Millions of members sing these songs each week without really understanding their implication or application.

Even with a history of anthropocentric actions and deeply ingrained belief and behavior, I do not think that the task of getting churches involved in meeting their

stewardship and environmental responsibilities is impossible. The times have dictated that "environmental" sells. It behooves pastors and church leaders to be able to tap into the issues that are current and relative, and to use the buzz words that are popular and reflect a pastor that is "up on things."

I am not idealistic enough to think that our churches are going to jump into wildlife management and the environmental movement just because their stewardship ethic and conservation responsibility exists. In a parallel, churches have had other responsibilities for thousands of years, and they are still divisionary, and do not agree on interpretation, demographic, and procedural differences.

On the other hand, resource management professionals and sportspersons cannot alone do all that needs to be done. I do not think that there will be stewardship of the Earth and its resources until churches are enlightened and involved in changing the way they look at and deal with nature.

Included in our 350,000 churches and 145 million members is the potential for a real American environmental revolution. This revolution will have to take place in the emotions, feelings, and minds of the people long before it happens on the ecological battlefields.

Churches already have the delivery systems for an effective environmental education message in place as well as the physical structures, educational framework, and means of information conveyance. The responsibility of stewardship of natural resources has been theirs from the very beginning, and the fact that churches have people that are receptive, concerned, and willing to do something is already being demonstrated. Persons concerned enough to recycle, tackle hazardous waste, and confront the loss of wetlands, are also ready to be informed about fish and wildlife problems and needed solutions. By nature, no pun intended, fish and wildlife have more appeal to the concerns and emotions of people, than do styrofoam cups and recycled newspapers.

The challenge is to develop a multifaceted approach to teach church leaders and their members, conservation and eco-justice principles and ethics. Implemented in a way that an environmental and ecological revolution will be inspired.

First, let's look at how such a multifaceted training approach might be accomplished. Techniques used and efforts made must convey basic ecological principles, fish and wildlife problems, and management needs. Finding an appropriate way to train church leaders on how to integrate fish, wildlife, and natural resource information and stewardship responsibility into the theological framework and educational material may not be as difficult as it might seem. Existing programs such as Project Wild and Learning Tree, may both be used as prototypes.

For example, one strategy is to begin the training of pastors and church leaders while in seminary. Getting courses included in the curricula at these educational institutions is realistic and practical. In Virginia, for example, Sally Angus, a Fish and Game employee, recently met with the president of a Baptist Seminary and has been promised the inclusion of a two-day Project WILD workshop as part of their ethics courses. One meeting, less than an hour long, and the wildlife foot was firmly planted in the door.

Parables and Stories

Another basic and powerful strategy to consider is conveying information in the form of stories or parables. This is already an accepted means with which we are all familiar. Stories have been part of the human learning process since the beginning. In our own respective churches we can submit such parables and stories to our pastors. We can offer story writing projects within our churches or with youth groups that will produce these kinds of parables related to wildlife. On a larger scale, we, as government employees, can publish, develop, collect, and promote the use of such stories/parables by church educators through whatever opportunity comes our way. Sponsoring a storyteller at a regional denominational conference or camp is another strategy.

Our churches survive, thrive, or die on the basis of the redemptive reality of the stories that are told from the pulpit and in the educational material. Stories conveying information, morals, ethics, survival, or anything else is one of the oldest and wide-spread educational tools. The use of wildlife and environmental stories or parables, may be worth considering.

One such story used in "Tend My Garden," could be called the parable of spaceship earth.

"God gave us the Earth, guided by his laws of creation. It was completely equipped, self-supporting and self-contained. God blessed it and saw that it was excellent in every way. It was designed to carry its occupants, who God said are strangers and guests, from the alpha to the omega—from the beginning to the end.

In this respect, the Earth is much like a giant spaceship, controlled by a computer consisting of 10 million different interrelated computer chips (species). Each is irreplaceable and possesses the knowledge and wisdom of God. This spaceship Earth is traveling through space at 66,000 miles per hour and our solar system is traveling through the galaxy at 432,000 miles per hour. Its 5.5 billion occupants and all future occupants are dependent upon this spaceship, its computer, and its life support systems, from the beginning to the end. But instead of these travelers taking care of their life support systems, they are taking their axes (greed, apathy, waste, selfishness, instant gratification, neglect, and exploitation) and are chopping away at their support systems. They are trying to see at what point in travel that life's functions, as we know them, will cease to exist." (Davis 1987).

Other examples are:

Parable of the Earth

Aboriginal mothers in Australia teach their children not to drag a stick behind them, marking the ground; reminding them that it is painful to the earth. Their children grew up understanding the earth's pain, and as a lesson and warning to us and our society, it is a powerful message. If we were to regard each action toward the earth in this light, we might take time to consider all the implications of our actions (Hasselstrom 1991).

Parable of a Handful of Mud

Paul Brand was the son of missionaries in the mountains of South India. He and his parents lived simple lives with the tribal people. There were no stores, electricity, plumbing, or roads, and the children played games that they made up.

Rice was an important food, and since there was no level ground for wet cultivation, it was grown along the streams that had been terraced hundreds of years before.

One day, Paul and other boys were racing to see who would be the first to catch three frogs. It was a way to get dirty from head to foot in the shortest possible time.

Suddenly, the boys were scrambling out of the paddy, because one of the boys had spotted an old man walking towards them. They knew him as "Tata" or "Grandpa," the keeper of the dams. Old age was respected in India, and the boys shuffled their feet and waited in silence for what they knew would be a rebuke.

He come over and asked them what they were doing? "Catching frogs," they replied. He stared at the churned mud and flattened young rice plants in the corner where they had been playing. They were expecting him to talk about the rice seedlings that they had destroyed, but instead, he bent down and picked up a handful of mud. "What is this?" he asked. The biggest boy answered for all and said "It is mud, Tata." "Whose mud is it?" the old man asked.

"It is your mud, Tata, this is your field." Then the old man turned and looked at the nearest of the little channels across the dam "What do you see there, in that channel?"

"That is water running into the lower field," the boy answered.

For the first time, the old man looked angry. "Come with me and I will show you water." A few steps along the dam he pointed to the next channel, where clear water was running, "That is what water looks like," he said. Then they came back to the nearest channel, and he said again "Is that water?"

The boys hung their heads. "No Tata, that is mud." The older boy had heard this before and did not want to prolong the agony and continued, "and mud from your field is being carried away to the field below and it will never come back, because mud always runs downhill, never up again. We are sorry, Tata, and we will never do this again."

Tata was not ready for the lesson to be over and went on to say that just one handful of mud would grow enough rice for one meal for one person, and it would do it twice every year for years and years into the future. "That mud flowing over the dam has given my family food since before I was born, and before my grandfather was born. It would have given my grandchildren and their grandchildren food forever. Now it will never feed us again. When you see mud in the channels of water, you know that life is flowing away from the mountains."

The old man walked slowly back across the path, pausing a moment to adjust with his foot the grass clod in the muddy channel so that no more water flowed through it. The boys were silent and uncomfortable and had experienced a dose of traditional Indian folk education that would remain with them as long as they lived.

Soil is life, and every generation is responsible for all generations to come (Brand 1985).

This story should be one that we remember as we lose four tons of topsoil for every ton of grain produced, and we are losing nine tons of topsoil per acre per year nationwide.

Parable of the Toad

When I was growing up, my grandparents lived on a farm. Sometimes as we walked about the farm to check the fences, the corn, or look at the livestock, we would see toads, frogs, snakes, and other forms of wildlife.

One day when we were walking near the garden, I saw a toad. Being young and curious, I wanted to nudge it with a stick to see it jump, or puff up. My granddad, in a calm and understanding voice, told me what his father had said to him many years before, "Don't kill the toads, or the milk cow will go dry."

Even at a young age, I knew that if I killed one toad, that the milk cow would still give milk. But later, I understood the many basic ecological principles behind this statement. Some of those were: that toads were an important part of the farm and toads ate insects; the insects that the toads ate, were some of the insects that ate the plants which were eaten by the cow; and if the toads were not there to control the insects, the insects might get so numerous that they would eat the plants that the cow needed; and if the cow did not have enough green plants, it could not produce milk.

Therefore, the simple message, "If you kill a toad, the milk cow will go dry," has been a part of me for over 40 years.

This simple story, regardless of whether it stemmed from utilitarian or other values, still has a tremendous ability to convey ecological principles, the understanding of food chains, species interaction and one of the roles and functions that a toad has in the ecological system.

Parable of the Seed Corn

My great grandmother told me the story about the "seed corn" as she had been told as a young lady, many years before.

When they were a young pioneer family just starting married life their parents did as today's parents might do, and gave them some items that they needed to start a home.

One of the basic gifts was seeds that their parents had saved from the previous year's harvest. These seeds were not something that could be readily bought, and they provided the resource needed to plant a crop the following spring. The corn and other crops would provide food for them and their livestock, a seed source for the next year, and even some income.

As their parents handed them the seeds, it was not only a moment of gift giving, but an instructive moment as well. They told them that no matter how bad things got, "Don't eat your seed corn!."

This was a powerful message, not to be taken lightly. It had all the gravity and implications of life or death. The couple knew, that no matter how desperate and

hungry they got, that if they ate their "seed corn," there would not be a future. It was foolish to consume at one sitting the hope of next year's crops and the survival of the family. The short term gain of food to live a few more days would mean that there would be no hope for the future.

These stories or parables are as applicable today in coveying information and principles as they were yesterday. In our short term waste and rapid exploitation of our fish, wildlife and other natural resources, we are eliminating hope for the future and the survival of ourselves and future generations.

Another strategy worth considering is that many churches have their own outdoor or nature camps. Some churches, such as one Lutheran group in Virginia, for example, are sponsoring outdoor learning centers and working with the public school divisions to use their facility for environmental education. They have trained church members from several Lutheran churches to act as volunteer facilitators providing environmental education to the students who attend the outdoor learning centers. This particular group in Virginia obtained the funding through a grant from a non-profit foundation.

And what about the obvious strategy of just plain giving money to support a church or denomination's effort to implement a project which promotes conservation of wildlife and the environment? A good example of this already being done is "The Earth: In Our Hands," a project of the National Council of Catholic Women in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and receiving grants from the USDA Forest Service and USDA Soil Conservation Service. "This program will give individuals, affiliates and community organizations an opportunity to become involved, to increase their awareness of natural resource issues and, working in partnership with public and private agencies and other interested groups and individuals, to make a difference in this vital area" (Catholic Woman, 1992).

One good piece of advice to remember when approaching persons at any level of church organization with an exhortation for them to "get with what's happening" and include conservation in their presentations, teachings, and church activities is to always "go with a full basket," never with an empty one. In other words, have ideas, suggestions, a plan, volunteers waiting in the wings, and someone who would take on the responsibility for heading it up if needed. Often, church pastors and staff are swamped with activities and overscheduled agendas already. Going to them with constructive criticism, however, eloquently phrased, on what you think they should be doing, is simply risky, and possibly counterproductive. Go with a full basket of support, both conceptually and practically, and go with great expectations.

A Time for Innovation

There are many forms of communication that can be used to disperse information. Regardless of what is used, it is important that we realize that our natural resources are being depleted. The few professionals and sportspersons making the efforts cannot do the task of conservation and recovery alone. We cannot afford to constrain ourselves to traditional structured groups and continue with a segregated

approach. We must accept and meet the challenge to be innovative in trying to solve our environmental problems before it is too late for us and spaceship earth.

One possible source of help may be in the 350,000 churches and their 145 million members. Conservation and stewardship responsibilities are scriptural in the judaeo-christian doctrine, and churches have had this undeveloped responsibility from their beginnings. No other body is as large, nor has the inherent power to excite the conscience of people into renewed activity on behalf of wildlife and the earth. Church people have been commissioned to be stewards of the earth and its natural resources. Churches offer a receptive audience. The responsibility is inherent in the ethics espoused, and an educational framework is already in place.

The only real block to government agencies and church groups working together to help wildlife and the environment is attitude. That is the real potential impediment. You may have heard along the way that separation of church and state prevents state agencies from working with churches. And churches, likewise, have heard the same erroneous interpretation. But the truth is that the doctrine of separation of church and state was never intended to keep such entities from working together: its intent was to prevent government control of churches in America. Unfortunately, it has probably been used to justify non-involvement and lack of caring about the planet more than any other excuse.

We know the power that example, leadership, and religious teachings can have on the ability to influence personal conduct and commitment. What other incentives do we need before we consider and ask churches and their members to help us manage and conserve our fish, wildlife, and other natural resources?

A challenge or issue before us is, knowing what we know, should we or do we want to try to tap into the churches as a resource to help educate the public and modify behavior? "The present world environmental crisis is not yet a disaster, not yet. As is other crises, it has the potential to draw forth previously untapped and unimagined powers of cooperation, ingenuity and commitment" (Sagen 1992).

Are "churches—the lost market?" I think they are. But, they do not have to be.

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