

Environmental Policies of the Society for Ecological Restoration

For more information on policies, guidelines and definitions—or if you are interested in more information about SER's Science & Policy Working Group, please contact Keith Winterhalder, Chair.

Policies 1 through 9 were published in *Restoration Ecology* 1(3): 206-207, 1993.

- 1. Protection of Ecosystems**
- 2. Restitution**
- 3. Adoption of Ecological Restoration**
- 4. Ecosystem Management**
- 5. Landscape Integration**
- 6. Culture and Sustainability**
- 7. Biodiversity' and Endangered Species**
- 8. Strategic Environmental Values of Restoration**
- 9. Global Reforestation Projects**

1. Protection of Ecosystems

The Society for Ecological Restoration advocates the protection of ecosystems that are pristine or that otherwise exhibit characteristic diversity and functional attributes. Protection should also be extended to such ecosystems that have recently suffered storms, fires, or other catastrophic natural events that may occasionally affect them. The Society further advocates protection for degraded ecosystems, if:

- (1) they are among the last remnants of a type threatened by regional extirpation,
- (2) they contain mature specimens of characteristic species whose generation time spans many decades, or
- (3) their removal would cause the fragmentation of a continuous natural area

2. Restitution

The Society for Ecological Restoration will not sanction the destruction of any ecosystem of the pretext that it may be restored. To the contrary, for any ecosystem that is willfully destroyed, the Society advocates restitution that recoups environmental values equivalent to those lost by the destruction of that ecosystem and in addition provides other environmental reparations in order to realize a net environmental improvement to the regional landscape.

3. Adoption of Ecological Restoration

Ecological restoration is increasingly becoming an integral element in resource management and should be adopted generally as an essential practice by public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, institutions, corporations, individuals, or other entities that own, control, or manage resources.

4. Ecosystem Management

The Society for Ecological Restoration advocates the ecologically sensitive management of ecosystems and landscapes, including restored systems. Such management should be designed to sustain these natural areas in perpetuity. The Society acknowledges that ecosystems are dynamic and may evolve in response to natural catastrophic events and also to gradual changes in environmental conditions. Such eventualities should be accommodated in management plans.

5. Landscape Integration

The Society for Ecological Restoration advocates the integration of restoration projects into regional landscapes, so as to maximize the effectiveness of restoration efforts. To that end, ecological restoration projects should contribute as much as possible to the establishment of greenbelts, buffers, wildlife corridors, biosphere reserves, and similar conservation lands.

6. Culture and Sustainability

The Society for Ecological Restoration recognizes that ecosystems, including restored ecosystems, are inseparable from human culture and economy. Resource usage of restored systems should be compatible with the principle of sustainability and should not cause environmental degradation.

7. Biodiversity' and Endangered Species

The Society for Ecological Restoration advocates programs for preserving biodiversity and endangered species. The Society contends that the preservation of biodiversity and protection of endangered species cannot be sustained satisfactorily apart from viable ecosystems. Therefore, the Society advises resource planners charged with preserving biodiversity and protecting endangered species to emphasize the restoration and maintenance of ecosystems and those key species upon which all other species in an ecosystem depend.

8. Strategic Environmental Values of Restoration

The Society for Ecological Restoration recognizes that the restoration and management of historical ecosystems contribute towards the solution of strategic environmental needs, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) retention of precipitation in order to maintain the integrity of the hydrologic cycle;

- (b) diversification of habitat, which augments the diversity of both predator and prey species and can thereby enhance the biological control of pest organisms;
- (c) stabilization of substrates, which prevents erosion and promotes the formation of topsoil;
- (d) augmentation of habitat, which harbors the genetic diversity required for future adaptability, including improvements in economic species;
- (e) retention and enhancement of biodiversity;
- (f) preservation of land-based cultural traditions for indigenous peoples, including traditional indigenous environmental knowledge;
- (g) storage of carbon and thus the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

9. Global Reforestation Projects

The Society for Ecological Restoration approves in principle of those projects by organizations and governments that contribute to global reforestation, with the following caveats:

1. that lands selected for reforestation are those that had been previously forested within historical times; and,
2. that trees of indigenous species are planted, except where clearly enunciated goals require the planting of non-indigenous trees, such as in agroforestry reserves.

The Society advises the establishment of multispecific stands of trees rather than singlespecies tree plantations and also the concomitant establishment of indigenous forest undergrowth, representing the vegetational strata typically associated with regional forests.