



By John Imes

# Do Well By Doing Good

With major issues confronting our state — including the high price of fuel and energy, concerns about climate change, and growing economic uncertainty — we need to find innovative solutions that result in positive economic impacts and an improved quality of life.

Fortunately, forward-thinking businesses, citizens and communities are advancing the concept of “doing well by doing good,” realizing financial benefits through superior environmental performance by implementing innovative best practices, technologies and mindsets to reduce waste, maximize resource efficiency, and improve product or service design. By integrating environmental priorities into day-to-day decision making, households, businesses and communities are benefiting in many ways.

In each month of Green Sense, we will highlight these leading “ecopreneurs” and offer insights on how to become a profitable steward of our precious natural resources.

Today’s ecopreneurs are guided by a few simple principles:

■ **What gets measured gets done:** In order to improve your environmental impact, you must first measure your current impact. Information on how much

solid waste, energy and water are consumed will provide a baseline and help you set time-specific environmental goals and measure improvements.

■ **Advance the use of “best practices:”** In just about every sector of the economy and every household and community activity, there is a set of “best practices” that can protect the environment, protect investments and enhance our standard of living. Green Sense will highlight leading practices covering topics such as renewable energy and energy efficiency, green construction and remodeling, biofuels and bioproducts, low-impact development and green infrastructure, climate stewardship, local sustainable food production, eco-tourism and more.

■ **Ask questions, demand superior environmental performance:** Markets are finally beginning to respond to growing consumer demand for green products and services. It’s estimated that more than 60 million Americans are making purchasing decisions based on environmental and social criteria. Suppliers and retailers that ignore this trend do so at their own peril. After all, how many think that fuel or energy prices are going to decrease, or that consumer demand for clean air and clean water will decline anytime soon?

**Tie-dyes and sandals? Don’t believe the myth that being “green” or environmentally responsible has to cost more or results in compromises in comfort or quality. Cost-effective green products and services are readily available and today’s high-performance green buildings are not only beautiful, but economical to build and operate.**



■ **Support new directions in environmental policy:** Today, we mostly rely on a complex web of compliance, costly litigation and the minimum standards of “command-and-control” to meet environmental requirements. Green Tier-type approaches represent the next generation of environmental management, with an emphasis on cooperation, creative incentives, effective and frequent progress measurement plus unique public education and information tools to achieve superior economic and environmental results.

In Wisconsin, we have a long and proud heritage of environmental stewardship, started by the Native Americans and continued by luminaries such as Aldo Leopold, John Muir and Gaylord Nelson. Now it’s time to ask what the next generation of environmental leadership will look like. Maybe it will be the businesses, citizens and communities that recognize improved environmental performance results in a strong economy; a clean, healthy environment; and a great quality of life. ▲

*John Imes is the executive director of Wisconsin Environmental Initiative. WEI is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing together business, government and citizen groups in a neutral forum to address environmental issues affecting Wisconsin.*

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