NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION: MANAGEMENT FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE. *Sixth Edition.*

By Oliver S. Owen and Daniel D. Chiras. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs (New Jersey). $66.00. xvii + 586 p.; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-02-390121-7. 1995.

This is the sixth edition of a textbook first published in 1971. It is intended for students in introductory natural resource conservation and environmental science courses. The topics covered are diverse: ecology, economics, ethics, human population demographics, soils, hydrology, water pollution, fisheries management, coastal and marine resources, rangeland management, forest management, wildlife management, biological diversity, extinction, pesticides, waste management, air pollution, nonrenewable resources, renewable resources, and sustainability.

The book is divided into 22 chapters. Each chapter is well organized and ends with a list of key points to remember. There are also thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter which could be useful as learning and teaching aids. A few references, relevant and not too demanding, at the end of each chapter point interested students to the literature.

The writing and general tone have a strong political advocacy flavor, as the authors freely admit in the preface and reinforce throughout the book: "In this book, we argue that conservation, recycling, renewable resources, restoration, and population control are the operating principles of a sustainable society. . . . We and many others believe that humans must adopt an attitude that seeks cooperation with, rather than domination of, nature" (p. viii); "We can achieve a sustainable society . . . with an emphasis on cultural, intellectual, moral, and spiritual values rather than on material wealth" (p. 5); and ". . . other species share the Earth's wealth and have a right to prosper as much as humans do" (p. 28). Such strongly held philosophical positions give the book an aura of political advocacy rather than the neutrality common in textbooks.

Technically the book is solid. Chapters on such topics as fisheries, forest, and wildlife management cover entire professions in a few pages, but are both coherent and credible. Each chapter is self-contained and their sequence easily can be modified, without problems, at the discretion of the instructor. The authors have included a number of "boxes" that focus insightfully on relevant ethical issues in natural resources management such as "To kill or not to kill?" and "Is reproduction a personal right?" Other boxes look at specific natural resource problems such as the recent flood in the midwestern United States and methods of coyote control. I found these boxes to be interesting and perceptive. They will be especially useful to students for understanding the difficulty of applying some of the general principles presented.

There are two potential weaknesses in the book. The first is the strong political and moral positions taken by the authors. As each question or topic is developed, the authors tend to view the world from the "green" side of the debate. I think this detracts from its use as a textbook. As an example, when summarizing the issues of human population growth, they assert: "Fortunately, President Clinton has taken bold steps to increase spending on family planning in the LDCs" (p. 81).

The other potential weakness, the wide breadth of topics covered, may also be considered a strength. For an introductory text there is a massive amount of material, everything from air pollution to agriculture, ethics to economics, fisheries to fission, and windmills to water.

There are a number of books available for introductory natural resource and environmental science courses. Among them, this edition of *Natural Resource Conservation* deserves serious consideration.

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