

# looking back on leopold

In fall 1999, the Wisconsin Academy held a conference on Aldo Leopold that drew more than 600 participants. Here's an update on conference outcomes in an open letter to participants and Academy members.

Just over a year ago we gathered in Madison to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, and to look forward to emerging challenges in conservation. At the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, we have continued to build upon the success of that conference. We would like to update you on some of the activities at the Academy and elsewhere that have flowed out of the Leopold conference.

**Familiar Faces, New Initiatives.** Conference director Michael Strigel is now director of programs at the Wisconsin Academy, while conference co-chair Curt Meine is now the Academy's director of conservation programs on a part-time basis. The Academy has created a New Century for Conservation Program specifically to continue working on themes from the Leopold conference.

**The Wisconsin Academy Water Initiative.** This major new initiative examines the state of water science, conservation, and policy in Wisconsin as the first project of a program called The Wisconsin Idea at the Academy (more on page 56).

**Fall Forum on Genetically Modified Food.** The Wisconsin Academy returned to Monona Terrace in November for a day-long forum entitled "Genetically Modified Food: Risks, Rewards & Realities." Leading agricultural biotechnology critics and proponents met for substantive discussion in direct conversation with the general public. Our goal was to allow all interested citizens to understand the issues better, and to help shape the diverse agricultural and consumer realities we are rapidly creating. See [www.wisconsinacademy.org](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org) for more information.

**"Aldo Leopold and the Origins of Ecological Restoration"** exhibit. The Wisconsin Academy organized this prairie restoration exhibit for the conference. It has since been on display at a gallery in Prairie du Sac, at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, and is now at the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum in Neenah. The exhibit has played a catalytic role in one of the Midwest's most important conservation issues: the fate of the 7,354-acre Badger Army Ammunition Plant in Sauk County. You may find more information on this issue at [www.saukprairievision.org](http://www.saukprairievision.org) and in the fall edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review* (excerpts online at [www.wisconsinacademy.org](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org)).

**The Intelligent Consumption Project.** Under this project, the Wisconsin Academy, in partnership with the Forest Products Laboratory of the U.S. Forest Service, has explored the connections between forest conservation and consumption of forest products. A final report is now in preparation. See [www.wisconsinacademy.org/programs](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org/programs) for more information.

**Federal Land Ethic Council.** Our Washington, D.C.-based colleagues have been working hard over the last year to create a Federal Land Ethic Council to continue fostering the sort of

cross-agency discussion and action that we tried to build into the Leopold conference. A memorandum of understanding has been prepared and signed by most of the participating agencies, and the Council is now beginning to identify new initiatives of its own. For information on the Council, contact Bruce Beard ([beardbd@acq.osd.mil](mailto:beardbd@acq.osd.mil)) or Jim van Ness ([vannessj@osdgc.osd.mil](mailto:vannessj@osdgc.osd.mil)) in the Department of Defense.

**Environmental Justice and the Land Ethic.** We have taken further steps in exploring cross-cutting issues involving environmental justice, training programs, diversity, outreach, and emerging issues in natural resource and conservation, working with Dan Durett (program manager at the National Council for Science and the Environment), Dave Blockstein (senior scientist with the NCSE), and colleagues in the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service. In early December the NCSE sponsored the inaugural National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. (see [www.cnie.org/nceconference](http://www.cnie.org/nceconference) for more information).

**Conservation Legacy Network.** Following the Leopold event, several conference organizers began working toward a meeting of various "conservation legacy" organizations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has taken the lead on this, and we hope this spring to bring together organizations representing the legacies of Rachel Carson, Ding Darling, Olaus and Mardie Murie, Sigurd Olson, and other key conservation leaders.

These are only a few of the activities resulting from the Leopold conference that we are aware of and have contributed to. We know that relationships built at the conference have continued to grow in exciting new directions. We invite you to share with us any additional reports of new projects and partnerships. One of our objectives in planning the conference was to ensure that its impact extend beyond the meeting hall and the time we spent together. We can be very pleased that our achievement in Madison has been matched by post-Madison successes as well.

Sincerely,

Paul Johnson  
Curt Meine  
Joy Zedler

**Conference co-chairs**

Michael Strigel, director of programs  
Robert Lange, executive director

**The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters**