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*The following is a transcription of his keynote address.*

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Thank you for inviting me to join your discussion tonight. I've had the opportunity to visit your watershed and listen to a lot of people talk about the Nine Mile Run Greenway work. I have also learned about the many other exciting community environmental protection initiatives underway such as the Pittsburgh Environmental City Initiative and the Steel Industry Heritage Project. My visit here is not so much to suggest things you should do, but to share some experiences I have gained working in other communities. I hope some of these ideas will contribute to what you are doing.

I'm here to talk about sustainability or sustainable development. Many people say it is a nebulous term. To some it means everything to others it doesn't mean anything. My experience with the concept of sustainability has changed over time. I received my academic training in 1976 at the University of Pennsylvania studying under Ian McHarg, the ecological planner and author of *Design With Nature*. At that time the word sustainability wasn't being used but many of us were trying to find a better way to achieve environmental quality and economic prosperity. In recent years as more and more attention was given to sustainability and sustainable development, I wasn't sure how to react to it. Working in Washington, you look at new initiatives with a certain amount of suspicion. Is it the slogan of the day, is it a "boutique term," as we call it in the bureaucracy, or is it something more substantive? A movement that's going to last? As I thought about sustainability and the work that I do, I wondered how does my training relate to this new direction? On one hand it is a new generation of environmental protection and economic development. On the other hand it is also an approach to the way we plan our land, water and communities that has been developing for quite some time.

Sustainable development seems to be an idea and a movement which reflects an evolution of our thinking about environmental protection and economic development. This revolution is a change

in the way we view environmental protection and economic development; their individual meaning has changed and they can no longer be considered as separate areas of interest. This evolution and convergence offers great promise for the future of our communities, watersheds, states and the Nation.

When I talk about this convergence of thinking which has led us to sustainability, I am talking about how all of us have been moving in the same direction, whether you are in environmental protection, historic preservation, in civic organizations in your neighborhood, in the business of managing the city, or in economic development. I think we have all come to the conclusion that there's a formula that goes into making decisions about places like Pittsburgh and Nine Mile Run that we're all pretty much agreeing to. We may use different terms and we may in fact at times have a little different approach for how we make those decisions, but I think there are some common elements in this convergence and I'd like to highlight them. By and large we're all at a point where we agree we need to:

- Base the setting of goals and the selection of actions on the best available science. Science about the ecology and also science about the people.
- Empower people to help them, provide information and access to a broad-based consensus process of decision making.
- Look at opportunities for what we call place-based protection, development and management. Those places may be a neighborhood, they may be a community, they may be a watershed or a river corridor, or some subset of some larger geo-political region.
- Foster community-based action. Local leadership is essential to all of these ideas and there may in fact be a role for federal, state, and private sector involvement. Actions are best begun with communities and local officials.
- Work toward environmental, community, and economic goals, simultaneously. This is a keystone concept of sustainability.

- Use a full range of financial, technical and information approaches, tools, programs and laws to be successful. We have all learned that no one agency, no one organization, and no one program can in fact carry out strategies like this initiative you are undertaking.

- Measure programs to monitor whether or not we are achieving results. Take that measurement and monitoring and feed it back into our processes.

If you've been following the literature and dabbling in this work or delving into sustainable development work, you know that the general definition is " *to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" That's a pretty broad goal that you could interpret in any number of ways. Inherent to this general definition is the concept of concurrently meeting multiple objectives, including environmental, economic and community based goals. In order to achieve those goals a sustainable development approach needs to recognize all legitimate beneficial public and private uses which have the least adverse impact on environment, community, and economic resources which reflect a high degree of public involvement and consensus at all stages of decision making.

In the Environmental Protection Agency's Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program, we have tried to better define what sustainable development means for us by defining nonsustainable behavior. What we've said is—and this is reflective in the recent grant guidance that we've put out— that nonsustainable behavior is development or land and water activities, management or uses, which limit the ability of humans and ecosystems to live sustainably by destroying or degrading ecological values and functions, diminishing the material quality of life and diverting economic benefits away from where they are most needed.

The more you research and learn about sustainability you will see that there is no one approach or definition for how you go about this work. For example, at EPA we are trying to reinvent the way we go about protecting the environment. Part of this reinvention process involves trying to develop a better understanding of what sustainability means to us. I think through projects like Nine Mile Run, and others going on in your community you have the same reinvention challenge.

What you are doing here is very important, not just for the specifics of the Nine Mile Run watershed, but also because of the context of Nine Mile Run within the city of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. Eighty percent of the U.S. population resides within metropolitan areas.

EPA is working on the recently announced Presidential Urban Initiative which is targeting urban areas. We are in the beginning of a process to attempt to better identify how EPA can contribute to the priorities that the President has set for urban areas.

The Urban Initiative recognizes that if the patterns of metropolitan growth and development (i.e., investment and divestment, mobility and access to jobs, services, transportation systems, the amount of impervious surface, etc.) continue, environmental quality will be significantly diminished. The current metropolitan trends indicate that if current growth and development patterns are unchanged they will virtually guarantee further increases in vehicular miles traveled, declining air quality, degradation and loss of critical habitat, increased urban runoff, diminished access to nature, and growing environmental justice concerns.

EPA believes the cities and metropolitan areas of the U.S. are critically important and that efforts like the development initiative here are in fact a way to address some of the problems. Cities and metropolitan areas constantly change and I think what we have experienced in many urban areas is an outward migration; I think you have seen that here—the creation of edge cities and in some cases, the creation of sprawl development. What we are also seeing, and Pittsburgh is an excellent example because of its brownfields work, is a reallocation of uses. This turnover in land use is an opportunity for cities and communities to look at how we use our areas—a second chance.

We've seen some very exciting efforts going on here and in other cities through programs like brownfields, waterfront restoration and heritage areas. The reallocation of uses in urban areas is extremely important not only for what possibilities it generates within your urban areas, but also for the impact it will have on the surrounding countryside. We feel that the efforts within the cities will have a major influence over the future of countryside areas. The two are inseparable although we often talk about urban sprawl in one context, and talk about regeneration efforts in another.

Let's take a look at the three points around which sustainability pivots: environment, community and economics. It is an equation that does in fact need to be met for us to have any chance of achieving sustainability. First, from an ecological perspective there is an opportunity for you to look at the values and functions of the natural resource systems and how they fit into the future uses of the watershed. Whether it be the stream you are focusing on or the watershed as a whole you need to understand

ecological function to maintain environmental quality. To be sustained in the future, these natural resource systems need to be recognized and managed as a type of natural resource infrastructure.

This green, natural infrastructure should be planned, implemented and managed in a way similar to other types of infrastructure which provide the public with economic value and environmental services. This type of natural resource infrastructure approach requires an effort like yours, always thinking one size larger than your project area. If you are working on a river or greenway corridor, think about your watershed. If you are working on the watershed, think about the relationship of the watershed to the larger community.

There are a number of excellent examples of stream restoration and greenway efforts which you might want to look at. Groups and governments in West Eugene, Oregon, the Woodlands Development in Texas, and the Suwannee River Water Management District in Florida are testing these ideas and actually applying sustainable development approaches. Another excellent example for you to examine is the Lackawanna River Valley in Scranton, Pennsylvania, which in some ways has similar problems to those you are tackling. Exciting work in a larger context, in that case, in a county-wide context, looking at economic development, historic preservation, and open space. At the local and community levels, there is some wonderful work going on looking at alternative economic uses that make the protection of open space and riparian systems possible. One example is the Port of Cape Charles in Virginia, which was one of four areas selected by the President's Council on Sustainable Development to test the idea of an ecological industrial park. The Port of Cape Charles is coming up with a strategy to rebuild an industrial park that is ecologically sound, and do it in concert with a sustainable development strategy that encourages the protection of certain rural qualities and agriculture and allows them to achieve a zero discharge goal for water that goes into the Chesapeake Bay.

Second, from a community perspective, it is important for an effort like this to take community attitudes and people's relationships with natural values very seriously. Increased attention is being given to human ecology, understanding the relationship people have with watersheds and greenways as well as natural values. Never underestimate the importance of private property owners, users' attitudes, and the attitudes of local officials towards the work that you are doing. I think you also need to factor in local interest, people's connection, be it recreational or access: fishing,

boating or scenery. You need to understand the human relationships to the area you are working on...and certainly Nine Mile Run has a lot of people that care about it.

Part of what you are doing is taking local initiative. Your approach can help the city and county to empower people at the community level and at the local government level to make more decisions about their future. What's exciting about that, is that it does put you in a position to shape the future of your area. The challenge that comes with that is to step up and assume that leadership, and it will test your local capacity to work out differences of opinion; to take on tough decisions and figure out ways to come up with solutions that will bring the community together rather than drive it apart. You will find as you go through this that you have to hone your conflict management skills and this idea of multiple objectives will become a second language.

One example to look at is the work of the Pennsylvania Heritage Park Program in Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. The Lackawanna Valley Heritage Area is one of the flagships of the Pennsylvania Program and it offers demonstrable results you can in fact take a look at and see if they apply to what you are doing here, ideas about greenways, ideas about compatible development.

The third perspective, is the economic part of this equation. As we look at the land, especially in places like Pennsylvania, we have to understand that with the land comes an intrinsic economic value. That a private property owner does look at their property and believe that they in fact have the right to prosper from that property at some point in time; as we look at natural values, we have to understand and respect that. There is a growing movement looking at areas to determine what resource-based economics might be possible in the future and an exciting thing about sustainability is the land uses that are coming out of these projects. Ecological and cultural tourism, industrial ecology, recycling, converting agricultural waste to energy, and so on.

This idea of industrial ecology, where the principles of nature (waste equals food) is being embraced by many communities. Bill McDonough, who served on the President's Council for Sustainable Development, uses Pittsburgh examples to illustrate how industries are changing their industrial processes to eliminate the idea of waste and change the equation from waste being something that you have to bury somewhere at the public expense, to waste equaling energy, very exciting work going on.

Let me highlight three specific programs EPA

offers that provide opportunities to support your efforts:

1. Community-Based Environmental Protection: We have been going through a reinvention effort in our agency away from command and control and away from a top-down type of environmental protection. That change has been underway for quite awhile. One of the driving forces of that change has been community-based environmental protection. Our deputy administrator is partially behind that, and he is in fact charging our headquarters and regional offices to work more with communities, helping them to achieve environmental protection solutions. It's a redirection and it embraces this idea of sustainable development. It has empowered our region to work with groups like yours and to provide technical and financial assistance. EPA leadership envisions that in a couple of years most of us will be spending 80 percent of our time on community-based environmental protection work.

2. EPA Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program: EPA provides small grants to community organizations to pursue sustainable development projects. As a demonstration project last year, the program was an attempt to help EPA figure out what sustainable development is and create a source of funding assistance for community-based projects. You had an application in last year. Unfortunately, it wasn't selected and I hope you reapply this year. They have increased the funding; it is still small, it is five million nationally, but these funds can be used to leverage other public and private funds. It is in fact a program that is specifically aimed at what you are trying to do here.

3. Regional Geographic Initiative Program: Each year, Congress gives us money which we in turn pass on to our regional offices to use on community-based and geographic-based efforts. This money is discretionary; it's used based on the priorities of the regional office. I have been talking with your leadership about conversations you should have with our leadership in Philadelphia about your work and priorities. The money is used to address risks to human health and ecosystems and achieve multiple objectives; again, the work here in this watershed and in Pittsburgh certainly would qualify for this assistance.

Let me summarize by saying that the Nine Mile Run effort is very much part of this new approach to environmental protection and economic development. As a locally initiated sustainability project, you are one of the incubators of these ideas. You have to define and demonstrate the best way to do this. At times, it will be frustrating because you will look to others, the Commonwealth or agencies like us,

for policies and clarification. We are looking to you to let us know what works and what is the appropriate role.

The challenge is for you to test these efforts and to communicate that to policy organizations like ours and for us to glean those rich insights and experiences and fold it into a policy that makes sense. The context of your work is terribly important and I encourage you to think one scale larger than the focus of the project. As you look inward to your project area, be looking outward and be mindful of the context you are working in. You do have to combine the lessons of the past and the present with those of the future. Build on your rich history of cooperative work here, in this metropolitan area.

This is not so much a new idea, but, rather, a different way of working and it's a new arrangement of ideas. It challenges us to take down the boxes we put ourselves in, the stereotypes we create as we look at different organizations and different disciplines and different jurisdictions, and realize that by working together you have a chance for this area to be successful. Compete with the rest of the Nation, don't compete amongst yourselves.

The process is extremely important. Incorporate ecological, community, and economic values into your decision-making. Be sure you listen to everybody in terms of the issues and what the priorities are and go through the difficult process of coming up with a consensus-based approach. At times, you will want to act independently and you will want to have your differences and your good fights, but there will be times especially when you're competing for resources, where you speak as a unified group.

As you interact with each other, starting tonight, look at everyone as a designer of this plan and for the strategy of this area. Stuart Cohen, a sustainable development practitioner and author of the book *Sustainable Design* says, "Listen to every voice in the design process. No one is a participant only, or a designer only. Everyone is a participant designer."

Explicit goals and objectives are essential. If you do that, you will be able to measure progress. It is important that you are mindful of what you want to accomplish. That you have a sense of what success is going to look like so that you can go back and say, "How are we doing and are we doing the right thing for what we hope to accomplish?" Sometimes in general goals and objective statements, those important directions get lost. I encourage you to communicate in a way that connects people with the place that you are interested in.

I am thrilled with the University, the Carnegie Mellon effort, because it does in fact bring an



opportunity to increase and diversify the type of communication that you use in your community to help make decisions about the future.

When I first came to Lackawanna Valley in 1987, I was there to help carry out plans for the Steamtown National Historic Site and, also, I was invited to help with community interest in the Lackawanna River. In one of my first visits, people held up a painting by George Innes called, *The Lackawanna Valley*. They actually brought it to the meeting. They said, "This is our vision for the Lackawanna Valley." Some of you are very familiar with that painting. It is a vision of what was going on in the Lackawanna Valley at that time, it's partially pastoral landscape qualities and also, the industrial landscape in that particular valley; it is an important part of the history.

What was fascinating about it was the reference to that painting and the use of fine arts to make such a point with everybody. It crystallized the beginnings of a vision that ultimately led to shaping their plan for Steamtown, Scranton, and the Lackawanna River Valley. It got me very interested in the relationship of fine arts to environmental protection. So I applaud your effort here. I think you add something significant to the community perspective by going in the direction you are going.

Thank you. Good luck with your efforts.



A view of Nine Mile Run just before construction of a culvert circa, 1923. This section of the stream presently lies under Greendale Avenue in Edgewood. Photo courtesy of Ted Rakovsky