



Ecology-Based Economy

In an ecology-based economy we would measure the health of the economy based upon the health of the natural resources. For example, when our water and soil become healthier then the economy would be healthier. This is the position of strength on Earth and can literally leave a better world for the next generation." - Ken Pentel

What is an Ecological Economy?

The main focus is ecology. We must move from a human centered to ecological centered view. We are healthier when the whole Earth is healthier. The health of human beings cannot be separated from the health of our natural resource base. An ecological economy is an acknowledgment that we cannot continue a growth economic model on a finite resource base. Consciously continuing down this path leads to traumatic collapse among humans and mass genocide for the indigenous animals and species of the planet who have no say in how humans mismanage the planet. Counter to the current economic model in which we were born, the ecological economy recognizes humans are stronger when our fellow creatures are stronger. Gross Domestic or National Product (GNP) is obsolete as an indicator of economic health.

Robert Kennedy, speaking in 1968 at Kansas University, states

following comments on what the GNP really measures:

"For too long we seem to have surrendered personal excellence and community value for the mere accumulation of material things. Our gross national product now is over 800 billion dollars a year, but that gross national product, if we judge the United States of America by that, that gross national product counts air pollution, and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwoods and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic squall. It counts Napalm, and it counts nuclear warheads, and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our city. It counts Whitman's rifles and Speck's Knives and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet, the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play; it does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short except that which makes life worth while. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans."

An ecology-based economy internalizes costs not in the bottom line by using measurements such as whole-cost, full-cost, or life-cycle cost. If we were to add up the whole cost or life-cycle cost of the Prairie Island and Monticello Nuclear electric power facilities, we could not because the number is infinite, the by-products are toxic for 10,000 to 100,000 years. The inane profit driven obsession that rigged our government and economy allowing this to happen has put the upper Mississippi River Basin in danger. It has also imposed the burden on future generations who will now have to work millions of hours to pay off the infinite costs during our short time on earth. These costs include impacts from mining and the tailing waste, CO2 releases turning uranium into pellets, routine releases of iodine 131, strontium 90 and tritium, the decommissioning of the facilities and the waste, as well as, increased risks of a terrorist attack, natural disaster or human error that could lead to the Upper Mississippi River being contaminated indefinitely by way of a meltdown. Each economic exchange would inherently restore air, water, and soil to health and sustainability. When persistent poisons are dumped, topsoil is eroded, nuclear reactors keep running, coal keeps burning, driving miles increase, extinction of species grows, the Minnesota economy will be failing. A successful, natural outcome of an ecological economy for Minnesota will restore our state's habitats leading to investments that enable saved over wasted energy, healing farming practices, durable over disposable products, and walkable, bike, train, and bus friendly cities.

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An ecology-based economy offers a commensurate response proportional to the problems. In the face of many ecological problems the last 50 years we have been guided to solutions such as picking up litter, recycling, using compact florescent light bulbs, putting in a low-flow shower head, walking to work, buying reusable bags for grocery shopping, and growing our own food. All of these in isolation have their merits but, as a whole, keep the consumer thinking we are solving the ecological crisis proportionate to the problem. Once dysfunctional design, engineering and manufacturing is unleashed (and the proverbial genie is out of the bottle) we can no longer be guided to incremental changes in the face of exponential problems. As we use whole-cost accounting energy, the way we grow food, and transportation we will inherently remedy the over-consumption of limited resources and begin the needed repair.

What would a Pentel & Wallace ecological economy mean for Minnesota?

In addition to using new measurements such as whole-cost accounting one of the tools as Governor, Ken Pentel will use to achieve an ecological economy will be to enforce the Precautionary Principle (Do No Harm) as embodied in the Purpose of the Minnesota Environmental Act of 1973: (a) to declare a state policy that will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between human beings and their environment; (b) to promote efforts that will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of human beings; and (c) to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the state and to the nation. HIST: 1973 c 412 s 1; 1986 c 444

As an example to calculate impacts on human health, we can look to the 2002 Report by the Minnesota Project: Public Health Benefits Of Converting the Riverside Coal Plant To Natural Gas. In this report, there are human health costs that are not in the bottom line of coal electric power plants such as: bronchitis, asthma, mortality, and a host of many other predetermined illnesses. At the time of the report, if we were to add up these costs from eight coal power facilities just within Minnesota, approximately \$185 million each year would be added to the bottom line of the electric bills for Minnesotans.

Through implementation of the ecological economy, whole-cost accounting, the precautionary principle, enforcement of existing law, passing new laws, and court challenges, the natural outcome will be far more efficient energy use, because we will no longer lose so much energy in long distant transport as energy production moves closer to energy use. There will be stringent efficiency standards in housing and building codes, house-to-house small-scale renewable energy production will lead to savings in billions of dollars not spent on wasted energy, dollars will stay in communities for retraining and retooling creating 2-10 times more jobs locally for a healing energy future. Most important, we start to eliminate the massive risk to our habitats and human health.

An additional benefit in an ecology-based economy can be seen by eliminating redundancies and waste in production in general, leading to more human-scale economies which would inherently enable minimum-impact and minimum-risk outcomes, such as subsistence, barter, communal, cooperative and co-housing economies. Now we start to see the steady state economy emerging and the cost of living will go down and quality of life indicators will rise. All living things will enjoy a cleaner, healthier environment. People will have increased free time available to become more whole and healthy individuals rather than being just producer-consumers and working for waste that is leading to the rapid deterioration of all key life support systems on earth. We will have more time for families, friends, and more social, civic, contemplative and creative time.

Our struggle to phase out of the existing economic dysfunction leading to a healing economy will continue to be met with a variety of proven deceptive messages and harsh practices by those who are emboldened by the unsustainable growth/GDP economic model. They will maintain monopoly control over our vital dependencies in areas like water, food, energy, and transportation as well as our government, finance and information flow. These people and their surrogates will attempt to divert us away from the need for greater respect, balance, and a healing relationship with our home.

Ken Pentel and Erin Wallace are asking: How much more ecological collapse do we allow before we find the collective courage to change? When do our expectations meet the necessary actions? Now is our time. Join in the effort and let's transform the political and economic culture of Minnesota to be "of, by and for the Earth and the people of Earth."

For more information, or to volunteer or donate, please contact:

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