



Letter from the Director

How does one reflect on his or her own inner environmentalist?

Everyone has one whether it is an avid environmentalist or an accidental environmentalist.

Reflecting on one's inner environmentalist is a very personal thing. Deep down, everyone knows how much they value the natural environment and most would admit that they care about the health of their surroundings for their own benefit or that of future generations. But how that shows really comes down to how important they view the environment relative to other issues that may have a higher priority in their lives.

A parent with an asthmatic child who lives in an urban environment may care not for the intrinsic value to a healthy environment but rather because the poor air quality makes the child sick. An outdoorsman who enjoys the hunt may not understand the intrinsic value but rather the immediate concern that there is recreation to be had from bagging the biggest buck or the craftiest bear. A market-economy tycoon may not find it particularly important whether his holdings include environmentally forward-thinking companies but rather that everything that has a tangible value may be traded.

But, why do I care? I care because there is something so magical about seeing my children's eyes light up at the inhabitants of the local tidepools or watching them find the elusive sand dollars that were so plentiful in my own youth. There is something so heart-warming in witnessing my son and daughter understand why we choose to use natural, nature-loving landscapes over traditional driveway pavement (more mud tracked into the house, but less stormwater running off our property). There is something so fascinating in watching my children discover the unexpected—from a wayward turtle in our own backyard, to a nesting plover in the dunes.

That's why I care. And personally, I like being a whale-hugging, dune-appreciating, piping plover-watching environmentalist. But I like to also think I am a realist. Not everything in the "movement" is cute and fuzzy. To be successful, we need to focus less on simply protecting an environmental "thing" and more on changing our views and vision by facilitating cooperation. We should focus more on developing economic carrots rather than regulatory sticks—and most importantly, we need to make it easier for all of us to do the small things that will collectively make a big difference (see www.carbonrally.org to get started!).

And your inner environmentalist may have completely different reasons for caring about the future of the coast and the planet. Regardless of your personal perspective, think about this: currently more than 50 percent of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the coastline. Any positive changes we can make—or convince our non-eco-freak friends to make—will have cumulative, lasting benefits to our coasts and oceans, and our world. We will have cleaner waters for swimming and fishing, less storm-induced flooding, and more diversity in our tidepools, not to mention cleaner air and greener communities. I often wonder if we give the right message to the younger generation. Do we lead a disposable life? Isn't it really easy and relatively inexpensive to make small changes in our lives that together have a positive impact? What are these changes and how do we get started? How do we get involved? How do we bring others along for the ride? To be successful, we need to work together. This edition of *Coastlines* offers a range of suggestions of things you can do, or teach others to do, to work towards a cleaner, greener future and a vibrant economy...

Leslie-Ann McGee

DIRECTOR, MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT