

8. Environmental Resource Management

In a historical context, the physical environment has been viewed as a resource to be exploited with little regard to the long term consequences of such actions. When human activities contaminated groundwater and surface streams, new areas were settled rather than conserving and protecting these natural resources. These actions ignored the long term costs to society in deference to the more immediate needs and desires of the day. It was often thought that "the solution to pollution is dilution" and in some cases when there was ample land and few people, that process worked.

As natural resources become more scarce and endangered, it is critical that environmental issues be addressed in the land use decision making process to ensure that even greater problems and costs are not passed on to succeeding generations. Management of solid waste and wastewater, ground and surface waters, wetlands, and storm water runoff should be important considerations in the development review process.

The quality of the environment can be eroded in many ways including destruction of natural features such as drainage ways and wetlands during development, runoff of farm chemicals and fertilizers into lakes and streams, improper treatment of human and animal wastes, and hazardous waste spills and leaks. The proper use of natural resources has taken on a greater importance as people recognize the benefits of clean water, access to outdoor recreation opportunities, enhanced aesthetic qualities, and cost saving measures that avoid mitigation of environmental impacts.