

The Land Ethic

The Life and Ideals of Aldo Leopold

A Discussion at the BSA NE Region Outdoor Ethics Conference
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Overview of the Boy Scouts of America

Mission

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Scout Oath

On my honor I will do my best
to do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;
to help other people at all times;
to keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.

Scout Law

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful,
friendly, courteous, kind, obedient,
cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.



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BSA Outdoor Code



Outdoor ethics is deeply ingrained in the BSA program. No place is this more important than in the outdoors. Scouting and Venturing have a long challenge in the Outdoor

Scouting and Venturing have a long tradition? By heeding the

As an American, I will do my best to—

Be clean in my outdoor manners.

Be careful with fire.

Be considerate in the outdoors.

Be conservation minded.

Building upon this four stewardship, care for t levels, youth are encouraged to take leadership positions in encouraging proper outdoor ethics using the principles of Leave No Trace. Many Venturing crews have similarly adapted Leave No Trace principles to guide their outdoor recreation activities. Through the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace, we can take responsibility for our own impacts. We can provide leadership to those around us to reduce their impacts by making good choices. Together, we can preserve and conserve our rich environmental heritage.

Programs all include outdoor and Varsity Scout





Land Ethics?

BSA Outdoor Code



- Plan Ahead and Prepare
 - Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
 - Dispose of Waste Properly
 - Leave What You Find
 - Minimize Campfire Impacts
 - Respect Wildlife
 - Be Considerate of Other Visitors
- As an American, I will do my best to—
- Be clean in my outdoor manners.
 - Be careful with fire.
 - Be considerate in the outdoors.
 - Be conservation minded.



- Travel Responsibly
- Respect the Rights of Others
- Educate Yourself Before You Go
- Avoid Sensitive Areas
- Do Your Part





The Land Ethic: The Life & Ideals of Aldo Leopold

- Introduce the concept of a “Land Ethic” as illustrated by Aldo Leopold in his writings which were published after his death as “A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There”.
 - Leopold’s ideas and ideals form the basis for ethical use of “The Land” that are embodied in Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! principles.
- Learn some things about Leopold’s life as an ecologist, forester, and environmentalist, and some of the experiences that lead him to describe the interconnectedness of people with the land that they inhabit.





What is Ethics?

- The word ethics is "commonly used interchangeably with '[morality](#)' ... and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual."
[Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy](#)
- "A set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures". - Richard Paul and Linda Elder of the [Foundation for Critical Thinking](#)
- "Most people confuse ethics with behaving in accordance with social conventions, religious beliefs and the law", and don't treat ethics as a stand-alone concept.



- [Ethics](#). Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia
- Paul, Richard; Elder, Linda (2006). The Miniature Guide to Understanding the Foundations of Ethical Reasoning. United States: Foundation for Critical Thinking Free Press





During this session, we will explore ...

- Who was Aldo Leopold and how did his life experiences shape his concept of the Land Ethic?
- How do BSA Outdoor Ethics relate to Leopold's vision?
- How do Wendell Berry's observations on the societal move from the agricultural economy to industrialization relate to Leopold's Land Ethic
- What is "Our Responsibility to the Seventh Generation"?
- How can you refine your Land Ethic and pass it on to the next generations of Scouts?





Aldo Leopold

January 11, 1887 – April 21, 1948

Childhood

1887-1904 > Burlington, IA, on the Mississippi River

1904-1905 > Lawrenceville (Prep) School, near Trenton, NJ

1905-1909 > Yale Forest School (Gifford Pinchot Trust, 1905)



US Forest Service

1909-1911 > - Apache National Forest, AZ

1911-1922 > Carson National Forest, NM (assigned to kill bears, wolves, and mountain lions)

1922-1928 > US Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, WI

1928-1933 > Private Consultant – game surveys of Midwestern states

University of Wisconsin

1933-1939 >, Dept. of Ag Economics, Chairman, Game Management

1935 > Purchases farm on Wisconsin River, Baraboo, WI aka "The Shack"

- Founding member of The Wilderness Society, dedicated to protecting public lands
- 1939-1948 > Chairman, (New) Dept. of Wildlife Management
- April 14, 1948 > "Great Possessions" manuscript accepted for publication
- April 21, 1948 > Leopold dies fighting grass fire on neighbor's farm
- Spring 1949 > "A Sand County Almanac" is published





Aldo Leopold



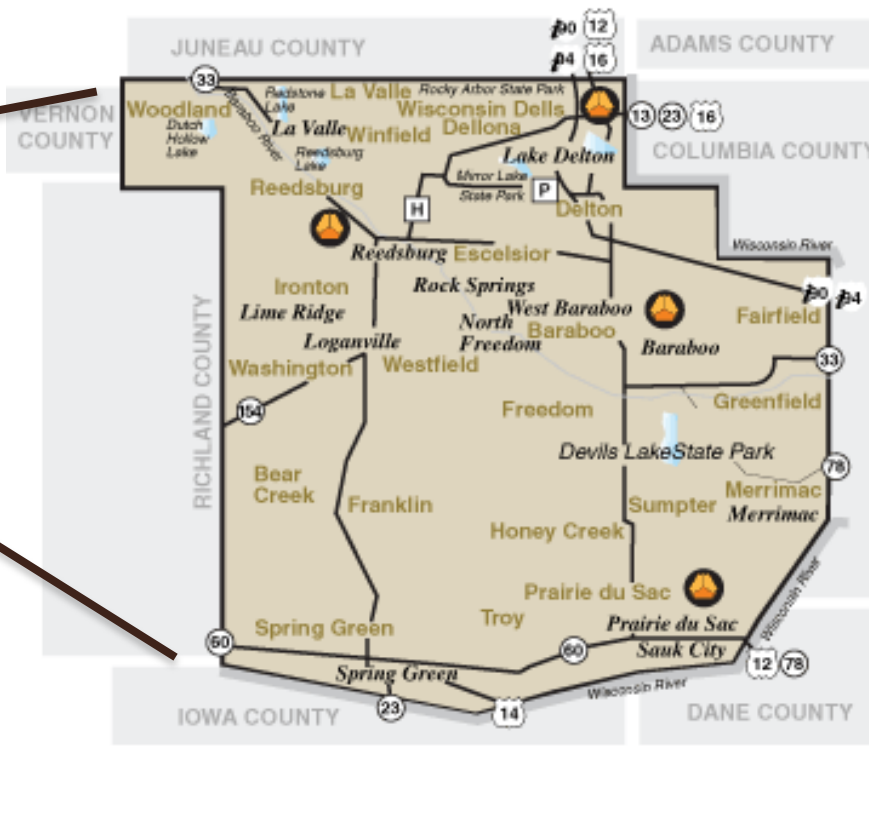
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Sand County

Sauk County, Wisconsin

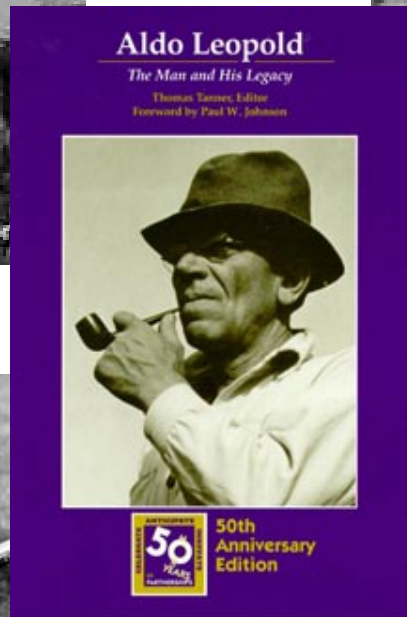


- [Sand County Almanac Wiki](#)





Courtesy of the Leopold Foundation



Aldo Leopold/s Shack



Land Ethic

- Leopold's idea of a "land ethic", or a responsible relationship existing between people and the land they inhabit.
- Land includes everything in or on it: plants, animals, microbes, minerals, atmosphere
- What is an ecosystem? An **ecosystem** is a community of living organisms (plants, animals and microbes) in conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment (things like air, water and mineral soil), interacting as a system.



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem> Accessed 11/19/13





A Sand County
ALMANAC
AND DEVISED HERE AND THERE
By ALDO LEOPOLD



Land Ethic

- **All ethics** so far evolved rest upon a single premise that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for).

The Land Ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem> Accessed 11/19/13





BSA: The Land Ethic

The concept of the Land Ethic was developed by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*. In this book, Aldo Leopold reflected upon his interaction with the land and how it had enriched him, but also how our society tends to trivialize or dismiss the role of the land. The following quotations provide a brief introduction to the Land Ethic concept as envisioned by Leopold:

"An ethic [that] presupposes the mental image of the land as a biotic mechanism. We can be ethical only in relation to something that we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in." ... [Think of the land as an energy circuit, with energy flowing from the soils to the plants to animals and back.] This thumbnail sketch of the land as an energy circuit conveys three basic ideas:

- That land is not merely soil;
- That the native plants and animals kept the energy circuit open; others may or may not;
- That man-made changes are of a different order than evolutionary changes, and have effects more comprehensive than intended or foreseen. These ideas, collectively, raise two issues: Can the land adjust itself to the new order? Can the desired alterations be accomplished with less violence?



www.scouting.org/home/OutdoorProgram/OutdoorEthics/LandEthic.aspx



From www.scouting.org

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Exploiter vs Nurturer Ethic

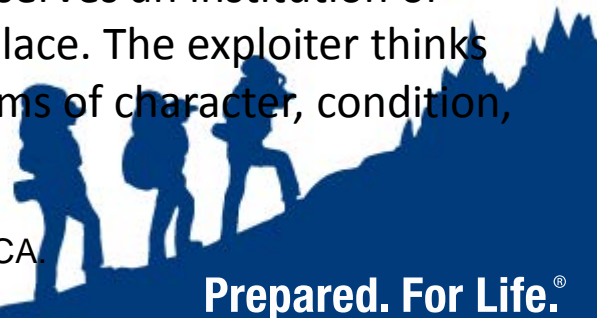
- From the writings of Wendell Berry

“Let me outline as briefly as I can what seem to me the characteristics of these opposite kinds of mind. I conceive a strip-miner to be a model exploiter, and as a **model nurturer I take the old-fashioned idea or ideal of the farmer**. The exploiter is a specialist, an expert; the nurturer is not. The standard of the exploiter is efficiency; the standard of the nurturer is care. The exploiter's goal is money, profit; the nurturer's goal is health - his land's health, his own, his family's, his community's, his country's. Whereas the exploiter asks of a piece of land only how much and how quickly it can be made to produce, the nurturer asks a question that is much more complex and difficult: What is its carrying capacity? (That is: How much can be taken from it without diminishing it? What can it produce dependably for an indefinite time?) The exploiter wishes to earn as much as possible by as little work as possible; the nurturer expects, certainly, to have a decent living from his work, but his characteristic wish is to work as well as possible. The competence of the exploiter is in organization; that of the nurturer is in order – a human order, that is, that accommodates itself both to other order and to mystery. The exploiter typically serves an institution or organization; the nurturer serves land, household, community, place. The exploiter thinks in terms of numbers, quantities, "hard facts"; the nurturer in terms of character, condition, quality, kind.”



From **The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture**.

Copyright ©1977 by Wendell Berry. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, CA.



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Wallace Stegner

- *"Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste . . . "*



<http://wallacestegner.org/index.html>

From his Wilderness Letter on the importance of federal protection of wild places - 1960





Indigenous Peoples' View of The Land Ethic: “Our Responsibility to the Seventh Generation”

“The Indigenous people, our people, were aware of their responsibility, not just in terms of balance for the immediate life; they were also aware of the need to maintain this balance for the seventh generation to come. The prophecy given to us, tells us that what we do today will affect the seventh generation and because of this we must bear in mind our responsibility to them today and always. Because of the sacredness of Creation and the connection to the spirit life of the earth, we were directed to treat the earth with great care and respect. Our spirits will be carried forward into the next generations and our teachings toward the earth will be carried along with this. If at some point we fail to consider these teachings, the balance that was maintained through the teachings will disappear and we will disappear. It is often said that our people [have no] concept of time and no investment in the future. In fact, our concept of time forces us to think hundreds of years into the future. The investment we make is not measured in dollars or in material wealth, it is measured in terms of our ability to insure that what is here for us today is here for our children and our children's' children tomorrow..”



<http://www.iisd.org/7thgen/default.htm> ... Written by indigenous people from Canada.





Indigenous Peoples' View of The Land Ethic: "Our Responsibility to the Seventh Generation"

- . "We cannot simply think of our survival; each new generation is responsible to ensure the survival of the seventh generation. The prophecy given to us, tells us that what we do today will affect the seventh generation and because of this we must bear in mind our responsibility to them today and always."

What will the Earth look like in 2134 ...
140 years from now?

<http://www.iisd.org/7thgen/default.htm>





Ask yourself ...

What is My Personal Land Ethic?

- An exercise after reading A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold:
- Objective: Form your own land ethic – one that you can put into practice.
 1. Summarize the principles of Aldo Leopold’s land ethic by
 - Briefly summarizing two or three key points that you felt were the most important
 - Write down why you feel these are the most important of Leopold’s points.
 2. Write down the principles of your own land ethic. How will you live on the earth?
 - Can you name your principles?
 - Can you explain the basis of these principles?

[Adapted from: Land Ethic Worksheet](#) shared by Paul Totah, Director of Communications at [St. Ignatius College Preparatory](#)

Provided by: The Aldo Leopold Foundation website > [Using Leopold in Teaching](#)





As Outdoor Ethics Advocates, we must ask ourselves...

- What are some ethical challenges for today's youth?
 - Cub Scout: 7-11 years old
 - Boy Scout: 11-14 years old
 - Venturers: 14-20 years old
 - Adults: 21+





As Outdoor Ethics Advocates, we must ask ourselves...

- What challenges are there in changing the ethical behavior of Scouters?
 - GI Generation/WW II: 1901-1926
 - Mature/Silents: 1927-1945
 - Baby Boomers: 1946-1964
 - Generation X: 1965-1980
 - Generation Y/Millennials: 1981-2000
 - (Current 21-yr-olds were born in 1993)

www.marketingteacher.com/the-six-living-generations-in-America/





Exercise

- How does this age group relate to/see impacts on the environment?
 - What do they need to learn to become aware?
- What are some effective ways to present Outdoor Ethics to this age group?
- What tools or information do adult leaders need to reach this age group?
 - Cub Scout: 7-11 years old
 - Boy Scout: 11-14 years old
 - Venturers: 14-20 years old
 - Adults: 21+





Cub Scouts: 7-11 years old

- How does this age group relate to/see impacts on the environment?
 - What do they need to learn to become aware?
- What are some effective ways to present Outdoor Ethics to this age group?
- What tools or information do adult leaders need to reach this age group?





Boy Scouts: 11-14 years old

- How does this age group relate to/see impacts on the environment?
 - What do they need to learn to become aware?
- What are some effective ways to present Outdoor Ethics to this age group?
- What tools or information do adult leaders need to reach this age group?





Venturers: 14-20 years old

- How does this age group relate to/see impacts on the environment?
 - What do they need to learn to become aware?
- What are some effective ways to present Outdoor Ethics to this age group?
- What tools or information do adult leaders need to reach this age group?





Scout Leaders: 21+

- How does this age group relate to/see impacts on the environment?
 - What do they need to learn to become aware?
- What are some effective ways to present Outdoor Ethics to this age group?
- What tools or information do adult leaders need to reach this age group?





Recognition name tag can be personalized.

Final Thoughts?



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