Aldo Leopold's Worldview of Land-use

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." pg 239

This sounds simple: do we not already sing our love for and obligation to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Yes, but just what and whom do we love? Certainly not the soil, which we are sending helter-skelter downriver. Certainly not the waters, which we assume have no function except to turn turbines, float barges, and carry off sewage. Certainly not the plants, of which we exterminate whole communities without batting an eye. Certainly not the animals, of which we have already extirpated many of the largest and most beautiful species. A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these 'resources,' but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state.

Leopold, Aldo: [*A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*](http://www.oup-usa.org/gcdocs/gc_0195053052.html), 1948, [Oxford University Press](http://www.oup-usa.org/), New York, 1987, pg. 204. <http://gargravarr.cc.utexas.edu/chrisj/leopold-quotes.html>

"In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such." pg 240

On the "Economic" worldview...

"One basic weakness in a conservation system based wholly on economic motives is that most members of the land community have no economic value. Wild-flowers and songbirds are examples. Of the 22,000 higher plants and animals native to Wisconsin, it is doubtful whether more than 5 per cent can be sold, fed, eaten, or otherwise put to economic use. Yet these creatures are members of the biotic community, and if (as I believe) it stability depends on its integrity, they are entitled to continuance." Pg 247

"The 'key-log' which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it does otherwise." pg 262

"The fallacy the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and which we now need to cast off, is the belief that economics determines all land-use. This is simply not true. An innumerable host of actions and attitudes, comprising perhaps the bulk of all land relations, is determined by the land-users' tastes and predilections, rather than by his purse. The bulk of all and relations hinges on investments of time, forethought, skill, and faith rather than investments of cash. As a land-user thinketh, so is he." pg 263

<http://www.ies.wisc.edu/research/ies900/leopold.html>