



The L.E.A.R.N. Process, Using Federal Law,
Provides the Legal Basis to Say to the State:
*“Here’s Our Local [L.E.A.R.N. Based] Plan.
Make Sure You Comply With it.”*

L.E.A.R.N.
(Local Environment and Resource Network)

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Associate Professor John Williams – Staff Chair, Natural Resources Agent, Oregon State
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Pat Snyder – Radio Co-Host
Tom King – Radio Co-Host

Comments [added/unintelligible]. Interjections/pauses removed. Emphasis not added.

-----Beginning of Show -----

Introduction of Guests

Pat – “55 Feedback”! Good morning everyone, with Tom King, I'm Pat Snyder. Joining us today via the phone is Dr. Michael Coffman and John Williams.

Dr. Michael Coffman

Dr. Coffman received his Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry and a Masters of Science in Biology at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, and also a Ph.D. in Forest Science at the University of Idaho at Moscow. Since then he's become a respected scientist and ecologist who's been involved in ecosystem research for over twenty years in both academia and industry. He has lead a multimillion dollar research effort in the effects of acid rain and global warming on ecosystems in the U.S., and became intimately involved in subjects such as wetlands, cumulative effects and biological diversity. He's also authored several books on environmentalism and the global agenda and played a key role in stopping the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the U.S. Senate.

International Agenda to Erode Civil Liberties of Americans By Using False Environmental Scares

It was while leading the multimillion dollar research program on acid rain and global climate change that he became aware of an international agenda that was using false environmental scares to justify laws that seriously eroded the civil liberties of all Americans, especially those of the private property rights. He left his research position in 1992 to start his own education group, Environmental Perspectives, Inc., that warned citizens of this agenda and how to protect our environment without harming people. He has since become an expert in [private property rights](#), written several books, and helped expose several harmful treaties and plans such as the Biodiversity Treaty and Sustainable Development.

Now when Dr. Coffman heard about what was to become the L.E.A.R.N. program he immediately realized that this is the best, perhaps the only interim solution to protect the environment *and* local citizens. And we're going to talk a little bit about the L.E.A.R.N. program.

Associate Professor John Williams

Also with us is John Williams. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Rangeland Resources at Oregon State University working for the OSU Extension Service in Wallowa County.

He is the Natural Resources Agent and Staff Chair of the Extension Program. He was raised on his family's purebred Horned Hereford ranch south of Canyon City in the Strawberry Mountains where he returned as a partner following college where he received his B.S. degree in Animal Science. They raised commercial cattle, ran yearlings, raised and sold hay, rented pasture and contracted fence building. He returned to Oregon State University in 1985 for a Master of Agriculture in the fields of Animal Science, Rangeland Resources and Agricultural Resource Economics.

In 1987 he began his career with Oregon State University as a 4-H/Agriculture agent and stayed there for 7 years on the Oregon coast. In 1993 he moved to Wallowa County in Northeast Oregon as the OSU Natural Resource Agent. The county was heavily impacted by the listing of the Snake River Chinook salmon as threatened and he has worked collaboratively with the Nez Perce Tribe to develop a Salmon Habitat Recovery Plan. And he is also going to talk a little bit about L.E.A.R.N. and how we can work with environmental common sense.

Losing Rights versus Protecting the Environment – Is There a Middle Ground?

And gentlemen, thanks for being here! (Dr. Coffman – Well thank you!) And thanks for getting up so early too! (Laughing) (John Williams – It's a pleasure to be here!) All right! Well, let's talk about this. It has to be for some out there...we've had this series about Comprehensive Planning, and a lot of folks are worried that rights are being taken away. And then the folks that want to protect the environment are saying that the people that don't to follow like a comprehensive planning or "Smart Growth" are going to hurt the environment. There has to be a middle ground and it sounds like that's what you both have been working on.

John Has Practical Experience With L.E.A.R.N.

Doctor – That is correct. John has actually done it physically. I'm just in the process of helping people understand what the system is. So I'm going to probably allow John to speak most of this morning just because I think he...his practical experience and actually doing this in Wallowa County in Oregon I think is going to be very beneficial.

2 Concepts with Applying L.E.A.R.N.: First is Comprehensive Planning

Let me just divide this into two concepts: we have two problems going on as I understand it in Wisconsin. First of all you have the comprehensive plan that is being required by the state, and that can be addressed by L.E.A.R.N. too because of the federal nexus [connection] with the... [U.S. government]. When it involves planning and so forth and it [the state] receives federal money, you [local municipalities/citizens] have the opportunity of using the NEPA process [National Environmental Policy Act] to actually become involved with state processes, and state planning as well.

Second is U.S. Forest Service Land

Then there's the other side of the issue is that many of the counties that are in northern Wisconsin have a tremendous amount of federal land directly in it – U.S. Forest Service land. And that's what John can really address because he is also dealing with the same thing there in Wallowa County. And the fact is that the NEPA process does allow the local governments to become involved in the actual planning process of the federal government as well. And I think his experience in that particular area is probably far superior to mine. And I'm going to defer to him.

Pat – Okay. Before we move further, do we need to maybe define what L.E.A.R.N. is?

L.E.A.R.N. -- A Process for Doing Your Own Local Planning Instead of Forced State Planning

Doctor – Well L.E.A.R.N. is a process by which you can use NEPA in order to establish a cooperative basis with the federal government. And in your situation if this comprehensive planning ever becomes a reality [in 2010]...with the state as well. It is just a process. It is not a total answer. I truly believe that comprehensive planning creates more problems and more evil, and so forth then not having comprehensive planning. I think the planning as some of your previous speakers have already spoken about is best done at the local level: either the city or the

county or whatever jurisdiction you happen to be in, rather than to have the state to start to force the local governments to have a plan that they have to adhere to.

L.E.A.R.N. Gives Opportunity to Get Your Voices Heard in the Planning Process

But if the fact is that you have to have this situation going on (and you certainly do with the federal government, the U.S. Forest Service...you don't have any choice in that) then L.E.A.R.N., or this process of cooperation and collaboration that John will be talking about, is a solution...is an approach that can get your voices heard in the planning process of how your forests and so forth are going to be managed.

Pat – Okay. Well John, maybe explain the process that Dr. Coffman was talking about -- how you were able to put practice to reality.

It's a Team Effort

John Williams – Okay. I can start and if you have questions go ahead and interrupt. (Pat – Okay.) To start with, "I didn't do it!" It takes a lot of people to do it! And one of the things that we learned really early was that the group of people that are dedicated to make something happen at the local level kinda gotta throw their egos aside and we all work together. And so I sure don't want to say that, "John Williams did this." This was a Wallowa County process that everybody from the commissioners [supervisors] down to the local citizens participated in.

Federal Plan Would Hurt Tribe/Economy, So Wrote Own Local Plan

What happened was the listing of the Snake River Chinook salmon which was if not the first, within a month or two of the very first anadromous [ocean run] fish that was listed under the Endangered Species Act. And we recognized here locally...and it was actually before I came to the county...but the local people recognized what kind of devastation could occur to our economy by having such a listing because of the regulations that would come down to restrict use of land in protecting this fish. And so they actually got together with the members of the Nez Perce Tribe (and thought they'd be proactive), and decided to write a salmon plan. And it was a Salmon Habitat Recovery Plan (did that in 1993). And they were trying to be proactive to keep the federal listing from having such a severe impact on both Nez Perce traditional uses of the land as well as the local economy. And in 1993, in August, they actually published the Wallowa County/Nez Perce Tribe Salmon Habitat Recovery Plan [www.co.wallowa.or.us/salmonplan] that was a couple of hundred pages long.

No Federal Blessing But Community Implemented Local Plan Anyway

We were a little bit naïve in thinking we could get the federal government to review our plan and accept it as the recovery plan in our local county. They didn't do that. We couldn't get it reviewed in any timely manner, and we couldn't get...of course they wouldn't turn over authority to us as we had hoped that they would do. The thing it did was that it actually brought our community together – we learned to play together in the sandbox so to speak. (Pat – Mhmm.) And we were proactive, and we weren't going to give up! And so even though we couldn't get the federal partners to participate in our process, we moved ahead anyway with implementation of the [County/Tribe] salmon plan.

People Worked Together With Their Own Plan and Advised Others

And that basically is a land use plan written by ourselves! It's based on the needs of the water shed. It doesn't require anything...it's voluntary. The only time...I say it's totally voluntary, but there's one time it isn't. We actually adopted it into Oregon's famous land use plans as article 36 of our zoning articles. And so if you want to build a house, you have to make sure that it complies with the salmon plan. And we never turn anybody down! All we do...we have an advisory committee, a technical committee that looks at any house that's close to water and makes sure that it doesn't have any kind of impact on the fish. And you can always find a way to do that. We don't ever make recommendations where we turn it down. We make recommendations on how it will be better, and how it would work better for them as well as maybe for the environment.

Pat – So the state doesn't come in and say, "I'm sorry, this is going to impact fish so you can't build?!"

Feds Haven't Said "No" to Local Plan

John – They can do that – the state doesn't...it would be a federal nexus where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife would do it. They may do it through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. But where we have looked at it as a local advisory committee and said, "Here's what we'd like to see you do." Most people appreciate the technical support where it's not required. And by the time they've gone through the process we haven't had very many times where the Feds have come in and said, "No, you can't do that...", particularly if they've followed our advice. (Pat – Mmmm.) So it's a proactive stance that's here to help the local people.

Created an Advisory Committee to the County Supervisors

And one of the things it helps them do is they can be in compliance with the Federal Endangered Species Act on a practical basis. And it's free -- nobody gets any money for it. We just do it as part of our jobs. And we've been implementing that since 1993. About '96 we realized that you kind of need more than a ragtag group of people that are just trying to do something and we needed to be a little bit more organized. And they also had a set of county commissioners at that time that recognized that natural resources was such a major part of the county government... that you always were going to need strong leadership in the natural resource arena. And the people that had been elected to that commissioner's position may not always be that strong as they were at that time. So they actually worked with us (two of us)...sat in the rooms and thought about the best way to do it. And we created the Natural Resource Advisory Committee to the Board of Commissioners in Wallowa County. And that was to just help the commissioners do their job. In more recent times we talk about, "we have all sorts of responsibility and absolutely no authority in the Natural Resource Advisory Committee." Because all we do is advise the commissioners. However...

Supervisors Are the Go-Between in Levels of Government

Doctor – That's a key point John! And I think you need to emphasize it. The actual decisions or the actual connection between the federal government and the county, or the county and the state is the county commissioners – the elected officials.

Good Supervisors Will Seriously Consider Advice From a Local Citizen Advisory Committee

All you can do is advise them. But generally speaking, if you have a good group of commissioners (or in Wisconsin's case it's supervisors) they will take your advice very seriously because it is made up by this advisory committee who's made up of a cross-section of your community!

Local Elected Officials Should Never Give Up Their Authority!

John – Yes, a very broad cross-section. The one thing we don't... You're exactly right! And I'll make a point of local elected officials even more than that Michael -- elected officials should never give up their authority! They should not give it to advisory committees! They should not give it up to some regional government! [e.g. a regional planning commission.]

Regional (Metro) Government Takes Away Local Authority

One of the things in Oregon that we have found (or I find anyway and I'm from the east side and a little more conservative than some of the others)... But the two places in the state of Oregon where we've created a "metro-government" – that's between county government and state government – is the two places that we're having real disasters when it comes to trying to really accomplish something. Because you've got another level of government where the local people have given up their authority. And that's just something that in my mind if an elected official (e.g. city counselor, county commissioner/supervisor (whatever you want to call them)) -- they have a certain authority they should have. They should never give that up!

Pat – All right. Let's get a break in here guys. Hold on a second here. I've got a quick break. Again, we are talking with Dr. Michael Coffman, and also John Williams. So we're learning about, well the L.E.A.R.N. program, and addressing it to see how it might help in the comprehensive planning that we're learning about here and experiencing in Wisconsin. Back with more in a moment.

----- Break -----

Pat – "55 Feedback" continues, talking with Dr. Michael Coffman and John Williams. As we learned a little bit about John's efforts there with his colleagues in Oregon along the Snake River there. John, how could we somehow mold that into the situation we have here in Wisconsin? Utilize what you did there to make something like that work...what's going on in Wisconsin?

Principles of L.E.A.R.N.

John – Well, there are certain principles, and every community has to figure it out for themselves. But some of those principles are exactly what, what is the basis for being successful with the L.E.A.R.N. program. And number one is – if you're going to do something like this, it has to be based in county government or local government! And so it could be the cities, it could be a soil and water conservation districts, or whatever. But I often get hung up on county government because that's where we went. But it could be something...any local government.

Local Government Has An Equivalent Seat

And you need to recognize that laws -- and the best way I can describe it is most people see it kind of a special seat at the table with the tribal entities because their treaties that they have, and the laws that the federal governments have put out... and recognize that local government has an equivalent seat at the table pretty much like what the tribes have!

So recognize that:

Based on Local Government

- A. It needs to be based on local government.

From Ground Up

- B. It needs to be [from the] ground up. You cannot start with the top down situation. You need to get an advocate who says, "I want to make my local government...have a real influence in the state or the federal decision-making that's going on, particularly based in natural resource management."

How Affect Culture, Customs, Economy, Environment, Tax Base of Community?

It works in all phases, but my experience at least has been natural resource based. And to do that you need to look at how these actions that are coming affect the culture, the customs, and the economy of your community. And then you need to look at how they might affect your physical environment. How they affect the tax base of the local government.

Form Local Community Group

And doing that – we're sitting here talking about the NEPA process like Michael was saying... when you decide that it's something that needs to be dealt with, then you need to get a small group of people together at the local level.

State/Federal Employees Are Citizens Too But Keep Discipline vs Employment Separate

And I always get the question: should we include state and federal employees? Of course you do! They're part of the community! Many times the expertise you need in a local group comes from state and local government people! So in Oregon we have the Oregon Department of Forestry. If we need a forester on our committee, it may well be an Oregon Department of Forestry employee. U.S. Forest Service people are members of our advisory committee. So they are

there representing their discipline, not their employer! And we try to make that clear that they're there representing their discipline – until it comes down to a discussion (e.g. let's say that the action is from the Forest Service, of course then the federal employee working for the Forest Service has to represent their employer).

Get Engaged in the Process

But bringing this group of people together and sitting down and saying, "We need to be proactive, we want to participate in the process. We're not trying to overthrow anybody. We're not trying to stop anything." And that's one of the things in Wallowa County -- we usually aren't "Out Here Stoppers". We're trying to accomplish something. If you're going to try to stop something that's being done, you need to offer an alternative that says, "No, here's a better way to go."

Federal Guidance Always Wrong?

Tom King – Have you found in your dealings with the salmon situation or other situations you've dealt with that the suggestions coming down from the federal level (whether it be the Forest Service or the EPA or whoever it is), are their suggestions (rules, laws) always wrong?

Approach Rules Early On

John – Not always, not always. Sometimes there's been good thought put into things. But if the rule has already come down from the federal or the state government, you're too late! You need to be in on the ground floor. You need to be thinking about it...all rules have to be published in the Federal Register if it's a federal issue. You need to catch those rules when they're at the Federal Register level, where you still have the opportunity to say, "Whoa! Here's what that's going to do to my local community...!" Whether it be custom, culture, or the economic base. And at that level, if you have enough common sense in there and enough people saying it...that are said at the right time...then you can make a difference.

Realizing Success Can Take a Long Time

Now we're not saying we've been successful all the time. In fact, it's only been 16 years and I've been asked several times to write a success story. And I keep telling them, "Well we haven't had a success yet." But I can tell you that we've made significant impacts along the road. And the reason we don't want to write a success story is because when I moved here in 1993 there were 3 saw mills in Wallowa County that were up and running 2 shifts. And today one of those has been closed down/torn down, one has been closed down/reopened with 2 different owners and then closed down, and one is still operating. And they only get about 3-4 million board feet off the federal land when we used to get 50-60 million. We can't in good conscience write a success story until we get back into the woods when of course the fire hazard from the overstocking of trees and so forth is severe. So we're looking at the bigger picture. Even though we have changed things, we have improved things as we go along, we have not had the [success] with everything that we do. We do believe that most things that were done were done a little bit differently because we were involved in the process.

Pat – All right, hold on... (Dr. Coffman – Let me...) Okay, go ahead.

When You Can Influence Federal Planning

Dr. Coffman – Let me interject here John and ask you a question. (John – Sure.) You said that you have to get in there when it's still in the Federal Registers phase. And that's what they're trying to do with the comprehensive plan right now. It's still pretty much in the development stage. But even with the federal level, you may not be able to affect what's already been decided now and handed down. But in the next planning cycle (which is now...it's supposed to be every 10 years originally, but now it's what...15-20 years I suspect – I haven't looked at it recently) ... but at least you can begin to influence the next planning cycle, is that correct?

Be Proactive and Watching [Chuckers Don't Agree]

John – That's correct, yes. You need to be involved while they're orchestrating and thinking through what they want to write in the rules. And that means being proactive and watching that

stuff. One federal rule that was going to impact us in the north part of the county pretty significantly was that they were going to eliminate all firearms on one of the scenic waterways because every now and then there were hunters that didn't know camps were down at the edge of the river. And there was a problem. There was a problem. So they made a "No Gun" zone of like 500 feet back. Well they didn't realize that it had an 80% slope. And if you go 500 feet back on a horizontal plane you're about clear to the top of the rim and the whole canyon wasn't going to be able to be hunted. And it was good, great chucker hunting from the top. I got a phone call from a friend of mine in Nevada who said, "Have you seen the rule?" And I hadn't seen it. And we actually completely changed that and got it in a practical manner got it where we could protect the campgrounds around the edge of the Grand Ronde River, but still allow for some very high quality chucker hunting in the majority of the canyon. That's one of those things...

Doctor – People don't know what a chucker is in Wisconsin.

Having Right Attitude/Approach Helps

John – A chucker is a bird. Okay. It's a bird... (Pat/Doctor laugh.) If you'd have let that become law, you know how hard it is to get something changed! And that's just a little thing. But you've gotta stay at it. And after you get involved in the game and people realize that you're there to try to help make a better plan than to just stop everything, they begin to show some respect and they listen to you and actually the local federal people now seek us out and ask for our input early on....even in the prescoping of the NEPA process.

Pat – All right. Hold on a second, I gotta get a newsbreak in here guys. We'll talk more and learn more about the L.E.A.R.N. program – how to protect your community working with the government, and trying to come up with solutions and see how it fits with what's going on right now with the comprehensive planning and "Smart Growth" in the state of Wisconsin. Tom has news, and then more after this.

----- Newsbreak -----

Take the Grant Money. Now You Have to Do What They Say

Pat – We continue with "55 Feedback". As we are visiting with Dr. Michael Coffman and also John Williams. Dr. Coffman, Ph.D. in Ecosystems, core focus [in planning]. Of course, talking about his experiences. And [] John Williams, the extension agent for Oregon State University, talking about the L.E.A.R.N. program. [] And gentlemen, a lot of times if the government (be it federal or state or local) somehow gives you money or a grant, usually they expect to run the show. And that I think is what's going on here with our comprehensive planning is they're giving out...you bring in your plan and you get the grant money and then that's it...you do what we say.

Comprehensive Planning Lets the Camel's Nose Under the Tent

Doctor – Well I'm sure the Comprehensive Plan...I've read part of it, I haven't had the chance to read all of it but I'm sure the law as it exists right now doesn't tell the local governments (the counties and so forth) what they have to do. However, they do outline the areas that they have to cover. And that of course is the camel's nose under the tent. And I have read some of the transcripts of previous radio interviews you have had over the past few weeks.

Wisconsin to Increase its Influence Over Local Government

And I think it has been well stated by some of the people that have been on the program that what you find here are going to be creeping control or creeping regulations (however you want to put it) that over a period of time the state is going to exert its influence more and more and more!

Comprehensive Planning Means Greater Control on People

And the thing that concerns me the most as being a private property advocate, and being involved in this whole thing, is that what you find is that there is tremendous political pressure at the federal and the state level (meaning the environmental groups and other people) who have an agenda that they want to see implemented. And it usually means control! They want to see a

reality that is theirs and perhaps theirs alone! They don't really want people to be able to make decisions for themselves. And the easiest way for them to do that is at the state or federal level where you don't have as many governing agencies to deal with. And those are going to be coming under more and more pressure.

Forestry Service Used to Want to Get Along With Local People

And I think John can attest to this with what he's seen with the U.S. Forest Service over the last 20 years. I used to work extensively in the Nicolet and the Chequamegon National Forest there in Wisconsin. And you had a bunch of people that really wanted to get along with the local people. Yeah there were conflicts. There always will be when you have a feudal-like system like the forest service manages their land. But the fact is that people generally wanted to cooperate and work with the people to make sure that local communities were...had access to the forest, both recreation-wise as well as timber-wise, and so forth.

Things Have Changed -- Forest Service Wants Nature to Be Preserved Rather Than Used

And then we got this planning process that was started in the 1980's. And you had more and more people come into the forest service that were coming out of colleges and universities that were more planning oriented and more ecosystem mentality where "nature needs to be preserved rather than used." And now you have a situation where it is very confrontational with the local communities very often. Now that's not always the case. There are some national forests in which supervisors are very, very attuned to what's happening at the local level. But a lot of them now are very confrontational! And we see a totally different forest service now (or Bureau of Land Management that you have out west) that is much, much different then it was 30 years ago. And it's now...they have a mentality very often, a bunker mentality of protecting their forest against the people that live there.

Is L.E.A.R.N. a Compromise?

Pat – 845-2155 if you have any questions here. Of course, with our situation with the "Smart Growth" or Comprehensive Planning, a lot of folks on the property rights or the self-government type rights want the total removal of this. Should communities still consider LEARN?

Try to Back Out of Comprehensive Planning

Doctor – If they decide that they cannot actually get out of it – I would advise that you take (and we're going to talk about this on future shows), I would strongly advise that you make every effort to try to back out of this mandate for comprehensive planning. []

SG/CP Is Horribly Expensive and Punitive

Comprehensive Planning is just another name for "Smart Growth". In fact [comprehensive planning has evolved out of "Smart Growth"] in some ways. And there's been a number of studies, research studies that have shown that comprehensive planning/"Smart Growth" is horribly expensive and horribly punitive on the people that have to deal with it on the ground!

Do Everything You Can to Prevent SG/CP and Keep Your Local Control

And if you can back out of it and basically take...as John said keep your economy and your authority at the local level without having federal or state intervention...then you're going to be far, far better off. So do everything you can initially to prevent it.

L.E.A.R.N. Gives You an Oar in the Water Instead of the State Taking Over (Which It Will)

However, if you have to do it, then I think as long as...John was explaining – L.E.A.R.N. is a very good way of at least having your oar in the water. Because if you don't, the state will take over! I can almost guarantee it! Just like what's happened within the federal government and the federal agencies -- within a period of time, the state will become dictator and you won't have any say in the matter at all!

Does NEPA Not Expose Us to More Government Intimidation and Corruption?

Pat – It makes you just wonder. With NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) [] in a way we're relying on a government program. Does this expose citizens and communities to yet another possible means of the government's intimidation or corruption?

Environmental Organizations Use NEPA to the Hilt

Doctor – It's already being used that way by the environmental organizations. And John, you probably have had more experience in that than I have. But it's been my experience that the environmental organizations will use NEPA to the hilt in order to get what they want employed in the Bureau of Land Management out west or the U.S. Forest Service. Is that correct John?

Other Environmental-Like Groups Use NEPA Too

John – Yes, that's correct. You say environmental groups...there's a half-dozen other groups out there.

[Big Brother] Planning Is Going to Occur Whether You Like It or Not

The things that you need to recognize is that... (and I agree with Michael) – I think that if you can stop this type of top down planning that's coming – that's the best! However, it makes no difference whether you stop it this year or next year. Recognize that planning is going to occur. And he [Michael] said that, "You need to have your oar in the water." And that's exactly it!

The Question Is: Who Is Going to Control the Planning Process?

And so yes, you need to participate. You need to try to orchestrate that because basically control is going to be fought over: Who's going to control the planning process?! And you need to be able to be at the table to say that we want control at the local level as much as possible.

Federal Law Says That a Local Land Use Plan Trumps All Other Plans

And the tool that the federal government and the federal laws gives you is that it states... (and these are my words, I'm not the lawyer, somebody else has to be the lawyer) ...basically it says that if you have a local land use plan, they must follow it! Federal and state people must follow it when they write their plans. And they must comply with that local plan! And if that local plan isn't followed with then they need to explain why they legally can't!

That Local Land Use Plan Should Be a L.E.A.R.N. Based Plan

And that's where the power of L.E.A.R.N. comes in -- is that we get ourselves organized (and I've talked a little about that), but then you need to write a local land use plan (and I'm not talking about zoning articles and I'm not talking about "Smart Growth" [or comprehensive planning]). I'm talking about a plan that says, "This is who we are. We are as a custom...identify your customs and your culture, identify your economic base, identify your environmental conditions (the goods, the bads, the warts and everything), and then identify your plan on how you're going...[how] you would like to see all of that fit together and work in your local community. That's what I'm calling a local land use plan.

State and Federal Government Plan Must Concur With Your Plan

You have that and you have it adopted. When the state comes by to write their plan, or the federal government comes by to write their plan, they cannot legally write their plan that's in opposition to your local plan unless they legally can't follow it. And if they legally can't follow it they have to explain in the document why they're not following it.

Having Your Own L.E.A.R.N Based Local Plan Is a Powerful Tool

That's a powerful tool for you! It has to take some thought. It has to take some organization. And it takes time. But that plan in itself...and then you being organized where you say, "Look, you're coming down here to plan -- here's our plan and make sure you comply with it." That's a useful tool in trying to keep local control in the planning process, because I think the planning process is going to occur whether you like it or not.

Pat – Okay. Let's get a question from a listener. Bill up in Merrill. Hi Bill!

Beware of "Facilitators"!

Bill – Yeah, how are you gentlemen today? I appreciate your program. I'm a local official up here that got elected on a property rights position in 2005 against this "Smart Growth" on a town level. And then ran for county board of supervisors and was elected there. But what I've noticed here is that when you get involved in this [planning] process you've got to beware of what are called "The Facilitators"... (Doctor and John knowingly laugh) ...who come in under the guise of helping out your local town and directing your local town in the composition of their plan, or their zoning ordinances, or whatever.

"Facilitators" Are Funded by the University of Wisconsin Extension

And they are funded (in this case) here out of the University of Wisconsin Extension. And I would just love to cut off the money to these people because what they do is they get a lot of people active on a local level and then they direct them in the direction that they want! Well, the direction was rejected by the voters in our town.

We Have People-Friendly Zoning

We then pulled out of county zoning because they were doing a re-codification. So what we have is a locally, very lenient and cooperative zoning. I like to brag a little bit and say that we have not even had one party bring an issue before our board of adjustments...before our board for rectifying anything. Because we sit down, and pretty much whatever the people want to do, they can do. And then if our zoning ordinances are too restrictive, and our fees are too high, we lower 'em! Okay? And we get rid of them!

People Have Got to Be Involved in Local Government

So it's a case here where John has said, "Be proactive." You've gotta do that! And you've got to run for election. Even though you've got tons of other things to do, and you don't think you're going to win, you don't think you've got a chance – you can do it! You can do it! And these "facilitators"...

Hiring Outside Planners is a Huge Expense on Taxpayers!

And another thing: Oftentimes when they got the grants they then go to Madison or Green Bay and they hire these planning organizations and departments and so forth. It's a huge expense... drain on the taxpayers! And you're not even getting what you want on a local level!

Pat – All right Bill.

Much Due to These Type of Planners, In Oregon People Are Having Their Property Value Stolen

Doctor – That is absolutely correct! And my hat is off to you for being able to resist that kind of effort. However, many places cannot. In fact Oregon (where John is coming from) has probably got one of the most advanced planning states in the whole nation – although there are many hot on its heels right now. [] ...they even passed Measure (John – Measure 37) back a couple of years ago to provide just compensation for those people that have been basically stolen of their property value and so forth!

Don't Get "Facilitators" From Local Universities!

But the key I think is this: if you're going to do something like this, realize that it's under the local control. Don't get a facilitator out of one of the local universities! In fact the advisory committee will work better if it's done with the goal in mind of achieving what your...define what your custom, culture, and economy is...and go with that approach! So that you have basically local people controlling that advisory committee that then advises the county supervisors without any facilitators whatsoever. I realize what you're saying about facilitators! You really have to be very, very careful.

Stay Away From Professional Planners: They Tend to Over-Plan [Resulting in Over-Regulations]

And stay away from professional planners if you can. There are some very good professional planners out there. But unfortunately most of the kids coming out of school right now have been trained in this mentality that everything has to be planned – right down to the nuts and bolts of how everything is supposed to work within the county or the jurisdiction, whatever it happens to be. And that's not what you're looking for.

You Want to Protect Your Community the Way Your Community Wants to Be Protected

You're looking for maximum flexibility to achieve certain goals in environmental protection or what other goals that you have. There are things that you want to protect. The question is -- how are you going to protect them? Are you going to do it the way the federal bureaucracy demands out of Washington D.C., or in the case of this state, out of Madison?! Or are you going to do it in a way that makes sense for the local custom, culture, and economy of your county or local jurisdiction?

Wisconsin Governor to Regionalize All Planning and Zoning in 2010?!

Bill – The thing that concerns me is that in the year 2010, when all of this [comprehensive planning] clicks into operation, I am very afraid that the governor [Gov Doyle] is going to (and I've heard this from a number of people) by the stroke of the pen regionalize all planning and zoning! (Doctor – Yeah.) And it's going to trump the local things that have been done! And I'm very concerned about that. I don't know what we can do short of throwing out a lot of legislators that have adopted this comprehensive plan in the state statutes! (John – If you have a local plan...)

Pat – All right. Thanks for your call Bill. Go ahead.

Federal Law Protects L.E.A.R.N. Based Local Plans From Being Trumped by the State

John – If the county has this [L.E.A.R.N. based] local plan, even if the governor regionalizes it, by [federal] law it has to comply in your county with your local plan or you've got a [federal] standing that says it doesn't have to happen there! Now the key would be if you could get enough of your counties to all have [L.E.A.R.N. based] local plans, so that you could actually make an impact in the capital!

Pat – Okay.

[Private Citizen Driven] Advisory Boards as Leverage in Dealing With State/Federal Agencies

Doctor – I think that's a very important thing. If there are enough counties that did this... And let me... The reason I started out my talk earlier was the fact that you really have two issues: you're dealing with the state and their comprehensive planning issue, as well as those counties that have [federal] land (Chequamegon National Forest or Nicolet National Forest) within those counties. So you're dealing with two different governmental agencies there. You can make – maybe – the comprehensive plan go away by joining and uniting and so forth. And I think that's a great idea. But regardless of that, the L.E.A.R.N. process is still going to be effective in working with the Nicolet and the Chequamegon for those counties who have federal lands within them. And so I think it certainly makes sense to create one of these advisory committees with each one of the county [] board of supervisors just for that reason itself! But it can then be leveraged into using it at the state level as well for the comprehensive plan.

Pat – Okay. We're going to take a newsbreak here guys. We've got the top of the hour on the way, and we will come back. Talking with Dr. Michael Coffman...also John Williams. They are visiting with us about the L.E.A.R.N. program and how we could possibly learn more about it and incorporate it into our planning ahead for the environment and for all of our planning needs. Back with more in a moment.

----- Newsbreak -----

[Program Note: At the beginning of this last portion of the program the broadcast signal for WSAU was significantly weaker (i.e. it was now difficult to hear the program, even in Wausau) and Dr. Coffman's phone connection with WSAU was disconnected.]

L.E.A.R.N. Uses Existing Federal/Environmental Laws to Have Joint/Equal Standing

Pat – Welcome back. We're talking again with Dr. Michael Coffman, and also John Williams, an Associate Professor in the Department of Rangeland Resources at Oregon State University. And we're learning about the new program – L.E.A.R.N. It helps rural citizens protect themselves against the overzealous application of federal and state regulations. As the program name L.E.A.R.N. [stands] for "Local Environment and Resource Network". And it educates local citizens and elected officials on how to use existing federal and environmental laws to have joint and equal standing with the federal agencies in applying federal law in their community. And we heard from John [about] one of the success stories from earlier dealing there with the Snake River.

Supervisors Being Told They Should Give In to What is Bad Law Due to Possible Consequences

And let's continue on guys. You know our county board of supervisors here in Wisconsin are told by their corporation counsels that they have to sign this comprehensive planning before 2010 to ensure they won't lose funding or the ability to make land use decisions when 2010 arrives. What would you tell these county board supervisors, or the leaders of their townships and villages?

Every Oregon County Gave In and Voters Are Now Revolting

John – Boy, in Oregon we went through this clear back in the 70's. And we had the same...we had to have a comprehensive land use plan. And every city and every county in Oregon has one, and we've been living with it ever since. We are... [Here's where Dr. Coffman was disconnected.] (Pat – Go ahead.) We are currently in the situation where the voters are revolting and passing petitions to limit that land use planning. So what I would tell the commissioners is, "Get organized. You may have to sign it, but if you're going to sign it sign something that says, 'Minimal...as legally possible'. And make sure that your local needs are written into those land use plans.

How Do You Get Citizens Interested/Involved?

Pat – When you were getting folks organized there in Oregon, how were you able to get the (I don't want to say ordinary citizens, but maybe) citizens that weren't as active of a role as the environmental (John – Sure.), but they're just living everyday lives, and something like this doesn't hit 'em until they want to make an addition to their home, or maybe buy some other land, or something like that. How should they get involved?

Reduced Number of Meetings and Emphasized Finding Solutions, Not Arguments

John – Well to start with, when you appoint a committee, you have to try to appoint something that's very efficient. And getting to your question, when the commissioners got ready to appoint the NRAC (the Natural Resource Advisory Committee) in Wallowa County, we replaced 7 other committees that were meeting separately, and this is an integrated committee. So we replaced the roach committee, the water committee, the natural resource committee, the forest committee, and so forth, and then created one committee to replace them. So those people that were already involved, that was appealing to them because actually we reduced the number of meetings that the people who were participating wanted to get involved in. The other thing we did was we eliminated the radical right and the radical left. And the commissioners said, "We're looking for solutions, not arguments."

Pat – How were you able to eliminate the radical right and the radical left because...? (John – The commissioners are in charge of who they appoint and they just refused to appoint them.) Oh.

Get People Who Want Results

John – We have groups, people who had come in and requested [appointments], and the commissioners looked at them in the face and said, “You don’t qualify. Your track record is that all you do is try to stop things.” And I’m looking on both sides of the political spectrum. But what we’re looking for is for people who will roll up their sleeves and accomplish something. If you can create that atmosphere...

Private Citizens Lead the Committee

And a couple of other things that we did to create it was, we don’t let any government employee be in charge of the advisory committee. We recognize that private industry needs to drive any process you go through. A private guy has to get up from the meeting you’re in and go out and make a living after the meeting. The meeting isn’t his living. And so to keep the process efficient, you begin to pick up those private citizens who recognize that something needs to be done.

Tom – But do you have people who are maybe affected by the rules that are being passed help make these decisions? As far as a company maybe suggesting ways to deal with rules that are coming down that will affect their company?

John – Sure! Sure! Big corporations, big timber companies, land use people, ranchers and farmers are all members because they recognize it will impact them eventually.

Tom – But how do you separate self-interest then from what might be a better solution?

Standing Committee of 9 Members

John – We have a pretty good size committee. There’s actually 20 people who then said that’s too big, and they appointed a standing committee of 9 among themselves that was just done by the committee. And that’s large enough that one individual’s needs or wants isn’t going to dominate the day.

Integrity Among Members is Key

And you just declare a conflict of interest if you’ve got one. And we do that all the time. It’s the forest service district ranger who’s sitting on the committee who stands up and says, “We’re talking about a forest service rule. I’m going to bow out of the conversation.” Integrity has a lot to do with it, but you’re dealing with the local people. And the local people recognize...each member that’s there has to recognize that his job, no matter what it is, will be better served if he is a part of this committee!

Must Take the Position Seriously

And we’ve got people that have been on that committee since ’93 and have never left because they recognize the value of sitting down locally with a broad spectrum of people and dealing with these issues early and clear through the process. So it takes a little bit of stepping out in the beginning, to say, “Yes, I guess I’ll do this.” There are some people we appointed and after a little while we appointed somebody else ‘cause they didn’t find the value to show up. But we have had very good participation both from the private sector and from the governmental sector, because they recognized the value of sitting at the table. And it’s the commissioners’ table, not the government -- not the bigger governments, and that’s useful.

Pat – How do you get the L.E.A.R.N. educational process to these folks? Is there someone who has to take the initiative to get this idea and bring it to them?

L.E.A.R.N. Program Started in Oregon

John – The L.E.A.R.N. program was actually founded out in the Washington Farm Bureau and we need to give them credit for it. In the mid ’90’s they were pushing getting commissioners (or supervisors as you call them) trained to step to the table. We actually created the L.E.A.R.N. program. Karen Budd-Fallon was the lawyer in the morning program, and I was the afternoon

program of kind of a case study of what we'd done, and lessons learned and so forth. Sometimes we can get Karen, sometimes we can't.

John Can Help Train Wisconsin About L.E.A.R.N.

But if there's a group out there that wants help, all I need is...(if somebody wants me to come help them) all I need is some travel money. Being on a county budget I can't spend my money helping Wisconsin. But if you'd like me to come give you a program, give you a workshop, I'm willing to do that and just lay out some of the simple facts. We try to keep it really simple.

Citizens/Communities Need to Step Up and Initiate L.E.A.R.N.

What you need to do is get organized, and every community does it differently. But the basis is it's gotta be in county or local government. And you've gotta have the willingness to step up and say, "We want to have an (like what Michael said earlier...gotta have) ...our oar in the water." And I've been called the day before a federal judge shut down the Klamath water and they said, "What does your LEARN program do for me?" And I said, "Well, for your crisis two years out I can help you. But for today, for Monday...I'm sorry, [but] it takes time to get an organization of a local community going." So the L.E.A.R.N. program itself is the educational program about the facts that we're talking about here. And if nothing else, I'm willing to come as long as I can get my expenses paid for to help just think through how it might work in your community.

Pat – Now I know the web site is www.learn-us.org so folks can learn a little bit more about the whole program and things like that. It just seems in some ways too easy, but there's a lot of apathy out there if you know what I mean. People just would rather...

Tom – I would imagine one of the hardest things we were just talking about a little bit is getting the local people who might have self-interest in some of these projects to buy into the program and to take the long view as opposed to the short view.

Committee Members Need the Long View

John – And if they only have the short view it's probably a good place for them not to be, is not on that committee. What we found is when they come to the committee...(and we have a technical committee that helps them with technical advise...we have a standing committee or overall committee that does policy and politics and that sort of stuff in advising the commissioners) ... when they come before the committee we've never really had anybody say, "Oh, we had a bad experience." Because mostly we have no agendas that are personal.

Committee Members' Priority is Local Needs

Again, sometimes it is a personal issue, but the committee itself is just trying to help somebody locally be successful. Whether it be successful in figuring out how to comply with the rules, be successful in building a house, building a road, or be successful in applying for a grant to get money to do a process. We're trying to help the commissioners say, "What's the county need?" And to focus on the fact that we have the custom, culture, and economy to keep in mind every time one of these actions occurs, whether it be private or public. As far as the local people, we've been embraced because we tried to keep the larger picture of the local peoples' needs in mind.

Sometimes It Takes a Crisis – And Wisconsin Has One

And again, it takes time. This does not happen over night. And a lot of times it takes a crisis to get things started. And it sounds like Wisconsin's approaching having a crisis with the land use issues.

Pat – Well now you mentioned before too that environmentalists and jobs, environment verses jobs...the LEARN program is a win-win solution.

John – We look for those solutions (Pat – Okay.) and again, it's site specific and local.

What About the DNR?

Pat – Okay, and that’s the key. What about your Department of Natural Resources? How does that fit in out there in Washington state? Because we have a lot of folks that are upset with some of the rules and regulations...like they’re an unchecked agency that makes their own rules?

John – DNR and Washington, and I’m not there...but my county border borders the state of Washington so I’m familiar with it... (Pat – Oh that’s right. I meant in Oregon). In Oregon we have the Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Department of Agriculture and then the Department of Forestry, which makes up what other states I think would [equate as their] DNR. And yes, a lot of times what we locally are doing is giving input on any of those rules that come out or have the potential to come out about the impact they would have on their local community, and making sure that we’re giving that advice from a position of knowledge. And the advice might be to the legislature, it might be to the...again, it’s the commissioners that are the ones that are giving it. But they’re lobbying whether it be an agency or whether it be the legislature or the governor about the impact that action would have on us, positive or negative. And sometimes we’re pushing for a program that would help us, and sometimes we’re pushing for a rule, against a rule that might severely impact us in one form or another.

You’ve Got to Stay Engaged

And so you’ve got to stay engaged. And that’s the issue is you stay engaged all the time. We meet monthly. And we’ve met monthly since 1994 or ’95, because sometimes things will sneak up on you if you miss a meeting or two.

Pat – And I guess to get started it’s up to the commissioners or the supervisors, maybe the city government to invite interested people in coming in and maybe formulating a committee?

How You Start Forming the Local [Private Citizen Driven] Advisory Committee

John – Either way. When I write out the rules, and the first step is I say you have to have an advocate. That could be a commissioner or that could be a private citizen who’s going to the commissioners and asking for that committee to be formed. But you have to have an advocate, and then you pull together your partners, whether it be from the commission or the partners that you’re going to go to the commission with.

Some Don’t Want [L.E.A.R.N. Based/Citizen-Driven] Local Plan/Advisory Committee. Vote Out
And then you get the commissioners to act. And in some counties the local groups went up to the commissioners and said, “We want to do this!” And in Washington there were several counties that said, “No, we aren’t going to do that.” The guys from the committee signed up, ran for election, and the ones I know won the next election and then they implemented the [L.E.A.R.N. based] planning process!

Advisory Committee Process is Local and Public

And I say the NRAC, and that’s the Advisory Committee Process that then brings in this land use plan that identifies custom, culture, and the tax base of the local economy. And that’s your basis! And that’s not a private process, that’s a public process where you’ve got to go out to the people and say, “What do you want protected, and what do you want pushed in this county?” In Wallowa County one of the most valuable things is irrigation water just like it is in a lot of other places. And there’s some places where flood irrigation is what the people wanted, and you write that into...that’s the custom and culture of the way we do business here in Wallowa County.

Dr. Coffman Returns

Pat – Okay. And Michael Coffman’s back with us. I thought you had to leave so that’s why... (Doctor – No, no I didn’t! But somehow I was cut off right after the news.) Oh Lord! Okay. Sorry about that, I thought you had to leave so I didn’t call back right away. We were just talking more about the L.E.A.R.N. program and how to get it started here a bit. And I see that when you go to the web site (www.learn-us.org) you’re right up there Michael! I mean you’re the guy to contact uh?

Doctor – We can help you get it started and so forth. I think that John probably, as I said earlier, should take the lions share of the discussion just because he is the guy with the feet on the ground that has actually done it. And he can explain it perhaps much better than I can -- as long as I'm on the radio.

Pat – And that's what he was doing there while you were gone. Now, it always seems like when there's something happening the environmental groups, if they make a claim or throw something out there, everything stops in motion! Everything has to stop and it's the business person or someone that has to spend millions of dollars to prove it not true. How can we help this? Does this L.E.A.R.N. fall into that category?

Laws Are Being Drafted By Environmental Groups

Doctor – Well again, John probably is a better person to ask because he's actually had to experience this. However, what the L.E.A.R.N. process does is it has an ability to put your foot in the door and to have an opportunity to influence what the [local] plan is. The thing that has been very disturbing with the legislation coming out of Congress and many of the state governments is that the laws are actually drafted by the environmental organizations to suit their needs to allow them to come in and file an injunction at the drop of the hat whenever they want to.

If you are in the actual planning process where you can help define the rules and so forth you can start to minimize this. Now it's not going to happen next year or the year after that, but over a period of time – and John I want you to jump in here – over a period of time you can be to influence that particular impact.

Just Having a Local Advisory Committee Tends to Dissuade Litigation

John – That's true. You're not going to stop the request for injunctions and the law suits. What you hope you do is to reduce them because there's always organizations out there again from both sides of the political spectrum. But they come along and they say, "We don't like that so we're going to sue." When they see a local community that's working together that has representatives from the conservation side, representatives from the industry side, and all the spectrum in between, then you have a little bit less desire to take on that community unless it's something that's very site specific. So hopefully as you're saying to the people who might want to come in and follow a lawsuit is, "We working on trying to do the right thing."

Committee Members Environmentally Conscious, Economically Smart

And again, we're not trying to run over people. With the L.E.A.R.N. program we're trying to wear the white hat. We're trying to be environmentally conscious. We're trying to be environmentally conscious while we're being economically smart. And so that...the issue is that we're trying to comply with these things locally the way we know. ...solutions have to come from the local level. And again, we're looking for those solutions.

Committee Provides Local Knowledge and Advice

If that's the case then maybe that's not where the lawsuit gets filed. Once it gets filed then you look at it and you try to help those individuals address whatever it is. And many times it means... hey, if you think you're right, then you go ahead and hire your lawyers and the L.E.A.R.N. program's not going to be much help at that point other than you've accumulated a large volume of knowledge in one room that meets every now and then -- monthly. And you can offer advice (it's free so you can tell what it's worth), but help people move forward with local knowledge, local advice, and figure out if there isn't a positive or win-win solution.

Tom – Do you find though that sometimes the pressure is much greater on these local people, whether it be from the local interests, the good old boys network, whatever the case may be to make determinations one way or the other?

Committee Members Need Integrity and Fairness

John – We work really hard to try to do what's right. And what's right...we're not going to follow just the good old boys network, or just the environmental groups network. We have both of those representatives on the committee. But again, the committee's large enough that we truly try to say, "It's 2007. What's right to move Wallowa County forward in a positive manner?" And there's enough people with integrity that are on the committee that says, "That we need to accomplish this." And having all those different representatives, if you start to move in a direction that maybe helps the cattlemen but hurts the hay growers, you hear about it! And that's where we ought to hear about it! Its our own room and our own public meeting and say, "Hey, wait a minute! We've got to find a better solution 'cause we really don't want to go back and forth, hurt one, help the other!" Sometimes you have to have compromise in the sense of well yes, we do have to recognize the Clean Water Act that says you gotta do that. But how do we do that and still not... or have the least impact on the economy, and I'm talking about the people. When I say the economy you're talking about everybody's pocket book, not some nebulous thing out there. So yes it's difficult, but nobody signed up for the easy stuff.

Powerful Position -- Advisory Committee of Owyhee County (Idaho) Has Been Very Successful

Doctor – Let me add one thing to. And I would advise whoever's interested in this to go to Owyhee County [www.owyheecounty.net] and look at some of the things... (that's in Southwestern Idaho). Owyhee County has actually, because of their presence and the fact that they have the advisory committee, the county board of commissioners has literally become a partner with both the state and the federal government on many of the same kinds of issues that you're dealing with. And where injunctions were filed...and this was from the 9th Circuit Court which is really a tough place to protect yourself out on the West Coast there. And they were able to literally shut down some of the injunctions and so forth that environmentalists (the organizations) had actually leveled for water quality or a number of other things. I don't remember all the details now, but I'm sure that they can tell you that it gives you a very powerful position in order to actually address some of these injunctions and some of these requests by the environmental organizations to the state and to the federal agencies. They've been very, very successful in doing this.

Pat – It sounds like the way as we mentioned earlier, the win-win. When you can keep things to the local level on things then it seems to be the best solution. Well, we're out of time. Do you guys have any final thoughts before we close out today?

John Willing to Help Wisconsin Communities Keep Local Control via L.E.A.R.N.

John – I offer the hope for Wisconsin to try to get a handle on keeping things local. If there's a way that I can help as an extension agent, as a member of the L.E.A.R.N. training program give me a call. I'd be more than happy to come. Like I said, all I need is travel money.

Pat – All right. And Michael, any last thoughts from you?

Use What is Available to Be Heard. Use L.E.A.R.N.

Doctor – Well, I would just say to...with the comprehensive plan...to try to get it reversed [] so that it doesn't impact you at all...to get out of it in some way. I'm not sure how you can best do that. We'll be talking about that in future weeks. But the key is to get out of that. But I still think that the L.E.A.R.N. process, when you're dealing with the National Forest System, if your county is in the National Forest System is the best way to go to get your voice heard, because otherwise you're totally ignored! And let me tell you, the environmental organizations in that part of the country are using the NEPA process to get their voices heard within the U.S. Forest Service.

Pat – All right, Doctor Michael Coffman and also John Williams. Thanks for being on the show!

----- End of Program -----

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Biography of WSAU "55 Feedback" Guests

Dr. Michael Coffman

Dr. Michael S. Coffman received his BS in Forestry and MS in Biology at Northern Arizona University at Flagstaff, and his Ph.D. in Forest Science at the University of Idaho at Moscow. Since then he has become a respected scientist and ecologist who has been involved in ecosystem research for over twenty years in both academia and industry. He has lead a multimillion dollar research effort in the effects of acid rain and global warming on ecosystems in the US, and became intimately involved in subjects such as wetlands, cumulative effects and biological diversity. He has authored several books on environmentalism and the global agenda and played a key role in stopping the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the U.S. Senate.

It was while leading the multimillion dollar research program on acid rain and global climate change that he became aware of an international agenda that was using false environmental scares to justify laws that seriously eroded the civil liberties of all Americans, especially those of private property rights. He left his research position in 1992 to start his own education group, Environmental Perspectives, Inc., that warned citizens of this agenda and how to protect our environment without harming people. He has since become an expert in [private property rights](#), written several books, and helped expose several harmful treaties and plans such as the Biodiversity Treaty and Sustainable Development.

When Dr. Coffman heard about what was to become the L.E.A.R.N. program he immediately realized that this is the best, perhaps the only interim solution to protect the environment *and* local citizens. It is a win-win solution where everyone benefits--the environment, property owners, government officials and environmentalists. Ultimately, the long-term solution is to guide the nation back to constitutional protection of private property rights. Until then he is totally committed to helping people help themselves through the LEARN program.

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Associate Professor John Williams

John Williams is an Associate Professor in the Department of Rangeland Resources at Oregon State University working for the OSU Extension Service in Wallowa County. He is the Natural Resources Agent and Staff Chair of the Extension Program. He was raised on his family's purebred Horned Hereford ranch south of Canyon City in the Strawberry Mountains where he

returned as a partner following college where he received a B.S. degree in animal science. They raised commercial cattle, ran yearlings, raised and sold hay, rented pasture and contracted fence building. He returned to Oregon State University in 1985 for a Master of Agriculture in the fields of Animal Science, Rangeland Resources and Agricultural Resource Economics. He has been a member of the Society for Range Management since 1985.

In 1987 he began his career with Oregon State University as a 4-H/Agriculture agent in Tillamook County on the Oregon Coast where he stayed for 7 years. In 1993 he moved to Wallowa County in Northeast Oregon as the OSU Natural Resource Agent. The county was heavily impacted by the listing of the Snake River Chinook salmon as threatened and has worked collaboratively with the Nez Perce Tribe to develop a Salmon Habitat Recovery Plan. He has helped the county in implementing this plan through development of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioner's Natural Resource Advisory Committee. As a member of this committee he has worked with a wide variety of local folks to assure that Wallowa County is doing everything practical to make the best decisions possible about natural resource issues. Wallowa County works to aid the federal and state agencies in the development of appropriate policies and decisions when it involves local lands, animals or people.

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